The Evolving Role of Community Health Workers

Mary-Beth Malcarney, JD, MPH, Patricia Pittman, PhD, Leo Quigley, MSW, MPH, Naomi Seiler, JD, Katie Horton, RN, JD, MPH
The George Washington University Health Workforce Institute & Health Workforce Research Center

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY — WASHINGTON, DC

1 BACKGROUND

- CHW workforce is expanding and integration into health systems is growing.
- Employers asking about required competencies.
- CHWs debating how best to preserve their unique contribution in the face of changing employment relationships.

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Part I: What kinds of employers? What are their hiring criteria? How are programs funded? What are primary work sites? How is the type and degree integration correlated with these variables?
Part II: What are implications for competencies?

3 METHOD

Literature review
- 78 CHW programs identified through web sites, articles, interviews and surveys (22). Convenience sample. Not all variables obtainable for all programs.
- 22 key informant interviews (used to enhance data base and add policy context)
- 3 case studies that examine the identify major categories of analysis regarding the nature of integration approach
- Comparative analysis of existing competency lists
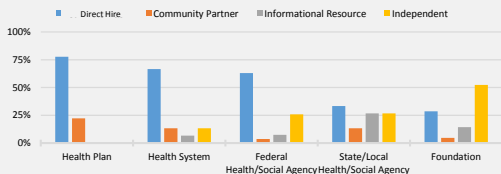
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CONTACT INFORMATION

Patricia Pittman, PhD
Co-Director, The GW Health Workforce Research Institute
Director, The GW Health Workforce Research Center
ppittman@gwu.edu

4 RESULTS

Lead Organization by Type of Integration

Type of Integration by Funding Source

Hiring Criteria by Type of Integrations

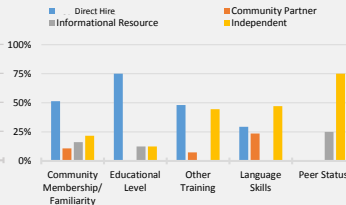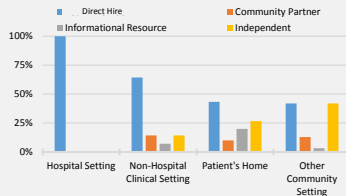### Primary Site of Intervention by Type of Integration

8 DISCUSSION

- Funding through health plans still below 10%. Stability for CHWs may depend on growing this source.
- Peer status and community membership are key elements of CHW in most forms of integration, but in direct hire situations, education and training more important.
- Whether CHW integration effectively helps address social determinants may depend on a) financing and b) how integration occurs.
- Need to develop strong occupational identity, with competencies that relate to integration needs- including ability to defend their unique contribution.
- Need for a support structure for the "CHW identity" – a CHW as supervisor, or a supervisor sensitized to the tendency of health care services to shape jobs and relationships around its needs, as opposed to the needs of disadvantaged community.

5 Part II: How do Current Competency Lists Relate to These Issues?

- Content analysis of existing lists (MN, MI, TX, NY, NM, OH, Texas, Boston, MA, City College of SF)
- Consistency across lists (despite confusion around tasks vs. skills vs. knowledge)

6 What is the Unique Contribution of CHWs? Organizing Existing Competencies into Modes of Impact

Current Competencies	Mode of Impact
- Outreach Methods and Strategies	1. Outreach
- Culturally Based Communication	
- Cultural Responsiveness & Mediation	2. Trust building
- Interpersonal Skills	
- Teaching	
- Health coaching	
- Capacity building	3. Community and Individual Empowerment
- Informal counseling	
- Community capacity building	
- Knowledge base about the community, health issues, and available services and resources	4. Addressing Social Determinants
- Community Assessment	
- Advocacy	

7 What is the Unique Contribution of CHWs? Organizing Existing Competencies into Modes of Impact

Proposed New Competencies	Mode of Impact?
- Ability to articulate unique contributions (occupational identity relating to 1st 4 Modes of Impact)	
- Knowledge of legal and ethical responsibilities in health systems	
- Writing and technical communication skills for documentation and reporting	
- Knowledge of health system for care coordination and system navigation services	5. Ability to integrate into health systems while maintaining unique occupational identity
- Ability to work in teams	
- An ability to balance empathy for the provider with advocacy for the patient (high level negotiating, diplomacy and conflict resolution skills)	
- Leadership skills – in the community & in the system as a representative of the community	