



SECTION 1

Community Health Workers in the Community

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CHAPTER 1

What Is a Community Health Worker?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define public health and individual health.
2. Describe the history of community health workers.
3. Explain the roles, skills, and responsibilities of community health workers.

KEY TERMS

community health workers (CHWs)
health
individual health

public health
health equity

Introduction

This chapter introduces the difference between population health and individual health. Next the discussion presents the history of **community health workers (CHWs)** and the roles, skills, and responsibilities of CHWs. Also, the chapter identifies various types of places for employment, including wages and geographical locations in the United States. Last, the chapter introduces how to search for job descriptions when seeking CHW positions.

Definition of Individual Health and Public Health

Before delving into the topic of community health work, it is important to examine the definition of **health**. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is defined as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”¹⁻² For example, even when individuals do not have an active disease diagnosis, it is not to be assumed that those individuals live in a

complete state of health. They may be coping with social or financial issues that are causing sleepless nights. Their housing may be in a location where environmental or industrial pollution is causing poor outdoor air quality. Since everyone's life situation is different, it is important to consider the whole person when examining their health conditions, not merely their current medical diagnosis.¹⁻² There are two broad categories of health: individual health and public health.

Individual Health. Individual health relates to health care and clinical disciplines (i.e., medicine, nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy, clinical psychology, dental, vision, hearing, and others) in which licensed professionals examine, diagnosis, and treat the health of one person at a time. When an individual is experiencing an illness,

the individual seeks health care to determine the cause of the symptoms and to create a tailored treatment plan. Public health professionals investigate the health needs of the entire community.^{1,3}

Public Health. Public health considers all aspects of health in an entire community including social, education, economic, housing, environmental, etc. A community (population) may be as small as a faith-based community or as large as a country, continent, or the entire globe.^{1,3} Population health is focused on the health of the public. See **Figure 1.1**. The outer circle shows the three core functions of public health: assurance, assessment, and policy development. The inner circle defines the three core functions into the 10 essential services of public health. Last, it is important to notice that equity is at the center of the circle.⁵

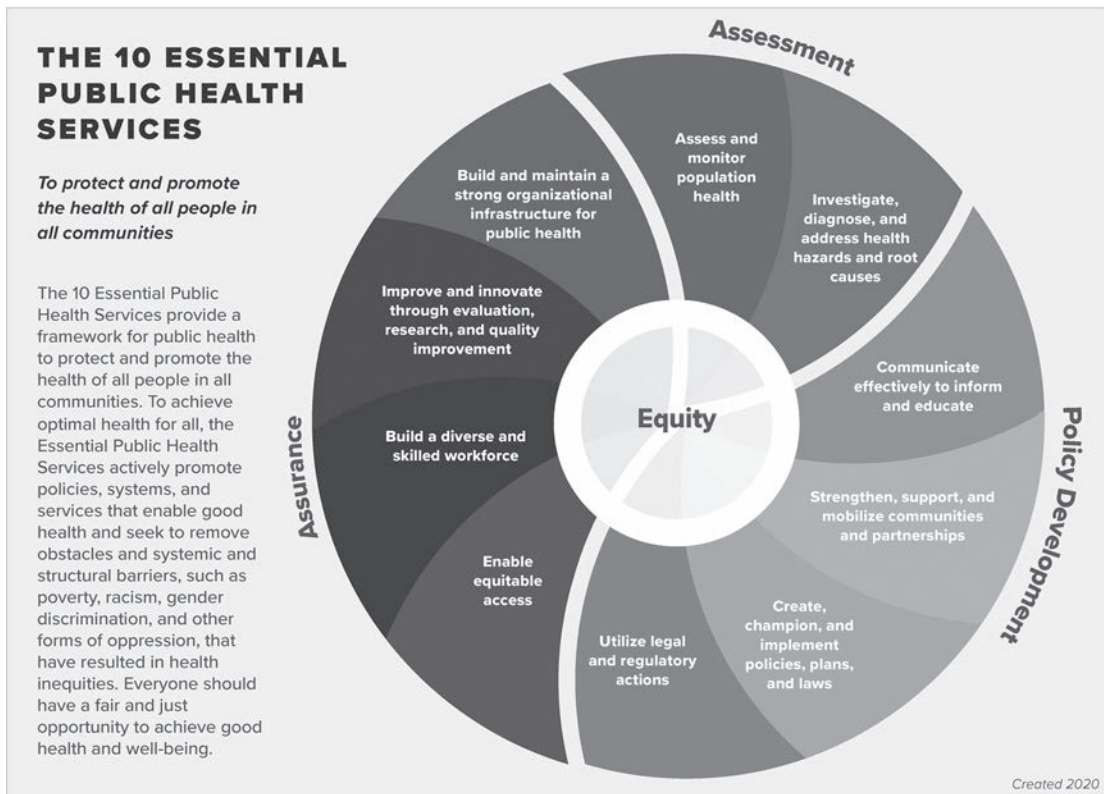


Figure 1.1 Core Functions of Public Health and 10 Essential Public Health Services

