



Fact-sheet: Community Health Workers

How do we define community health workers (CHWs)?

- Community health workers (CHWs) are community members who assist those in the community access health care and health resources.¹
- They work in areas where health care, related resources, and programs have been unattainable.²
- They are particularly prepared to interact with high-risk populations as they share common backgrounds and experiences with those they serve.³
- They are known by many different titles including:⁴
 - community health advisors
 - lay health advocates
 - promotoras de salud
 - outreach educators
 - community health representatives
 - peer health promoters
 - peer health educators

What are the demographics of CHWs?

- Most CHW range in age of 30–50; a large number of them are female and are mainly Hispanic or White.⁵
- CHWs are either paid or volunteer in association with local health care systems in rural or urban areas.³
- Currently there are about 47,880 CHWs employed nationally and mainly work in the individual and family service industry.⁶
- In Missouri, there are 1,160 CHWs.⁷
- Illinois is one of the states with the highest employed as CHWs, 3,760.⁶
- Nationally, those who are paid make about \$18.50 hourly, or \$38,180 annually, with the scientific research and development industry as a top payer.⁶
- CHWs work in clinical and non-clinical settings that range from public health organizations, clinics, hospitals, schools, religious institutions, and public housing.⁸

What role do CHWs play in the health care system?

Members of care delivery teams who help patients manage their own healthcare and navigate the healthcare system.^{8,9}

Aid in the management of chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease in high-risk population by checking patient progress, helping patients keep their appointments, and helping to keep up with their medications.¹⁰

Provide first aid, blood pressure screenings, and information on health needs in the community.³

Provide interpretation and translation services, culturally appropriate health education and information.³

Who do CHWs serve?

- Community members of all ages.¹
- Usually share the same ethnicity, social-economic class, culture, and life experiences as the people that they're assisting, and therefore they can teach cultural competency to health care providers and can extend reach, care quality, and patient outcomes.¹
- Migrant or minority communities where health education and resources aren't known or attainable.³
- Hispanic/Latino, African-American, Caucasian, Native Americans, and Asian/Pacific Islanders, as well as populations like the uninsured, homeless, immigrants, rural, and migrant workers.⁵
- African- American and White groups seem to be the populations most served in Missouri, as well as low-income, and uninsured.¹¹
- Have been proven effective at working with populations with chronic health conditions like HIV/Aids, cancer, hypertension, diabetes, and asthma.⁸

1 Crum, R. (2012). Promoting community health workers to reduce health disparities in minnesota: Coalition creates a statewide standardized competency-based community health worker training program in higher education: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Retrieved July 6, 2015 from:

http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/program_results_reports/2012/rwjf403543

²CDC. (2015). State law factsheet: A summary of state community health worker laws. In National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention (Ed.) (pp. 1-3). Retrieved July 20, 2015 from:

http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/pubs/docs/chw_state_laws.pdf

³ Alvisurez, J., Clopper, B., Felix, C., Gibson, C., Harpe, J., Masterson, A. R., ... & Ferraro, M. Funding Community Health Workers: Best practices and the way forward. Retrieved July 20, 2015 from:

[http://medicine.yale.edu/ysph/practice/practice/SWAHEC%20Action%20Report_June25%20\(dlh\)_tcm393-163894_tcm393-284-32.pdf](http://medicine.yale.edu/ysph/practice/practice/SWAHEC%20Action%20Report_June25%20(dlh)_tcm393-163894_tcm393-284-32.pdf)

⁴ Center, R. A. (2014). Community health workers toolkit. Retrieved July 20, 2015 from:

<https://www.raconline.org/communityhealth/chw>

⁵ Brownson, C., Cleary, J., Plain, T. (2009). Community health workers: Keys to revitalizing the health care workforce? New Orleans: Missouri Foundation for Health. Retrieved July 5, 2015 from: http://www.gih.org/usr_doc/2009_am_community_health_workers_terry_plain.pdf

⁶ Statistics, B. O. L. (2014). Occupational employment and wages May 2014: 21-1094 community health workers. Retrieved July, 11, 2015 from:

<http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm>

⁷ Statistics, B. O. L. (2014). State occupational employment and wage estimates

in Missouri. Retrieved September 9, 2015 from: http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_mo.htm

⁸ Brownstein, J. N., Hirsch, G. R., Rosenthal, E. L., & Rush, C. H. (2011). Community health workers "101" for primary care providers and other stakeholders in health care systems. *The Journal of Ambulatory Care Management*, 34(3), 210-220.

⁹ Rosenthal, E. L., Brownstein, J. N., Rush, C. H., Hirsch, G. R., Willaert, A. M., Scott, J. R., et al. (2010). Community health workers: Part of the solution?. *Health Affairs*, 29(7), 1338.

¹⁰ Allen, J. K., Dennison-Himmelfarb, C. R., Szanton, S. L., Bone, L., Hill, M. N., Levine, D. M., et al. (2011). Community outreach and cardiovascular health (coach) trial: A randomized, controlled trial of nurse practitioner/community health worker cardiovascular disease risk reduction in urban community health centers. *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, 4(6), 595.

¹¹ Cox, C., Rhodes, D., & Visker, J. (2014). Missouri community health workers final research report. In MDHSS Bureau of Cancer & Chronic Disease Control (Ed.) (pp. 1-55): Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Bureau of Cancer & Chronic Disease Control.