Community Health Workers: An Essential Part of a Whole Team

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MHP Salud implements Community Health Worker programs to empower underserved Latino communities and promotes the CHW model nationally as a culturally appropriate strategy to improve health.
Who are Community Health Workers?

“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.”
Other Titles

- Peer Educator/Peer Health Educator
- Camp Health Aides
- Lay Health Advisors
- Outreach Workers
- Community Health Representative
- Health Coach
- Health Aides
- Patient Navigators
- Enrollment Specialist
- Promotor(a) de Salud

They are part of the community they serve.
Who do they serve?

- Latino populations
- African American populations
- American Indian populations
- Low-income communities, housing developments
- Formerly incarcerated citizens
- LGBTQ populations
- Immigrant populations
- At-risk youth
Program Types

- Chronic Disease Prevention or Management (Diabetes, Cardiovascular Health, etc.)
- Maternal and Child Health
- Women’s Health
- Men’s Health
- Health Plan Enrollment
- Reproductive Health
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Oral Health
- Healthy Aging
- Mental Health
- Nutrition
What do CHWs do?

- Health education
- Referrals
- Health promotion/coaching
- Outreach
- Case management/Care coordination
- Basic first aid services
- Home-based services
- Cultural mediation
- Eligibility enrollment
- System navigation
- Social support
- Language interpretation
- Community organizing
- Participatory research

Source: Paving a Path to Advance the Community Health Worker Workforce in New York State: A New Summary Report and Recommendations
CHWs as Part of a ‘Whole Team’

On a team, CHWs can be considered the experts in the dynamics and culture of the patient’s community.

- Patient-centered, value-based care
- ‘Cultural broker’
- Complimentary role
CDC Roles for CHWs on Multidisciplinary Teams

• Provide Outreach
• Measure and monitor blood pressure
• Assist with medication or treatment adherence
• Facilitate goal setting with patients
• Problem-solve obstacles to comply with given treatment

• Navigate healthcare and other social service systems
• Provide health education
• Provide patient and family with social support
• Assess how a self-management plan is progressing
• Assist patient in obtaining home health devices
2015 Clinical CHW Study Results

The most frequently reported CHW roles on care teams were:

• Helping people gain access to medical services (86%)
• Advocating for individual needs (86%)
• Teaching people how to use health care and social services (78%)
• Helping people manage chronic conditions (77%)

Why a CHW?

• Improve the quality of care
• Improve health outcomes
• Reduce health disparities
• Reduce costs of care
Why a CHW?

CHWs improve the quality of care.

• Provide context and insight
• Facilitate honest and open communication
• Adapt information
• Extend the reach/Create a greater impact

“[CHWs] teach me how to be a better doctor, to understand a patient’s whole context before constructing and communicating a care plan...they help me build a more meaningful relationship with even my toughest patients.” – Dr. Heidi Behforouz

Why a CHW?

CHWs improve health outcomes.

• Six studies of CHW interventions focused on cervical cancer reported:
  At least one positive outcome including the significant increase in the number of patients receiving a Pap smear and a larger change in the number of patients ever having a Pap smear

• At least six published studies on CHW interventions on prevention and management of diabetes have shown:
  At least one significant positive outcome, including changes in HbA1c levels and improved self-reports of dietary changes

• A program for pediatric asthma patients showed:
  Over the course of a year, emergency department visits related to asthma were reduced by 68% and hospitalizations decreased by 84.8%. Additionally, there were significant decreases in activity limitations, missed school days and parental missed work time.

## MI Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Issue</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal and Child Health</td>
<td>Sew Up the Safety Net for Women</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>Community Neighborhood Navigators (CHWs) provided guidance and support</td>
<td>There have been zero infant deaths among 364 pregnant African American women</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Healthy MOMs</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>14-session curriculum completed through home visits and group meetings</td>
<td>Hispanic mothers showed a significant decline in depressive symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Diseases</td>
<td>Core Health</td>
<td>Kent County</td>
<td>CHW, Case Manager RN conducted weekly to monthly visits to set goals and provide education and referrals</td>
<td>Patients with heart failure and diabetes improved A1C levels, blood pressure, and other important health indicators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
Why a CHW?

CHWs reduce health disparities.

• Cultural competence
• Breakdown stigmas or concerns
• Problem-solve obstacles
• Earlier intervention
Why a CHW?

CHWs reduce costs

- Reduce inappropriate use of emergency department
- Establish a PCP
- *Effectively* promote preventative care
- Provide follow-up
Reduce Costs?

Studies

• Denver: Return on Investment (ROI) of $2.28 in savings for each dollar spent due to decrease in urgent care and uncompensated costs. Annual savings were $95,941.

• Arkansas Community Connector Program: Tracked Medicaid spending of 900 patients and saw a 3 years savings of over 2.6 million, or $2.92 savings for each dollar spent.

• Spectrum Health (Grand Rapids, MI): $2.53 savings for every $1 of cost for patients diagnosed with diabetes or heart failure.

• Muskegon Community Health Project: $35,000 savings in recovered costs by enrolling newly released prisoners in Medicaid.

Sources:


Considerations

• Team Reception
• Staffing
• Training and Supervision
• Certification or Licensure
• Documentation and Reporting Systems
• Funding
Considerations: Team Reception

• Prep team to understand CHW’s role
- Integration was reported as a key issue in 2015 Clinical CHW study:

“I’m put here in the office and I’m given a list but we don’t thrive that way because… we’re from the community. We’re like the last man on the totem pole, so to speak, so it takes a lot of support. It takes a lot of backing up, informing the immediate staff that I work with, so they know how to utilize me, making sure that they’re on board and being more supportive and including me in the health care plan instead of leaving me just as an option in an office.”

Considerations: Staffing

• Full-time CHW
• Supervisor

Physicians, certified NPs, PAs, Psychologists, LSWs, Licensed Professional Counselors, Dentists
Considerations: Training and Supervision

• Intensive Orientation
  Around 40 hours

• Specific Skills Training
  Staff Time
  Cost

• On-going Training
  Staff time
  Cost
  Networking opportunities

• Supervision
  Supervisor training
  Weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly supervision meetings
**Considerations: Certification or Licensure**

- Not currently required by law in Michigan
- Standardized training Curriculum piloted this year
Considerations: Communication, Documentation and Reporting Systems

• Team meetings

  *In a study, seven in ten CHWs cited attendance at staff meetings as a facilitator for their work.*

• Electronic Health Records (EHRs)

  *In the same study EHRs were also reported as a significant facilitator to integrate CHWs into the care team*

Consideration: Evaluation

• Time
• Funds
• Skilled staff
• Data collection software or tools and other technological infrastructure
Considerations: Funding

• Source – Is it sustainable?

• Budget time, resources and funds for:
  
  Appropriate staffing
  Training
  Supervision
  Program Materials and expenses (travel included)
  Evaluation
Case Study
Questions?
Resources

- MHP Salud Resource Portfolio: http://mhpsalud.org/portfolio/
- MHP Salud Pasaporte de Promotor(a) de Salud Training
- Michigan Community Health Worker Alliance (MiCHWA): www.michwa.org
- APHA Community Health Worker Section: https://www.apha.org/apha-communities/member-sections/community-health-workers