Figure from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 10 essential public health services. <https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/publichealthservices/essentialhealthservices.html#:~:text=The%2010%20Essential%20Public%20Health%20Services%20describe%20the,identity%20and%20solve%20health%20problems%20More%20items...%20> Accessed January 8, 2021. Reference to specific commercial products, manufacturers, companies, or trademarks does not constitute its endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government, Department of Health and Human Services, or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.⁴

The simple definition of **health equity** is when everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible.³

For some examples of how the role of CHWs fit into the big picture of public health service in their community, it is useful to begin with a definition of a CHW. Although there are various definitions for CHWs, the definition provided by the American Public Health Association states:

*A community health worker is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A community health worker also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.*¹⁶

Next, to understand how the definition and role of CHWs fits into the core functions and services of public health, see **Table 1.1**.

History of CHWs

1930: The first CHWs were “Farmer Scholars” who were trained in China in the 1930s and were the forerunners of the Barefoot Doctors, of whom there were more than one million from the 1950s to the 1970s.⁵

1960: In the 1960s, small CHW programs began to emerge in various countries, particularly in Latin America. The CHWs began to provide basic frontline health care in rural areas.⁵ Since CHWs lived in the areas in which they worked, the community trusted them.⁶

1970: By the 1970s, the term CHW was used to describe a variety of individuals working to improve the health of their communities.⁵⁻⁶ These individuals are

knowledgeable of the local language, societal norms, cultures, and customs. There is no exact skill set for CHWs, and their demographics include all ages, levels of education, gender, and backgrounds. Their roles cover a broad spectrum of health topics, including prevention of disease, improvement of health outcomes through education, implementation of health interventions, and expansion of healthcare access.⁵⁻⁶ Also, their community knowledge allows them to become essential workers in assisting with emergencies and disaster management due to their knowledge of the community.⁶

1980: By the 1980s, many impoverished healthcare systems around the world recognized the challenges in providing adequate healthcare services, and thus governments explored a flexible approach to adopt CHWs into the health systems to improve health. Although CHWs do not provide direct patient care, they offer limited services rather than no services.⁶

1990: In the 1990s, following the failure of many of the programs in the 1980s, new highly successful programs have emerged and as a result of research findings demonstrating the effectiveness of community-based programs in improving child health in particular, there is now a resurgence of interest and growth of CHW programs around the world.⁵ CHW services were acknowledged as an important component within the health system and not as a separate unit. Along with this inclusion came questions about how to standardize the training, scope of services, and supervision of CHWs.⁶⁻⁷ By 1998, the National Community Health Advisor Study provided guidance to improve the status of CHWs and identify the roles and competencies for CHWs.⁷⁻⁸

2000: In 2006, the CHW Special Primary Interest Group of the American Public Health Association strengthened the role

Table 1.1 Three Core Functions and 10 Essential Services of Public Health for CHWs

Three Core Functions	Ten Essential Services	Role of CHW
Assurance	1. Enable equitable access.	Assist individuals struggling to access healthcare services.
	2. Build a diverse and skilled workforce.	Incorporate cultural diversity.
	3. Improve and innovate through evaluation, research, and quality improvement.	Collect community data to improve health education efforts.
	4. Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health.	Network with public health, clinical, and social service agencies.
Assessment	5. Assess and monitor population health.	Understand and monitor community health data to improve population well-being.
	6. Investigate, diagnose, and address health hazards and root causes.	Explore possible environmental or systemic causes of adverse health conditions.
Policy Development	7. Communicate effectively to inform and educate.	Create health education programs in common language and literacy level of the community.
	8. Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships.	Network with community to maximize services and decrease duplicative resources.
	9. Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws.	Identify need for changing in policies to improve health and safety of community.
	10. Utilize legal and regulatory actions.	Investigate legal and regulatory actions for greater understanding of services.

Data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 10 essential public health services. <https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/publichealthservices/essentialhealthservices.html#:~:text=The%2010%20Essential%20Public%20Health%20Services%20describe%20the,identify%20and%20solve%20health%20problems%20More%20items...%20> Accessed January 8, 2021. Reference to specific commercial products, manufacturers, companies, or trademarks does not constitute its endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. Government, Department of Health and Human Services, or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.⁴

of a CHW by stating that a CHW is “a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served.”⁹ Within a year, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) published a national report on CHWs. This study showed that CHWs provided a cost-effective way to address

health concerns in underserved communities. This research provided needed information to private insurers, corporations, and the federal government as a possible way to change delivery and financing of health care¹⁰ by employing CHWs as a complement service rather than a replacement of health and social service care.¹¹

- 2010: In 2010, the Bureau of Labor Statistics assigned an occupational code of 21-1091 to Community Health Workers.¹² Also, in 2010, CHWs were identified as an important component of the health workforce and were cited in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) as a health industry professional with a variety of new employment pathways.¹³
- 2013: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) created a new rule that allows state Medicaid agencies to reimburse for preventive services provided by professionals that may fall outside of a state's clinical licensure system if the services have been initially recommended by a physician or other licensed practitioner. This new rule for the first time offers state Medicaid agencies the option to reimburse for more community-based preventive services, including those of CHWs.¹⁴ As a result of the Medicaid reimbursement option, several states took initiatives to advance the CHW infrastructure, professional identity, workforce development, and financing. These initiatives opened new employment opportunities for CHWs.¹⁴
- 2014: The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified 14 CHW policy components.¹⁵

See **Critical Thinking 1.1**.

