COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER
Self Determination, Values and Leadership

The National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW) implemented a Community Health Worker (CHW) survey in 2021 to advance the national professional identity, policy leadership and organizational capacity of CHWs in the United States. This infographic highlights responses to our national survey from 867 CHWs (772 English and 95 Spanish respondents) from 859 unique zip codes.

This infographic explores CHWs’ values and leadership identities, and ways CHWs want to express and advance their leadership roles.

The following core values are part of my CHW identity

Within the national CHW survey, 867 CHWs were asked to choose from a list of 26 values. CHWs identified as being “core to their identity as a CHW” the 7 responses included: 1) Respect (90%), 2) Integrity (81%), 3) Equity (79%), 4) Self-empowerment (75%), 5) Self determination (75%), 6) Unity (76%), and 7) Social Justice and Community (70%).

Top 5 items that describe what it means to be a CHW leader

CHWs were also asked to rate their top 5 items that describe what it means to be a CHW leader. Of the 15 options, CHWs selected the following top 5:

1. Inspires others: 67.5%
2. Motivates other people: 66.0%
3. Addresses cultural and racial barriers: 45.9%
4. Is an agent of change: 41.6%
5. Impacts policy to better my community: 38.4%

CHWs are organized around a clear set of core values to guide their profession. They agree on indicators of leadership, and areas of leadership advancement. Furthering CHWs capacity, training, and advocacy opportunities around justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion will improve community trust, engagement, and well-being.
SELF DETERMINATION, VALUES AND LEADERSHIP (CONTINUED)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- Co-develop justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion curriculum with CHWs and include these topics in CHW core competencies & training programs
- Core values developed by NACHW are endorsed by CHWs across the country and can be integrated into training, program, and policy development
- Employers should align the wording and assessment of CHW leadership capacity and readiness with the above descriptions as part of recruitment, job descriptions, promotional evaluations, and other opportunities

- State actors should prioritize the capacity, infrastructure, and sustainability of the CHW profession to address state-level plans and policy development.
- Payers and funders must include a description of CHWs' roles and services to address the social determinants of health in their models and grant opportunities.
- Workforce studies should explore CHWs in racial health equity and social determinants of health

Top 3 ways I express my leadership as a CHW

- Advocating for community needs and preferences: 72%
- Promoting health and racial equity: 43%
- Advocating for the CHW role to address the social determinants of health: 37%

I am interested in building the following leadership skills (top 3)

- Community engagement: 40%
- Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: 36%
- Effective communication: 33%

CHWs confirm that a key way they express their identity as leaders is through their roles as advocates for community needs. They also acknowledge that this advocacy includes a focus on racial equity. Emerging as an urgent issue to realize CHW leadership, is to establish their roles to address the social determinants of health. Of the 14 options, CHWs selected the following top 3:

1. Advocating for community needs and preferences: 70.7%
2. Promoting health and racial equity: 42.8%
3. Advocating for the CHW role to address the social determinants of health: 40.0%

While CHWs reflect leadership capacity across roles and identities, CHWs were asked to answer their top 3 leadership skills from 15 options. The top responses included:

1. Community engagement: 40.0%
2. Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: 35.6%
3. Effective communication: 33.4%
4. Grant writing: 29.9%
5. Partnership development: 22.0%

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