

**Contextual Care Exercise<sup>1</sup>**  
**Domain of Context – Competing Responsibility**  
*What is the best next thing for this patient at this time?*

---

**Competing Responsibility** - An obligation or commitment the patient has that impacts their ability to manage their healthcare.

**CASE:**

**A Patient's record indicates that he has missed 13 out of his last 19 appointments.**

What would be your next step?

**Scenario One:**

**The provider does not inquire why the patient has missed so many appointments and schedules labs, follow-up appointments with specialists, and a return visit in six months.**

1. What are your thoughts on this plan of care?
2. Why do you think the provider didn't ask *why* the patient had missed appointments?
3. Do you think the patient will attend all the scheduled appointments?
4. Why do you think the patient didn't spontaneously reveal to this provider the reasons he had missed appointments?

---

<sup>1</sup> These materials have been developed with support from the Department of Patients Affairs. Any views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Patients Affairs or the United States government.

## Scenario Two:

**Provider:** “I see you missed some appointments. Would you share with me why?”

**Patient:** “My life is really chaotic right now. My daughter and her kids moved in with me, and also I don’t always have the car. I think I’m going to make it in, and then it turns out I can’t get here.”

How does this information influence your thoughts about next steps?

## Scenario Two (continued):

**Provider:** “What would help you get to your appointments?”

**Patient:** “I think it would be easier if they were all on one day.”

**Provider:** “You can ask at the front desk when you leave if there’s a way to do that. Have you also checked with transportation to see if there are any options? They might have vouchers to pay for the bus – could you take the bus?”

**Patient:** “I can look into that.”

**Provider:** “I’ll walk out with you to the registrar and see if there’s a way to schedule visits on the same day so you don’t have to make multiple trips.”

**Patient:** “That would be great.”

Do you think the patient will attend his upcoming appointments?

***In Scenario Two, the provider was able to address the Patient’s context, or his life situation, as it impacted his ability to manage his health.***

**Other examples where Patients' competing responsibilities impacted their ability to manage their care:**

1. Overweight patient with diabetes says that he can't attend weight management program because his wife has cancer and he can't be gone that much.
  2. Patient doesn't want to reschedule recommended lung test because he is out of vacation time at work.
  3. Patient's shoulder injury is not healing because he is a single father with a quadriplegic daughter he has to lift.
- 

**DISCUSSION:**

1. Have you encountered a patient where their **competing responsibility** impacted their ability to manage their care? What happened?
2. Were you able to incorporate the patient's **competing responsibility** into the plan of care? What was the outcome?
3. What are the challenges to incorporating a patient's **competing responsibility** into a future plan of care?
4. What can providers do to explore and incorporate patient context?