A CHWs Career

CHWs are recognized as an integrated model across different healthcare systems.¹⁶ In some communities, the CHWs work to increase health screenings and use of health services, while in other communities, the CHWs focus on the enhancement of communication between community members and health providers. The community needs vary, but the services provided by CHWs are focused on creatively improving the overall health of the population.¹⁶ CHWs are lay members of the community who work in close association with the local healthcare system in both urban and rural environments. CHWs usually share ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, and life experiences with the community members they serve.¹⁶ CHWs have numerous titles, roles, and skills in their various positions. See **Table 1.2**.

The CHWs achieve their goal of improving health for the population or an individual by working in community agencies, healthcare offices, county health departments, and nonprofit organizations.¹⁶⁻¹⁷ Working under supervision of senior staff, CHWs add support to numerous healthcare providers including physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, dietitians, certified health education specialists, lactation consultants, doulas, allied health professionals, school nurses, language interpreters, and last, they improve the overall patient experience.¹⁷⁻¹⁸

If CHWs are interested in direct patient contact, there are CHW roles within clinical settings:

- Conduct saliva-based HIV testing and counseling.
- Perform basic cholesterol or blood pressure screenings.
- Teach patients how to use asthma inhalers.
- Teach patients with diabetes how to test their blood glucose levels with a glucometer.
- Explain the patient's body mass index (BMI) in relationship to prescribed weight loss exercise, and healthy eating programs.
- Participate in COVID screening testing and contact tracing activities.

Critical Thinking 1.1 What Is a CHW?

Review roles and skills of CHWs in Table 1.2 and answer the following questions.

1. How would you summarize the main role of the CHW? Why?
2. Which of your current skills will be most beneficial for your career as a CHW? Which of your skills might need improvement?

Table 1.2 Titles, Roles, and Skills of CHWs

Titles
Community health advisor
Lay health advocates
Promotors
Outreach educators
Health liaison
Community health representatives
Peer health promoters
Peer health educators
Health navigators
Health advocates
<small>Data from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions. Community health worker national workforce study. https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/community-health-workforce.pdf. Accessed January 8, 2021.¹⁶</small>
Roles
Advocate for individual and community health needs.
Receive training to conduct clinical screenings and teach how to use medical equipment, such as an asthma inhaler or diabetic glucose monitor.
Offer interpretation and translation services.
Provide culturally appropriate health education, promotion, and information.
Improve access to healthcare services for people in need.
Give informal health education, counseling, and guidance on health behaviors.
Assist in accessing medical and nonmedical service and health programs.
Provide some direct services such as basic first aid and blood pressure screening.
Increase health screening and healthcare services.
Provide a better understanding between community members, health providers, and social service systems.
Advocate for specific populations in the community.
Improve understanding and adherence to health recommendations.
Reduce the need for emergency and specialty services.
<small>Data from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions. Community health worker national workforce study. https://bhw.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/bureau-health-workforce/data-research/community-health-workforce.pdf. Accessed January 8, 2021.¹⁶</small>
Skills
Communication skill
Interpersonal and relationship-building skills
Service coordination and navigation skills

(continues)

Table 1.2 Titles, Roles, and Skills of CHWs*(continued)***Skills**

Capacity building skills

Advocacy skills

Education and facilitation skills

Individual and community assessment skills

Outreach skills

Professional skills and conduct

Evaluation and research skills

Knowledge on diverse health topics

Reproduced from The Community Health Worker Core Consensus Project. C3 Project Findings: Roles & Competencies. <https://www.c3project.org/roles-competencies>. Accessed May 25, 2021.¹⁷

- Participate in community vaccine clinics with the eligibility, registration, and screening process.
- Assist community nurses during community blood drives by conducting the eligibility screenings.
- Assist school nurses by conducting the children's eyesight exams and tracking mandatory student vaccine records.

Because CHWs live in the community, they speak the same language, know the cultural beliefs, and recognize health barriers.¹⁸ CHWs are likely to receive their own health care in the community; therefore, they know how to connect people to health services.¹⁹ CHWs understand the needs of their community, so they are able to educate about how to reduce the symptoms of chronic disease and improve medication compliance²⁰ and reduce health care costs.^{21–22} Furthermore, when CHWs are integrated into the community's health care system, the clients receive a greater understanding of the services. CHWs provide a holistic and culturally sensitive approach that enhances the effectiveness of the care provided. For example, if a homeless individual is seeking care, the CHW can directly assist the homeless individual to provide a variety of needed services, such as food banks, shelters, employment services, and health care.^{19–23} See **Critical Thinking 1.2**.

