COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS PROVIDE VITAL SERVICES TO THE HEARTLAND

Heartland Health Caucus

Understanding the value of Community Health Workers (CHWs) is essential to building and sustaining a stronger health care system in heartland states. Recognized as a designated workforce classification by the U.S. Department of Labor,[1] CHWs fill a crucial role in keeping our communities healthy. By defining training, certification, scope of practice and payment for CHWs, their contributions will continue to improve health outcomes in states and communities across the heartland.

CHWs ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF RURAL PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

CHWs work one-on-one with patients and their families. CHWs uniquely understand what is going on in people's lives by taking a holistic approach to patient care and other determinants of health – from driving patients to doctor appointments to preventing fall risks to helping ensure balanced nutrition. Whether a patient is managing a chronic disease or navigating the health system for the first time, evidence shows CHWs can make all the difference in patient experience and overall health outcomes.

INVESTING IN CHWs IS AN INVESTMENT IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

CHWs facilitate access to health education and services for individuals and families. CHWs typically have deep ties to their communities and practical experience working with local organizations. As frontline public health workers who are **trusted members of the community**, they bring deep regional knowledge of local services that augment the clinical needs of patients and their families.

QUALITY CARE WITH POSITIVE OUTCOMES

CHWs' trusted grassroots approach to care has clear economic benefits:

- A 2020 Health Affairs study found **CHWs saved Medicaid more than $1.4 million**, generating a **return of $2.47** for every dollar spent by the average Medicaid payer. These savings came primarily from a 5% drop in ER visits, 12.6 % drop in hospitalizations related to diabetes and other chronic conditions and $250 savings per patient on hospital care coordination.[2]

- In a recent study, the American Medical Association found that on average, one CHW saved facilities **more than $170,000 per CHW** and **$1,135 per patient engaging with a CHW**.[3]

- **Hospitals received enhanced reimbursement** for care coordination services of $250 per patient, and there was a **5% reduction of emergency department visits**. For patients with diabetes and other chronic health issues, there was a **12.6% reduction in hospitalizations**.[4]

WORKFORCE GROWTH

Over the next 10 years, we anticipate more than 80,000 CHWs will enter the workforce – directly contributing to better outcomes and less financial burden for those accessing health care.[5] Private insurers across the heartland have been expanding access to CWHs for their members.[6] As health care becomes more complex, the simplicity and direct service provided by CHWs will become increasingly important - allowing patients and their families the freedom to focus on improving their health outcomes.

DOWNLOAD TO YOUR DEVICE

[1] Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). "Occupational Outlook Handbook."
[2] Health Affairs. (2020). "Evidence-Based Community Health Worker Program Addresses Unmet Social Needs And Generates Positive Return On Investment." https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00981
[3] American Medical Association. (2020). "How community health workers can help improve outcomes, cut costs." https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/scope-practice/how-community-health-workers-can-help-improve-outcomes-cut-costs#:~:text=Data%20supports%20CHWs'%20positive%20impact,-CHWs%20%E2%80%9Ccontributed-%20substantially&text=Emergency%20department%20visits%20fell%20by,annually%20generated%20by%20each%20CHW.
[4] Idem.
[5] Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). Employment Projections Program. https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/community-health-workers.htm#tab-6
[6] https://www.hcinnovationgroup.com/population-health-management/payers-providers/article/21252192/blue-cross-blue-shield-of-minnesotas-innovations-around-community-health-workers