

KANSAS COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER COALITION



SPOTLIGHT

CHWS & COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Kansas CHWs have been providing outstanding support to Kansans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kansas Department of Health and Environment, local health departments, clinics, and community organizations have engaged CHWs as part of the emergency response efforts. CHWs have been helping to minimize risk for essential staff by providing health education, addressing the increase in food/supplies/rent assistance by linking clients to resources, and helping to address clients' fear of accessing community services due to immigration status.

The Kansas CHW Coalition expresses the importance to capture CHW voices to share what is working to help individuals over the phone, where they have previously met patients face-to-face. Even though CHWs are concerned about how effective it is to conduct their work over-the-phone, they are adapting well to the difficult circumstances. Guadalupe Tredway, a CHW that serves at the University of Kansas Medical Center, shared that that she is helping the Wyandotte County 3-1-1 COVID-19 hotline. She receives warm transfers of callers impacted by job loss, need of services, and unemployment. Guadalupe does a quick assessment of their needs and then helps navigate the callers through resources. She has found that service agencies are more willing than ever to accommodate clients.

Diana Lady, a CHW for the Kansas Statewide Farmworker Health Program, shares culturally appropriate messages related to the state and national COVID-19 guidelines. This information is both texted and shared with clients during calls. A direct link to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention helps clients understand and stay informed. KSFHP reaches clients by mailing health education materials and following-up with a phone call to review them. They speak to clients about how they can incorporate the healthy behaviors into their lifestyles.

CHWs are continuously reviewing processes and learning from experiences. Previously, Guadalupe was accustomed to attending all appointments that she arranged with clients. Due to changes in business operations, she has coordinated services with clients by submitting Medicaid applications and scheduling appointments for assistance. If clients need food delivery due to being in quarantine, she will coordinate weekly grocery deliveries that include fresh produce, cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizers.

Diana mentioned that she and her colleagues are regularly reviewing resources and evaluating that clients are receiving information in the most culturally appropriate way.

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NEWS & RESOURCES

COMMITTEE UPDATES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Olivia Borland, *Community Engagement Institute*

Alissa Rankin, *Community Engagement Institute*

We are collecting Community Health Worker success stories and want to know yours! Please [click here](#) and take a moment to share so that we can raise awareness of CHWs in Kansas.

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Community Health Workers Discussed at the National Level in Economic Recovery Proposal

Presidential candidate, Joe Biden, recently discussed his recovery plan to address the effects of COVID-19 on jobs and the economy. This three plank plan includes one that focuses on a "21st century caregiving" model through investing in education and jobs focused on childcare, care for the aging population, and health care. Part of this plan includes providing "direct grant funding" for community health workers. He discussed the barriers people of color face in accessing healthcare services and said that CHWs are heroes who break these barriers down. Biden wants to put 150,000 more CHWs into the workforce through this plan. This exciting proposal goes to show the cost-saving and human value that the CHW workforce has to offer! Learn more about the proposal [here](#).

Community Health Workers are Essential

This [article from the Washington Post](#) discusses why CHWs are so important to our communities, but particularly communities who have faced a history of medical racism that causes fear and anxiety about utilizing the health care system. The article tells the story of a CHW in Florida who worked with a Latinx line cook who was exposed to the coronavirus, but had been avoiding calls from the health department's contact tracers due to fear of losing his job. The CHW was able to support the man through his concerns and help him get tested.

The author goes on to discuss how systemic racism may be causing our health care system to overlook CHWs - who often are a part of marginalized communities. CHWs' identity and life experience positions them to address the health disparities that exist as a result of systemic racism and other complex systems. Embedding CHWs in communities most impacted by these disparities could greatly change address these concerns that have existed, but are heightened by the coronavirus outbreak. This is why the NAACP, National Association for CHWs, and the American Public Health Association have recommended to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services create sustainable financing for the workforce and provide both short-term funding to address COVID-19 response and long-term funding to sustain the profession.

New Reports from Families USA

Families USA has released two new reports related to COVID-19. The first report discussed the impact the virus has had on almost every aspect of a child's life and that their needs need to be addressed through strengthening Medicaid, CHIP, programs that support healthy development (SNAP, child welfare services, etc.). [Read the report and recommendations here.](#)

The second report describes the link between social injustice and COVID-19 and provides a guide for health equity advocates through short-term and long-term policy recommendations. It includes recommendations on sustainable financing for CHWs and including them in efforts to address health equity. [Find the report and recommendations here.](#)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Advocacy Committee: Tuesday, August 11 at 11:00 AM
Education Committee: Tuesday, August 18 at 3:00 PM
Executive Committee: Wednesday, August 5 at 1:00 PM
Symposium Committee: Monday, August 17 at 11:00 AM
Sustainability Committee: Tuesday, August 25 at 2:00 PM

Continued from page 1. They have mailed kits to clients that include personal protective equipment such as masks and educational information to help address clients' concerns about entering public spaces safely. In addition, extra efforts are being made to encourage clients' appointment adherence. This includes appointment reminders, creating individualized safety plans on how to go to appointments, and follow-up after the appointment. If patients are unable to make it, the CHWs help work through contributing barriers. This includes appointment reminders, creating individualized safety plans on how to go to appointments, and follow-up after the appointment. If patients are unable to make it, the CHWs help work through contributing barriers.

The impact that COVID-19 has had on communities of color is immense. Many individuals cannot afford to isolate or quarantine. As a result, many individuals from Latinx and African American communities are opting to not get tested. CHWs are attempting to work through the effects on people who are at higher risk of losing their jobs, eviction, and worse. After hearing of a client's experience with losing her husband at home due to COVID, Guadalupe said, "I wish that I knew her before so I could tell her not to worry and it was safe to take him to the hospital." Establishing solid relationships before the crisis is paramount.

Local health departments are encouraged to utilize CHWs to do contract tracing, as they can work against the additional layers plaguing undeserved and highly impacted communities. They can help clients create safety plans if they need to leave their home, help monitor symptoms and cope with social isolation, connect to resources, direct to testing sites, assist in self-management efforts, and other things.

Please take a moment to review [this document](#) that was created by the Mid-America Regional Council and the Kansas City Regional CHW Collaborative on how to use CHWs as part of the COVID-19 Emergency Response. The list of CHW employers provided at the bottom of this document are specific to the Kansas City metropolitan area. If you need to reach current CHWs in your area of KS, please contact Alissa Rankin at alissa.rankin@wichita.edu.

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