

Community Health Workers in Connecticut

**Southwestern AHEC, Trumbull
Connecticut AHEC Network**

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Community Health Workers

- According to the American Public Health Association, a “Community Health Worker” (CHW) is defined as a frontline 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, facilitating access to services and improving the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.

Overview of CHWs in Connecticut

- Mission Driven: To improve access to quality primary and preventive healthcare in Connecticut by linking students, providers and families through education, workforce development and community collaborations.
- **HOW ?**

Community Health Workers

Development

- Dissemination Partnership – Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education:
 - 1999: Community Health Works in San Francisco – FIPSE grant. Curriculum partner (17 credits) Eastern and Southwestern AHEC
 - 2001: Project Jump Start with University of Arizona AHEC Program
 - 2002 – 2004 Developed Core Competency Curriculum
 - COPC Grant at Housatonic Community College
 - Advisory of CHWs, Supervisors, Academia
- Community Health Worker National Education Collaborative (CHW-NEC) 2004 - 2008
 - to identify and promote curricula and educational programs that best represent the most promising practices for uniquely non-traditional CHW student success in the U.S.
 - Technical Assistance Partner

Needs Assessment

- 1999 – Statewide Survey re: Outreach Workers
- 33% employed OW, 46% positions threatened
- Demographics
 - 85% Female
 - 56% White, 22% Latino, 20% AA, 2% Other
- Education:
 - 69% Post HS w/majority Bachelors, 4% Masters, 4% No HS
- On-the-job training: 85%
- Compensation: 24% < \$20K, 76% ≥ \$20K

Results (con't.)

- Barriers to Using OW
 - ▣ Funding – 69%
 - ▣ Lack of a standard definition/training of who outreach workers are and what they do”
 - ▣ “difficulty in supervising employees who come with uneven preparation”
 - ▣ “lack of qualifications of the outreach worker because of absence of certification or other assurances of competency”
- 89% would like Additional Training
- 79% Release for Training

Curriculum

- Core Competency Curriculum
 - 50 Competencies
 - Correlation to Public Health Competencies
- Have trained 100+ CHW's in Core Competency Curriculum
- Specialized courses for content specific areas, i.e. asthma, diabetes, cardio-vascular, etc.
- Mentoring
- Bilingual

Core Competencies

- Primary Health Care and Human Services: The CHW is able to describe primary health care delivery, principles of health promotion and disease prevention, basic human service needs, and how to assess these needs in a community
- Communication: The CHW is able to network effectively to research and obtain primary health care and human services information and impart this information orally and in writing to the members of the community being served.
- Advocacy: The CHW is able to serve in an advocacy role to address individual and community needs, bridging cultural differences between clients and systems, empowering capacity building within the community served, encouraging teamwork, creating and using support materials, and educating community members about health care and social service systems to get the services they need.

Core Competencies

- Community Health Education: The CHW is able to provide culturally appropriate information and make health education, health promotion, and disease prevention accessible to a community through the distribution of pamphlets, through facilitation of on-going health education classes, community health education events, health fairs, home visits, and community meetings.
- Capacity Building: The CHW is able to develop and use networks and coalitions to help communities build their capacity to care for themselves, and to use informal counseling and social support to improve the health of the community.
- Services Skills and Responsibilities: The CHW exhibits interpersonal qualities and skills necessary to promote teamwork, respect for diversity, individual self-esteem, and community mobilization; exhibits an ability to cope with stress; exhibits organizational skills necessary to solve problems; and exhibits professional work habits, including an awareness of the appropriate roles and responsibilities of a CHW; skilled in vital sign assessment and First Aid/CPR.

Support of CHWs Under Health Reform (1)

- National Health Care Workforce Commission (§5101)—includes CHWs as primary care professionals
- Grants to Promote the Community Health Workforce (§5313)—CDC to award grants to employ CHWs
 - To promote positive health behaviors and outcomes
 - In medically underserved communities

Support of CHWs Under Health Reform (2)

- Area Health Education Centers (§5403)—
CHWs added to mandate for training
- Hospital Readmission Reduction (§3025)—
high potential for CHW role in meeting standards
- Patient-Centered Medical Homes (§3502)—
natural role for CHWs as part of
“Community Health Teams”

Support of CHWs Under Health Care Reform (3)

- Patient Navigator Program (§3509)—HRSA favors employing CHWs (grants awarded August 2010).
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs (§2951)—grants to States. CHWs not mentioned; case will have to be made
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (§3021) –not mentioned in law but interested!

Other Opportunities in Reform Policy to Promote Employment of CHWs

- Standards for Patient-Centered Medical Homes (PCMH) and “community health teams”
- Outreach for Health Insurance Exchanges
- New models for global payment, P4P, and Accountable Care Organizations
- Standards for preventive care benefits
- Rules for Medical Loss Ratios

New Federal CHW initiatives (1)

- CDC CHW policy education webinars
(free to any user!)
- OWH CHW leadership training
- DOL “apprenticeable trade” approval
- OMH Promotora/CHW initiative

New Federal CHW initiatives (2)

- HUD CHW Initiatives
- CMS Medicare diabetes disparities pilots
- CMS Center for Innovation
- USDHHS working group formed
- CDC, HRSA support for state policy initiatives (IL, IN, MS, NM...)
- NACHC PCMH Institute

CDC e-learning modules

1. Definitions: CHW roles and scope of practice
2. Current issues within the CHW field
3. Arenas of public policy (1): workforce development
4. Arenas of public policy (2): occupational regulation; standards for research and evaluation
5. Arenas of public policy (3): sustainable financing of ongoing CHW services
6. Achieving policy and systems change: learning from Minnesota and Massachusetts

Link to CDC e-learning

http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/pubs/chw_elearning.htm

You will be surprised how much you will learn!

Who are Connecticut's CHWs?



CHW Participants in Bridgeport Focus Group,
June 28, 2012

HOW

- Working closely with the CT-RI Public Health Training Center
- Yale MPH Summer Intern: Brigette A. Davis
- **Employer Needs Assessment:**
 - Health and Human Services providers ~10 minutes to complete survey.
 - https://yalesurvey.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_e9hcOqgbt3hiz6k.
- Please forward to your colleagues!

HOW

- CHW Needs Assessment:
 - ▣ Please have CHWs complete
 - ▣ https://yalesurvey.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_erJE0GhRQIJBKba

- CHW Focus Groups:
 - ▣ Pilot completed in Bridgeport
 - ▣ Others to be planned with CT-RI PHTC

Leadership - CHWs



- Millie Seguinot, CHW Project Coordinator, Southwestern AHEC.
- Esther M. Holderby Community Health Worker Award *Honorable Mention* the at the Unity Conference in May 2011.
- The Esther M. Holderby Award honors a dedicated community health worker (CHW) who has overcome personal adversity to promote health in his or her community.

INNOVATIVE USES OF CHWs



Next Steps

- Are you willing to come to a second meeting?
- Are you willing to assist in defining the role for CHWs in CT
- What should they be called?
- Support the needs assessment for employers they know
- Who is missing that should be here?
- Other..... TBD
- Meeting to be scheduled in October 2012

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THANK YOU!

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