



# COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER EXPANSION

“COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS ARE A PART OF THE SOLUTION TO THE CHALLENGES IN OUR HEALTH AND PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES.

INVESTING IN AND SUSTAINING THE CHW WORKFORCE IS CRITICAL FOR RESPONDING TO CURRENT AND FUTURE PANDEMICS AND TO ACHIEVING HEALTH EQUITY.”

*-DURRELL FOX, CCR EVALUATION CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.*

## A RECAP OF WHAT GOT US HERE...

- The data that we gathered through our RCA and subsequent focus groups indicated that a major reason for vaccine hesitancy in our Hispanic and Latino population was **a lack of trust of government, healthcare and public health entities.**
- Early efforts to engage, converse with, and educate vaccine hesitant folks proved extremely difficult due to our affiliation with a public health department.
- Additional feedback gained through our focus groups, interviews, and surveys made us aware that our Hispanic and Latino community members are concerned about accessing healthcare and behavioral healthcare services, concerned about language barriers in general, often uninsured or underinsured, and fearful of government entities (which is what they perceive CDHD to be).
- Over the last few months, our Community Health Ambassador program (proposed in Invoice #4), which was inspired by above findings, has shifted and grown into a much larger project focused on the utilization of Community Health Workers to help us overcome this barrier and support the needs of our target population.

The following slides will provide updates about our plans and progress thus far!

# CHW: INTERNAL PLANS

## **Current state:**

CDHD employs 1.5 FTE Community Health Workers who are bilingual in English and Spanish

## **Future goals:**

In 2023, CDHD aims to create a new department division entitled “Outreach Programs”. CDHD will hire an Outreach Project Manager and 3 additional full-time Community Health Workers from our Hall County community.

CDHD will employ CHWs who speak Spanish, Somali and Arabic, the three most prominent languages spoken in our minority communities.

2 of these CHWs will be Certified Medication Aides and will be able to administer vaccine under the supervision of a nurse.

## **Progress made:**

We have secured funding and are interviewing for the Outreach Program Manager and our first additional Community Health Worker. We also currently employ 2 Med Aides who speak Spanish and Somali who are interested in going through the Nebraska DHHS Community Health Worker training.

# CHW: EXTERNAL PLANS

WE ARE WORKING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS IN THREE AREAS RELATED TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS (CHWS).

## CHW Network

Our vision is to build a network of Community Health Workers & Navigators in the Central District. We will invite our partner's CHWs and open this network up to similar "navigator" roles (i.e Parish Nurses).

The purpose of this network is to offer support for these staff, including networking opportunities, additional training and professional development opportunities, and to increase the communication and resource sharing among Community Health Workers in Hall, Hamilton, and Merrick Counties.

## Training

We will coordinate and expand training opportunities for members of this CHW network and work in collaboration with NALHD and the UNMC College of Public Health (more on slide 7).

## Coordinated Referrals

We will coordinate with partners to discuss the utilization of a closed-loop referral system to improve client outcomes (ultimately improving trust).

We will explore UniteUs and facilitate conversations with partners and Unite Us to discuss the realistic usability of this system.

# CHW: EXTERNAL FOCUS - PROGRESS UPDATES!

## CHW Network

Hall County partners with CHWs (or similar roles) that have agreed to join this CHW network:

**Hope Harbor\*** - Provides services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness and near homelessness.

**Heartland Health Center** - Hall County's Federally Qualified Health Center, which provides quality, affordable, integrated primary care and preventative services including medical, dental, and behavioral health services.

**Multicultural Coalition\*** - Local non-profit who provides Hall County newcomers with assistance in navigating barriers, including housing, employment, insurance, citizenship, or immigration legal problems, all in the client's native language.

\*These organizations have mostly sustained a strong level of trust with our vaccine hesitant community, as opposed to public health and healthcare organizations.

## Training

We have identified funding sources that will enable us to offer trainings to members of this CHW Network, including trainings on:

- Social Determinants of Health
- Behavioral Health specific trainings:
  - QPR
  - Mental Health First Aid
- Addressing Mis/Disinformation (this is where we will focus on vaccine hesitancy)
- Unconscious Bias
- Motivational Interviewing

Trainings will begin in spring of 2023.

## Coordinated Referrals

We've met with a representative from [UniteUs](#), a closed-loop referral system, and have received basic training on use of the system. We also are exploring [CyncHealth](#), which is used by our hospitals, in the hopes that we can get our hospitals on board and create a more seamless referral system and health information exchange.

Next month, we will meet with our healthcare and social services partners to discuss the feasibility of using a program like UniteUs. A few of our partners are already a part of this platform, but very few in our district are actively using the system for referrals.

As mentioned in the NACCHO "Closing the Referral Loop" Webinar, sometimes a technical solution isn't enough to close the loop. Through the growth of our CHW Network, we hope to grow and strengthen the relationships we know need to be in place for us to successfully use any type of referral system.

# CHW: STATE-WIDE PLANS

- Teresa (CDHD Health Director) is extremely excited about this project. She started talking to other local and state health departments about our intention to focus on the use of Community Health Workers to increase access to care and rebuild trust with the community.
- Through her conversations, we learned that the Nebraska State Association of Local Health Directors (NALHD) and the UNMC College of Public Health recently secured funding to create Community Health Worker trainings for our local health departments.
- At our state Public Health retreat this month, a large focus was on the future of a state-wide effort to use Community Health Workers to support our public health efforts while also rebuilding trust with the different communities that we serve.
- While we don't know exactly what a state-coordinated effort will look like, we seem to be in the right place at the right time!