



## **Navigator Workgroup Evaluation**

First 1,000 Days Suncoast is an initiative that is only as successful as its partnerships. We place a strong importance on networking, communication, and collaboration for the benefit of families. Together, we can better address individual family needs as well as broader systemic challenges.

Difficulty navigating the system continues to be one of the top barriers to care for families and professionals. Complex social and medical situations are often a challenge for community residents to steer on their own with various eligibility requirements and numerous non-profit agencies throughout the region. “Navigators” (i.e., Community Health Workers, Peer Advocates, Care Coordinators, Family Navigators, etc.) are critical in connecting families with services and supporting them during difficult times. Developing a safety net of care while ensuring Navigators are aware of available resources is key to improving care coordination and reducing unnecessary sources of stress for both families and professionals. We encourage partner agencies to keep each other updated on available resources and to help disseminate information to families. Workforce capacity issues is also a top barrier at the local, state, and national level. In a survey conducted by Resilient Retreat (2020), 50% of helping professionals from a diverse group of organizations reported feelings of burnout or compassion fatigue. To support families, we must better support the professionals who help them.

To address the above-mentioned concerns and in collaboration with community leaders, First 1000 Days Suncoast began convening and facilitating “Navigator Workgroups” in both Sarasota and Manatee Counties in the Fall of 2022. The purpose of the Navigator Workgroup is to provide professionals with an opportunity to:

- network with and support other peers
- enhance knowledge of community resources/professional development
- brainstorm solutions to complex family situations
- identify areas of need and opportunities for collaboration

There were 10 Navigator meetings held between September 2022 through June 2023; five held in Manatee and five in Sarasota. Manatee Community Foundation and Sarasota County Department of Health provide free meeting space and Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation and First 1000 Days Suncoast have sponsored lunches. Sarasota County Department of Health staff co-facilitate Sarasota meetings. Guest speakers lined up to address topics requested by Navigators included housing, resources for the aging population, healthcare benefits navigation. Attendance has remained consistent for both meeting locations, with 20-30 professionals attending Sarasota County meetings and 5-15 attending the Manatee County meetings. The roster of professionals has grown to 80 for Sarasota and 45 for Manatee. Since September 2022, 26 professionals in total have attended at least two meetings.

A survey was distributed to workgroup members who attended at least two meetings to determine benefit and satisfaction with meetings. The questions further explore impact of the meetings on inter-

