

CAREER NAVIGATION JOURNEY MAPS

HEALTHCARE SUPPORT WORKERS

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.



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

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.

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."

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!

1: Glasmeier, Amy K. Living Wage Calculator. 2024. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <https://livingwage.mit.edu>.

Self-Assessment

Timeframe: Ongoing

Thinking: Nobody is going to take care of my family like I can.

Later: This job isn't working for me. I miss my kids and I'm unfulfilled in this role.

Pain points: Left her job to care for family.

Experienced financial struggles due to low pay and emotional struggles with extra work.

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.

Pain points: Became a home health aid out of necessity, not choice.

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 aid job with college and gig work, but that's life.

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

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.

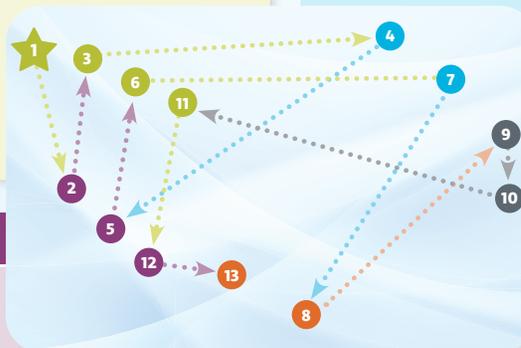
Pain points: Lack of access to affordable, safe, quality childcare and transportation.

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.



How Anita Experienced Her Career Journey



Anita's Career Journey

- 1 With two children and a disabled mother, Anita focuses on caretaking for her family, but this impedes her availability to work.
- 2 To receive some income, she becomes her mother's designated home health aide (HHA) through the state.
- 3 She struggles financially, earning only \$18/hour as an HHA, to support her family of four.
- 4 She finds a health staffing firm that will assign her additional clients.
- 5 Her income increases with the extra work and she finds mentorship in her supervisor.
- 6 The extra work required to make ends meet prevents her from taking care of herself and her family.
- 7 She looks into other job options in the healthcare field with better pay and hours.
- 8 Anita gets support and encouragement from her mentor, the supervisor at the staffing agency.
- 9 She enrolls in a community college program to become an occupational therapy assistant.
- 10 Anita adapts to being back in school, and finishes her first semester with a 3.5 GPA.
- 11 With diminished time to work, she again faces financial hardship and skips classes to earn extra money through delivery gig work.
- 12 Struggling to balance work, school, and family, Anita withdraws from school to work full-time as a home health aide alongside delivery gig work.
- 13 Anita reconnects with the college's student center to figure out a plan to finish school. She gets help with financial aid and identifying which classes she needs to graduate, but she's put on a long waiting list for a slot at the campus's childcare center. Until she can secure affordable childcare, returning to school is not an option.

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?