



Evidence for Increasing Community Health Worker Wages

July 2020

The Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers (MACHW) commissioned the University of Massachusetts' Center for Social Policy to prepare a report* on community health workers' (CHWs) skills and wages. It found that CHWs in Massachusetts receive considerably lower pay than those in occupations requiring a similar skill set. In response, **MACHW recommends employers consider adopting the following minimum salary range for CHWs:**

Experience	Annual Salary	Hourly Wage⊕
Entry 0 – 2 years	\$38,500 - \$42,500	\$27 - \$30
Mid-Career 2- 5 years	\$42,500 - \$48,500	\$30 - \$35
Senior 5+ years	\$48,500+	\$35 +

⊕ includes benefits

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) recognizes CHWs as important health professionals for reducing costs and improving health outcomes. Though some CHWs have no college experience, their required skill set is comparable to many occupations requiring college degrees and beyond. In 2016, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, CHWs in Massachusetts earned an average hourly wage of \$20.86 (no benefits). The average wage for all occupations in Massachusetts was \$29.95 in 2016, 29% higher than a CHW's wage.

To date, most CHWs are not paid living wages. Research shows that the CHW workforce is predominately comprised of women of color (likely supporting children). The MIT Living Wage Calculator notes the MA living wage for a single adult with 2 children is \$32.98 – approximately \$68,600 in annual earnings for a full time, year-round worker. Different areas of the state have different costs. Living wage for a single adult with two children in Boston is \$34.51/hour compared to \$29.40 for Franklin County, both higher than the current CHW average wage.

The demand for CHWs is growing. Without a corresponding wage increase, health care providers and others will find it more difficult to recruit, hire and retain CHWs. Massachusetts can anticipate increased demand for CHWs. With voluntary state certification now available, that credential should be recognized with a living wage. Paying CHWs appropriate to their skill levels will attract and maintain this professional workforce, reduce turnover cost and improve health outcomes.

***Community Health Workers: Wages, Skills and Roles;** Prepared by
The Center for Social Policy (Brandynn Holgate, Randy Albelda, and Vishakha Agarwal) March, 2018