



SUSTAINABLE FINANCING FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS IN PENNSYLVANIA

BACKGROUND

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are frontline public health workers who are trusted members of and/or have an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery (APHA).

- CHWs provide cultural mediation among individuals, communities and health and social services systems; care coordination and health education; and advocacy for individuals and communities. CHWs improve health outcomes and reduce hospitalizations, ER use, and health care spending.
- CHWs are currently not reimbursable through Medicaid in Pennsylvania. 58% of PA CHWs are funded by short-term federal, state, or philanthropic grants.*
- PA PH-MCOs have latitude to incorporate CHWs through the CBCM program, but only 13% of CHW positions are currently funded through PH-MCO contracts.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The PA CHW Task Force, PA CHW Association, and Western PA CHW Collaborative recommend that PA legislators and PA DHS support the Sustainable Financing Plan (SFP) for CHWs in PA.

- Submit a State Plan Amendment to CMS formally adding CHW services to the state plan to ensure that these services are considered medical costs.
- Expand incentives and/or requirements for MCOs to reimburse the full scope of CHW services, including the utilization of value-based purchasing arrangements and earmarking of CBCM dollars to fund CHWs.
- Leverage the flexibilities under Section 1115 to pilot alternative payment methods (APMs) that incorporate the full range of CHW services.

BEST PRACTICES

- Include community-based organizations and community health centers as part of the solution.
- Provide adequate financing to ensure coverage of the full cost to provide CHW services, including benefits, training, mileage, supervision, and pay increases.
- Adhere to the American Public Health Association definition of CHWs.
- Leverage the work of other states that have implemented long-term financing mechanisms.

