Career navigation is rarely – if ever – a linear journey. Enhancing career navigation for workers and learners provides a valuable opportunity to actively address structural barriers contributing to occupational segregation.

Phases of Career Navigation

Follow Anita’s Career Navigation Journey

Anita's journey represents workers in the healthcare support field. The experiences represented align with the stories we heard, not a predetermined order or number.

Walk through her career navigation journey map by following her experiences, which are numbered, color-coded, and listed in chronological order.

Each phase is further illustrated through the Timeframe, Thinking, and Pain Points that were notable in each phase.

Career navigation phases varied in order, timeframe, and number of experiences.
Anita is a single mom with two school-aged kids, ages 10 and 14. They live with her 60-year-old mother who is disabled and requires care. Anita left her job to be her mother’s home health aide. She went back to school to become an occupational therapy assistant. She loves spending time with family.

“I wasn’t advancing, I wasn’t doing anything. I was just bored. I wanted something that excites me, so that’s [going back to school] what I did.”

**Goals**
- Earn a bachelor’s in the health field.
- Start a small business and be her own boss.
- Achieve financial independence without working multiple jobs/gigs.
- Be fulfilled and excited at work, and expand her skills.

**Barriers**
As a single parent, Anita faces ongoing challenges securing stable and affordable childcare. She has few financial resources and no support system.

**Expectations**
Continued education leads to better jobs. A good job is just one job!

**Persona:** Anita  
**Age:** 36  
**Race:** Latina  
**Occupation:** Home health aide  
**Salary:** $39,900  
**Living Wage:** $132,100

**Background and Family Life**
Anita has few financial resources and struggles to balance work, school, and caring for her family. She is unable to pay for an answer. She feels financially overwhelmed and struggles due to low pay and emotional strain that requires her to care for family.

**Quote**
“I wasn’t advancing, I wasn’t doing anything. I was just bored. I wanted something that excites me, so that’s [going back to school] what I did.”

**Skills and Credentials**
- **Timeframe:** Four-plus years, on and off  
- **Thinking:** I want to develop skills and earn a credential to get a better job. Being in school is challenging, but I enjoy it. Graduation will be a huge milestone.  
- **Pain points:** It’s taking a long time to finish because taking care of family and paying bills comes first. She feels discriminated against when she’s pushed into remedial classes she doesn’t think she needs.

**Career Exploration**
- **Timeframe:** A few weeks at multiple career transition points  
- **Thinking:** I’m not going to do something if I don’t like it. I want to work in a comfortable environment. I am passionate about serving my community and want to stay in the healthcare field.

**Career Pathways**
- **Timeframe:** Ongoing  
- **Thinking:** I’m going to lean on people I trust. I want to take advantage of available resources, so I’m going to seek them out and I won’t take no for an answer. I’m looking for a job that offers work-life balance and good pay.

**Connect to Job**
- **Timeframe:** Less than two weeks  
- **Thinking:** I can’t afford to be a home health aide and I’m bored. Later: I take on side gigs doing food delivery as needed. It’s challenging to balance my home health aide job with college and gig work, but that’s life.

**Pain points:** Traveling for the job costs time and money. Childcare arrangements are tenuous.

**How Anita Experienced Her Career Journey**

1. **Positive**
   - Anita’s Career Journey
     - With two children and a disabled mother, Anita focuses on caretaking for her family, but this impedes her availability to work.
     - Anita gets support and encouragement from her mentor, the supervisor at the staffing agency.

2. **Negative**
   - She struggles financially, earning only $18/hour as an HHA, to support her family of four.
   - Struggling to balance work, school, and family, Anita withdraws from school to work full-time as a home health aide alongside delivery gig work.

1. **Achieve financial independence**
2. **Start a small business and be her own boss.**
3. **Earn a bachelor’s in the health field.**
4. **Continued education leads to better jobs.**
5. **A good job is just one job!**
6. **Achieving financial independence without working multiple jobs/gigs.**
7. **Being fulfilled and excited at work, and expanding her skills.**
8. **Pain points:** Left her job to care for family.  

9. **Background and Family Life**
   - Anita is a single mom with two school-aged kids, ages 10 and 14. They live with her 60-year-old mother who is disabled and requires care. Anita left her job to be her mother’s home health aide. She went back to school to become an occupational therapy assistant. She loves spending time with family.

10. **Quote**
    - “I wasn’t advancing, I wasn’t doing anything. I was just bored. I wanted something that excites me, so that’s [going back to school] what I did.”

11. **Goals**
    - Earn a bachelor’s in the health field.
    - Start a small business and be her own boss.
    - Achieve financial independence without working multiple jobs/gigs.
    - Be fulfilled and excited at work, and expand her skills.

12. **Barriers**
    - As a single parent, Anita faces ongoing challenges securing stable and affordable childcare. She has few financial resources and no support system.

13. **Expectations**
    - Continued education leads to better jobs. A good job is just one job!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are your observations about Anita's journey?

Which experience was most surprising to you, and why?

Which experience was least surprising to you, and why?

What is the experience you’d want a client to have in their career navigation journey?

What stands out to you on this journey map as a crossroads, where a resource or support intervention might have benefited this individual’s career journey?

What shifts can you make in your work to offer, improve, or publicize that support or intervention?

Are there policy recommendations that would improve outcomes for Boston Healthcare Support Workers?