

The Community Health Worker Sustainability Collaborative

*Working to Reduce Disparities
in Health and Health Care*



How Community Health Workers Help to Reduce Health Care Disparities

Health care in the United States can be complicated and costly, and the benefits of good health and health care are very unevenly distributed. It may be hard to believe, but social factors such as income, education, racism, and even zipcode have a larger effect on one's health than the actual medical care one receives. Given persistent racial and ethnic disparities in health and health care, it is clear that our fragmented health care system has been failing many communities.

Of course, many people find our complex health care system hard to navigate. But it's even more difficult for people who don't understand the language, lack transportation, and struggle to make rent—let alone pay for medications. For many people, the social and economic barriers to good health and access to health care are simply overwhelming.



Community health workers* (CHWs) play a vital role in addressing these disparities. They can bridge the gaps between health care systems and communities, and provide much-needed education, support, and resources. As trusted

and respected community members, CHWs understand the reality their clients face, as well as their cultural beliefs, traditions, and values. This gives them a unique ability to work with families to address their needs so they can take charge of their health—from increasing prevention and early detection to effectively managing chronic conditions.

Unfortunately, CHWs are an underutilized resource. Many programs have limited funding, lack coordination with clients' overall clinical care, and are not widely available. As a result, we are missing out on an opportunity to provide higher quality, person-centered services that can improve outcomes *and* save health care dollars, and support community-based health empowerment efforts. Clearly, promoting sustainable funding for CHWs and improving how they connect with health care systems must be national priorities.

*Community health workers can have several different titles, including *promotores*, community health representatives, peer navigators, and many more.

The CHW Sustainability Collaborative

The CHW Sustainability Collaborative, a new initiative launched by Families USA, helps health advocates, policymakers, and other stakeholders at state and local levels use Medicaid funding to sustainably support CHWs. We provide a variety of resources and services, including:

The Community Health Worker Resource Hub, containing:

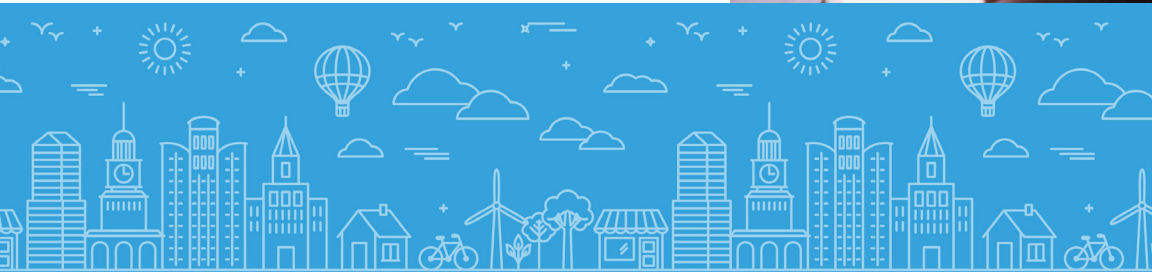
- » Issue briefs and fact sheets about securing sustainable funding for CHWs
- » A guide about opportunities and challenges of different CHW funding models in varying state contexts
- » Case studies, fact sheets, webinars, and presentations about different CHW models
- » State-by-state details on recent legislation and other efforts involving CHWs
- » Select resources from partner organizations

An online community where advocates and stakeholders can:

- » Ask questions and share knowledge, stories, and tips
- » Learn about new pilot programs for CHWs in their communities
- » Provide feedback on advocacy strategies & tactics