Critical Thinking 1.2 CHW Promotes Heart Health in Community

Jasmine has been working for 3 years as a CHW in an inner-city clinic. During February, the clinic decided to focus on promoting heart health in the community. Jasmine volunteered to chair this committee and design activities for February. She created a list of tasks, including recruit clinic staff to participate, plan the parking lot family kick-off event for the first Saturday in February, and develop patient activities in the clinic for each week of February.

Answer the following questions:

1. How would you recruit the staff to participate? What staff would you target for participation?
2. Make a list of tasks required for the kick-off event.
3. What types of patient activities would be suitable for each week of February?

CHW Professional Profile Examples

The CHW career spans a lifetime of interest. Here are a few examples:

Example One: Patricia was 18 years old and struggled to complete high school. After graduating a semester late, she was not ready for

community college but knew that she enjoyed helping people. She saw a flyer at the local national chain drug store about a 6-week course to become a pharmacy technician. During the application process, Patricia learned that her \$500 tuition would be waived if she worked full-time for the company for 6 months. She was excited to learn that she was on a path for full-time employment. Patricia enjoyed her job and worked for the national chain drug store for more than 5 years. Two years after she became a pharmacy technician, she learned that the company would pay her tuition at the local community college. She started taking one course at a time until she gained confidence in her study skills. After her third semester, her advisor suggested that she take a few health education courses and explore the CHW certificate. Patricia took the advice and graduated with an associate degree in health education with the CHW certificate. She was getting tired of the routine as a pharmacy technician, so she looked for a new position where she could use her education. She applied and received a CHW position at the local community hospital in the outpatient center. It was an excellent transition since Patricia had 5 years of customer service experience in the healthcare field.

Example Two: Soon after Maria graduated from high school, her grandmother, age 72, was diagnosed with cancer. Maria was the youngest of five children and had spent most of her childhood after school at her grandmother's house. She loved her grandmother. Her parents worked full-time at the local car dealership. Her dad worked in the service department, and her mom worked in the financial and loan office. Since she was not interested in college, Maria told her parents that she wanted to care for her grandmother. Her parents negotiated a salary for Maria for the caregiving role. Maria moved into her grandmother's home and assumed all care duties, including scheduling medical appointments, driving to the cancer treatments, purchasing groceries, cooking healthy meals, cleaning, and caring for her grandmother as the cancer progressed. Since Maria's

grandmother spoke only Spanish, Maria was able to become fluent again. She had let her Spanish lapse while she was in high school and was not spending much time with her grandmother until the cancer diagnosis. Two years into the diagnosis, the treatment was not working, and Maria's grandmother was admitted into home hospice. She died peacefully at home, as requested, with the family near her bed. Several months after Maria's grandmother died, Maria began looking online for some type of health-care position. She found a position at a local retirement facility as a care coordinator for the assisted living wing of the facility. Maria was a perfect fit for the new position because of her extensive caregiver experience and ability to speak Spanish fluently.

Example Three: Arnie completed his bachelor of science in public health, but he was still not sure about the direction of his career. During his last year in college, the COVID pandemic hit, and he was stuck in his apartment taking classes online for most of the last semester. He was reading his email and noticed that the local health department was seeking students to become contact trackers for COVID. He could work from home with a flexible schedule, get paid, and gain experience for his resume. Arnie applied and was told that he could start immediately. He enjoyed calling and talking to the list of people on the email list that he received each day. After a few weeks, he was told that social distancing was adequate at the health department, so he could work from the call center. Arnie was tired of being home alone, so he worked half-time at the call center and half-time at home. After he completed his shift at the health department, Arnie asked his supervisor what other types of jobs were going to be available after COVID. His supervisor told him that there was a community health advocate position in the HIV/AIDS Clinic. Since Arnie is gay, he had always been interested in helping young gay males. He applied for the position after graduation. He was interviewed for the position and was hired to serve the LGBTQIA+ community and attend to various health needs.

Example Four: June, age 46, had spent most of her life raising her three children, working part-time at her church, and participating in school and sport activities with her children. She had been married to Gerald for 12 years. Soon after he was deployed to Afghanistan, Gerald was killed by a roadside bomb. Now that her last child had graduated from high school and was happily attending college out-of-state, June was ready to allow herself to explore career choices that may be of interest to her. Her other three children lived in the same city, but they were married and starting families of their own. June loved being a grandmother but had no desire in raising her grandchildren. Within a few weeks, June obtained a front receptionist position at the local health department clinic that served mainly elderly patients. She enjoyed talking to the elderly patients, but she soon she noticed that the patients needed more than her friendly greeting and big smile. She talked to the clinic supervisor and asked if she could get trained to be a CHW. June had lived in the community for the past 25 years. She knew many of the resources, services, and veteran benefits from her own experience after her husband passed. The supervisor told June that her ideas were good, but she needed to develop a job description for what she was proposing to do for the patients. Her supervisor admitted that she was not clear on the role of a CHW. June worked every evening for 2 weeks to develop the job description, duties, and average salary for this new position. She was asked to present her proposal at the monthly board meeting. Much to June's surprise, they approved her request. They hired a new front receptionist. June trained that person while she was preparing into her new role as the CHW.

