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The Community Health Worker Career Web Model

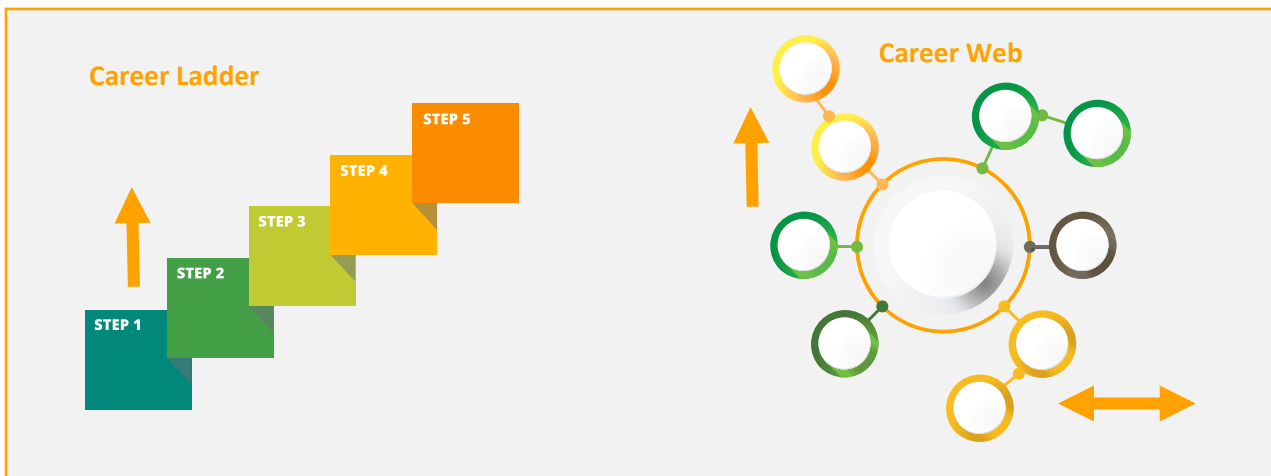
Community Health Worker Career Web Model

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Becoming or Developing as a Community Health Worker	3
Clinical.....	9
Social Work	12
Education	14
CHW Management	15
Advocacy.....	16
The CHW Career Web	18
References	19
Appendix A: CHWs & Other Careers.....	20
Clinical.....	21
Social Work.....	22
Educational.....	23
Appendix B: CHW Career Web Vignettes.....	24
Clinical.....	25
Social Work.....	29
Educational.....	33
CHW Supervisor.....	36
Advocacy.....	37

Introduction

A traditional career ladder indicates the series of steps that may be taken as an individual professionally grows within their specific job classification. Movement from one step to another typically includes adjustments in expertise, experience, and/or responsibility. Customarily, career ladders take on a vertical approach to development. This method is better suited for specialized positions and may not be suited for the complex career path of Community Health Workers (CHWs). Ultimately, the shape of the model resembles a web-like structure and falls under the term career web. A career web is a configuration of a career ladder that permits vertical and horizontal movement placing countless jobs on the CHW career path. ^{[1][2]}



