**ASTHO CHW Learning Community: South Carolina State Team Call**

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**Objectives:**

* Examine Reciprocity in State CHW Certification Programs
* Explore CHW Career Advancement Issues
* Plan Next Steps for the South Carolina CHW Workforce Development Effort

**Reciprocity:**

* Certification is now present in 17 states (including South Carolina) with varying structures. It is mostly run by the state, but an increasing number (e.g., MO) are run by outside entities.
	+ In Michigan, the training program offered by the Michigan CHW Alliance is considered a de facto certification.
	+ In South Carolina, certification is launched and privately operated. The first training is under way and there are 4-5 facilitators being trained. There is an application that needs to be submitted to become a trainer.
* No states have reciprocity regulations to date.
	+ Missouri has a regulation stating that a CHW does not need residency to be certified in the state.
	+ Connecticut has guidance that a CHW certified in another state must demonstrate experience (over 2,000 hours in the past five years).
* South Carolina CHW Credentialing Council has determined that it would like to explore reciprocity, with the central question being “how.”
	+ There is no current regulation in South Carolina, and the state team would not likely pursue regulatory language.
	+ South Carolina certifies training programs. Certified training programs must demonstrate how they will screen for the qualities of a CHW. For example, the CHW Institute is the first approved training program and has a process to apply for the training (talk about community connectedness). The CHW Institute is also educating employers about how to find a true CHW employee.
* Issues to consider:
	+ How to align features of certification (e.g., core competencies, amount of required training, minimum number of hours in the field, residency requirements, background checks).
	+ Voluntary nature of CHW certification: Certified CHWs moving from one state to one another can still be employable since – absent of regulations – an employer can hire a CHW with another state’s certification.

**Career Advancement for CHWs:**

* CHWs themselves are concerned with “advancement,” more than “pathways.” This includes increasing pay, authority, and responsibility. CHWs are also interested in expanding opportunities to practice as CHWs rather than to move into other roles (i.e., using CHW position as a “stepping stone”)
	+ The South Carolina team validated this perspective within their state.
* There is a continued lack of understanding of and respect for the CHW role. CHWs are interested in learning how to better promote themselves, including to employers and supervisors.
* The principles for promoting CHW career advancement include:
	+ Promoting advancement within the CHW profession, especially as it can promote health system improvement.
	+ Meeting multiple stakeholder interests and engaging multiple stakeholders in the discussion (supervisors, employers, unions, public health agencies, etc.)
* Organized CHW participation is essential in any policy development.
* The state may consider utilizing existing structures for broad stakeholder participation.
	+ South Carolina has ten CHW ambassadors that are supported by the CHW Institute and CHW Association to provide feedback on tiers and advancement. They now form a “Best Practices Expert Council” along with supportive supervisors recommended by the ambassadors.
	+ The next step is to connect with Human Resources stakeholders in various health systems to collect feedback, which can then be brought forward to the Credentialing Council.
	+ Similarly, in Massachusetts, 2,000 hours of work experience plus 80-hours of core competency training are required for certification (not entry level). Therefore, the Credentialing Board promotes the certification as more mid-career.
* CHW Career Advancement Strategies:
	+ Employers can compensate and recognize performance (e.g., salary and benefits, mentorship, promotions, advancement towards organizational responsibility).
	+ State certification entities and advisory groups (with CHW associations) can create additional certification levels.
* The options for organizations with very small numbers of CHWs may face limitations in providing career advancement, but options like becoming in-house consultants or trainers may be a way to ensure a position can grow.
	+ Consider what resources can be offered to employers (e.g., technical assistance or training).
	+ It’s also important to remember that turnover among CHWs will have a greater impact in smaller programs and organizations. It is even more in these smaller organizations’ interest to be thoughtful about career advancement as a way to reduce turnover.
* South Carolina’s Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) sees part of its role as normalizing the conversation. DHEC Is also working with its Director of Human Resources to determine if CHWs can become a state job classification (most likely a series 1-4). DHEC wants to promote hiring of CHWs as well as offer progression.
	+ Terri noted that the SC Credentialing Council would be open to aligning this work.
	+ The CHW Association is also working on an educational campaign, and the executive director will meet with individual clinics and providers to provide 1:1 education that enhances the reputation of CHW statewide.
	+ The CHW Institute will also be working on a supervisor certification, which can be a tool for CHWS and hiring organizations.
* The South Carolina team’s progress on career advancement does include employer participation, and, in that way, it differs from state policy development.

**Next steps:**

* DHEC will share outcomes from the meeting with the State Office of Human Resources.
* Scott Thorpe (DHEC), coordinator for the Credentialing Council, can share back updates from their meetings.
* The Best Practices Expert Council will be meeting again soon.