

Priorities for New Hampshire Children | 2015

Health Priority: Improve Access to Medical and Social Services

Priority Leaders: Paula Smith, Southern NH Area Health Education Center and Kris McCracken, Manchester Community Health Center

BACKGROUND

On a national and global level, Community Health Workers (CHWs) connect people to needed services and bridge the gap between medical care, behavioral health, social services, and the community.

CHWs are members of the community and are “well-versed in the ethnic, cultural, social, environmental, and historical experiences that shape the behaviors and knowledge of their communities (Ro, Treadwell, & Northridge, 2003).”

CHWs have the experience and time to engage with patients to promote health and wellness. In both rural and urban settings, they are valuable members of the health care team within a health care setting and outside in the community. CHWs are particularly effective assets for low-income populations.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Due to the child poverty rate, especially in urban areas, it is time for New Hampshire to promote Community Health Workers as valued members of the interdisciplinary health care team.

Many forces are at play that encourage organizations to look at creative ways to meet the “triple aim” of improving access to care, promoting quality of care, and reducing costs. In the health care arena, the advent of the Affordable Care Act, recognition for medical practices as Patient-Centered Medical Homes, and Meaningful Use criteria that encourage patient engagement, all converge to promote Community Health Workers as key members of the health care workforce.

NH can use this opportunity to leverage partnerships to broaden the awareness and knowledge base of health care organizational leaders, legislators, and families about the strengths and values of Community Health Workers.

A challenge to date has been mechanisms for reimbursement since many CHWs have historically been funded through government funds or grants.

This Priority will provide the impetus to assess work done in other states that can inform how to shape the workforce in New Hampshire and build a common language to talk about CHWs.

TAKE ACTION

In 2015, NH CAN Partners can help to bring people together to share information about Community Health Workers, ensuring there is common language and understanding.

Key stakeholders could assist in the clarification of CHW roles in health, behavioral health and social service settings, and plan a legislative strategy to build the CHW. Additionally, there is need to include the position as an authorized provider under Medicaid and NHHP. The process may evolve into a legislative campaign in 2016.

nh can

nh kids count coalition

nhkidscount.org

REFERENCES

1. American Public Health Association. Support for community health workers to increase health access and to reduce health inequalities. Policy no. 20091. Washington, DC.: American Public Health Association; 2009.
2. Balcazar, H., Rosenthal, L.E., Brownstein, N.J., Rush, C.H. & Matos, S., 2011, Community health workers can be a public health force for change in the United States: three actions for a new paradigm, American Journal of Public Health, 101(12), 2199-2203.
3. Ro, M.J., Treadwell, H.M., & Northridge, M., (2003), Community Health Workers and Community Voices: Promoting Good Health, The National Center for Primary Care at Morehouse School of Medicine.

PRIORITY LEADERS

Paula Smith; Southern NH Area Health Education Center (SNHAHEC) psmith@snhahec.org; 603-895-1514 x 1

Kris McCracken; Manchester Community Health Center; kmccracken@mchc-nh.org; 603-935-5210



New Hampshire Kids Count is dedicated to improving the lives of all children by advocating for public initiatives that make a real difference. We ensure that laws, policies, and programs in the Granite State are effective and improve kids' lives.

Two Delta Drive, Concord, NH 03301 (603) 225-2264
nhkidscount.org

Priorities for NH Children by NH CAN: 2015