

2024



# CHW Workforce Awareness Toolkit



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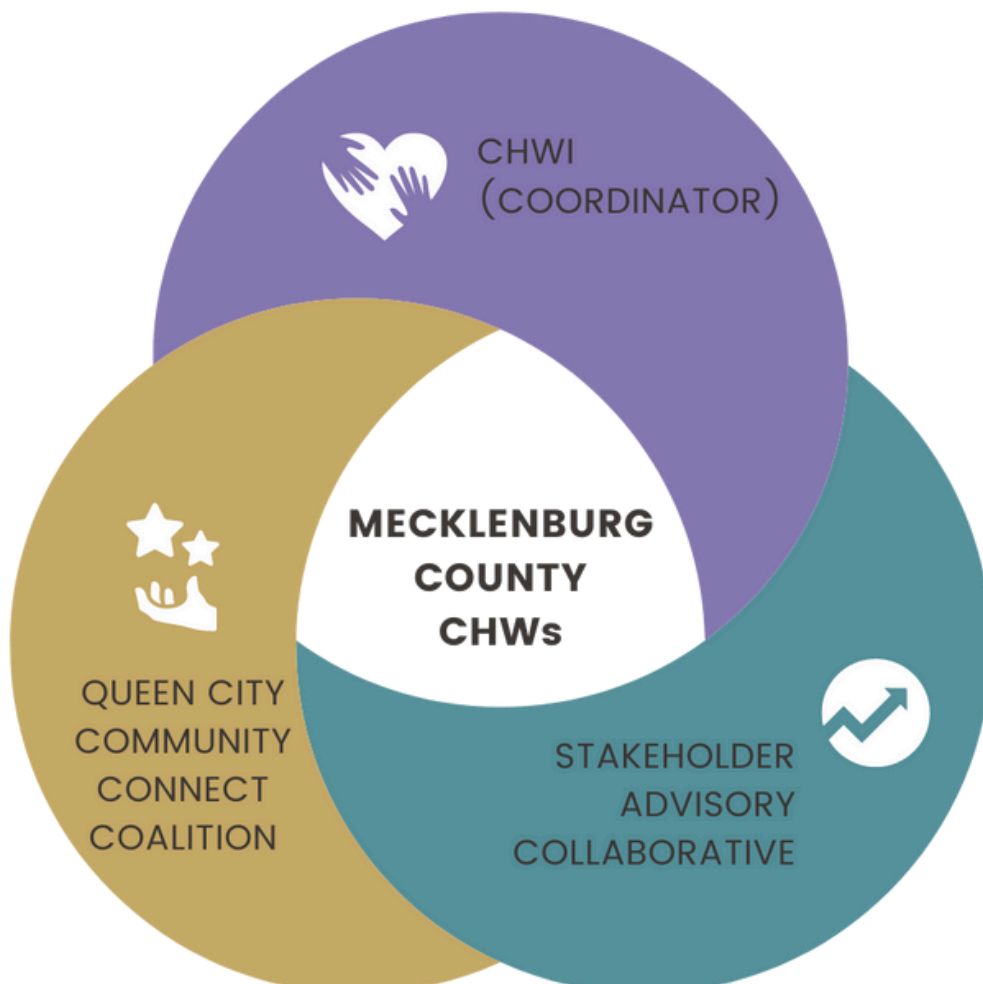
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# About Mecklenburg County's Community Health Worker Initiative

## What We Do

Mecklenburg County Public Health Department established the Community Health Worker Initiative (CHWI) to organize, strengthen, and sustain positive relationships between community partners and stakeholders deeply invested in the CHW workforce in Mecklenburg County. This initiative works internally and externally to support CHW programming by:

- Leading and Coordinating Collaborative Groups
- Facilitating and Coordinating Trainings and Technical Assistance
- Aiding in Policy Development and System Change Management
- Implementing and Directing Programs and Strategies using the CHW Model