Example Five: Robert, age 64, is a military veteran. While in the Army, he was trained to be a field medic. After discharge, he worked in the pharmaceutical industry for 25 years. After retirement, he and his wife of 34 years traveled and enjoyed spending time with their five grandchildren from their two daughters. When Robert's wife died suddenly of a stroke, he became lonely.

He recognized his depression when he no longer enjoyed playing golf. He scheduled an appointment with his long-term physician, Dr. Swanson. After a conversation, Dr. Swanson told Robert that he needed to find a new meaningful purpose in life before trying a prescription for anti-depression medication. Robert left the appointment a bit confused, but he remembered telling the same advice to wounded soldiers back when he was a medic. As he drove home, he thought about how much he enjoyed helping people. After a few days searching online for part-time employment, Robert concluded that he did not need income, but rather meaningful volunteer opportunities. He applied for a volunteer position at the large regional hospital near his home. The volunteer coordinator called Robert and scheduled him for an interview. He was excited to learn how he could contribute to the healthcare system. The volunteer coordinator provided a list of several open positions in various departments. Robert decided to volunteer two days per week: one shift in the rehabilitation unit and one shift in the patient discharge. The next day, he was excited to go to the uniform store to purchase his volunteer uniform. He attended the volunteer orientation later that week. Even before Robert's first shift, he felt that he had regained his sense of purpose by helping others. See **Critical Thinking 1.3**.

Critical Thinking 1.3 A Day in the Life of a CHW

Nancy was recently hired as the CHW in a rural clinic in Kentucky. She was born and raised in the community, so she knows many people in the area. During her first week of employment, she encountered two challenges: (1) assisting Mrs. Johnson, a 50-year-old woman, to understand her health insurance documents and (2) bridging the gap between the clinical staff and the patients. Answer the following questions:

1. How could Nancy begin to work with Mrs. Johnson?
2. How could Nancy begin to define her role in the clinic?

CHW Employment Outlook, Job Satisfaction, Salary, Place of Employment, and Training

Employment Outlook

According to O*Net in 2021, the occupation of CHW is an emerging profession, is expected to grow rapidly within the next several years, and will have large numbers of job openings.²⁴

The list of the top five tasks for CHW employment included the following:

- Maintain updated client records with plans, notes, appropriate forms, or related information.²⁵
- Advise clients or community groups on issues related to improving general health, such as diet or exercise.²⁵
- Identify or contact members of high-risk or otherwise targeted groups, such as members of minority populations, low-income populations, or pregnant women.²⁵
- Contact clients in person, by phone, or in writing to ensure they have completed required or recommended actions.²⁵
- Distribute flyers, brochures, or other informational or educational documents to inform members of a target community.²⁵

Job Satisfaction

The job satisfaction is high among CHWs, and the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics expects the CHW profession to grow approximately 16 percent by 2026.²⁶ See **Box 1.1**.

Salary

As of 2019 in the United States, the average hourly wage for CHWs was \$22.12 or approximately \$46,000. However, keep in mind that the wages ranged from \$13.47 per hour (\$28,010 annually) to \$34.03 per hour (\$70,790 annually).²⁶ Another source reported the median wages in 2020 was \$20.19 hourly or \$42,000 annually.²⁵ See **Figure 1.2**.

Box 1.1 Pros and Cons of CHW Job Satisfaction

Pros of being a CHW

- Provides an opportunity to help individuals in the community
- Assists individuals seeking health care resources
- Offers a chance to work as a member of the healthcare team
- Provides ways to further education
- Offers an adequate salary along with benefits in most locations
- Presents ways to get acquainted with members of the community

Cons of being a CHW

- Does not appeal to individuals desiring a set work assignment and schedule
- Limited number of CHW positions in most communities
- Most positions require that bilingual applicant match the community
- Applicant needs be familiar with the community
- Applicant needs a flexible schedule and enjoy a variety of duties
- Salary may not be adequate, but advancement usually possible

Place of Employment

When exploring where CHWs are most likely to work, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show the following information. See **Table 1.3** and **Figure 1.3** to see the distribution of CHWs across the United States.