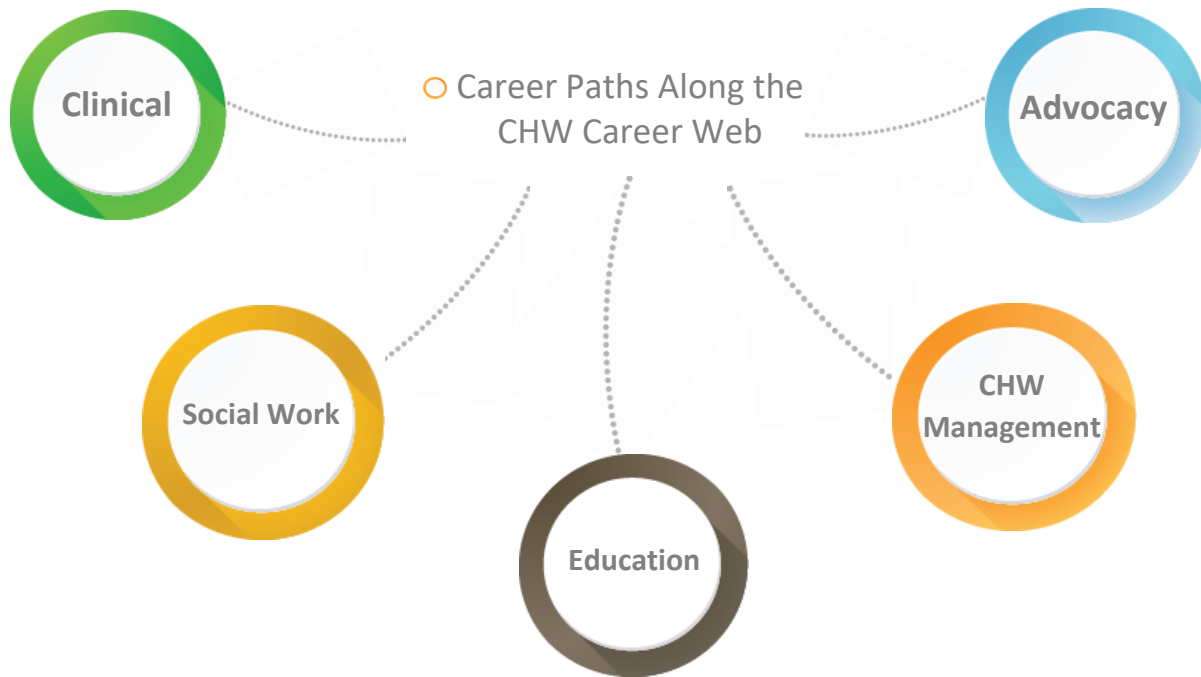
Currently, CHW career webs tend to be generalizable across the entire CHW profession. However, the CHW profession varies by region on credentials, requirements, and duties. The lack of consensus in these areas can disservice the workforce and add unnecessary steps and confusion for individuals wishing to join or expand their careers as a CHW. It was essential for the various components of the career web to apply to CHWs across various industries and regions to take a step towards assisting the national understanding of the profession. Areas where a lack of congruency remains are noted throughout the report.

The purpose of this report is to present the CHW career web model as a component of CHW workforce development. The CHW career web model is one amongst many steps in an initiative to develop, define, and solidify the CHW workforce. The function of this model is to assist in conceptualizing the many paths CHWs can take during their career development.



The following topic areas are detailed in the report that follows :

- Becoming or Developing as a **Community Health Worker**



- CHW Career Web Visual

Becoming or Developing as a Community Health Worker

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of how one may become a CHW.

There are a variety of ways to become a CHW and no clear path has been defined. The following information provides various methods one may take when considering becoming a CHW or developing as a CHW. The standards for each method may vary by region, and it is appropriate for an individual to do further research into their state before assessing these suggestions as viable options.

Direct Hire: Being hired directly into a CHW role without formal training or credentialing is one route to join the profession. Certain qualities associated with the CHW role may not require formal training, leaving an opportunity for individuals to be directly hired into a CHW position. It is common for the hiring organization to provide specific training and, in some cases, offer hired CHWs an opportunity to become certified if it is available within the state. If an individual is looking to progress into a CHW role directly, it is important to consider the development opportunities offered by the hiring organization.

Training program: CHW training is a common way for an individual to build and gain the knowledge and skills needed in the CHW role. Training programs are conducted by government agencies, CHW associations, academic institutions, and non-profits like us. Training tends to focus on the core CHW skills such as communication skills, cultural competency, and/or service skills. Many training programs can incorporate a fee, so the individual needs to consider the return on their investment. There is no national standard for training, and, thus, the individual needs to examine each option.

Certification: The integration of CHW certification has been increasing in the CHW profession. Some employers have begun incorporating it as a requirement for employment. However, standardization has not happened across the profession. Certification credentials vary on a state by state basis with many states not offering the option. If the individual is considering becoming certified, it is crucial to research certification in the state.

Internships: Traditionally, internships involve a hands-on experience that provides general information regarding a position or field; Internships typically fall in conjunction with stated academic goals needed to complete the discipline of study. They are a common tool offered by academic institutions on a short-term basis. CHW specific internships are offered at a limited capacity for college-bound students as a step towards a future career in a health-related field. It seems this path may oppose the traditional definition of a CHW. However, CHW internships are presented to cover the complete scope of the various avenues to becoming a CHW.^[4]

Apprenticeships: An apprenticeship is a formal program geared toward individuals who have a concrete idea of whether they want to join the CHW profession. Typically, they are longer than internships and provide education more specific to the CHW role through on the job training and education in a formal classroom setting. Additionally, apprenticeships provide some type of incentive or wage. For example, some CHW apprenticeship programs have provided a small wage that slowly increases as an individual continues in the program, whereas other programs have offered free college credits. CHW apprenticeships are still a growing component of the CHW profession. Opportunities depend on the state, so the individual considering this option needs to research apprenticeship programs in their area.^{[5][6]}

