



WWC Definitions: Community Health Workers & Patient Navigators

Introduction: In Colorado there has been some confusion and overlap about the roles, responsibilities and definitions of community health workers (CHW) and patient navigators (PN) along the continuum of care coordination. For the purposes of the FY 2014-15 WWC Targeted Outreach Grant Program, the following definitions will apply. Note: Promotoras(es) may be considered either CHWs or PNs depending on the definition that pertains to the work they will be doing.

Community Health Worker	Commonalities	Patient Navigator
<p>CHWs are trusted members of the community or intended population whom they serve. CHWs implement outreach within their communities to provide basic health assessments and health education, community advocacy and capacity building/empowerment and connect/refer to culturally-tailored resources to reduce risk factors of the social determinants of health. CHWs may provide language interpretation¹ and cultural brokering to assure culturally responsive services for their clients.</p> <p>CHWs are connectors to health care systems (providers, hospitals, community health programming, etc.) through referrals (“warm-handoffs”) based on relationships built with those systems and knowledge of interested individuals/entities within their community.</p>	<p>CHW and PN duties are based upon the competencies of health education and coaching, client or patient advocacy and capacity building, assessment and referral, communication, care coordination, cultural responsiveness, outreach and recruitment. [The CHW and PN are to support health behavioral change, complete tracking (documentation), evaluation, reporting and use of public health concepts and approaches.]</p> <p>Examples: Both are involved with individual or patient education, but the types of information provided can vary in complexity; they provide assistance in accessing health insurance, but PNs also link patients to financial assistance to afford health insurance; and both support health promotion but the CHW engages community members in HEAL (Healthy Eating and Active Living) activities, while a PN will guide patients through the next steps in their health care needs, share the benefits of clinical trials and connect them to additional services. A CHW can be involved in community capacity building to improve the health of a neighborhood or geographical area.</p>	<p>PNs serve as part of the health care team within or in conjunction with health care systems to reduce barriers to accessing health care from prevention through end-of-life by guiding individuals and families through complex health care systems; linking them with appropriate services, information and resources to reduce barriers to the patient’s healthcare; helping providers and others interact with patients in a culturally and linguistically proficient manner.</p> <p>Patient navigators may provide comprehensive health education, and assist individuals in making health behavior change to improve their health and quality of health care.</p>

¹ Please note that CDPHE strongly encourages interpretation only be provided by a certified interpreter. However, depending on the resources available in the community in which the patient seeks the healthcare, a CHW may be the most appropriate person to provide interpretation to be culturally responsive to the patient’s needs.

Reference:

Mandi Pratt-Chapman, M.A. et al. **Development of a framework for patient navigation: delineating roles across navigator types.** *Journal of Oncology Navigation and Survivorship*, December 2013. Accessed via the Internet: June 30, 2014