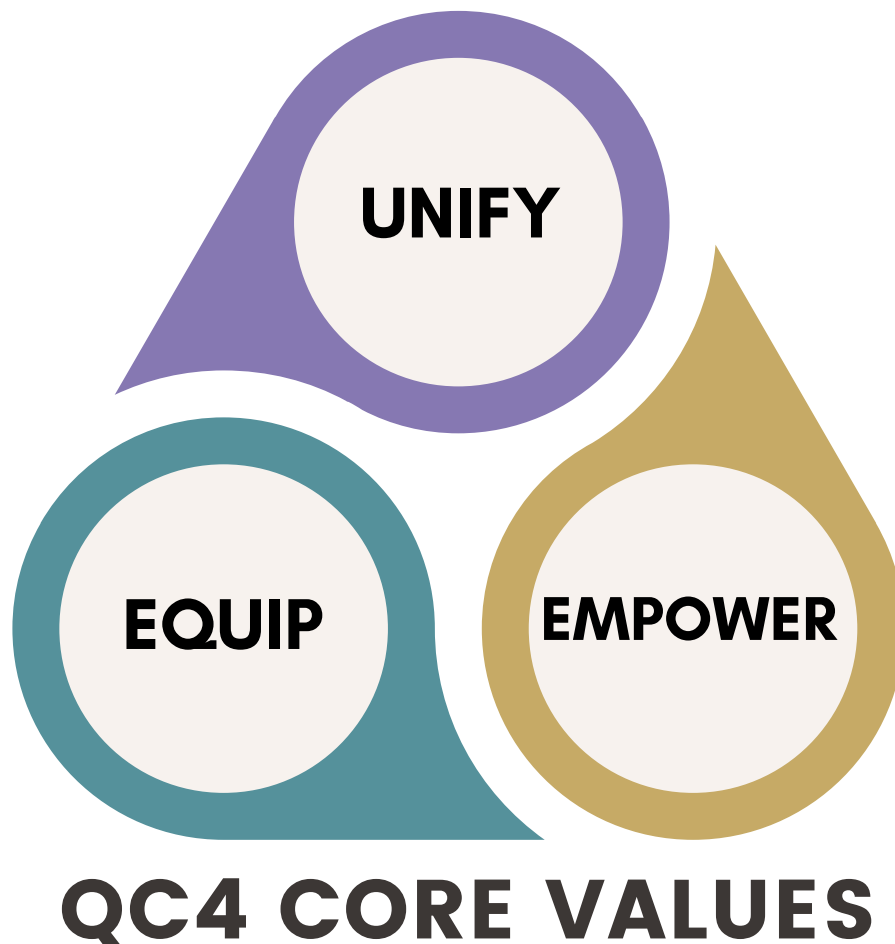
# About Queen City Community Connect Coalition

## What We Do

Queen City Community Connect Coalition (QC4) is a collaborative workgroup powered by Mecklenburg County's CHWI. Its mission is to unify, equip, and empower CHWs across organizations to serve Mecklenburg County communities.

## Objectives

- Convene CHWs in a collaborative forum that nurtures workforce and professional development opportunities
- Increase public and professional recognition of CHW expertise and contribution
- Equip CHWs with relevant resources by sharing active health and social services that serve Mecklenburg County communities



# Introduction



## What is a Community Health Worker (CHW)?

According to the [American Public Health Association](#), Community Health Workers (CHWs) are frontline public health workers who are trusted members of and/or have a unique understanding of the community served. This dynamic enables the worker to serve as a liaison between health and social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.<sup>1</sup>

# Purpose & Priority Audience



## ↳ Purpose

This toolkit aims to educate and inform stakeholders about the vital role of CHWs, advocate for their support, enhance their professional development, foster community engagement, and promote best practices.

## ↳ Priority Audience

This toolkit was developed for CHWs, CHW allies, aspiring CHWs, and the general public. This toolkit focuses on educating and raising awareness for CHWs in the local community. It provides specific tools and resources to support and uplift Mecklenburg County CHWs in their vital roles.