Technical assistance for advocates working to fund CHWs through Medicaid

- » Tailored strategic guidance on policy and campaign development



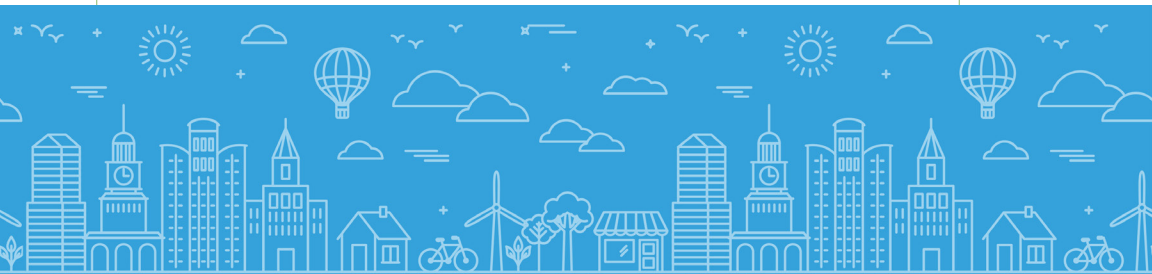


Our vision is a truly affordable, high-quality health care system. We seek to eliminate unjust and costly racial, ethnic, and other health disparities, and to focus on paying for health care value, not volume. CHWs are an example of exactly the kind of valuable

services that will help us reach that goal. To learn more, please contact us at CHWCollaborative@familiesusa.org, or visit familiesusa.org/chw.

How Community Health Workers Address Health and Health Care Disparities

- » Helping people understand and navigate the health care system, including enrolling in health insurance, especially those with limited English or low health literacy
- » Providing culturally tailored support to increase trust in the health care system
- » Promoting and providing preventive services and chronic disease management
- » Connecting people with community and public resources to address unmet social needs
- » Leading community-based classes to help people enjoy healthier lives
- » Advocating to improve community resources, including access to health care

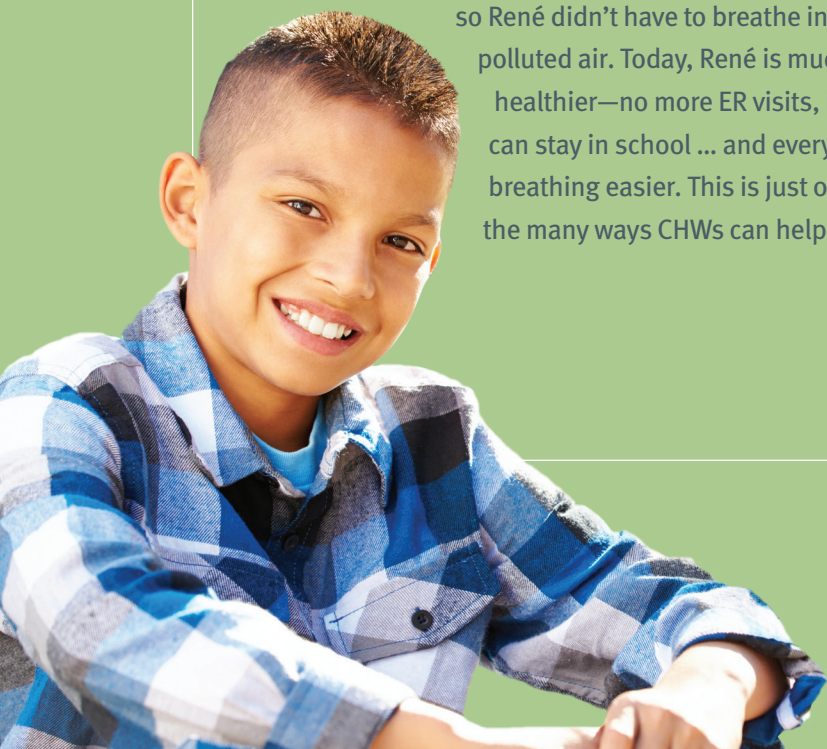


Community Health Workers Make a Difference: René Breathes Better

René's mother made sure he took all his medicines just as the doctor ordered, but his asthma kept getting worse, and he regularly ended up in the emergency department and missing school. Then Carla, a *promotora*, visited their home to provide asthma management education, and assess René's environment.

As soon as she entered their stifling apartment, Carla saw that they had no A/C, there was mold everywhere, and René's bedroom had an open window facing the highway. Carla worked with the family to get the landlord to fix the mold problem, and secured an air conditioner

so René didn't have to breathe in polluted air. Today, René is much healthier—no more ER visits, he can stay in school ... and everyone is breathing easier. This is just one of the many ways CHWs can help.



To learn more about supporting the integration and sustainable funding of CHWs in your state, please contact us at CHWCollaborative@familiesusa.org, or visit familiesusa.org/chw.

The Community Health Worker Sustainability Collaborative is an initiative of Families USA

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