



Community Health Workers: Bridging Gaps, Building Trust, and Strengthening Communities

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Oklahoma City-County Health Department: Community Health Engagement Program

Program Background

The Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD) has developed a workforce of Community Health Workers (CHWs) to directly partner with school districts to receive referrals from students, school staff, nurses, counselors, and social workers. CHWs are utilized to research and find community resources for a variety of needs such as behavioral health referrals, clothing, food insecurity, legal inquiries, social services, health insurance, health care navigation, and housing assistance.

In partnerships with Oklahoma City Public Schools, Putnam City School District and Santa Fe South School District, our team of seven CHWs are embedded in 31 school sites ranging from elementary, middle and high. Additional schools include two alternative school sites and a Middle College.



Grant Strategy and Activities

Grant Strategy: Mobilize partners and collaborators to advance health equity and address social determinants of health as they relate to COVID-19 health disparities among populations at higher risk and that are underserved.

Activities:

1. Work with metropolitan schools to develop CHW positions to be placed at local schools. These CHWs will be embedded within the infrastructure of the school districts to work with families identified as being at greatest need for community services and interventions.
2. Train CHWs using the CHW training protocol being developed in the Active Community Engagement (ACE) CDC Disparities grant.
3. Use COVID-19 health literacy education materials and integrate those materials into the information being shared with students and families.



Figure 1: Referral Cards with QR code to allow any community member to submit a referral for support from our team of CHWs

Figure 2: School Referral Form created for each school site for counselors, office staff, teachers and administration to utilize



Figure 3: CHWs hosting resource tables at various school and community events

School Partnerships

CHWs are embedded up to 30 hours per week in local schools. CHWs receive referrals from a variety of sources including parents, students, school administrators, teaching staff, nurses, counselors, and Social Workers. In the elementary and middle school setting, CHWs primarily connect with parents or guardians for student and family support. At the high-school level, CHWs work directly with students, with the support of their parents and school, to provide that student with the support needed. School districts support and take part in weekly case management staffing for long term continuity of care. At these meetings, CHWs are utilized and find community resources for a variety of needs.

CHW Trainings

The Community Health Engagement (CHE) Outreach Program developed a structured Foundational Training based on the core skills and competencies in the C3 Curriculum Project. The University of Oklahoma, Langston University, and Oklahoma State University developed the curriculum and delivered the training in year one and two of the grant cycle. Additionally, all CHWs became certified through the American Heart Association Heartsaver CPR/AED course and the American Heart Association Heartsaver First Aid course, which renews every two years. Other trainings completed include:

- Child Passenger Safety
- Family/Domestic Violence
- De-escalation Training
- Legal First Aid
- Medicare Signup and Renewal
- Mental Health First Aid
- Motivational Interviewing
- NEAR Science Beyond ACEs
- Reporting Child Abuse
- SNAP Training
- Victim Advocate Training

Health Literacy Education

CHWs had 5,448 interactions and distributed 5,274 resource bags to families and students across 55 community events. The resource bags included information on OCCHD's Children First Program, Clinical Services, Mobile Market, Total Wellness Classes, the WIC program and other services. CHWs provide multi-language materials, utilize and follow CLAS standards, and refer to culturally diverse and appropriate community based organizations to advance health literacy efforts.