Training for CHW

While there are no universal training requirements for entry-level positions, CHWs are required to have at least a high school diploma or equivalent. For more advanced or specialized positions, employers may require an associate degree or higher in health or human services. After CHWs are hired, the employer may provide training and mentoring. Customer service

Annual mean wage of community health workers, by state, May 2020

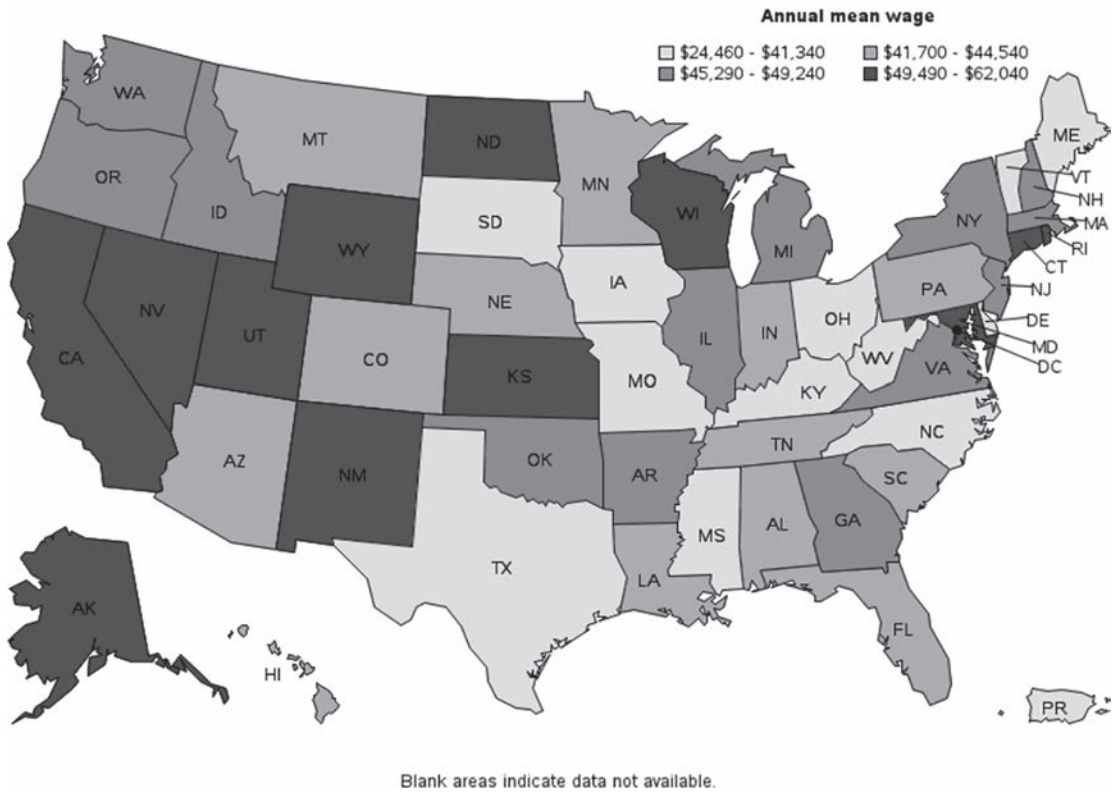


Figure 1.2 Annual Mean Wage of CHWs by State

Figure from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational employment and wages, May 2020, 21-1094 community health workers. [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm#\(1\)](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm#(1)). Accessed on January 8, 2021.²⁶

Table 1.3 Location and Wage Information for CHWs

Place of Employment	Percentage of Employment	Average Hourly Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Outpatient care centers	54%	\$21.10	\$43,880
Individual, family, community, and vocational rehabilitation services	43%	\$20.19	\$41,990
State and local government, excluding schools and hospitals	7%	\$25.44	\$52,920
Offices of physicians	14%	\$20.24	\$42,100
State, local, and private hospitals	9%	\$24.62	\$51,200

Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational employment and wages, May 2020, 21-1094 community health workers. [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm#\(1\)](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm#(1)). Accessed on January 8, 2021.²⁶

