

MACHW NEWS

Quarterly Newsletter of the

MA Association of
Community Health Workers



Jamie Berberena, CHW and Core Competency Trainer & MACHW Southeast Regional Coordinator, (right), helps a family navigate the way forward

CHWS AT THE FOREFRONT OF COVID EDUCATION

CDC ISSUES GRANTS TO ADDRESS HEALTH INEQUITIES

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), and the MA Department of Public Health (DPH), recently received grants from the CDC to hire 36 new CHWs. The so-called CCR Grant (Community Health Workers for COVID Response and Resilient Communities), will enable both entities to embed CHWs in various health care settings, making a significant impact on communities hardest hit by COVID. Stay tuned to MACHW.org for these new roles!

BPHC will hire (6) CHWs: (1) will be assigned to the Mattapan Community Health Center (CHC), and (1) will be embedded in the Boston Pediatrics South End office. DPH will hire (30) CHWs, of which (10) will be embedded in municipal boards of health. Both organizations are receptive to following the recommended salary levels developed by MACHW (see recommended salary rates here: <https://bit.ly/3EuseLy>).

As they have throughout the pandemic, CHWs will help increase the number of people vaccinated in communities especially hard hit by COVID-19, and address issues related to poverty, housing and food insecurity; all factors known to increase the risk of severe COVID illness.

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Mark Your Calendar 2022

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER WELLNESS SERIES:

'Trauma Informed Care for CHWs'

January 6

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Earn 1.5 CEU's

(continuing education unit hours)

Discuss the impact that traumatic experiences have on individuals, families, and communities. An interactive, inclusive and inspiring space to empower the CHW voice. Expand your advocacy and communication skills and develop ways to interact and network safely.

Register here:

<https://www.nephtc.org/enrol/index.php?id=257>

March 3 & May 12

(Stay tuned for topics)

February

CHW Certification workshop

April

Resume writing for CHWs

June 15

CHW Day!

Please Like/Follow Us!





MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

LISSETTE BLONDET

We are proud to share our newsletter!

This is one more way for our 1,200-member family to stay connected and collectively honor the work of CHWs across the Commonwealth.

This year has been pivotal for our workforce. After 60+ years of research documenting the impact and reach of CHWs, employers and funders realize how critical CHWs are to ensure our most vulnerable neighbors have access to information, services, and resources.

As we grow weary of variants and misinformation, it is important to pause and acknowledge your extraordinary work and accomplishments this year. Counseling clients/patients in despair, clarifying misinformation about vaccines, providing food and protective equipment in neighborhoods - all while home schooling and taking care of family!

You may recall the survey we conducted last winter to learn from you about the impact the pandemic had on your professional and personal life. The findings from the survey made the MACHW team pause and create training and strategies to better support you in 2021.

Our trainings have been focused on providing mental health skills in a webinar format that feels safe and participatory. For this reason, we are asking that only CHWs participate in the webinars. The demand has been huge. In fact, we had to close registration for our November webinar 'Trauma Informed Care for CHWs,' because 200 people signed up!

We miss seeing you in person at our quarterly MACHWita Forums (Southeast, Pioneer Valley, Grater Boston). For now, we will continue to host virtual trainings and workshops. Starting in February, we will add hands on workshops on 'Certification,' 'Resume Writing,' and 'Using LinkedIn to Market You.'

Fair wages and standardization of CHW practice are two main policy priorities. We continue to work with employers and funders to ensure that all CHWs in MA are paid fairly and practice their profession as described by best practices. Here are several accomplishments worth mentioning:

- **The Mass League of Community Health Centers required employers hiring 24 CHWs through a grant from the Klarman Family Foundation to pay CHW salaries at the levels recommended by MACHW: <https://bit.ly/3psM5Ei>.**
- **As MassHealth prepares to create payment rates (capitation) for ACOs, we are actively advocating that they include CHWs earning wages at the recommended rate in their calculations.**
- **We are enormously grateful to the Klarman Family Foundation for a generous grant that is testimony to their commitment and investment in the future of CHWs.**

Meanwhile, we are looking for a 'catchy' new name for our newsletter; I am hopeful you can activate your creative juices and help us identify one! Please email your suggestions to: lblondet@machw.org. We are proud of your dedication and accomplishments and are fortunate to continue this work into 2022 and beyond.

