

Path to Community Health Worker Certification



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Background

What is a Community Health Worker?

A community health worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker who:

- Is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served.
- Serves as a liaison between health/social services and the community
- Improves the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.
- Builds individual and community capacity
- Key activities: outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.¹

CHWs are becoming more common and show promise for managing chronic disease, reducing unnecessary emergency room use, increasing the use of primary care, and reducing overall health care costs.²

Development Process

2016

In order to create a certification process for CHWs, the Kansas CHWs convened to adopt and/or produce a standard definition of CHWs, Scope of Practice, and a professional organization. The Kansas Community Health Worker Coalition (KCHWC) was formed and collaborated with the Kansas City Regional CHWC Collaborative.

Immediately, the groups began educating other professionals, the community, and decision-makers about CHWs (e.g., who, why, etc.). The first annual Kansas CHW Symposium was held in Wichita.

2017

KCHWC adopted the standard Kansas CHW definition, as outlined above. This is now used across Kansas.

KCHWC Education Committee outlined the Kansas CHW core competencies and scope of practice. These were based on national standards.

2018

Kansas CHW Coalition Certification Task Force was formed to research CHW interest in professional certification. The team then focused on outlining the standards for certification.

The Coalition began researching CHW workforce sustainability opportunities.

2019-2020

The Coalition adopted a standard CHW curriculum and preferred delivery options to be used across Kansas. They created and trained an instruction team with partners from a wide array of professions and organizations. The first Kansas CHW course was facilitated with 20 CHWs.

KCHWC surveyed membership, both CHWs, and their allies, to collect perceptions on certification and whether Kansas should adopt a policy.

Development Process (Continued)

2021-2022

The 2nd cohort of instructors was trained and cohorts two through eight were completed for the Kansas CHW course.

The KCHWC Executive Committee developed Certification guidelines to propose to the membership at large. An open comment period was held and through a public Q&A session, the policy was finalized and adopted.

Kansas CHW Certification structure was created and implemented on April 4, 2022, as follows.



Kansas Individual CHW Certification Requirements

Length of Certification	Two years
Background Check Requirement	None. Background checks will be the responsibility of the employer/volunteer organization
Education	High School Diploma/Equivalent with exceptions
Residency	None
Age	15 years
Fees	\$45 initial and recertification Online applications accepted
Continuing Education Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 CEUs (aligned with CHW scope of practice) every two years with a minimum of six in ethics and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and no more than 10 in one specific area • Guidelines on topics will be developed • Accept certificates / one contact hour =one credit
Work Experience Pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 800 hours over three years • Letters of recommendation to document work/volunteer experience • Will not sunset

Structure

- Current executive committee serves as the advisory group on certification until a formal organization is established for KCHWC, at which time a formal advisory group to the KCHWC will be developed for the management of the certification

Structure (continued)

Reciprocity: To reduce barriers for CHWs working and living on the Missouri-Kansas state line, the certification process will recognize the Missouri credential which is based upon the same KDHE-endorsed training program. The KCHWC will explore the recognition of certifications for other neighboring states.

Registry: KCHWC, with administrative support from WSU, will develop and maintain a registry of:

- CHWs who obtain the CHW certification through past work experience.
- CHWs who obtain the CHW certification through completion of the KDHE-endorsed CHW training program.
- Certified training programs statewide.

Kansas Training Program Certification Requirements

Scope of Practice & Core Competencies Created

Recertification Annually (1 year certification)

Who delivers the program now?

- Any organization that works with CHWs can apply to deliver the KCHWC curriculum
- Must be approved by KCHWC/WSU with input from Executive Committee until a formal KCHWC organization is formed

Trainer Requirements:

- Instructors must successfully complete the KCHWC train-the-trainer course
- List of KCHWC current instructors will be “grandfathered in”
- Trainers must complete a refresher course if not facilitated class/portions of class in five years
- Must have been working/volunteering in CHW or related field for at least two years

Conclusions

The individual application process is open and has been processing certifications since the launch date. Interested parties may locate applications and more information here: <https://kschw.org/certification/>.

The Kansas CHW Training Program Certification will be launched in early 2023. Stay tuned to the KCHWC website for more information.

The Kansas Community Health Worker Coalition hopes that the CHW Certification will lead to sustainable payment methods, increased confidence among other professional colleagues, and long-term maintenance of the profession.

References

¹Community Health Workers. American Public Health Association. 2017. Accessed August 07, 2017. <https://www.apha.org/apha-essentials/essential-services/community-health-workers>
²Neil Rouseman and Colin Silva. “Addressing Chronic Disease through Community Health Workers: A Policy and System-Level Approach.” Issue Brief. CDC. Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. April 2015. Accessed August 8, 2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/ohve/diversify/pdf>

