

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS: *Essential to the success of health reform*

Community health workers (CHWs)...

- Connect hard-to-reach individuals to health, public health, and human services.
- Reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.
- Have at least 50 different job titles; Work at health centers, community and faith based organizations, and hospitals; Pursue the following activities:
 - ⇒ Health system navigation
 - ⇒ Outreach
 - ⇒ Health education
 - ⇒ Client advocacy

“Community health workers are cost-effective, often resulting in improved health, more visits for preventative and primary care (and less for costly urgent care) and fewer hospitalizations, all of which translate into cost savings.”

— *National Conference of State Legislatures, 2008 Policy Brief*¹

How do CHWs contribute to healthy communities?^{1, 2}

Increase Access to Health Care by:

- Enrolling clients in and help them maintain health insurance coverage.
- Ensuring clients utilize primary and preventive care.

Improve Health Care Quality by:

- Helping clients navigate complex health and human service systems.
- Contributing to improved health literacy, patient engagement, and patient outcomes.

Increase Health Equity by:

- Delivering culturally and linguistically appropriate services.
- Addressing social, environmental and economic barriers to health.

Support legislation to strengthen the health system and the CHW field.

¹ Kristine Goodwin and Laura Tobler, *Community Health Workers: Expanding the Scope of the Health Care Delivery System* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2008).

² Massachusetts DPH Community Health Worker Advisory Council, *Community Health Workers in Massachusetts: Improving Health Care and Public Health* (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2010).

MASSACHUSETTS

HAS BEEN A NATIONAL LEADER IN
ADVANCING THE COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER
FIELD

1965: Boston– the first comprehensive community health center in the nation employed CHWs

2000: Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers formed

2006: Massachusetts Health Care Reform Law mandated study of how to develop a sustainable statewide CHW program

2007-08: MDPH convened CHW Advisory Council, report to the legislature with recommendations forthcoming spring 2009

OTHER STATES HAVE...

- Created CHW training infrastructure
- Established certification for CHWs
- Approved Medicaid reimbursement for some CHW services
- Funded CHWs through the general fund or invested in Medicaid studies

TAKE THE NEXT STEP, SUPPORT...

- **H4130**, Legislation to establish a CHW Board of Certification, *Leads: Representative Fox and Senator Flanagan.*
- **S810**, Legislation to establish the secretariat level Office of Health Equity, *Lead: Senator Fargo.*
- Budget line items that fund outreach, health promotion, disease prevention and enrollment activities.

To find out more about community health worker programs and policy work in Massachusetts, please contact:

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