The Evolving Role of Community Health Workers

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The George Washington University Health Workforce Institute & Health Workforce Research Center

**Background**
- CHW workforce is expanding and integrating into health systems is growing.
- Employers asking about required competencies.
- CHWs debating how best to preserve their unique contribution in the face of changing employment relationships.

**Research questions**

**Part I:** What kinds of employers? What are their hiring criteria? How are programs funded? What are primary work sites? How is the type and degree integration correlated with these variables?

**Part II:** What are implications for competencies?

**Method**
- Literature review: 78 CHW programs identified through web sites, articles, interviews and surveys (22). Convenience sample. Not all variables obtainable for all programs.
- 22 key informant interviews (used to enhance data base and add policy context)
- 3 case studies that examine the identify of integration approach
- Comparative analysis of existing competency lists

**Acknowledgment**
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**Contact Information**
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**Discussion**
- Funding through health plans still below 10%. Stability for CHWs may depend on growing this source.
- Peer status and community membership are key elements of CHW in most forms of integration, but in direct hire situations, education and training more important.
- CHW workforce is expanding and changing employment relationships.
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**Results**

**Type of Integration by Funding Source**

**Primary Site of Intervention by Type of Integration**

**Hiring Criteria by Type of Integrations**

**What is the Unique Contribution of CHWs?**

- Need for a support structure for the CHW identity – a CHW as supervisor, or a supervisor sensitized to the tendency of health care services to shape jobs and relationships around their unique contribution.
- Need to develop strong occupational identity, with competencies that relate to integration needs – including ability to defend their unique contribution.
- Whether CHW integration effectively helps address social determinants may depend on a) financing and b) how integration occurs.
- Peer status and community membership are key elements of CHW in most forms of integration, but in direct hire situations, education and training more important.
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