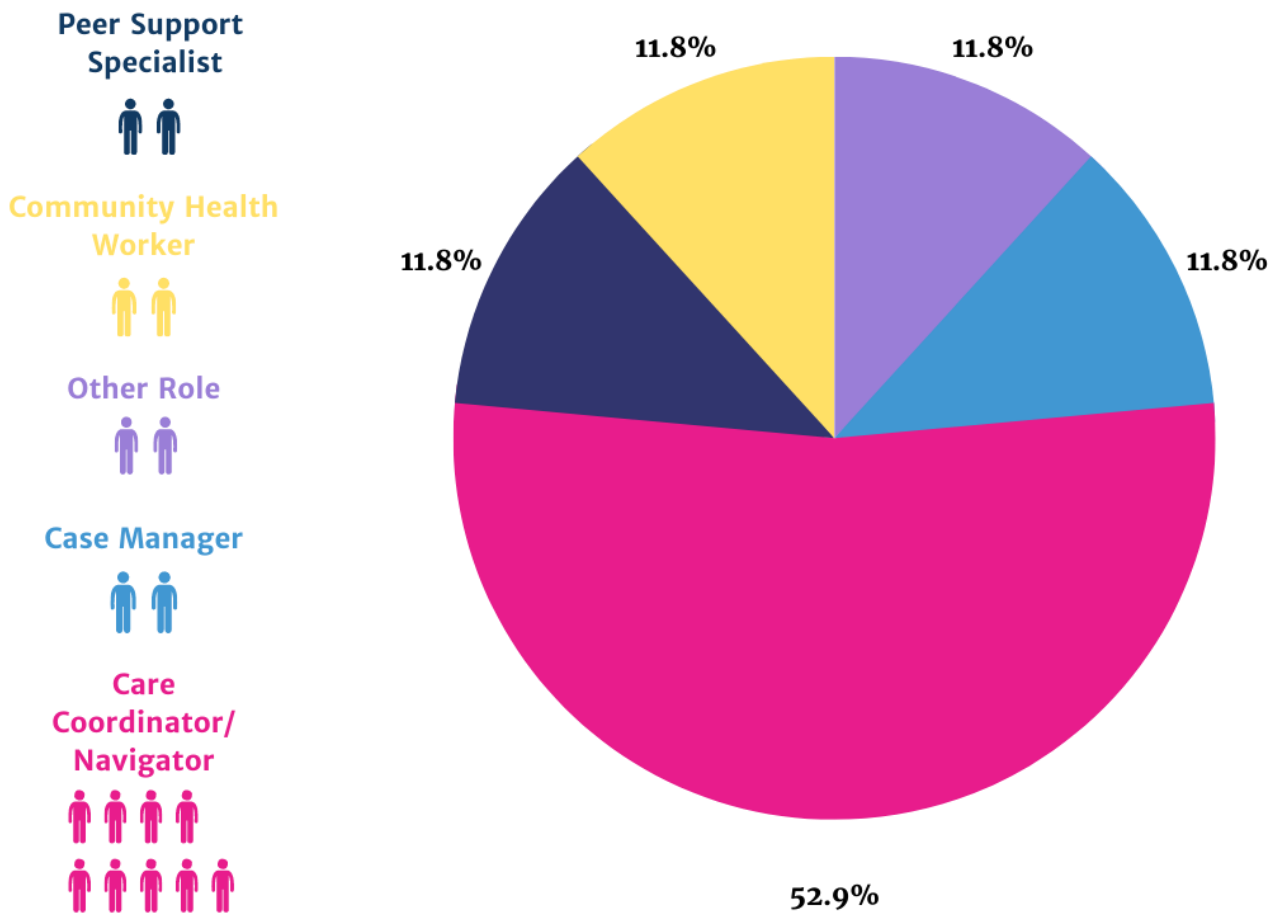
professional collaboration, referral practices, and resource knowledge. After completing the survey, a \$10 gift card was provided to thank them for their feedback. The survey was analyzed for common themes.

Overall, the feedback was positive, and professionals reported high levels of satisfaction with the meetings. The Navigator Workgroup facilitators were commended for their work, survey respondents cited the meetings as valuable, helpful, collaborative, and well-run. As a direct result of the Navigator meetings, professionals shared they have built new partnerships, felt more connected to their peers, been introduced to new professionals and organizations, and able to resolve complex cases. Ideas on ways to improve the meetings included: extending the length of the meetings and a more in-depth look at housing.