# CHW Core Consensus Project (C3 Project) Roles and Responsibilities

## CORE ROLES OF A COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

01. Cultural Mediation Among Individuals, Communities, and Health and Social Service Systems<sup>2</sup>
02. Providing Culturally Appropriate Health Education and Information<sup>2</sup>
03. Care Coordination, Case Management, and System Navigation<sup>2</sup>
04. Providing Coaching and Social Support<sup>2</sup>
05. Advocating for Individuals and Communities<sup>2</sup>
06. Building Individual and Community Capacity<sup>2</sup>
07. Providing Direct Service<sup>2</sup>
08. Implementing Individual and Community Assessments<sup>2</sup>
09. Conducting Research<sup>2</sup>
10. Participating in Evaluation and Research<sup>2</sup>

# Benefits of Community Health Workers

The C3 Project defines CHW roles to address social determinants of health (SDoH) and improve access to care. This aligns with the Triple Aim Framework that intends to enhance health outcomes, reduce costs, and improve care quality.

## 01 Improve Health Outcomes

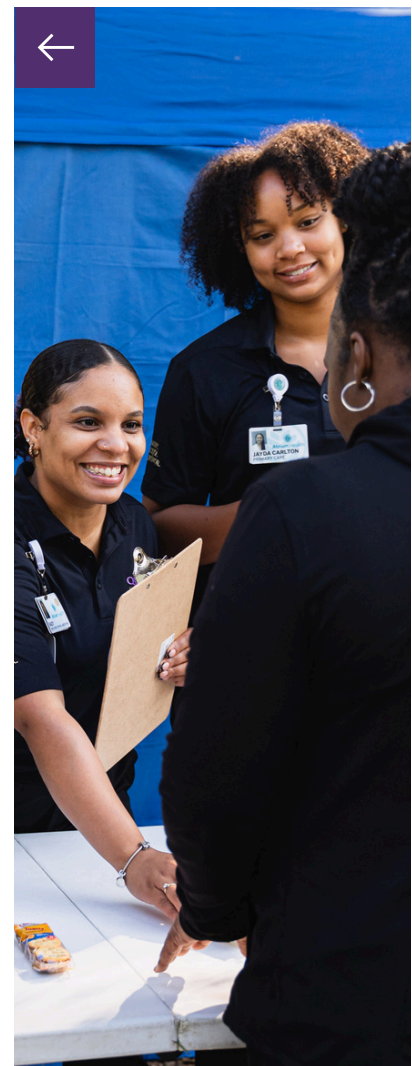
- **Chronic Disease Management:** CHW interventions enhance chronic disease care.<sup>3</sup>
- **Patient-Centered Interventions:** A study shows that patient-centered CHW interventions improve [key] health outcomes.<sup>4</sup>
- **Bridging Gaps:** CHWs effectively bridge gaps between existing services and community needs by addressing SDoH.<sup>5</sup>

## 02 Reduce Health Care Costs

- **Healthcare Utilization:** Studies show reduced numbers of ED visits, inpatient admissions, C-Sections, and NICU admissions with CHW integration.<sup>6</sup>
- **Cost Savings:** With every \$1 invested in CHW programs, savings range from \$0.66 to \$9.72 in averted and future health care costs. Additionally, CHW integration was noted to significantly reduce healthcare utilization costs.<sup>6</sup>

## 03 Advance Health Equity

- **Dual Role:** CHWs as community members and public health workers fulfill an unmet need in healthcare.<sup>7</sup>
- **Advocacy and Activism:** CHWs describe themselves as advocates and activists for vulnerable and underserved communities.<sup>7</sup>
- **Promoting Health Equity:** CHWs promote health equity in racial and ethnic communities.<sup>8</sup>





# Storytelling for Community Health Workers

## Things to Consider:



### Real People

The “characters” in your story are real people, make them familiar to your audience!



### Call to Action/Ask

All effective advocacy strategies have a clear call to action or ask. Your story should uplift this message!