Career Paths Along the CHW Career Web

The following section is a description of each role that falls upon the various career paths across the CHW career web. Each career path is classified into five categories, which are clinical work, social work, education, CHW management, and advocacy. These categories are intended to help individuals recognize the direction they would prefer to take their career, based on the work they prefer in the CHW role. Additionally, there are many elements beyond enjoyment that factor into one's decision to start a new career path, such as compensation, education requirements, and scheduling. It is important to consider the balance between interest and these additional elements. To capture the many components that go into choosing a career path these various factors will be considered within each classification and at an individual role level. The categories are as follows:

Clinical Work

Career paths that fall into this category are ideal for CHWs who enjoy the clinical responsibilities of their work. Responsibilities associated with clinical work that fall under the CHW umbrella include health screenings and care coordination. There are three main paths within this classification. The focus of the first path is on the nursing profession. This path is suited for CHWs who enjoy performing health screening, assisting patients, and working in a clinic. The second path is the transition from a CHW to a dietitian/nutritionist, which is a natural transition for CHWs who enjoy promoting healthy living. The third path includes the shift from a CHW to phlebotomy. The career paths within the clinical classification commonly require additional education, certification, and/or licensure.

Social Work

Career paths that fall into this category are ideal for CHWs who enjoy providing social services to the community. This can include CHW responsibilities such as linking the community to resources and providing social support. There are two main career paths within this classification. The first path includes the path between direct social work and licensed clinical social work. For the means of this report, a distinction was made between direct and clinical social work to assist individuals to differentiate the ideal career path within social work. Direct social work typically operates in the community space and is a good career path for CHWs who enjoy working in the community. Clinical social work requires additional schooling and credentials and work is typically done in a clinical setting.^[7] The second path includes the case manager role. Finally, the third path consists of the eligibility specialist role, which focuses on creating a link between the community and government resources.

Education

Career paths that fall into this category are ideal for CHWs who enjoy educating the community. There are three distinct career paths within this classification. The first is the path from a CHW to a health educator. This career path incorporates education while remaining within the health field. This path is ideal for CHWs who enjoy educating the community on various health topics. The second path includes a more traditional teaching role. This career path incorporates education work but is specific to the youth population and shifts from the health field. The third path is from a CHW to a corporate trainer. All paths in this classification require additional secondary education, which is an important consideration for CHWs looking to develop within these professions.

CHW Management

Career paths within this categorization are ideal for CHWs searching for a leadership role within the profession. The path included in this categorization is the CHW supervisor role. This single role intends to supply a foundation for individuals looking to grow within CHW management. Opportunities for CHW management can fluctuate across organizations and fall under an array of titles, including program manager, lead CHW, or CHW manager. Additionally, not all organizations that hire CHWs have an established leadership path for the CHW role. Individuals looking to progress into a CHW management role should consider the opportunities for leadership growth as a CHW in various organizations.

Advocacy

The advocacy classification is ideal for CHWs searching for a position lobbying for change and speaking up for the public. The structure of the Advocacy classification deviates from the other categories due to its unique conditions. It is framed as general advocacy while focusing on community advocacy and CHW advocacy.

The paths chosen to encompass the CHW career web were picked because they had a connection to the CHW role. These connections were based on similarities in responsibilities and duties as well as the logical transition from a CHW. It is important to note that this list does not include every career path a CHW may take, but instead provides a variety of directions for an individual to consider.

The information provided under each path is structured to build upon the previous step on that career path. For example, the Registered Nurse role is a vertical movement from the Licensed Practical Nurse role, and the information provided builds upon the information stated within the Licensed Practical Nurse role. The description of each role includes a general summary, median salary, movement along the career web, additional experience/education, and additional responsibilities/skills. These factors are not included in the Advocacy classification. Each factor is elaborated below:

Median Salary: This factor includes the national 2019 median annual wage for each role. Salaries were obtained from Salary.com and the Bureau of Labors Statistics website. It is important to note that the salary for each position will fluctuate based on location and the individual's level of experience. Therefore, the salaries in this report are not representative of all conditions and are intended to provide a general comparison of each role. ^[8]

Movement: The movement between roles refers to the progress along the career web, relative to the previous role. It is noteworthy that no one form of movement is inherently better than the other, and any movement presents an opportunity for personal and professional growth. The two forms of movement are as follows:

- **Horizontal:** Horizontal movement implies the role is considered an equal progression from the previous role. Several things were considered when signifying a horizontal move, such as a minor salary adjustment, little change in the requirements for the role, and if individuals can easily transition back and forth between the two roles. For example, a case manager has a horizontal move from a CHW as there are many similarities in the role's requirements and skills and many case managers become CHWs and vice-versa.
- **Vertical:** A vertical movement indicates there is a salary increase and/or additional requirements (e.g., skills, education, experience) to transition from the previous role.