Employment of community health workers, by state, May 2020

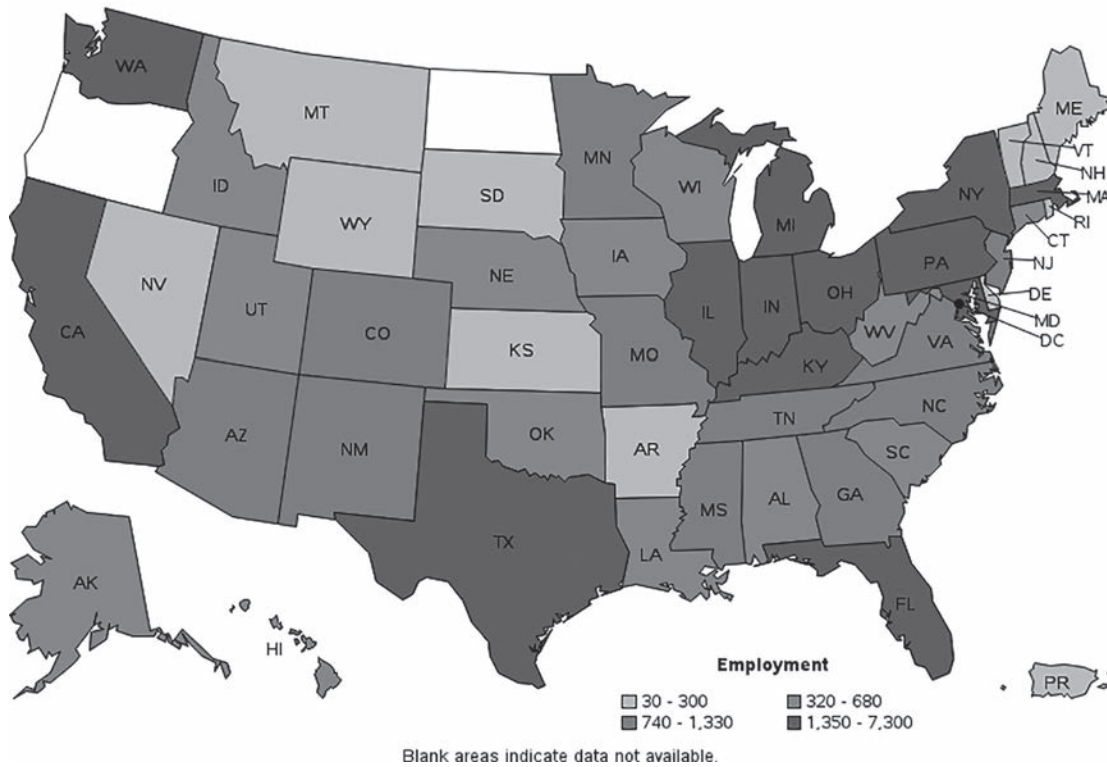


Figure 1.3 Employment of CHWs by State

Table 1.4 States with Highest Employment, Hourly Mean Wage, and Annual Mean Wage for CHWs

State	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
California	\$25.45	\$52,940
New York	\$22.18	\$46,130
Massachusetts	\$22.26	\$46,300
Texas	\$19.75	\$41,070
Washington	\$22.33	\$46,300

Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational employment and wages, May 2020, 21-1094 community health workers. [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm#\(1\)](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm#(1)). Accessed on January 8, 2021.²⁶

experience is valuable because CHWs work in the community with a diverse population. In addition, CHWs with additional language and cultural skills will have a major advantage when applying for CHW employment opportunities.²⁷ See **Table 1.4**.

Since the CHW profession is an emerging profession and the career information changes rapidly, here are two helpful links:

- https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/pubs/docs/chw_state_laws.pdf shows the requirements for CHWs in most states.²⁸

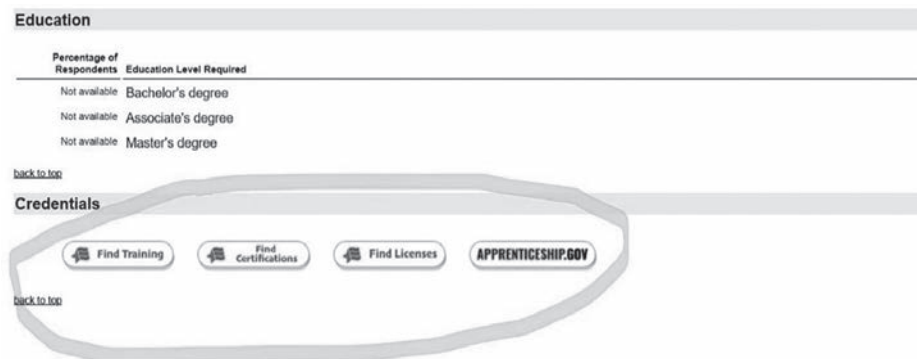


Figure 1.4 O*Net CHW Credentials

Figure from O*Net Online. Summary Report For: 21-1094.00- Community Health Workers. <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/21-1094.00>. Accessed October 23, 2021.²⁵

- O*NET Online has searchable information about credentials and certifications (<https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/21-1094.00#Credentials>).²⁵ For example, Arizona has a certification that is optional and not required; however, the benefits of certification versus noncertification are still being explored (<https://human-resources-health.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12960-020-00487-7.pdf>).²⁹ See **Figure 1.4**.

Examples of CHW Careers

Additionally, CHWs emphasize advocacy work among specific populations. For example, the LGBTQIA+ population advocates for equality and improved access to healthcare providers. CHWs join in such advocacy efforts, while focusing on numerous aspects of chronic disease, including access to health care and health insurance, understanding a diagnosis, taking medications correctly, communicating with healthcare providers, and other such topics. For example, if a CHW works with individuals in a rural area who have a chronic disease, the focus would be different than for a CHW serving elderly individuals who reside in a low-income housing community.

Now that you have learned what CHWs do in their community, it is time to think about

if you would enjoy this career. By taking the 10-question career quiz in **Box 1.2**, you will discover if your responses match with the expectations of CHWs.