### Powerful Quotes

This can help to flesh out experiences, and give stakeholders memorable quotes to share.



### Be Intentional

A critical step to recognizing the power in storytelling is being intentional about how to use your story to support advocacy.



### Compelling Details

How did you feel? What did you see? Integrating the right details can help put someone in your shoes.



### Suite Your Story

Be considerate that different media have different constraints, some may require different methods and approaches!



### Data, Statistics, Metrics

Pick a powerful statistic that resonates with your message and audience. Leave an impact!



# The Do's of Advocacy Storytelling



## 01. Have a Clear Beginning, Middle, and End.

Keep it simple, short, and straightforward. Audiences will want to hear your story!

## 02. Use Accessible, Relatable Language

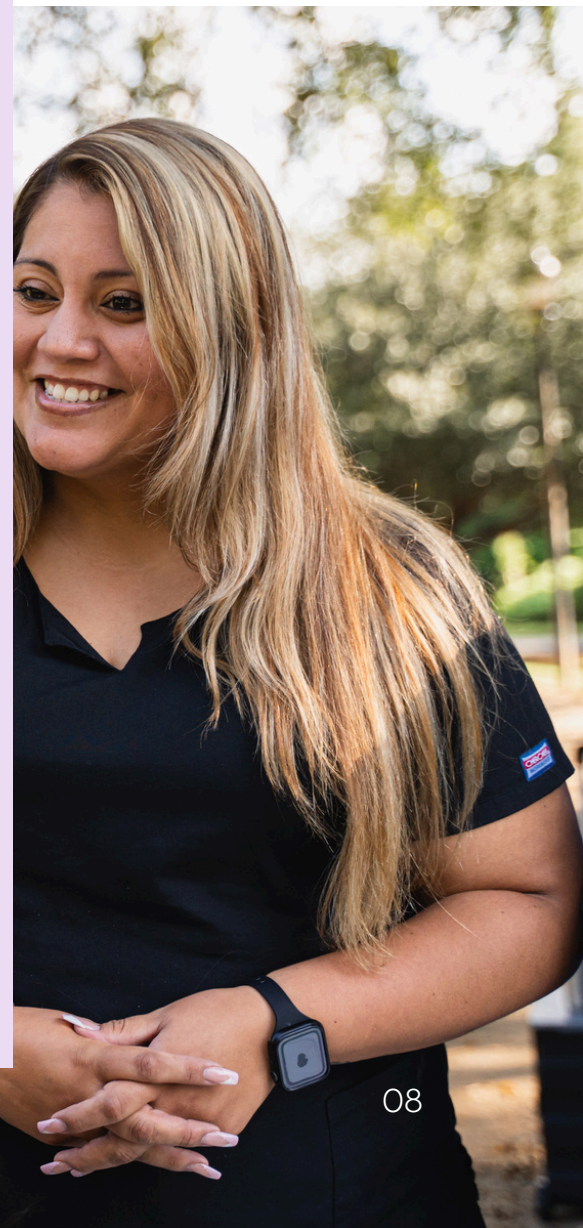
Make your story easy to understand. Tell the story in a way that can be understood by many.

## 03. Details, Details, Details

Use vivid details to paint a picture of the situation for your audience. What did you see? What did you hear? How did you feel?

## 04. Confidentiality is Key

Lift up the voices of residents, patients, and individuals you serve while also keeping them safe and protected!



# The Don'ts of Advocacy Storytelling



01.

## Make it Confusing

People shouldn't get lost listening or have to re-read your story to understand its message.

02.

## Use Medical Jargon or Acronyms

Be considerate of the diverse audience you are speaking to. Don't use certain terms if the average person has to look it up.

03.

## Leave Out or Not Give Enough Details

Be concise as possible. The right details will hook your audience, but too few can be underwhelming.

04.

## Reveal Identifying Personal Information

Keep your story anonymous. Never reveal identifying details - whether they're your patient, or another resident.



