

# GREATER COLUMBIA ACCOUNTABLE COMMUNITY OF HEALTH

## Community Health Worker (CHW) Internship and Training Program

### **PURPOSE:**

Greater Columbia Accountable Community of Health (GCACH) seeks to support organizations willing to provide internships for Community Health Workers (CHW)s. This policy provides guidelines for organizations that are willing to employ and integrate Community Health Workers into their care teams, support a training curriculum that gives them a wide variety of experiences and knowledge, and offer developmental opportunities that lead to professional growth. This is an eighteen-month program.

Organizations will be expected to provide jobs with livable wages and benefits, and encourage CHW interns to network within their communities to understand local resources and services. Greater Columbia ACH will coordinate specific training and education from the following entities:

- WA Department of Health,
- Northwest Regional Primary Care Association
- Eastern Washington Community Health Worker Network
- Training as identified by sponsor organizations, GCACH and the State's CHW Taskforce.

GCACH will convene CHWs hired by sponsor organizations on a quarterly basis to support peer-to-peer learning and create an environment for information sharing and relationship building. GCACH will also tap into other resources as they develop.

### **OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT:**

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are currently employed by many providers in the GCACH region, but most providers are not compensated for their services. Community Health Workers play a critical role in improving the health of their communities, and linking diverse and underserved populations to health and social service systems. Based on their life experiences and roles as health influencers within their communities, they address social determinants of health and work to reduce disparities in health care delivery among vulnerable or underserved populations. Through all this, CHWs can improve health outcomes and the quality of care while achieving significant cost savings in health care, institutional and social service spending.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an increasing need for outreach to people requiring resources and linkages to social services, providing additional opportunities for the CHWs. Many people have been displaced from their employment due to the pandemic, providing a potential CHW workforce. A 2020 survey of our provider organizations indicated a strong potential to utilize CHWs in the organizations' work, but the barrier has been little or no reimbursement for the services they would provide.

In 2015, a Community Health Worker (CHW) Task Force convened as part of the state's Healthier Washington initiative to recommend policies that would help the CHW workforce fit with other projects under the initiative. The task force released a report in 2016 with recommendations about Community Health Workers' potential roles, needed skills and qualities, training and education needs, and associated costs for long-term Community Health Worker integration into Washington's health care system. In 2018, the WA state legislature designated funding for the Washington State Department of Health to implement the 2015-2016 CHW Task Force community health worker training and education recommendations. The legislature requested a report detailing those efforts by June 30, 2019.

The recommendations in this GCACH CHW Internship and Training Policy incorporate the 2018-2019 CHW Task Force's recommendations on CHW training.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**"Applicant"** The organization applying for GCACH sponsorship or incentive funding through this GCACH CHW Internship and Training Program. Applicant must meet the requirements specified below (see: Requirements for Applicants).

**"Community Health Worker"** Community Health Workers in this policy refer to the definition supported by the American Public Health Association: "Frontline public health workers who are trusted members of and/or have a unique understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the workers 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." In the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), Community Health Workers are recognized as important members of the health care workforce who improve access to health care, health outcomes, and quality of life for underserved communities.

**"CHW Intern"** CHWs employed under provider-based CHW internship programs that receive GCACH sponsorship. Their roles might include assisting individuals and communities to adopt healthy behaviors and conducting outreach for medical personnel or health organizations to implement programs in their community that promote, maintain, and improve individual and community health. They may also provide information on available resources, provide social support and informal counseling, advocate for individuals and community health needs, and provide services such as first aid and blood pressure screening. They may also screen for (e.g. PRAPARE tool) and collect data to help identify community health needs.

**"Internship"** An internship is a professional learning experience that offers meaningful, practical work related to a learner's field of study or career interest. The purpose of an internship is to provide clinical, real-world experience that enables interns to use their life experience and training to help patients with their care coordination needs. For the purpose of this policy, internship will also include the time period under which GCACH provides sponsorship or incentive funding through this program to a particular organization.

