

## **Definition and Role of the Minnesota Community Health Worker**

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are members of the community they serve. They build relationships and trust at the grassroots level and bridge the gap between individuals, families and communities with health and social services. CHWs are paraprofessionals who have graduated from an approved CHW training curriculum\*, they work in clinical and community facilities to provide health and social service linkages. CHWs teach community members and providers the knowledge and skills needed to understand, give and receive appropriate care and service options for all Minnesotans.

### *Core Roles of Community Health Workers*

Role 1: Bridge the gap between communities and the health and social service systems

- A. Educate community members about how to use the health care and social service systems
- B. Educate the health and social service systems about community needs and perspectives
- C. Gather information
- D. Communicate with identified populations
- E. Improve quality of care by aiding communication between provider and patient to clarify cultural practices

Role 2: Promote wellness by providing culturally appropriate health information to clients and providers. For example:

- A. Health promotion and disease prevention
- B. Assist client's in managing their chronic illness

Role 3: Assist in navigating the health and human services system

- A. Connect with people needing services
- B. Make referrals and coordinate services
- C. Teach people the knowledge and skills needed to obtain care
- D. Facilitate continuity of care by providing follow-up
- E. Manage paperwork (e.g., help with application for public assistance)

Role 4: Advocate for Individual and Community Needs

- A. Articulate and represent needs of community and individuals to others
- B. Be a spokesperson for clients when they are unable to speak for themselves
- C. Involve participants in self and community advocacy.

Role 5: Provide Direct Services

- A. Link to community resources to meet basic needs
- B. Provide individual social and health care support
- C. Organize and/or facilitate support groups
- D. Refer and link to preventive services through health screenings and healthcare information

Role 6: Build Individual and Community Capacity:

- A. Build individual capacity to achieve wellness
- B. Build community capacity by addressing social determinants of health
- C. Identify individual and community needs
- D. Mentor other CHWs – capacity building
- E. Seek professional development (continuing education)

\*Recognizing that until recently there was no formal training curriculum for CHWs. This definition looks toward the future using the new curriculum that will facilitate employment, provide opportunities for advancement—academically and professionally—and foster reimbursement for CHW activities.

## Minnesota Community Health Worker Curriculum

1. **The Community Health Role: Advocacy and Outreach**
  - ✚ Credits = 3 credits, 2 credits in classroom, 1 credit internship
  - ✚ Description: This course focuses on the role of the community health workers' personal safety, self care, and personal wellness and the promotion of health and disease prevention of clients. Course includes classroom and internship field work.
  - ✚ Objectives:
    1. Define scope of practice for community health worker
    2. Identify and use 9-1-1 system appropriately and ethically
    3. List personal safety strategies
    4. Create a personal safety plan
    5. Identify and recognize signs of stress
    6. Identify and utilize coping strategies for managing stress and staying healthy
    7. Define outreach and identify ways to connect with community
    8. Identifies strategies to provide clear, accurate agency information to clients in the community
    9. Define advocacy
    10. Discuss strategy for effective advocacy work
  
2. **Organization and Resources: Community and Personal Strategies**
  - ✚ Credits = 2 credits, 1 credit classroom, 1 credit internship
  - ✚ Description: The course focuses on the community health worker's knowledge of the community and their ability to prioritize and organize their work. Emphasis is on the use and critical analysis of resources and information problem solving.
  - ✚ Objectives
    1. Identify ways to gather information about community resources
    2. Prioritize client information into an effective plan or time line
    3. List benefits of time management
    4. Analyze own time management style and present to others
    5. Identify sources of current information about health issues
    6. Find information on cultural beliefs
    7. Discuss ways to use information to promote health of self, families and clients
    8. Define critical thinking; Discuss critical thinking as it relates to the community health worker role
  
3. **Community Health Worker's Role in Teaching and Capacity Building**
  - ✚ Credits = 2 classroom credits
  - ✚ Description: This course focuses on the community health worker's role in teaching and increasing capacity of the community and of the client. Emphasis is on establishing health lifestyles and clients developing agreements to take responsibility for achieving health goals. Students will learn and practice methods for planning, developing and implementing plans with clients to promote wellness.

✚ Objectives:

1. Collect client data specific to healthy behaviors, safety and psychosocial issues.
2. Provide clients with information based on individual needs and desires
3. Construct a contract with clients that promote health care and social responsibility.
4. Develop a list of community resources to act as incentives for clients' health goals.
5. Utilize a variety of teaching strategies with clients.
6. Construct health promotion activities to address community needs
7. Employ effective communication skills when collaborating with client and other members of service team.
8. Act as a role model for clients regarding self-care and healthy behaviors.

4. The Community Health Worker: Legal and Ethical Responsibilities

✚ Credits = 1 classroom credit

✚ Description: This course focuses on the legal and ethical dimensions of the community health workers' role. Included are boundaries of the community health worker position, agency policies, confidentiality, liability, mandatory reporting and cultural issues that can influence legal and ethical responsibilities.

✚ Objective:

1. Define policy and explain why they are important and what implications of policy are.
2. Define confidentiality, HIPPA and ethical aspects of confidentiality.
3. Explain principles of a helping relationship.
4. Define role of community health worker and boundaries of community health worker.
5. Describe legal responsibility of community health worker in mandatory reporting.
6. Discuss cultural brokering.
7. Discuss impact of culture in the context of full disclosure.
8. Define liability and malpractice.
9. Discuss how ethics influence the care of clients.

5. Community Health Worker: Coordination, Documentation, and Reporting

✚ Credits = 1 classroom credit

✚ Description: This module focuses on the importance and ability of the CHW to gather, document and report on client visits and other activities. The emphasis is on appropriate, accurate and clear documentation with consideration of legal and agency requirements

✚ Objectives:

1. List types of forms that comprise a client record
2. Explain what kinds of information must be included in client record
3. State reasons for timeliness of documentation and its practical applications
4. Accurately uses health care terminology in client record
5. Create and maintain records following legal principles when documenting
6. Identify, create and maintain organized system of community resources

## 6. Communication Skills and Cultural Competence

✚ Credits = 2 credits

✚ **Description:** This module provides the content and skills in communication to assist the Community Health Worker in effectively interacting with a variety of clients, their families and a range of healthcare providers. Included are verbal/non-verbal communication, listening and interviewing skills, networking, building trust and working in teams. Communication skills are grounded within the context of the community's culture and the cultural implications that can affect client communication.

✚ **Objectives:**

1. Use a range of effective communication skills to interact with clients and provide accurate and relevant information/documentation.
2. Interact effectively within the community and its culture by building trust, being culturally responsive and working within diverse team settings.
3. Network within the community and throughout the healthcare system to provide needed services and resources for clients and their families