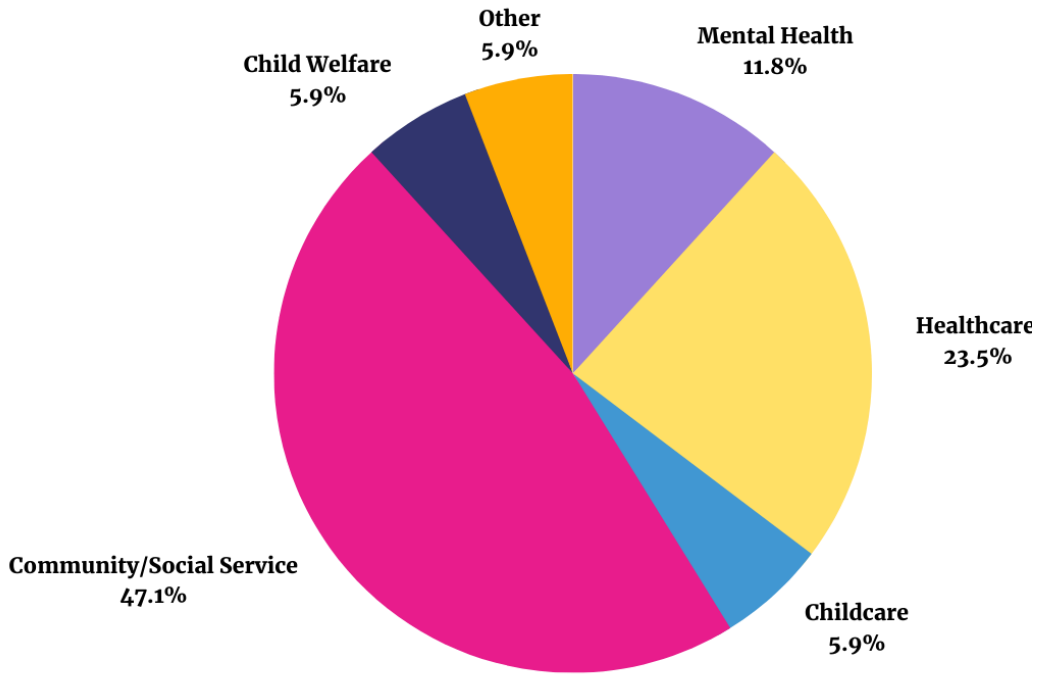
### Demographics

Out of the 26 professions who were eligible to respond to the survey, there were 17 respondents. The average number of meetings attended per each participant was 4.7. Majority worked within a social service organization and identified as navigators/care coordinators. Most participants have been in their role for 1 year or less.

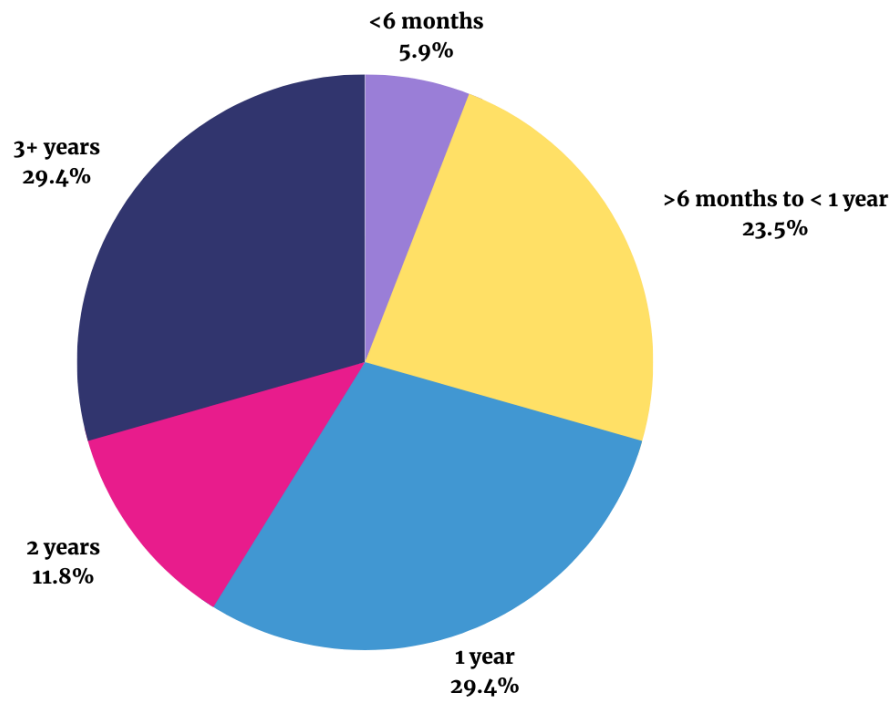
#### Role Type



Type of Organization



Time in Role



## How Their Job Makes Them Feel

Respondents were asked to describe how their job makes them feel using three words. Themes were identified from these descriptions, providing a deeper understanding of the complex nature of their roles and the impact their work has on their lives. Overall, the themes that emerged from the responses were feelings of fulfillment, helpfulness, connection, and passion. However, there was also mention of challenges, such as feeling overwhelmed or disappointed.



**Fulfilled & Satisfied:** Words such as "fulfilled," "satisfied," "purposeful," "happy," and "grateful" indicate a sense of accomplishment and contentment in their role.

**Connected and Supported:** The words "connected," "needed," "valued," and "part of a team" imply a strong sense of connection to a larger group or community, as well as feeling appreciated and important.

**Helpful and Knowledgeable:** Terms like "helpful," "empowered," and "impactful" suggest that participants feel their role is important in aiding others and that they are making a positive impact.