**"Team-based Care"** Team-based care is defined by the National Academy of Medicine (formerly known as the Institute of Medicine) as "...the provision of health services to individuals, families, and/or their communities by at least two health providers who work collaboratively with patients and their caregivers—to the extent

preferred by each patient - to accomplish shared goals within and across settings to achieve coordinated, high-quality care.”

**“CHW Sample of reported job titles”:** The following are a sampling of job titles that have been used by individuals assuming the CHW role within different organizations: Apprise Counselor, Community Health Outreach Worker, Community Health Program Coordinator, Community Health Program Representative, Community Health Aide, Promotor/Promotora, Community Health Promoter, Community Health Worker (CHW), Community Nutrition Educator, HIV CTS Specialist (Human Immunodeficiency Virus Counseling and Testing Services Specialist).

### **BACKGROUND:**

Community Health Workers have existed in this country and elsewhere for decades and provide varying levels of care to the communities they serve. Many providers in the GCACH service area employ CHWs or Care <sup>1</sup>Coordinators. These include Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), such as Yakima Neighborhood Health Services, Yakima Valley Farm Workers, and Tri-Cities Community Health. Providence St. Mary’s Medical Center in Walla Walla has employed CHWs and placed them in a dyad RN-CHW arrangement to care for at-risk patients with clinical and psychosocial needs. Comprehensive Healthcare has also been using care coordinators for more than a decade.

Preliminary feedback from its community partners led GCACH to survey its provider organizations to understand their need and interest in employing CHWs, especially through an internship program modeled after GCACH’s previous behavioral health internship program. Responding organizations included hospitals and health systems, community health centers, behavioral health agencies, and nursing facilities.

Many organizations spoke of the need or desire to add CHW capacity to support health literacy or to focus on the needs of minority and vulnerable populations. Those employing CHWs praised their work and the wide range of services they provided. A major barrier to hiring was inadequate reimbursement for their services.

CHWs could be integrated into organizations in many ways, such as through interdisciplinary teams or Health Home programs. Less than 24% of responding organizations currently have a CHW training program and more than 52% would like to receive training on how to implement such a program.

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICANT ORGANIZATION:**

- Preference for funding will be awarded to Applicants participating in the GCACH Practice Transformation program, although other Applicants may also apply for funding.
- The Applicant will demonstrate the capacity, competency, and willingness to provide training and clinical experience specific to the CHW’s role within the organization. As such, the Applicant is encouraged to provide travel reimbursement or transportation, childcare and meals for both online and in-person trainings.

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<sup>1</sup> E. Lee Rosenthal, J. Nell Brownstein, Carl H. Rush, Gail R. Hirsch, Anne M. Willaert, Jacqueline R. Scott, Lisa R. Holderby, and Durrell J. Fox, “Community Health Workers: Part of The Solution,” *Health Affairs* 2010 29:7, 1338-1342.

- The Applicant will understand the key abilities of Community Health Workers based on completion of a core training for hiring and retention purposes.
- The Applicant will work with the CHW Intern to customize their training curricula to address their specific roles within the Applicant's organization.
- The Applicant will evaluate the CHW Intern's performance and the program of work to demonstrate efficacy of the process after the internship period has been completed. Such evaluation of the CHW will include:
  - An estimate return on their CHW investment
  - Success stories
  - Suggest possible alternative payment streams
  - Grant opportunities resulting from their CHW Intern experience
  - Potential models to sustain the position
- A brief-evaluation will be conducted by the Applicant and provided to GCACH quarterly.
- Applicants will seek access to trainings and resources to better understand Community Health Worker models and support implementation of the most suitable models in their workplaces.
- Applicants will provide a written plan documenting training activity the CHW Intern will participate in; e.g., practical experience through projects and/or patient care; special assignments or research that supports federal, state, and community-based programs; and policies and best practices supporting prevention and care coordination.
- Preference will be given to Applicants offering rural practice experience, interprofessional learning, and/or clinical team-based care.
- CHW Interns will be integrated into the organization's clinical care processes. In some situations, this might mean that they are a part of a clinical/CHW dyad. This linkage may vary by organization.
- Dedicated recurring time for supervision where CHW Intern can process interactions with clients, ask questions, learn from other CHWs and receive support on administrative challenges (such as completing timesheets or mileage forms).
- Applicant will be expected to provide jobs with livable wages and benefits (see *1 Adult, Zero Children* at <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/53005>), and encourage CHW interns to network within the community to understand local resources and services.
- The organization is encouraged to offer developmental opportunities, through training or otherwise, that lead to professional growth of the CHW.
- Applicant will be expected to allow the CHW Intern to participate in GCACH CHW training opportunities that occur throughout their internship.