Now that you have an idea about whether you are suited for a CHW career, explore a sample job description for a CHW. See **Table 1.5**.

Would you apply for this position? You may wish to think about and consider the following questions:

- Would you get excited going to work each day if you were hired for this job?
- Do you know the healthcare resources in your community? If not, would you be willing to learn?
- Would you like to work with people and help them improve their health concerns?
- Would you like to help people to understand or resolve their health issues?
- Do you have the required qualifications? Do you have any of the preferred qualifications?

Now that you realize that becoming a CHW matches your desires and your experience, it is time to read through descriptions of available jobs. When you begin this process, it is not necessary to focus on geographical location of the position. Review Table 1.2 to remember the various titles given to CHWs. If you only search for CHWs positions, it is likely that you will skip over many other appropriate positions with

Box 1.2 CHW Career Quiz

Statements	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
I like working with different types of people.				
I am interested in working on a healthcare team.				
I enjoy helping to make my community a better place.				
I want a job that has a flexible schedule, including some evenings and weekends.				
I do not mind driving around the community if I am reimbursed for the mileage.				
I like researching topics to discover community resources for individuals in need.				
I enjoy getting involved with community committees to solve problems.				
I like to be creative at work to design or improve healthcare brochures.				
I am interested in a position that offers opportunities for advancement.				
I prefer a job I enjoy with adequate pay rather than a higher salary in a job that I do not enjoy.				
Total Score				

Results: The higher the score, the more likely you would enjoy a CHW position.

- You would like a career in CHW: Score: Over 30
- You would like portions of CHW: Score: 29–20
- You would generally not like this work: Score: Under 20

difference titles. This type of search is for you to focus on the qualifications and skills required to apply for each position.³⁰ The question to keep in mind is:

Which qualifications and skills do I have, and which qualifications and skills do I need to acquire?

As you browse through the available positions, make a list of qualifications and skills requested that you may need to develop as preparation for becoming a CHW. This purpose of this chapter is to introduce the role of CHWs rather

than present the details of resume writing and interviewing skills.

Chapter Summary

This chapter started with a description of public health by defining the three core functions and 10 essential services as well as the difference between public health and individual health. Next the discussion moved to the history of CHWs and the various roles, skills, and responsibilities of a CHW in the community including duties, wages, and places of employment.

Table 1.5 Example of Job Description for a CHW

Category	Duties
Summary	We are looking for a person who is a community-minded and interested in teaching classes about nutritious eating and exercise to promote healthy lifestyles. This job position is responsible for creating and integrating health-based programs, while partnering with various health organizations. It will be necessary to be familiar with community resources and understand effective program planning. Besides physical health, it is necessary to know about services for mental health and addiction services. Bilingual applicants will receive top priority for this position. If you enjoy helping others improve their lives and health, submit your application.
Responsibilities	<p>Develop and maintain a client database including contact information, forms, notes, and supplementary information.</p> <p>Host neighborhood meetings to determine health program needs for individuals in the community.</p> <p>Participate in weekly community outreach events to raise awareness among special interest groups, such as the elderly, pregnant women, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes seeking health care in the community.</p> <p>Contact (in-person, phone, or virtual media) clients in existing programs to ensure their health and safety, answer questions, provide resources, and update their current concerns.</p> <p>Complete administrative tasks to keep records organized, update the client database and calendar for community events, upcoming client visit schedules, and other duties as assigned.</p> <p>Coordinate and schedule staff meetings and the agenda for the administrative management team.</p>
Leadership and Advancement	<p>Manage “train-the-trainer” opportunities as CHW increases in size and scope of responsibilities.</p> <p>Teach basic clinical skills (e.g., glucose monitoring, blood pressure screening, vaccine clinic participation) to new team members.</p> <p>Participate in opportunities to gain additional certifications and advanced skills.</p>
Qualifications	<p>Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High school diploma or its equivalent ■ Basic computer skills for Microsoft Word, Zoom, and Facebook <p>Preferred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Experience in some aspect of the healthcare field ■ Experience working with retired individuals and the Medicaid population ■ Able to converse and write well in Spanish ■ Customer service experience with the public
Application	Apply online at https://mycommunitycenter.com/application

Data from Livecareer. Community health worker job description writing and posting in 3 easy steps. <https://www.livecareer.com/job-description/examples/social-services/community-health-worker>. Accessed on January 18, 2021.³⁰

CASE STUDY

Applying for a CHW Position

For the past 7 years, Brenda has been employed as a patient technician in a small, assisted living complex. She wants to explore how to become a CHW. She has an associate degree in health education and speaks fluent Spanish. Since she works full-time, she does not have much free time to investigate a career change to CHW.

1. Describe where Brenda should begin the process to become a CHW.
2. Identify places where Brenda might find employment as a CHW.
3. List ways to assist Brenda to update her resume prior to applying for CHW jobs.

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