



Supportive CHW Employer Practices

Community health workers (CHWs) are a unique workforce often balancing the needs of community members and the needs of employers. To do their jobs effectively, CHWs require supervision and support that accommodates to their distinctive work. The recommendations below are based on feedback from CHWs and employers. They are intended to strengthen current employer policies to increase support for CHWs. Employers who adopt these recommendations are likely to experience improved program effectiveness and retention rates among their CHW staff.

<p>Strengthening Supervision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers and supervisors should become educated about the unique role of CHWs • Supervisors should periodically accompany CHWs out into the community to better understand their roles and challenges • Provide CHWs with a job description to clarify responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ During performance reviews, work with CHW to edit description, as needed, to better reflect the work they do • Review goals and objectives of program with CHWs to enhance understanding of their contribution to the program’s overall effectiveness • Ensure that CHW is well integrated into the staff team • Educate other staff on role of CHW • Have timely performance reviews • Increase access to CHW training and education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Granting release time ○ Link improved skill levels to promotions and pay increases ○ Use trainings as a vehicle for professional development • Build career pathways into infrastructure • Allow time for CHWs to network and receive peer support
<p>Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversify CHW funding sources • Build costs of professional development into grant applications • Providing incentives for training and education to counter “body part funding” (i.e an asthma program one year, diabetes education the next)
<p>Suggestions for Hiring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for natural leaders among former clients • Provide opportunities for community input when recruiting CHW staff • Word of mouth through community networks is often the most effective method to find potential CHWs • Involve experienced CHWs in interviewing and training new CHWs

Conclusion: Improving employer policies to accommodate the unique work of CHWs will improve employee retention and program effectiveness. Many of these recommendations can be adopted into existing employer policies at minimal costs. Visit www.machw.org for additional resources on career pathways and core competencies.