



## Recommendations for the Community Health Worker (CHW) Task Force – Workgroup on roles, skills and qualities

The below set of recommendations from the CHW Task Force Workgroup on CHW roles, skills and qualities aims to address opportunities for Healthier Washington and partners to further the principles, roles, skills and qualities that underpin the work of Community Health Workers across the state.

We recommend:

1. Healthier Washington and the Accountable Communities of Health pursue the following guidelines when defining Community Health Worker's roles, skills and qualities:
  - a. Encompass the wide-ranging work of CHWs across multiple contexts
  - b. Encompass a variety of perspectives (e.g., CHWs, employers, health plans, etc.)
  - c. Be inclusive of work with youth, families, individual adults and communities
  - d. Use plain language
  - e. Focus on health not just healthcare (e.g. social determinants of health, human services, housing, bridging sectors)
2. That Healthier Washington include the following **definition** of Community Health Workers in relevant initiative and Innovation Plan work and corresponding documentation: CHWs are front line, non-clinical health workers who are members of, or have an unusually close relationship to, the community they serve.
3. That Healthier Washington, the Accountable Communities of Health and partner agencies adopt the attached roles and skills as a guide for the work successful Community Health Workers may do within a variety of jobs.
4. Healthier Washington and CHW Task Force members communicate and disseminate knowledge of the following CHW Qualities, especially as they relate to achieving Healthier Washington's goals. Community Health Worker **qualities** include being:
  - a. Connected to Community
  - b. Persistent, Creative and Resourceful
  - c. Empathic, Caring, Compassionate and Humble
  - d. Open-minded/Non-judgmental
  - e. Honest, Respectful, Patient, Realistic
  - f. Friendly, Engaging, Sociable
  - g. Dependable, Responsible, Reliable
  - h. Culturally sensitive, able to work with diverse communities
5. The Healthier Washington Practice Transformation Hub disseminate the attached list of Community Health Worker roles, skills, qualities and principles to multi-sector groups including providers, Accountable Communities of Health, social service organizations, and affiliation groups to educate on the value a Community Health Worker workforce can provide to a variety of groups toward population and patient health outcomes.
6. Healthier Washington explore ways to incubate, test, and evaluate CHW projects as a part of transformation innovation.



# Community Health Worker Task Force Recommended Roles

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to describe the broad roles Community Health Workers (CHWs) may serve in an organization. There is no expectation that CHWs fulfill every role listed. Ultimately, the CHWs organization will identify which roles would be suitable to achieve their needs.

## **1. Cultural Mediation among Individuals, Communities, and Health and Social Service Systems**

- a. Educating individuals and communities about navigating and health and social service systems (including understanding how systems operate)
- b. Educating systems about community perspectives and cultural norms (including supporting implementation of Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services [CLAS] standards)
- c. Building health literacy and cross-cultural communication

## **2. Providing Culturally Appropriate Health Education and Information**

- a. Conducting health promotion and disease prevention education in a manner that matches linguistic and cultural needs of participants or community
- b. Providing necessary information to understand and prevent diseases and to help people manage health conditions (including chronic disease)

## **3. Conducting Outreach**

- a. Finding and recruiting individuals that would benefit from services
- b. Follow-up on health and social service encounters with individuals, families, and community groups and help problem solve any barriers
- c. Conduct home visits to provide education, assessment, and social support
- d. Presenting at local agencies and community events

## **4. Care Coordination, Case Management, and System Navigation**

- a. Participating in making referrals, care coordination and/or case management, with an emphasis on connecting individuals to their medical home/primary care provider
- b. Connecting individuals to community resources and services
- c. Documenting and tracking individual and population level data
- d. Informing decision-makers and systems about community assets and challenges

## **5. Providing Coaching and Social Support**

- a. Providing individual support and informal coaching
- b. Motivating and encouraging people to obtain insurance coverage, care and other services



- c. Supporting self-management of disease prevention and management of health conditions (including chronic disease) within the parameters set by the organization and supervisor
- d. Planning and/or leading support groups

#### **6. Advocating for Individuals and Communities**

- a. Acting as an advocate for individuals
- b. Advocating for the basic needs and perspectives of communities
- c. Participating in policy advocacy

#### **7. Building Individual and Community Capacity**

- a. Building individual capacity to manage their health and well-being
  - i. Skill development
  - ii. Knowledge expansion
  - iii. Empowerment to participate in individual, family, community and systems improvement
- b. Building community capacity
  - i. Strengthening a sense of community and social connection
  - ii. Identifying and coordinating the use of individual and community assets/strengths
  - iii. Defining community development pathways
  - iv. Strengthening and diversifying leadership
  - v. Increasing participation in decision-making
- c. Training and building individual capacity with CHW peers and among groups of CHWs to improve individual and community health

#### **8. Providing Direct Service**

- a. Providing basic screening tests (e.g. heights & weights, blood pressure)
- b. Providing basic services (e.g. first aid, diabetic foot checks) with adequate supervision and training

