

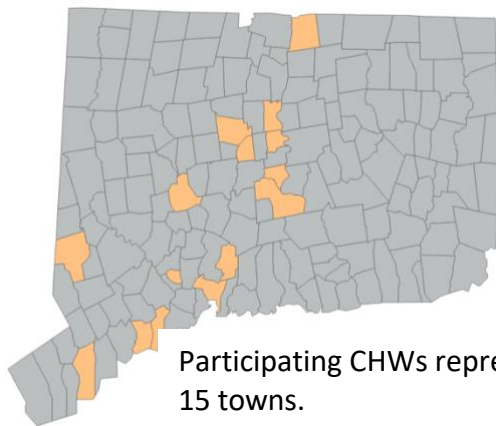


2021 CHW FORUM SUMMARY REPORT



OVERVIEW: Health Equity Solutions (HES) in partnership with the Community Health Worker Association of Connecticut (CHWACT) organized three virtual community health worker (CHW) forums from August - September of 2021. The purpose of these forums was to hold space for CHWs to gather and share their thoughts, priorities, and concerns for the CHW workforce in the state of Connecticut.

GEOGRAPHY:



Participating CHWs represented 15 towns.

RACE & ETHNICITY:

Black /African American	41%
Hispanic/Latino	34%
Prefer Not To Say	14%
Missing	7%
White	3%

*(n = 29)

CHW FORUM DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SUSTAINABILITY

In an ideal world, what is needed for CHWs to thrive in Connecticut? What does that mean or look like?

ADVANCEMENT

Now that we have certification in CT what is needed to make CHWs a more connected and recognized part of the health care system?

INCLUSIVITY

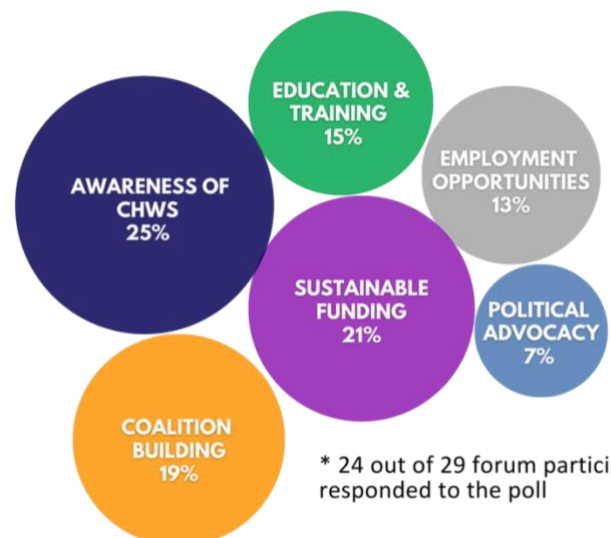
For the CT workforce, how can we ensure there is inclusive support and sustainability for CHWs in any setting (medical, community-based, etc.)?

FULL SCOPE OF PRACTICE

What other concerns related to the CHW workforce should we be discussing?

TOP PRIORITIES

Community awareness of CHWs ranked as the top priority (25%) to advance the workforce followed by sustainable funding (21%) and coalition building (19%).



* 24 out of 29 forum participants responded to the poll

FORUM HIGHLIGHTS

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING:

- Stable salary and competitive compensation that reflects the unique skill set and value that enable CHWs to engage communities experiencing disproportionate barriers to health.
- Solve problems associated with “grant-jumping” through consistent and flexible sources of funding that support CHWs in comprehensively responding to and addressing social determinants of health.
- Inform and involve CHWs in structuring funding models to support their work in Connecticut.

“We should not always be excluded from [essential workers designation] when we work just as close to the clients as a doctor or a nurse. We should be included in that.”

“CHWs must go side by side with funding. That is automatic... We are important enough to not be based on a grant. It should be ongoing.”

“Reimbursement which includes the voices of CHW so that, for example, the barriers being experienced by current funding mechanisms which restrain CHWs from getting the services to the clients that you're working with, so they don't perpetuate and continue.”

AWARENESS OF CHWS:

- Increase community awareness of what CHWs do.
- Increase recognition of CHWs by employers and other actors within the health care space as a valuable and contributing profession in health and social services.
- Embrace CHW inclusion in formal health systems, integrate in interprofessional care teams, strengthen referral networks with community-based organization, and ensure structural supports for professional growth and employment advancement opportunities.

“CHWs are not solely clinical; they are addressing social determinants of health and holistic health of communities - people need to become aware of this in order to increase understanding of their contributions and support of their services.”

“Not having respect or recognition of the work we know how to do and the tools we have that empower us to be very proactive.”

“The scope of CHW service when hired is extended 3 fold: social services, translators, and advocates.”

“CHWs are dealing with marginalization, stigma, and disparities. Educate the legislators! They are not aware of the dependence of communities on CHWs to fill the gaps created by policy.”

COALITION BUILDING & POLITICAL ADVOCACY:

- Increase the communication, connection, and collaboration between CHWs and other providers to help patients receive optimal care and promote more collaboration and professional partnerships in communities demonstrating the most need.
- Increase opportunities for CHWs to connect and network both within their catchment or service area and beyond. Break silos to borrow and share resources.
- Change mindsets by amplifying messaging so the public understands that CHWs are essential workers while simultaneously building advocacy capacity and understanding among the CHW workforce.
- Collect patient and client stories and testimonials showcasing how CHWs positively impact lives.

"CHWs need more publicity!! At all levels — political, community & business."

"Advocacy makes people uncomfortable. [We need] training on advocacy and how to connect with legislators!"

"Other counties with fewer CHWs can benefit from a stronger, more verbal CHW coalition."

"By forming a coalition, we will be able to do the political advocacy."

NEXT STEPS

Based on the CHW Forums summarized above, Health Equity Solutions plans to convene a CHW Coalition focused on advocating for sustainable funding for CHWs in Connecticut. This coalition will be open to CHWs, employers, and allies of the workforce. **If you are interested in joining or receiving updates, please email [Dashni Sathasivam](mailto:Dashni.Sathasivam@hesct.org).**

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

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