Community Health Workers: Innovative Solutions to Addressing the Triple Aim

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Emerging Issues

- Variation in definitions
- Training requirements
- State certification
- Scope of practice
- Role on teams
- Payment sources
- Career ladder
Growing Expectations

- Decrease costs of care
- Improve patient engagement in care
- Bridge language, culture, social supports and health care
- Coordinate care across sectors
- Advance population health
- Allow primary care and other providers to focus more on patient care
What can we do?

- Learn from what is happening in the various states with CHW programs
- Review the benefits of certification and credentialing
- Recommend standardized definition, training and competencies
- Provide career development resources
- Develop a prototype Scope of Practice
- Integrate CHWs into inter-professional teams
- Collect workforce data that includes CHWs
- Conduct evaluation studies including impact on quality of care and cost effectiveness
Definition – American Public Health Association

A Community Health Worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the CHW to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.

A CHW also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support and advocacy.

Community health workers are lay members of communities who work either for pay or as volunteers in association with the local health care system in both urban and rural environments and usually share ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status and life experiences with the community members they serve. They have been identified by many titles such as community health advisors, lay health advocates, “promotores(as),” outreach educators, community health representatives, peer health promoters, and peer health educators. CHWs offer interpretation and translation services, provide culturally appropriate health education and information, assist people in receiving the care they need, give informal counseling and guidance on health behaviors, advocate for individual and community health needs, and provide some direct services such as first aid and blood pressure screening.

The term ‘community health worker’ means an individual who promotes health or nutrition within the community in which the individual resides—

- by serving as a liaison between communities and healthcare agencies;
- by providing guidance and social assistance to community residents;
- by enhancing community residents’ ability to effectively communicate with healthcare providers;
- by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate health or nutrition education;
- by advocating for individual and community health;
- by providing referral and follow-up services or otherwise coordinating care; and
- by proactively identifying and enrolling eligible individuals in Federal, State, local, private or nonprofit health and human services programs.

## Summary of CHW Definitions by CHW Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHW CHARACTERISTIC</th>
<th>CHW DEFINITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APHA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>From the communities they serve and/or share commonalities</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Functions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Serve as link between communities and health/social service agencies</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitate access and information to services and resources</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve/provide culturally competent/appropriate education and service delivery</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance community residents’ ability to effectively communicate with healthcare providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer interpretation and translation services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build individual and community capacity</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct outreach and health education</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide informal counseling and social support on health behavior</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate for individual and community health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide services such as first aid and blood pressure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide referral and follow-up services or otherwise coordinating care</td>
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<td>Identify and enroll eligible individuals in Federal, State, local, private or nonprofit health and human services programs.</td>
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Characteristics Most Linked to Cost Outcomes

- Access and communication
- Referral tracking
- Care management
- Patient self-management support
Frequent Settings/Organizations Using CHWs

- Accountable Care Organizations
- Accountable Health Communities
- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Home Health Agencies
- Health Departments
- Health Plans
- Hospital Systems
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