

# Community Health Workers: The Foundation for Improving Public Health and Healthcare Practice

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# Highlights

- CHW Definition
  - CHW Core Values
  - CHW Code of Ethics
  - My role as a CHW (20 years)
- CHW role in improving practice
  - Health/healthcare
  - Public health
  - Wellness
  - Health equity - eliminating health disparities



# Community Health Worker is an umbrella term for many job titles!



Community Health Worker

*promotor(a) de salud*

*home visitor*

***patient navigator***

*community coordinator*

*community health advisor*

*street outreach worker*

*family health advocate*

*outreach educator*

*parent aid*

*youth worker*

*outreach advocate*



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 s/he serves. This trusting relationship enables the CHW to serve as *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.

*(Jan 2009 new BLS SOC CHW code - 21-1094)*



(submitted US Dept. of Labor, 7/06)

# Durrell's role as a CHW

- Began in 1991 at Children's Hospital Boston and Martha Eliot Health Center
- CHW/Outreach worker/adult advisor-youth peer ed. program/HIV Counselor/clinic resource specialist...
- Member of an adolescent clinical team with MDs, Nurses (multiple levels), social work, mental health, CHW, health ed.
- Respected, valued voice of "equal" weight



# CHW role cont

- CHW doing health education in three middle and two high schools in Boston
- Member of a “unified” comprehensive health education planning team for Boston Public schools
- Health educators, school administrators, educators, CBOs
- Brought “new” perspective to improve practice



# CHW Core Competencies

- **Outreach Methods and Strategies**
- **Client and Community Assessment**
- **Effective Communication**
- **Writing and Technical Communication Skills**
- **Culturally Based Communication and Care**
- **Health Education for Behavior Change**
- **Applying Public Health Concepts and Approaches**
- **Community Capacity Building**
- **Special Topics in Community Health**

(Adapted from Annie Casey Foundation funded National Health Advisory Study 1998)



# AACHW CHW Core Values

- **Access** - ensure equal access to services...
- **Acceptance** - remain open-minded and are accepting of others...
- **Advocacy** - advocate for communities, individuals and the field of community health work...
- **Excellence** - providing quality services and the most accurate information available to individuals and communities.
- **Learning** - embrace learning as life long, including life experiences and traditional learning.



# AACHW CHW Core Values cont

- **Partnership** - partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of CHW programs...
- **Self-determination** - CHWs shall determine the direction of the field.
- **Social Justice** - CHWs are agents of change
- **Strength** - assist families to acknowledge strengths and build upon them
- **Trust** - CHWs have earned the trust of individuals and communities.
- **Unity** - CHWs regardless of discipline, region of the country, job title, and work within or outside of traditional systems are unified in our work to reduce disparities.



# AACHW CHW Code of Ethics (1)

## **Article 1- Responsibilities in the Delivery of Care**

- **1.1 - Honesty**
- **1.2 - Confidentiality**
- **1.3 - Scope of Ability and Training**
- **1.4 - Quality of Care**
- **1.5 - Referral to Appropriate Services**



# AACHW CHW Code of Ethics (2)

## **Article 2. Promotion of Equitable Relationships**

- **2.1 - Cultural Humility**
- **2.2 - Maintaining the Trust of the Community**
- **2.3 - Respect for Human Rights**
- **2.4 - Anti-Discrimination**
- **2.5 - Client Relationships**



# AACHW CHW Code of Ethics (3)

## **Article 3: Interactions with Other Service Providers**

- **3.1 - Cooperation**
- **3.2 - Conduct**
- **3.3 - Self-Presentation**



# AACHW CHW Code of Ethics (4)

## **Article 4. Professional Rights and Responsibilities**

- **4.1 - Continuing Education**
- **4.2 - Advocacy for Change in Law and Policy**
- **4.3 - Enhancing Community Capacity**
- **4.4 - Wellness and Safety**
- **4.5 - Loyalty to the Profession**
- **4.6 - Advocacy for the Profession**
- **4.7 - Recognition of Others**



# CHW role in improving health equity practice

- Improving health literacy
- Improving access to culturally and linguistically appropriate care and services
- CHWs practice within elements of each of the seven Health Educator responsibility many of the competency areas
- Outreach, enrollment and retention in health insurance programs
- Truly eliminating health disparities



# CHW role in improving healthcare/clinical practice

- Improving access to most efficient and effective care and services (ER...)
- Outreach to patients lost to follow-up
- Extending the clinical practice with home visits, work outside the clinic...
- Chronic disease management specialists
- Client /community case management
- Patient capacity building “empowerment”



# CHW role in improving public health practice

- Primary and secondary prevention practitioners
- Community perspective to enhance local, state and national public health policy (advocacy)
- Wellness program enhancement
- Emergency preparedness opportunities
- Health information dissemination
- Outreach and interventions in the community (outside the walls of inst.)



# CHW reference materials

- **American Public Health Association (APHA) resolution # 200115, 2001.**  
<http://www.chwnetwork.org/docs/apharesolution.doc>
- **Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care**, Board on Health Sciences Policy, Institute Of Medicine (IOM), 2003, page 195. (finding 5-2, recommendation 5-10)  
[http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=10260&page=195](http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=10260&page=195)
- **Community Health Workers: Essential to Improving Health in Massachusetts**, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, March 2005.  
[http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/com\\_health/com\\_health\\_workers\\_narrative.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/com_health/com_health_workers_narrative.pdf)



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- **Advancing Community Health Worker Practice and Utilization: The Focus on Financing**, National Fund for Medical Education/UCSF Center for Health Professions, 2006.  
[www.futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf\\_files/CHW%202006.pdf](http://www.futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/CHW%202006.pdf)
- **Final Report on the Status, Impact, and Utilization of Community Health Workers**, James Madison University, January 2006.  
[http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/HD92006/\\$file/HD9.pdf](http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/HD92006/$file/HD9.pdf)
- **Community Health Worker - National Education Collaborative (CHW-NEC)**,  
<http://www.chw-nec.org/>



# CHW references

- **Community Health Workers: Closing the Gap on Families' Health Resources**, Family Strengthening Policy Center, March 2006. <http://www.nassembly.org/fspc/practice/documents/Brief14.pdf>
- **Community Health Workers National Workforce Study**, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, May 2007. <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/chw/>



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