



Community Health Workers in Nebraska

What is the role of the Community Health Worker?

A Community Health Worker (CHW) is an individual who:

- Serves as a liaison/link between public health, health care, behavioral health services, social services, and the community to assist individuals and communities in adopting healthy behaviors;
- Conducts outreach that promotes and improves individual and community health; and
- Facilitates access to services, decreases health disparities, and improves the quality and cultural competence of service delivery in Nebraska.

A CHW is a trusted member of, or has good understanding of, the community they serve. They are able to build trusting relationships and are able to link individuals with the systems of care in the communities they serve. 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. CHW is an umbrella term used to define other professional titles.

Source: Adopted by consensus by the Public Health Association of Nebraska Community Health Worker section April 2015: (<https://publichealthne.org/resources/Documents/CHW%20Policy%20Paper%20Final%204-7-15.pdf>)

What are the skills of Community Health Workers?

Here are widely-recognized competencies of Community Health Workers:

Community Health Worker Competencies	
Communication Skills	Advocacy Skills
Interpersonal Skills	Organization Skills
Capacity Building	Service Coordination
Teaching Skills	Outreach Methods and Strategies
Client Assessment	Community Assessment

Source: Public Health Association of Nebraska Community Health Worker section (2015); also adopted by Douglas County (NE) Community Health Worker Section (2017).

Approaches to training CHWs vary in Nebraska. At present there is no assurance these competencies are included in all projects and curricula involving CHWs.

How many Community Health Workers are working in Nebraska?

Nebraska lacks a mechanism for accurately counting the CHW workforce. In 2020, a CHW workforce assessment activity conducted by the University of Nebraska Medical Center’s College of Public Health saw focus group participation from over 60 CHW, and online survey completion from over 120 CHW. See the report <https://dhhs.ne.gov/MCAH/CHW-Workforce-Assessment-Report.pdf>. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



estimates between 320 and 680 CHW may be employed in Nebraska (May 2020, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm>).

Are Community Health Workers certified, regulated, or licensed by the State of Nebraska?

No. At the present time, neither Community Health Workers (CHWs) nor the programs that train CHWs are certified, regulated, or licensed by the State of Nebraska. Community Health Workers should not perform or be assigned services or duties that require a license from a professional licensing board.

Are there qualifications or training requirements in order to use the title Community Health Worker?

No. At the present time, there is no consensus on the foundational training for a Community Health Worker beyond their relationships in the community. As a result, there is wide variation in duration and nature of training for CHWs in Nebraska. This can make it difficult for CHWs to move between employers.

Why is Nebraska’s Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant investing in the CHW workforce?

Community Health Workers reach individuals who might otherwise face barriers to accessing care. CHW increase the capacity of traditional health care teams to overcome cultural and language barriers, and to address the social needs of clients. CHW make health care teams more effective and agile. They can also serve as an essential bridge between health care systems and community resources. CHW have the potential to improve health care outcomes, reduce costs, improve patient satisfaction, and improve equity.

Nebraska’s Title V MCH Block Grant program is committed to equity and addressing the barriers, needs, and determinants that create disadvantage and differential outcomes for the population, particularly where pregnancy, children, and families are concerned.

What are current priorities and activities for CHW workforce development?

<p>1. CHW in the Lead and Centered in our Work A Cadre of eleven experienced CHW from across the state are working to lead and advise CHW-related projects conducted by Title V MCH.</p>	<p>2. Develop a Sustainable CHW Workforce A collaborative working group, co-led by a CHW and including CHW as at least 30% of voting members, will work to establish the CHW workforce as a credible, trained, qualified workforce filling a unique role.</p>	<p>3. Increase Opportunities for CHW Training and Engagement The CHW Cadre will undertake projects including: CHW-led training activities; social media engagement; communication and networking.</p>
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