#### **REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNS AND PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS:**

- CHW Intern must be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident (I-151 or I-551), or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) student or provide work authorization to work in the United States

Individuals on temporary visas are not eligible. Additionally, individuals must be authorized or eligible by law to work in the United States.

- The CHW Intern will enroll in the Washington Department of Health Core training for CHWs and receive a certificate of completion at the end of the training.
- The CHW Intern will participate in other training opportunities throughout their internship as needed by the provider organization.
- Potential Tasks of a CHW may include the following:
  - Advise clients where they can receive resources related to improving their living condition, such as housing assistance, food resources, legal assistance, transportation, medical or behavioral health services.
  - Include within their caseload members of high-risk or otherwise targeted groups, such as members of minority populations, low-income populations, or pregnant women.
  - Contact clients in person, by phone, or in writing to support their efforts to access needed or recommended services
  - Advise clients or community groups on issues related to preventive diagnostic screenings, such as breast cancer screening, pap smears, glaucoma tests, or diabetes screenings.
  - Maintain/update client records with plans, notes, appropriate forms, or related information. Assist families in applying for healthcare and social services, including Medicaid coverage or Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) services.
  - Assist individuals or families in signing-up for health insurance coverage through Washington's Health Benefit Exchange.
  - Where needed, conduct social determinants of health screening of clients using an appropriate screening tool (e.g. PRAPARE) and assist clients in accessing these services
  - Coordinate with other organizations involved in a client's care including the primary care team and any social or behavioral health service providers who are working with the client.
  - Additional requirements determined by the Applicant Organization.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF GCACH**

GCACH will provide access to resources, training, and organizational infrastructure tools for Applicants, ensuring that training programs meet approved standards and are recognized by employers across the state. Such training will include themes identified by the 2018-2019 CHW Task Force:

- How to communicate with people who speak other languages or who have disabilities, as well as how to ask nonverbal questions to identify people who may need resources
- How to develop trust in relationships
- Mental health, including mental health first aid training, addressing adverse childhood experiences, trauma-informed care, and crisis intervention

- Community Health Worker self-empowerment, self-esteem, self-care, establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries, and handling second-hand trauma
- Cultural awareness, diversity, and bilingualism
- Advocacy and self-advocacy – how to make your case and identify processes for resolution

Trainings will be held in multiple languages, particularly Spanish and others as identified by the sponsoring organization.

**DESCRIPTION OF APPLICANT APPLICATION PROCESS:**

- Applicants may apply for one eighteen-month program award.
  - Funding awards are available for up to \$50,000 per award.
  - Funds used as a stipend to support travel and lodging/per diem expenses for interns are permissible uses of the fund.
- Create a training plan for the CHW.
- Participate in a training on how best to utilize and support a CHW.
- Demonstrate the desire, willingness or need for CHW interns within the organizations.
- Demonstrate the efficacy of their CHW Internship program, and provide a program assessment quarterly, following program launch, and a post-program evaluation of the program.
- Apply to be added to the Washington State Financial Executor Portal to receive incentive funding