#### **9. Implementing Individual and Community Assessments**

- a. Participating in design, implementation, and interpretation of individual-level assessments (e.g. home environmental assessment)
- b. Participating in design, implementation, and interpretation of community-level assessments (e.g. windshield survey of community assets and challenges)

#### **10. Participating in Evaluation and Research**

- a. Engaging in evaluating CHW services and programs
- b. Identifying and engaging research partners, and supporting community consent processes
- c. Participating in evaluation and research:



- i. Identification of priority issues and evaluation/research questions
- ii. Development of evaluation/research design and methods
- iii. Data collection and interpretation
- iv. Sharing results and findings
- v. Engaging stakeholders to take action on findings



## Community Health Worker Task Force Recommended Skills

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to describe the breadth of skills Community Health Workers (CHWs) have. There is no expectation that individual CHWs have all the skills listed below. Ultimately, the organization where the Community Health Worker resides will identify which skills are appropriate and necessary to achieve their goals.

### 1. Communication Skills

- a. Ability to communicate in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways, including using an interpreter when appropriate
- b. Ability to communicate using plain and clear language
- c. Ability to communicate in ways that engage individuals and communities
- d. Ability to translate professional terminology and jargon to lay language.
- e. Ability to listen actively and communicate with empathy
- f. Ability to document work in various formats, including written, oral and electronic

### 2. Interpersonal and Relationship Building Skills

- a. Ability to provide informal coaching and social support
- b. Ability to cultivate relationship trust that supports self-determination
- c. Ability to conduct self-management coaching that promotes self-advocacy and activation
- d. Ability to use interviewing techniques (e.g. Motivational Interviewing)
- e. Ability to work as a team member and understand the roles and responsibilities of all members
- f. Ability to manage conflict
- g. Ability to practice openness to a variety of cultures

### 3. Service Coordination and Navigation Skills

- a. Ability to navigate and coordinate care (including identifying and accessing resources and overcoming barriers) for individuals and families in collaboration with multiple systems
- b. Ability to appropriately connect clients to resources, without duplicating services
- c. Ability to facilitate development of an individual and/or group action plan and goal attainment
- d. Ability to follow-up and document care and referral outcomes



4. Capacity Building Skills
  - a. Ability to help others identify and develop to their full potential
  - b. Ability to network, build community connections, and partnerships
  - c. Ability to increase individual and community empowerment by building coalitions and organizing individuals and communities
  - d. Ability to mobilize or organize a community around a common issue
5. Advocacy Skills
  - a. Ability to teach self-advocacy skills
  - b. Ability to speak up for individuals and communities
  - c. Ability to collect and/or use information from and with community members
  - d. Ability to contribute to policy development at organizational, system and legislative levels
  - e. Ability to advocate for social change
  - f. Ability to bridge perspectives for policy change
6. Education and Facilitation Skills
  - a. Ability to seek out appropriate information and respond to questions about pertinent topics
  - b. Ability to plan and conduct classes and presentations for a variety of individuals and groups
  - c. Ability to use a range of appropriate and effective active learning techniques both with individuals and groups
  - d. Ability to facilitate group decision-making and discussions
  - e. Ability to collaborate with other educators and content experts
7. Individual and Community Assessment Skills
  - a. Ability to participate in individual assessment through observation and active inquiry in order to inform conclusions or actions
  - b. Ability to participate in community assessment through observation and active inquiry to inform conclusions or actions
  - c. Ability to utilize community wisdom and voice to identify community needs and serve vulnerable individuals
8. Outreach skills
  - a. Ability to build trust
  - b. Ability to organize events and conduct community outreach
  - c. Ability to conduct outreach, recruitment and follow-up with individuals
  - d. Ability to gather or prepare appropriate resources and materials and disseminate effectively



**9. Professional Skills and Conduct**

- a. Ability to set goals, to develop and follow a work plan, and know where to go for help
- b. Ability to self-organize in order to balance priorities and manage time
- c. Ability to identify and respond effectively to emergencies
- d. Ability to use pertinent technology applicable to the setting
- e. Ability to pursue continuing training and/or education
- f. Ability to work safely in community and/or clinical settings
- g. Ability to observe ethical and legal standards (e.g. CHW Code of Ethics, Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA], Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA])
- h. Ability to follow organizational, research and/or grant policies and procedures
- i. Ability to participate in professional development of peer CHWs and in networking among CHW groups
- j. Ability to set boundaries and practice self-care
- k. Ability to work independently, while using organizational and supervisory support as appropriate

**10. Experience and Knowledge Base**

- a. Knowledge about pertinent health issues
- b. Knowledge about healthy lifestyles, trauma informed care, and self-care
- c. Knowledge about whole person care (integration of mental/behavioral and physical health care)
- d. Knowledge of basic public health principles
- e. Ability to discern reliable, evidence based answers
- f. Knowledge about the community served
- g. Knowledge about the United States health and social service system and their cultural context
- h. Knowledge of how health is affected by the conditions in which we live, learn, work and play
- i. Ability to problem solve and think critically