Additional Experience/Education: This is the experience and education that is necessary for an individual to transition into the role. This can include years of experience, certification, and/or formal education.

Additional Responsibilities and Skills: This factor incorporates the responsibilities and skills that are unique to the role when compared to the previous role. For example, the responsibilities listed under the Registered Nurse position are unique to that role and may include the responsibilities of a Licensed Practical Nurse.

The career paths and their connections within the overall career web are as follows:^{[9][10][11][12]}

Clinical

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	
Median Salary: \$29,640 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Horizontal movement from CHW	
<p>A CNA role is the first step for a CHW looking to transition into the field of nursing. This route is ideal for individuals who prefer providing services in the clinical setting rather than the community. CNAs typically work in a clinical environment such as hospitals or residential care facilities. The majority of their duties revolve around helping with activities of daily living and taking vital signs. CNAs often develop relationships with their patients similarly to a CHW’s connection to the individuals they serve. CHWs will need to complete a training program and become certified to transition into being a CNA. CHWs need to consider a possible decrease in pay transitioning to a CNA, as noted by a lower median salary. However, there is a large amount of professional development and substantial pay if one continues the nursing career path.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of CNA training program approved by the state and National League for Nursing Accredited Commission (typically take around 6 weeks) • Completion of CNA certification exam
Additional Responsibilities and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist patients with daily living activities (e.g., turning patients, provide meals, restroom use, etc.) • Ensure patient cleanliness • Conduct standard health services (e.g., vital signs, blood pressure, etc.)
Licensed Practical Nurse	
Median Salary: \$47,480 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Vertical from CNA	
<p>The LPN role is traditionally the second step on the career path of a registered nurse. To transition from a CNA to an LPN requires the completion of an LPN education course and licensure through passing the National Council Licensure Examination-PN. LPNs conduct activities including administering medication, perform basic procedures (e.g., inserting a catheter, applying wound dressings, and monitoring vital signs). Additionally, LPNs can take on supervisory responsibilities and oversee other unlicensed staff.</p>	

Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete LPN educational program (typically take around a year) • Obtain licensure through completion of the National Council Licensure Examination-PN
Additional Responsibilities and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate or conduct more complex health services under the discretion of the physician or registered nurse (e.g., start IVs, inserting catheters, patient and family education, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dependent on some state regulations • Provide supervision and/or guidance to CNAs and other unlicensed health care workers • Monitor patient health
Registered Nurse	
Median Salary: \$73,300 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Vertical from LPN	
<p>The process of becoming an RN can be time-intensive, but the transition from LPN to RN can add flexibility. To become an RN requires the completion of a nursing education program, which can come in the form of a Bachelor's/Associates degree in nursing or an approved nursing program. It is important to note that earning a Bachelor's degree is becoming a common requirement for hospital RN jobs. Individuals will also have to earn a nursing license by passing the National Council Licensure Examination-RN. Typical responsibilities of an RN include assessing patient health and medical history, recording patient information, administering medication, and educating patients and families in accordance with their care plans. CHWs choosing this career path will need to keep in mind the many years and cost of education, and that work will be predominately conducted in a clinical setting.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete nursing education program; Associate or Bachelor of Science in nursing or completion of approved nursing program. • Obtain nursing license through completion of National Council Licensure Examination-RN • Supervised Clinical Experience
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of patient care (e.g., physical assessment, medical history, medication) • Evaluate diagnostic test to assess the patient's condition • Provide health education to patients and their families • Administer medication • Coordinate care amongst a multi-disciplinary team (e.g., physicians, pharmacists, physical therapists/occupational therapists, case managers)

