

# Thriving and Surviving Cancer in Rural Nevada!

## SUMMARY

In partnership with the Nevada Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (NCCCCP) and the Nevada Cancer Coalition (NCC), a series of four focus groups were conducted with cancer survivors statewide in 2017. Unique survivorship themes were identified among rural and frontier Nevada survivors including, frustration with the lack of consideration given for distance traveled for in-person visits, dissatisfaction with available local care, greater reliance on family and friends for social and emotional support, and greater difficulty in finding support outside of family and friends (leading to great stress incurred by caregivers).<sup>1</sup>

As a result, *ThriveNV* was implemented as a comprehensive, multifaceted survivorship navigation program.

## ISSUE

Most rural and frontier communities are in sparsely populated counties with considerable distances from the state's urban and tertiary health care centers. Consequently, the primary health care delivery issue for rural and frontier residents in Nevada is how best to overcome the spatial isolation and enormous geographic distances that characterize most communities in Nevada.

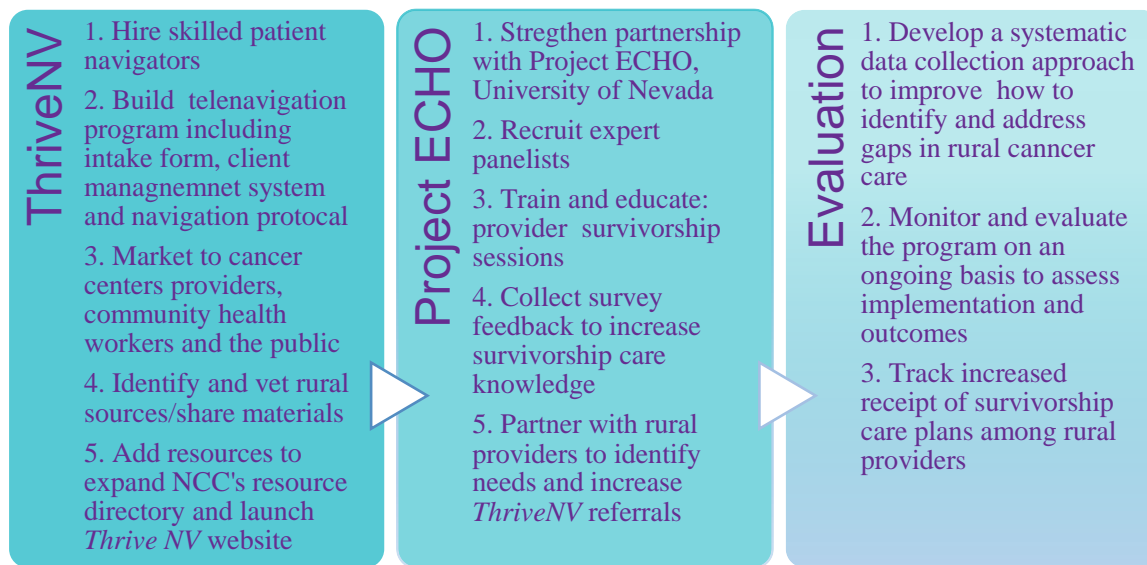
**288,744** Nevadans reside in rural and frontier counties spread over  
**87%** of state's land mass

Average distance to nearest incorporated town = **43 miles**

## INTERVENTION

The purpose of *ThriveNV* is to 1) develop and maintain an expert speaker panel which leverages the current partnership between NCC and University of Nevada, Reno Project ECHO to improve the care of cancer survivors in rural communities by increasing access to evidence-based survivorship programs, which increases capacity of providers and 2) offer patient navigation services to rural survivors to provide social and emotional support to assist survivors in accessing resources. To achieve these goals, the following strategies were outlined, implemented, and completed by the program.





## RESULTS

*ThriveNV's* community-based program has improved the quality of life for underserved individuals and those with cancer in five of nine Nevada rural and frontier communities since it launched in June 2020. The program provides free tele-navigation services and has connected over 80 referrals including providers, caregivers, and those living with cancer to information for local resources, financial help, transportation, and support groups. *ThriveNV* provides a place to share *your* story, to provide or receive peer support, and remember a loved one located on *ThriveNV's* website launched March 1, 2020.

*ThriveNV's* service has increased knowledge of rural survivor support while increasing access to navigation services. Clients reported decreased barriers to survivorship care as their connections to supportive care and community resources increased. *Thrive NV's* provider partnerships are improving coordination of care for rural survivors, decreasing survivorship care costs, and improving the ability to treat cancer survivors. The improved satisfaction of quality care is leading to an improved quality of life.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Beyond the first year of operation, NCC will again seek grant funding and sponsorships to support *ThriveNV* as a free statewide service. Different supplementary options may include payment service opportunities such as contracting with organizations that do not employ staff navigators to support their clients. In addition, Assembly Bill 191 is seeking coverage for the services of community health workers who often work as lay/community-based navigators. This would support Nevada's current and future lay navigators for *ThriveNV's* program expansion. To sustain the program and meet the growing demand overall, NCC confidently works with partners across the state for placing future navigators directly in the state's rural communities.

<sup>i</sup> [http://nevadacancercoalition.org/sites/default/files/NVSurvivorFocusGroups\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://nevadacancercoalition.org/sites/default/files/NVSurvivorFocusGroups_Report_Final.pdf)