



# Scope of Work, Skills and Roles of Community Health Workers

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# Objectives

- Define role and scope of work of community health worker
- Discuss how CHWs can be allies to reaching marginalized communities.
- Describe How do CHWs fit into the mental health system
- Define the roles of CHWs in supporting individuals during the pandemic.

# Dwyan Y. Monroe, Program Coordinator of Community Health Worker Initiatives



As Program Coordinator of CHW Initiatives with the Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI), Dwyan is part of a team that designs, plans, and delivers training and technical assistance for programs, institutions and health systems incorporating CHWs and outreach initiatives in the DC, MD and VA region.

A former Community Health Worker and current CHW Master Trainer, Dwyan has nearly 26 years of experience as an advocate for the community health worker profession.

Dwyan is a graduate of Hampton University with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She has completed numerous certificate programs in public health leadership, community and clinical health outreach and community-based program development.

# What is a CHW: Scope, Role and Skills

# What is a Community Health Worker?

**HRSA and CHW section of APHA have proposed new classification to BLS:**

“... 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.**”

# What is a Community Health Worker?

- CHWs work in all geographic settings
  - Rural, urban and metropolitan areas
  - Border regions (colonias)
  - Native American nations
- CHW roles vary depending on locale and cultural setting
- CHWs are most often found working in communities where people may
  - have limited resources
  - lack access to quality health care,
  - lack the means to pay for health care,
  - not speak English fluently,
  - have cultural beliefs, values & behaviors different from those of the dominant western health care system.

# What is a Community Health Worker?



- Their expertise is based on shared life experience (and often culture, community and health) with people served.
- They sometimes relate to community members as peers rather than purely as clients or patients
- Rely on relationships and trust more than on clinical expertise
- Do not provide clinical care
- Generally do not hold a professional license, are certified in some places
- Can achieve certain results that other professionals can't



# Scope of Practice

- Cultural Mediation among individuals, Communities, and Health and Social Service Systems
- Providing Culturally Appropriate Health Education and Information
- Care Coordination, Case Management, and System Navigation
- Providing Coaching and Social Support
- Advocating for Individuals and Communities



# Scope of Practice continued

- Building Individual and Community Capacity
- Providing Direct Service
- Implementing Individual and Community Assessments
- Conducting Outreach
- Participating in Evaluation and Research

# Core Skills of CHWs

- ✓ Communication Skills
- ✓ Interpersonal and Relationship-building Skills
- ✓ Service Coordination and Navigation Skills
- ✓ Capacity Building Skills
- ✓ Advocacy Skills
- ✓ Education and Facilitation Skills
- ✓ Individual and Community Assessment Skills
- ✓ Outreach Skills
- ✓ Professional Skills and Conduct
- ✓ Evaluation & Research Skills
- ✓ Knowledge Base

# Need for CHW Roles

- Changing health care scene that is:
  - Focused more on consumer needs and interests
  - Often located in home or community
  - More culturally sensitive and aware
- Health disparities are profound and persistent – new strategies such as CHWs are required.
- CHWs bring capacity and effectiveness to the health workforce, and represent entry into a career pipeline.
- Institutions are increasingly recognizing the role of the CHW as critical for engagement in primary care and reducing hospital readmissions.

(NFME, 2006)

# What CHWs Do:

- Assist individuals and communities to adopt healthy behaviors
- Conduct outreach to implement programs in the community that promote, maintain, and improve individual and community health
- Provide information on available resources
- Provide social support and informal counseling
- Advocate for individuals and community health needs
- Provide services such as first aid and blood pressure screening
- May collect data to help identify community health needs

# Characteristics for CHWs

- Empathetic
- Dependable, responsible
- Open minded/non-judgmental
- Flexible and adaptable
- Patient
- Motivated and capable of self-directed work
- Desires to help the community
- Persistent
- Creative/resourceful
- Connected to the Community
- Strong and Courageous
- Friendly/Outgoing/Sociable
- Caring
- Committed/Dedicated
- Respectful
- Honest
- Open/Eager to Grow, Change, and Learn
- Compassionate

# Models of Care

## Promotora de Salud/Lay Health Worker Model

CHWs are members of a target population sharing social, cultural and economic characteristics.

## Member of Care Delivery Team Model

CHW renders direct health services collaborating with medical professionals.

## Care Coordinator/Manager Model

CHW helps people with complex health conditions navigate healthcare systems.

## Health Educator Model

CHW delivers education to a target population.

## Outreach and Enrollment Agent Model

Similar to Health Educator model, with greater outreach and enrollment responsibilities.