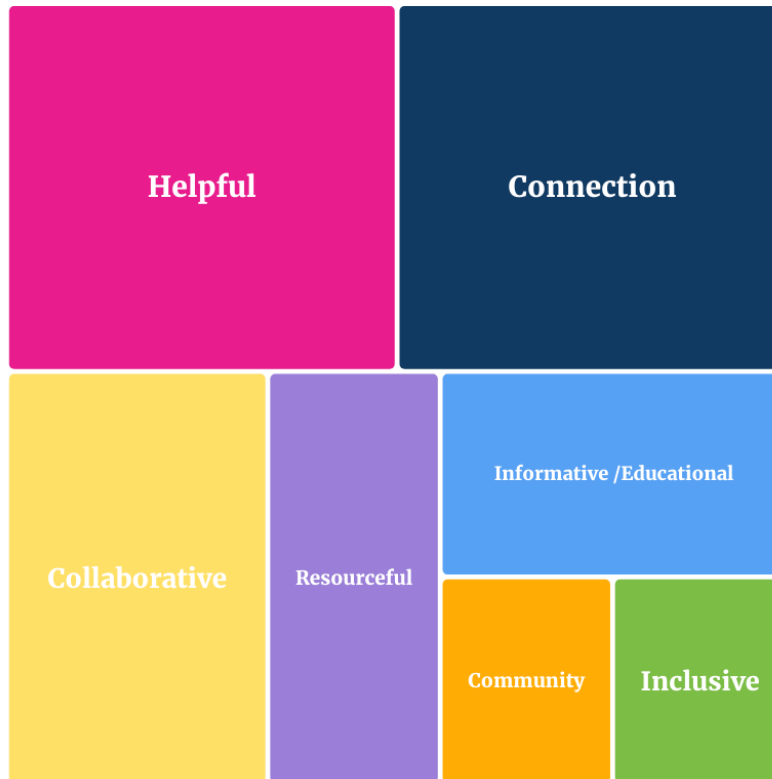
**Passionate and Excited:** Words like "passion," "excited," and "inspired" highlight a strong enthusiasm and drive towards their role as well as a sense of hope.

**Overwhelmed, Sad, and Disappointed:** The terms "sad", "disappointed" and "overwhelmed" stood out as contrasting elements amongst the other responses, thus indicating opportunities to better support them. Exploring these themes is critical to ensure navigators have the supports they need for job satisfaction and overall well-being.

## Navigator Workgroup Impact

Workgroup members expressed appreciation for the meetings, specifically sharing their enjoyment of the presentations, guest speakers, and resource-sharing. Retrospective questions evaluated the direct impact of the meetings on partnerships and professional growth, as well as improvements in connection to peers, knowledge of resources, and feelings of burn-out.

### One Word to Describe Navigator Workgroups



### Comments

*"I think you all are **doing a great job** by bringing all these different **resources** to the table."*

*"It's been a great pleasure to be a part of something that's really trying to **make a difference** for the entire **community**"*

*"My team and I **look forward to** the Navigator meetings and do not feel like it is just another meeting to join. They are **valuable!**"*

*"This is a **well-run** and **much needed meeting** of area agencies. Keep up the good work!"*

AS A DIRECT RESULT OF NAVIGATOR MEETINGS



100%  
LEARNED ABOUT NEW ORGANIZATIONS

88%  
MET NEW PROFESSIONALS/PEERS

88%  
CREATED NEW INTER-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

23%  
IMPROVED A PROGRAM WITHIN THEIR ORGANIZATION

94%  
DEEPENED THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF RESOURCES

82%  
FELT MORE PREPARED TO SUPPORT FAMILIES

17%  
WERE ABLE TO SOLVE A COMPLEX CASE

2 PROFESSIONALS REPORTED DECREASED FEELINGS OF BURNOUT



## Support & Opportunities

Two questions elicited responses on ways to enhance the navigator workgroups: what supports they need to better do their job and future suggestions for the workgroups.

