

The Role of Community Health Workers in Addressing Food and Nutrition Security and Social Support*

Who are Community Health Workers?

Community health workers (CHWs) are frontline public health workers whose shared culture, language, and experience support their unique role as mediators, bridge builders, and navigators between their communities and clinical, behavioral health, public health, and social services. CHWs play a key role in improving health by addressing adverse social conditions or social determinants of health.



85.6%
of CHWs provide food
& nutrition support



75.4%
of CHWs provide
social support



85.2%
Access to
Healthcare



78.8%
Community-Clinical
Linkages



68.2%
Health
Insurance



67.8%
Housing



66.5%
Transportation

How do CHWs help improve food and nutrition security and social support?

Social factors such as where we live, our income, access to healthcare, education, availability of healthy food, and many other complex factors affect up to 80% of our health and well-being. Addressing these areas can help people be healthier.

The National Association of Community Health Workers surveyed its membership to identify CHW roles in addressing food security and social support in the communities they serve and challenges that affect their work. The survey found that CHWs played a vital role in connecting community members to the key service areas during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the need for food and nutrition access and social support increased.

How can organizations better support CHWs?

Health is complex and is affected by multiple factors at the individual level, through relationships, within a community, and across society. This creates many opportunities for CHWs to support the work of organizations and make them stronger. According to surveyed CHWs, organizations can support and leverage the work CHWs are doing in several ways.



Develop a
resource hub
with up-to-date
resources and
services in the
community.



Involve CHWs in
program planning,
implementation, and
evaluation to build trust
within the community
and compensate them
for their work.



Integrate CHWs
with health care,
behavioral, and social
service professionals to
expand whole-person
services.



Demonstrate
CHWs' unique
contributions to
health in published
articles and
reports.



Mentor CHWs
and train them to
serve on boards and
citizen and patient
committees.



*This infographic accompanies the paper, "CDC and NACHW. *The Role of Community Health Workers in Addressing Food and Nutrition Security and Social Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. CDC Division of Diabetes Translation, Atlanta, GA, August 2022." All sources are listed in the paper.