# Stakeholder and Legislator Identification Tool

## Instructions:

The purpose of this tool is to help CHWs and their allies identify local key stakeholders and legislators to facilitate intentional advocacy and engagement techniques.

1. Download the Spreadsheet: [Stakeholder and Legislator Identification Tool](#)
2. Identify Representatives: Review the detailed entries for each category.
3. Engage with Stakeholders: Use the provided contact information and explore the Tips & Tricks section for engagement methods in the spreadsheet.

Category	Example Representative	Role	Region/ Location	Perspective
County Commissioners	Commissioner Jane Doe	Commissioner	Mecklenburg County	Supports community health
City Council	Council Member John Smith	City Council	Charlotte, North Carolina	Advocates for public health
NC General Assembly House of Representatives	Representative Joe Brown	State Representative	North Carolina	Focuses on healthcare funding
NC General Assembly Senate	Senator Julie McDonald	State Senator	North Carolina	Prioritizes health equity

# Suggested Talking Points



## Impact and Contributions

- **History: CHWs still lack recognition, protection, and funding** with almost 60 years of research on CHW effectiveness, 20 years of public health recognition, workforce development studies, and a national labor classification.<sup>9, 10, 11, 12</sup>
- **Improve Access to Care:** CHWs can aid patients/clients with transportation to increase access to care, as well as reinforce prevention strategies to help residents overcome barriers.<sup>13</sup>
- **Reduce Healthcare Costs:** CHWs can reduce healthcare costs by being cost-effective, reducing hospital admissions and decreasing provider burden.<sup>9</sup>
- **Advance Health and Racial Equity:** CHWs foster linkages between the community and health and social service systems by providing underserved populations with increased access to culturally competent services.<sup>1</sup>



## Ways Employers Support CHWs

- **Fair Pay:** Provide CHWs with competitive wages, pay scales, comprehensive benefits, paid time off, self-care resources, and compensation for overtime and sick leave.
- **Professional Development:** Ensure CHWs have access to professional development and promotional opportunities to foster career advancement and mobility.
- **Core Role Alignment:** Integrate C3 Project's Core CHW Roles into job descriptions, hiring processes, and work duties.<sup>2</sup>

# Suggested Talking Points



## Local Level Policy

- **Awareness:** Establish state legislation that recognizes and protects CHWs as a profession with lived experience and unique core roles and competencies. Increasing the professional and community recognition of CHWs is vital to fortifying the CHW workforce.<sup>14</sup>
- **CHW Training and Certification:** Align state CHW training and/or certification requirements with C3 Project's Core Roles of a CHW.
- **CHW Workgroups:** Mandate CHW policy and workforce development groups include diverse CHW representation (at least 50%).
- **Funding:** Allocate funding to CHW-led networks and associations to lead and sustain CHW workforce development initiatives at local, state, and regional levels.



## Payers and/or Funders

- **Prioritization:** Preference community-based organizations (CBOs) and local CHW-led networks and associations as eligible entities for CHW policy and workforce development grants and contracts.
- **Distribution:** Directly disseminate CHW-focused funding and resources to local CBOs that employ CHWs and CHW-led networks and associations.
- **Sustainability:** Ensure CHW funding supports a diverse workforce across sectors, demographics, and experiences. Many CHWs may leave the workforce due to poor job security, which reduces the capacity to provide residents with quality healthcare.<sup>15</sup>

# Letter Template/Email for Outreach



## Copy & Paste Template

LETTERHEAD [OPTIONAL: FOR ORGANIZATIONS]

EMAIL SUBJECT LINE: INVITATION TO [REP OR SEN] FOR THE [ORG NAME]  
"[NAME OF EVENT]" AT [LOCATION] ON [DATE]

[DATE]

[ADDRESS]

DEAR [LEGISLATOR 'S NAME]

[ORG NAME] would like to invite you to join your constituents and community for a [VIRTUAL/IN-PERSON] meeting on [DATE/TIME] at [LOCATION] to discuss the vital role of local CHWs.