## Community Organizer and Capacity Builder Model

CHW promotes community action and builds community support for new activities.

# CHW and the Mental Health System

# Models for Incorporating CHWs in Mental Health Interventions

- CHWs can conduct outreach to facilitate entry into provider settings, a role that has been described as a “bridge” between the community and care providers (e.g., [Ayala et al. 2010](#));
- CHWs can provide auxiliary support of mental health treatment delivery through case management and promotion of patient adherence to treatment (e.g., [Barnett et al. 2016](#));
- Within a stepped-care model, CHWs can provide lower levels of care to patients with less intensive needs while mental health professionals provide a higher level of care to patients with more severe symptomatology (e.g., [Araya 2006](#); [Patel et al. 2010](#));
- CHWs can be responsible for the delivery of mental health services as the sole treatment provider (e.g., [Bolton et al. 2014a](#); [Murray et al. 2015](#)).



# CHWs and Pandemics

# CHWs and COVID-19

Whether you are staffing a call center, translating information, connecting with clients online, feeding the hungry, collecting data, educating the community or advocating for change – we echo the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, identifying CHWs as essential critical infrastructure workers during COVID-19 response efforts!

NACHW, April 6, 2020

# CHWs and COVID-19

CHWs are a unique frontline public health workforce that helps ensure continuity of functions critical to public health and the economy.

Today's COVID-19 community health workers could become our epidemic response corps of the future – always ready to help us fight the next epidemic.

# Community Health Worker Roles in Inherent Resilience

Increase the access to health services and products within communities to improve population health and reduce the likelihood of an outbreak

Communicate important public health concepts in a culturally appropriate fashion

Reduce the burden felt by formal healthcare systems and improve the quality of clinical care

# Community Health Worker Roles in Adaptive Resilience



Act as community-level educators, organizers, and mobilizers during infectious disease outbreaks



<sup>21</sup> Contribute to disease reporting systems like, contact tracing and health department monitoring, while completing routine activities



Complete medical tasks unrelated to the infectious disease outbreak to fill health service gaps during or following the outbreak.

PERSPECTIVE ARTICLE

Front. Public Health, 26 March 2019 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2019.00062>

# How CHWs Are Critical in Minimizing the Spread of COVID-19



Provide correct and important information about COVID-19

- If you provide or send information, make sure it is easily understood
- Dispelling Myths and Rumors
- Stick to the facts and don't spread myths



Provide recommendations on how to stay safe from COVID-19

- Support clients in making their own masks
- Provide resources on cleaning and sanitizing their homes
- Advise clients to create shelter in place plans and locate resources



Use Language That Supports Their Literacy Level



It's ok to say "NO" or "I don't know that yet"

# How CHWs Are Critical in Minimizing the Spread of COVID-19

Build relationships and work as a team with:

- Local community centers
- Health ministries
- Health departments
- Social Service agencies

Know your neighborhood and how to help clients navigate for resources

- Help keep them calm by:
  - Having cultural humility- get to the real reason of the fear or mistrust
  - Be a listening ear
  - Be empathetic

# How CHWs Are Critical in Minimizing the Spread of COVID-19

Encourage people to talk to their healthcare providers about:

- Possible symptoms and concerns after visiting an area with a high number COVID-19 cases
- Managing their current chronic disease during the pandemic

Encourage those who are expressing signs of anxiety, stress and depression to seek mental health services.

Encourage clients to have a checklist that has:

- Access to or copies of health records such as: medications, pharmacy used, etc.
- Photos of important documents on their phones

Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick.

- What would be needed to care for them in the home?



# How CHWs Are Critical in Minimizing the Spread of COVID-19

Advocate for individuals or communities that might not have the money or resources for medical treatment if they get ill

Encourage elected officials to invest in public health infrastructure before a pandemic arrives in your state

Keep up to date on what's happening by following the CDC and WHO websites

- Be cautious about non-experts sharing information about COVID-19 and double check their information

# CHWs and Contact Tracing

- Community health workers are a proven solution for boots-on-the-ground needs such as [contact tracing](#).
- Properly trained and protected, these workers make possible door-to-door assessments that can be so critical to containing infectious disease outbreaks.
- They can collect information on symptoms, progression of infection, patient-reported outcomes, contacts, and other data at a level of detail unattainable by any other means.
- Community health workers can also deliver test kits, transport samples to labs, distribute educational materials as well as medicine, food, and other essentials to those who need them.

# QUESTIONS?



# Contact Us



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