Community Health Workers in Vermont
Workforce Snapshot: Demographics, Education, Skills, and Training
March 2022

Introduction
This brief provides a summary of key results describing the workforce from a May 2021 survey of 128 community health workers (CHW) and 33 CHW employers from across Vermont. The survey, conducted by the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) in collaboration with the Vermont CHW Steering Committee, is the second iteration of a survey first conducted in 2020. It is part of an effort to collect information about the roles, scope of work, skills, and training of the CHW workforce in the state.

Employment and Education
Most respondents (64%) are employed full-time as a CHW, with an additional 16% employed part-time. Most (63%) have been working as a CHW for over 4 years, and 27% have been working as a CHW for 1-3 years.

About half (54%) of CHW employers have employed CHWs at their organization for more than 10 years. Over half of CHW employers reported that their organizations require a high school diploma or GED for CHWs (see below).

Minimum Level of Education Required by Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma or GED</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate or licensure</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal CHW training program</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No educational requirements</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates degree</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When hiring CHWs, the top three characteristics that employers look for are: prior experience with the population served (70%), knowledge of community services or resources (70%), and shared background with the population served (52%).

Source: 2021 Vermont Community Health Worker Survey
Learn more at healthvermont.gov/CHWs
CHW WORKFORCE

Demographics

Most CHWs identify as female (87%) and White (91%). A quarter (25%) are younger than 35, 38% are 35-54 years of age, and 38% are 55 years and older.

Most CHWs live in or near the communities they serve (94%) and share a similar identity to the communities they serve (95%).

In terms of education, 71% of CHWs have a bachelors or graduate degree, and 29% reported being licensed health professionals.

Highest Level of Education Completed

- Bachelors degree: 48%
- Graduate degree: 23%
- Some college: 12%
- Associates degree: 8%
- High school diploma or GED: 5%
- Professional/trade certification: 4%

Salary and Position Funding

Among CHWs working full-time (64% of CHW respondents), 83% reported making between $25,000-$55,000 per year. According to CHW employers, the most cited funding sources for CHW positions are grants (68%) and organizational operating budgets (54%); 45% of CHW employers reported more than one funding source for CHW positions at their organization.

Self-Reported Salary Range of CHWs Working Full-Time

- < $25,000: 5%
- $25,000-$34,999: 24%
- $35,000-$44,999: 47%
- $45,000-$54,999: 12%
- $55,000+: 12%

Employer-Reported CHW Funding Sources

- Grant funded: 68%
- Organizational operating budget: 54%
- Clinical operating budget: 21%
- Volunteer: 4%
- Medicare/Medicaid: 4%
- Community Health Team/Blueprint for Health: 11%

95% of CHWs share a similar identity to the communities they serve

29% of CHWs are licensed health professionals
**Essential Skills and Training**

The vast majority of CHWs believed the following to be essential skills: communication (98%), interpersonal and relationship-building skills (98%), advocacy (93%), and service coordination and navigation (91%).

The top five skills in which CHWs received training were communication (75%), interpersonal skills (71%), legal and ethical standards (66%), individual and community assessment skills (64%), and service coordination and navigation skills (62%).

The top skills areas identified as training needs were cultural and linguistic competency (45%) and capacity building skills (42%).

CHWs reported that they received training for specific health conditions, including mental/behavioral health (61%) and substance use (47%).

CHW employers reported that their organizations have provided training in several areas, including service coordination and navigation (64%) and legal and ethical standards (64%).

### Training for health conditions received (Top 5), reported by CHWs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Condition</th>
<th>CHW Training (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental/behavioral health</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falls prevention</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Skills training provided (Top 5), reported by CHW employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>CHW Training (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service coordination and navigation</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and ethical standards (i.e., HIPAA)</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and facilitation/coaching</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and linguistic competency</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Opportunities for Education and Advancement**

CHW employers were asked if their organization provides tuition reimbursement for CHWs to participate in certification or other educational programs; only 44% said that this was offered at their organization. In terms of opportunities for promotion, only 29% of CHWs agreed that opportunities are available at their organization.

Only 29% of CHWs agreed that they have opportunities for promotion at their organization.
Next Steps

The Vermont Community Health Worker Steering Committee directs efforts to accomplish sustainable change in promoting and supporting the work of Community Health Workers in Vermont. The committee plans to conduct ongoing surveys to collect critical information to inform the statewide priorities to recognize and advance the work of Community Health Workers in Vermont.

For more information: Visit Healthvermont.gov/CHWS or contact Jennifer Woolard, jennifer.woolard@vermont.gov

---

A note about survey methods and respondents: Data for this brief was gathered from a web-based survey (administered 05/03/2021–05/28/2021) of a convenience sample of CHWs and CHW employers across Vermont. A total of 145 CHWs and 33 CHW employers responded to the survey. Upon analysis, VDH and PDA excluded 17 participants as they did not appear to be CHWs. This was the second year VDH gathered information via surveys about CHW professionals and organizations that engage CHWs. It is not clear the extent to which the responses are representative of all CHWs or all organizations that engage CHWs in Vermont.

The Vermont Community Health Worker activities are in part, supported though the DP18-1815 Vermont Department of Health grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Improving the Health of Vermonters through Prevention and Management of Diabetes and Heart Disease and Stroke

Healthvermont.gov/CHWs