This is an opportunity for your constituents to share information with you regarding the CHW workforce and our priorities for 2024 and beyond. We are also excited to share with you some of our recent accomplishments and discuss how we might work together toward a shared goal and vision to familiarize yourself with the CHW workforce and our priorities for 2024 and beyond. We are also excited to share with you some of our recent accomplishments and discuss how we might work together toward a shared goal and vision.

**[2-3 SENTENCES ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION. INCLUDE MISSION/CORE VALUES, YOUR REACH AND/OR NUMBER OF MEMBERS - IF APPLICABLE]**

We look forward to seeing you at [DATE/TIME]. We respectfully ask that you confirm your attendance at this meeting by [DATE TWO WEEKS BEFORE MEETING].

Sincerely,

[NAME, TITLE, ORGANIZATION]

# Letter Template/Email for Advocacy #1



## Copy & Paste Template

LETTERHEAD [OPTIONAL: FOR ORGANIZATIONS]

SUBJECT LINE: IMPORTANT! [LEGISLATOR TITLE, NAME] SUPPORT FOR CHWS!

[DATE]

[ADDRESS]

Dear [LEGISLATOR'S NAME],

I am writing to bring to your attention the critical issues Community Health Workers (CHWs) are facing and urge your support for policies that recognize their vital roles and value in our communities.

In 2010, the US Department of Labor established a Standard Occupational Classification for CHWs (21-1094), highlighting their significance in the public health space. Despite past recognition, CHWs still lack adequate support and opportunities.

CHWs involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic was crucial. Yet, many face hurdles in career growth due to a focus on formal education over lived experience, leading to low salaries and limited advancement opportunities.

I urge you to consider the following actions to address these pressing issues:

- Support policies recognizing and uplifting CHWs' role and impact.
- Advocate for equitable workforce development grants and contracts for CBOs that employ CHWs.
- Increase funding for training programs and educational and professional development opportunities for CHWs.
- Ensure legislation prioritizes and reflects CHWs diverse backgrounds.
- Work towards establishing fair wages for CHWs, aligning with their essential services provided to communities.

Your support can improve effectiveness of CHWs contributions and uplift underserved communities. I urge you to back policies empowering CHWs.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your leadership on this matter.

Sincerely,

[NAME, TITLE, ORGANIZATION]



# Letter Template/Email for Advocacy #2



## Copy & Paste Template

LETTERHEAD [OPTIONAL: FOR ORGANIZATIONS]

SUBJECT LINE: IMPORTANT! [LEGISLATOR TITLE, NAME] SUPPORT FOR CHWS!

[DATE]

[ADDRESS]

Dear [LEGISLATOR],

As a Community Health Worker [or Community Health Worker Ally], I am writing for your support to uplift and empower the Community Health Worker (CHW) workforce!<sup>1</sup>

According to the American Public Health Association, a CHW is a frontline public health worker who has a close understanding of the community they serve.<sup>2</sup> CHWs build trust with communities through shared lived experiences and serve as liaisons between health and social care teams to improve community health. CHWs are critical to achieving the Triple Aim, a framework for health reform that holds providers responsible for improving care,<sup>3</sup> improving health, and reducing healthcare costs per capita to reduce health disparities. However, significant barriers remain that prevent CHWs from effectively serving Mecklenburg County residents, especially those in vulnerable communities.

CHWs lack funding, career advancement, and recognition in healthcare systems. Funding, once ample during the COVID-19 pandemic, has slowly dwindled, decreasing the number of employed CHWs and thus putting the longevity of CHW careers and programs in danger. Additionally, a lack of community and professional recognition has hindered support for CHW initiatives and integration into healthcare teams. Low funding and recognition have reduced opportunities for CHWs to learn how to serve various populations and enter potential leadership roles.<sup>4</sup> These constraints limit CHWs' potential for expansion into various social and health employment settings, which are critical components of a sustainable workforce. CHWs deserve public recognition and advocacy for their career needs to fulfill their role in improving the overall health and well-being of Mecklenburg County residents.