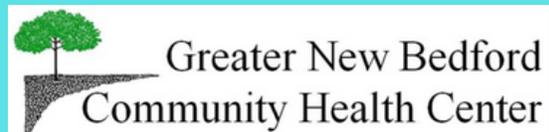
Lissette Blondet, L.



"As in 2021, we will continue to work on improving your wages and creating pathways for you to grow professionally within and beyond CHW practice."

CHW SPOTLIGHT:

**EVELYN LOPEZ, CASE MANAGEMENT
COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER**



Evelyn Lopez is one of those people you are drawn to immediately because of her warmth and caring demeanor, perfect traits for a successful community health worker. "I really love my job...working with families," says Evelyn.

January 2022 will mark Evelyn's 14th year working in various roles at the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (GNBCHC). She joined the health center in 2008 as a benefits counselor. She worked in that role for almost a decade when **Joyce Dupont**, Director of Wellness and Community Programs, asked if she was interested in joining the Community Wellness Team.

Evelyn recalls, "Because I worked as a CNA and benefits counselor, I know a little bit of everything, especially the health insurance piece, which is so important for families."

Soon after joining Dupont's team she began training to become a CHW. Her extensive knowledge and compassion makes her an exceptional resource in pediatrics and behavioral health. These experiences are essential and made a difference recently with a young family in crisis.

Evelyn became familiar with a mom of four, including a newborn, as she conducted a routine intake. After answering a few screening questions, she suspected the mom was depressed.

Evelyn offered assistance, but the mom declined, at least initially. Being the intuitive person she is, Evelyn put a note in the baby's record noting the mom was struggling emotionally. Then, just before Thanksgiving, Evelyn received a desperate voicemail from the mom:

"I don't know what's wrong with me, I feel like I want to run away. I need help."

Kudos to the mom for recognizing her despair and to Evelyn for springing into quick action. Evelyn called the mom immediately and spoke to her in Spanish, offering encouragement, "*No te preocupes. Te vamos a ayudar*" (*Don't worry. We are going to help you*).

She immediately contacted the Women's Health Center at GNBCHC and also spoke to the baby's provider. As a team, they were able to refer the mom to the 'crisis center' of the Office of Child and Family Services in New Bedford.

Evelyn also made sure the entire family was OK during the crisis, securing grocery gift cards for the dad to help him care for the other children as their mother received the care she needed. The mom trusted this CHW enough to reach out. Currently, she is receiving supportive services for her post-partum depression. Evelyn continues to check in with her at least once per week.

Joyce Dupont, Director of Wellness and Community Programs and Evelyn's supervisor says, "I truly believe Evelyn literally saved this mom and her children's lives," Dupont says proudly. It could be a holiday miracle, or just another day in the life of a committed CHW like Evelyn Lopez.

CHWS AT THE FOREFRONT OF COVID EDUCATION

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

"As Massachusetts receives significant funding from the CDC to increase the numbers of CHWs working on prevention and education, MACHW will continue to advocate for fair wages and standardization of CHW practice."

- **Lissette Blondet, MACHW**



The primary goal is to continue vital pandemic outreach, while addressing health inequities beyond the project period. Funding will enable clinical and community organizations and systems to not only address inequities in access to services, but also poor outcomes, such as mental health and maternal and child health concerns exacerbated by the pandemic.

Both organizations have engaged MACHW to take a lead role in convening the funded CHWs regularly to share best practices and solutions to common obstacles, particularly as they pertain to the strategies under the grant. MACHW hopes to create a 'learning collaborative' to assist both organizations in implementing best practices in outreach and education. The funded CHWs will also be invited to join their corresponding regional 'MACHWita' for broader opportunities around leadership, networking, and professional development. The ultimate goal is to assist CHWs toward certification.