**Community Collaboration & Partnerships:** Respondents expressed a desire for more community meetings like the Navigator meetings which provide direct contact with different organizations. They emphasized the importance of coming together as a group to address shared challenges and find collective solutions. One member mentioned a desire for stronger relationships, while others shared the importance of partnerships with other agencies.

**Resources:** The participants emphasized the need for more collaborative efforts and shared resources. Housing emerged as a significant concern amongst many workgroup members, emphasizing the need for better housing options and supports. One workgroup member highlighted the need for more mental health services, particularly for children facing significant struggles, citing needs for residential support, safety plans at home, and psychological evaluations. Another shared transportation as a major barrier and the need for help with bus passes for low-income and undocumented families.

**Growth and Development:** The workgroup members indicated a desire for continuous learning, including bringing in speakers from other organizations, professional growth and development ideas, and additional trainings.

### **Other improvements for future workgroups included:**

- Inviting more community agencies to participate
- Extending the meeting time for networking, troubleshooting challenging cases, sharing events

## Testimonials

In addition to the Survey, a few representatives from the workgroup were interviewed to share about their experience as partners of First 1000 Days Suncoast.

*“First 1000 Days has been a big connector to Primary Care services. And, staff go above and beyond to support our work with clients. For example, we were in desperate need of a breast pump for one client and a mattress for another. We reached out to Tina for ideas but she actually had both items and brought them to the Navigator meeting.”* – Tiona Settles, Community Health Worker at CenterPlace Health

*“I was so thankful for my connection to First 1000 Days because at one point I came to personal crisis and needed community support, so I called Chelsea and she connected me to the supports I needed. First 1000 Days has helped me become the person I am today. They helped me get out of a crisis situation, move forward and grow strong. After receiving services, I felt supported, empowered and encouraged. I grew a lot because I got the supports I needed and today my life is good!”* – Blake Neathery, Parents for Parents program coordinator at NAMI Sarasota and Manatee Counties

*“I think the group is great. It gives us all chance to let our hair down, share what we do and how we do it and get ideas from others on ways to make our jobs easier. And, I love the interaction! The group is*

*comfy, and everyone is kind and helpful. The Navigator Workgroup meetings feed me information that is so beneficial and something I can't get anyplace else. When I miss a meeting it affects me; I feel like I'm missing out."* – Bonnie Hardy, Multicultural Health Institute

*"First 1000 Days connects families to resources and is vital to the community. We have a lot of people moving into Sarasota who don't know the rich resources available. Getting connected to the right resources at the right time is key; timing is crucial. Networking and collaborating opportunities like the Navigator Workgroup and Perinatal Hub strengthens opportunities for care and support in the community. The awesome social media posts also increase awareness a ton about post-partum depression and when to get help."* - Lindsey Shroeder, Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County

*"I see many attendees having "a-ha" moments during meetings. Success is heavily influenced by coordination and communication and this meeting delivers it!... After hearing the panelist speak about Florida Kids Care, our organization met with her 1:1 resulting in a new partnership that will create additional support via a "warm hand off" for individuals applying for Medicaid or experiencing challenges with their application, like denials; she will help with tough cases. Another benefit is that Banyan has received referrals from new folks due to networking".* - Danielle Viera, Banyan Pediatrics

### Summary

Developing a safety net of care and creating solutions for longstanding barriers is key to improving care coordination and reducing unnecessary sources of stress for our most vulnerable residents. Supporting and empowering professionals who work directly with these families is a critical step. First 1,000 Days Suncoast recognizes the significance of partnerships in its success, emphasizing the need for networking, communication, and collaboration for the benefit of families. The challenges families and professionals face in navigating complex systems and accessing resources are identified as major barriers to care.

The workgroups provide professionals with opportunities for peer support, knowledge enhancement and collaboration. Regular meetings have been held, attracting consistent attendance, and fostering professional growth and inter-professional connections. It is key to note that most of the professionals had only been in their role for one year or less, signifying the need to build their network and learn about available resources.

Feedback from workgroup members indicates satisfaction and positive outcomes, including the development of new partnerships and successful resolution of complex cases. The initiative will use the feedback to improve meetings and address additional topics of interest, such as housing. By supporting professionals, First 1,000 Days Suncoast strives to enhance care coordination and ultimately benefit the families they serve.