I look forward to your support in uplifting and empowering the CHW workforce. For more information on national CHW efforts, please visit the National Community Health Workers Association's webpage at (<https://nachw.org/>). To learn more about CHW engagement efforts through Mecklenburg County Public Health, please visit the Community Health Worker Initiative ([health.mecknc.gov/chwi](https://health.mecknc.gov/chwi)) and Queen City Community Connect Coalition's (<https://qccommunityconnect.org/>) webpages.

Sincerely,

[NAME, POSITION]

ORGANIZATION [optional]

# References for Letter Template/Email

Instructions:

Copy and paste references into email or add to letter.

## References

1. NACHW. (2024, July 2). National CHW Awareness Week - NACHW - National Association of Community Health Workers. National Association of Community Health Workers. <https://nachw.org/nchwaw/#:~:text=For%202024%2C%20the%20second%20annual,toolkit%2C%20will%20become%20available%20soon>
2. Community Health Workers. American Public Health Association - For science. For action. For health. (n.d.). <https://www.apha.org/apha-communities/member-sections/community-health-workers>
3. Massachusetts Department of Public Health. (2015, May). Achieving the Triple Aim: Success with Community Health Workers.
4. Smithwick, J., Nance, J., Covington-Kolb, S., Rodriguez, A., & Young, M. (2023). "Community health workers bring value and deserve to be valued too." Key considerations in improving CHW career advancement opportunities. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 11, 1036481.

# Resources

## Check out these advocacy resources!

- [Advocating for Change | Community Tool Box \(ku.edu\)](#)
- [CHW Advocacy Toolkit Peers for Progress Advocacy Training for Community Health Workers | Digital Medic \(stanford.edu\)](#)
- [Community Health Worker Toolkit for Key Decision Makers: Advocacy Flyer \(wisconsin.gov\)](#)
- [CHW Advocacy Skills Training](#)
- [APHN Public Health Advocacy Guidebook](#)
- [Partners in Health Public Policy and Advocacy Toolkit](#)
- [APHA Health Reform Advocacy Toolkit](#)
- [NACCHO Advocacy Toolkit](#)
- [Public Health Professional Advocacy in Action Toolkit](#)
- [Global Health Advocacy Incubator Tools](#)
- [Families USA Health Policy and Advocacy Toolkit](#)
- [Congressional Check-Up: A Guide to Physician Advocacy Toolkit](#)
- [Toolkit for the 2024 CHW Awareness Week Resolution](#)
- [National CHW Association 2024 CHW Awareness Week Toolkit](#)





# References

## Sources

1. [Community Health Workers \(apha.org\)](https://www.apha.org)
2. [C3 Project Roles and Responsibilities](#)
3. [Effects of Community-Based Health Worker Interventions](#)
4. [Patient-Centered CHW Intervention to Improve Posthospital Outcomes](#)
5. [CHWs as an Integral Strategy in the REACH U.S Program](#)
6. [Evaluation of the ROI of CHW Integration in the Care of Individuals](#)
7. [CHWs as Puentes/Bridges to Increase COVID-19 Health Equity](#)
8. [Community Health Workers: Evidence of Their Effectiveness \(astho.org\)](https://www.astho.org)
9. [Critical Inputs for Successful Community Health Worker Programs](#)
10. [National Association of Community Health Workers](#)
11. [Community health workers at the dawn of a new era: 11. CHWs leading the way to "Health for All" | Health Research Policy and Systems | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](#)
12. [On the Front Lines of Health Equity: Community Health Workers \(cms.gov\)](https://www.cms.gov)
13. [CHW Incentives and Disincentives](#)
14. ["Community health workers bring value and deserve to be valued too:" Key considerations in improving CHW career advancement opportunities - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
15. [Congressional Check-Up: A Guide to Physician Advocacy Toolkit](#)



UNIFY.  
EQUIP.  
EMPOWER.

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## Join our Email List!