Phlebotomist	
Median Salary: \$35,510 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Horizontal from CHW	
<p>A Phlebotomist's main responsibility is drawing blood for donation, test, and transfusion while aiding individuals who have adverse reactions to the process. This position is ideal for CHWs who enjoy clinical work. The process of becoming a phlebotomist typically takes a year and programs can cost a few thousand dollars. The job outlook is strong, with the bureau of labor statistics predicting 27% growth between 2012 and 2022. Most Phlebotomists work in a laboratory setting, so this role may not be ideal for CHWs who prefer a community setting.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of phlebotomy education program • Tends to be a preference for professional phlebotomy certification (can vary by employer)
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw blood from patients and blood donors • Maintain sanitation in the work area • General knowledge about blood type
Dietitian/Nutritionist	
Median Salary: \$61,270 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Vertical from CHW	
<p>Dietitians and nutritionists are experts in the food and nutrition space and utilize their expertise to promote wellness and manage disease. Additionally, the role is involved in evaluating the health of an individual to create a personalized plan to improve health. The transition from a CHW or to a dietitian or nutritionist will involve obtaining licensure.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's in health education, public health, or similar • Many states require licensure, and some only require state registration or certification • Supervised training
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop personal meal and nutrition plans • Evaluate the effect of personal plans and adjust accordingly • Monitor and/or contribute to current food and nutritional science research

Social Work

Direct Social Worker	
Median Salary: \$50,470 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Vertical from CHW	
<p>Direct social workers assist individuals in solving and managing obstacles in their everyday lives. Many types of roles fall under the social worker umbrella, such as school social worker, health care social worker, child and family social worker, etc. Responsibilities can vary across the different types of social work but typically they identify individuals in need, refer individuals to resources, and respond to crisis situations amongst other duties. The social worker role is a role to consider for CHWs who enjoy providing social services in the community. It is important to note that a bachelor's degree is a standard requirement in becoming a social worker, which can be costly and entails a time commitment.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's in social work, psychology, sociology • Social work internship or supervised practicum • Licensure or certification requirements vary by state
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and respond to crisis situations (e.g., abuse, mental health emergencies. etc.)
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	
Median Salary: \$70,384 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Vertical from Social Worker	
<p>A licensed clinical social worker has many of the same responsibilities as a direct social worker, except most of their work happens in a clinical setting. Additionally, because of their added credentials, they can utilize therapeutic techniques to assist clients in coping with difficult situations. To become a licensed clinical social worker an individual must obtain a master's degree along with state licensing. This can entail a long-term commitment and can be costly. This career path is ideal for CHWs who enjoy providing social services in a clinical setting and are keen on the idea of professionally developing through many years of education.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree in Social Work • Two years of supervised clinical experience • State license
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide therapeutic services to patients and families • Assess an individual's mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan of treatment based on psychosocial assessment
Case Manager	
Median Salary: \$52,202 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Horizontal with CHW	
<p>Case managers provide social support and resources to assist individuals and families in coping with difficult situations. Many of the role’s responsibilities fall under the umbrella of responsibilities taken on by CHWs with a focus on coordinating care for clients. Case managers typically work in an office and may not be an ideal career path for CHWs who enjoy being out in the community. A bachelor’s degree is required by most employers looking to hire a case manager. Further, based on the median salary there may not be an increase in pay for having one. CHWs considering becoming a case manager need to think about the financial commitment of continued education required for the role.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor’s in psychology, sociology, criminal justice, or similar degree
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on coordinating care for the client
Eligibility Specialist	
Median Salary: \$52,453 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Vertical with CHW	
<p>The majority of the duties performed by eligibility specialists revolve around assessing whether individuals qualify for various programs that provide financial aid, such as Medicaid, Medicare, and SNAP-Ed. The transition into this role is relatively simple as the education and experience requirements are similar to the CHW role. This role is ideal for CHWs who enjoy linking community members to government resources and want to transition into working in an office setting.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High School diploma and possibly an associate’s degree Facility with industry institutions and policies
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on assessing individual eligibility for various programs High efficiency in maintaining and recording client files

Education

Health Educator	
Median Salary: \$64,488 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Vertical movement from CHW	
<p>Health educators promote general wellness and teach individuals as well as communities on living healthy lifestyles. Health Educators and CHWs will frequently work together as both roles have many similar responsibilities. However, there are distinct responsibilities of health educators that differentiate them from the CHW role. For example, health educators are typically more involved in program creation and evaluation. The majority of employers require a bachelor's degree in public health, which is an important consideration for an individual seeking this career path. This role is ideal for CHWs who enjoy educating the community on health topics and are looking to continue their education in the public health field.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's in health education or health promotion • Some employers may require certification from National Commission for Health Education Credentialing
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create programs that facilitate client education of health topics • Perform various components of health research and evaluation (e.g., survey creation, data collection, analysis, etc.)
Teacher	
Median Salary: \$61,660 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Vertical movement from CHW	
<p>This role is encompassing each level of traditional education (e.g., elementary, middle, and high school) and the responsibilities may vary depending on what level of education is taught. Generally, teachers instruct youth on various subjects and basic life skills while preparing them for their future. Daily responsibilities may include creating lesson plans, grading assignments, and educating students on a variety of subject matters. To become a teacher, individuals are required to obtain a bachelor's degree and a teaching certification. The transition to this role is ideal for CHWs who enjoy educating the community and working with youth.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree • General teaching certification; revolves around subject one will teach • On the job training under a supervisor

Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce lesson plans to teach students various topics within a designated subject • Design and grade student assignments and exams • Create and enforce classroom rules
Corporate Trainer	
Median Salary: \$52,150 per year <i>(as of 2018)</i>	
Movement: Vertical movement from CHW	
<p>Corporate training positions plan and conduct job-specific training programs to improve employee skills and knowledge. This position is ideal for individuals who enjoy educating or in a CHW training role. Several of the role’s responsibilities/skills fall under the CHW umbrella. Additionally, Corporate Trainers have the responsibility of evaluating and creating educational material. Becoming a trainer requires experience in education and the field that the employers operate. This role can function in a variety of fields, such as technical services, healthcare, social assistance, and finance. A position in the health field may be a logical transition for a CHW, but individuals are not limited to this field.</p>	
Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in the industry that the employer operates in
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and evaluate training programs • Design and create education material

CHW Management

As aforementioned, the CHW supervisor role is included as a foundation for individuals looking to grow within CHW management. Currently, there is a lot of variability in how positions are titled and structured across organizations. This variability is noted in the Career Web visual included on page 18.

Community Health Worker Supervisor	
Movement: Vertical movement from CHW	
<p>A CHW supervisor is a natural transition for a CHW looking to shift into a leadership role. The CHW will maintain many of the same duties with the addition of supervisory responsibilities.</p>	

Typically, this role will require additional experience as a CHW and in a supervisor role. This role may fall under many titles such as CHW lead or CHW manager.

Additional Experience/Education:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum 2 years working as a Community Health Worker or similar position• Minimum 2 years of supervisory experience
Additional Responsibilities and Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides direct supervision, coaching, and professional development to staff• Participates in hiring and orienting CHWs• Coordinates staff activities and duties to ensure proper implementation• Tracks and monitors client records

Advocacy

Advocacy is an area for CHWs who appreciate aspects of their role related to promoting change and speaking up for individuals and the community. Many of the responsibilities and skills associated with standard CHW work lend themselves to advocacy work (e.g., effective communication, relationship building and maintenance, lobbying for change, etc.). There is a shift in how these responsibilities and skills are conducted within advocacy work. For example, CHWs may be required to create relationships with community members, whereas advocacy work may require relationship building with key stakeholders to lobby for change. Generally, there is no additional education or experience required for entry-level advocacy work. However, knowledge regarding the issues the individual is supporting is preferred.

Before pursuing advocacy work, it is essential to consider the amount of involvement one is looking to put forward, as well as the pay. The level of involvement of advocacy work can fluctuate from being a supplementary part-time role to a full-time position and thus, can influence compensation. Further, advocacy positions can be on a volunteer basis or be a salaried position. If an individual is looking to engage in advocacy work, the types of organizations that publicize positions include non-profits, government entities, and grassroots organizations.

The advocacy path is divided into two sections (1) **community advocacy** and (2) **advocacy for the CHW profession**.

- **Community Advocacy:** Advocacy work for the community is ideal for individuals who are interested in the development or redevelopment of their neighborhood or community. Community advocates act as a bridge between the community and public agencies to

inform the public, organize funds, and lobby for policy change. One example is a community advocate may work with the community to create an advocacy campaign endorsing policy change for local transportation improvements. Standard titles within this work include community advocate, advocacy officer, and community activist.

- **Advocacy for the CHW Profession:** Advocacy conducted within the CHW profession is ideal for CHWs who would like to support the development and growth of the profession. One example is that an individual could join a state CHW advisory board to promote developments in the state, such as certification or training. Individuals who are interested in this type of advocacy could seek opportunities with CHW associations or local government. ^{[13][14]}



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CHW Career Web



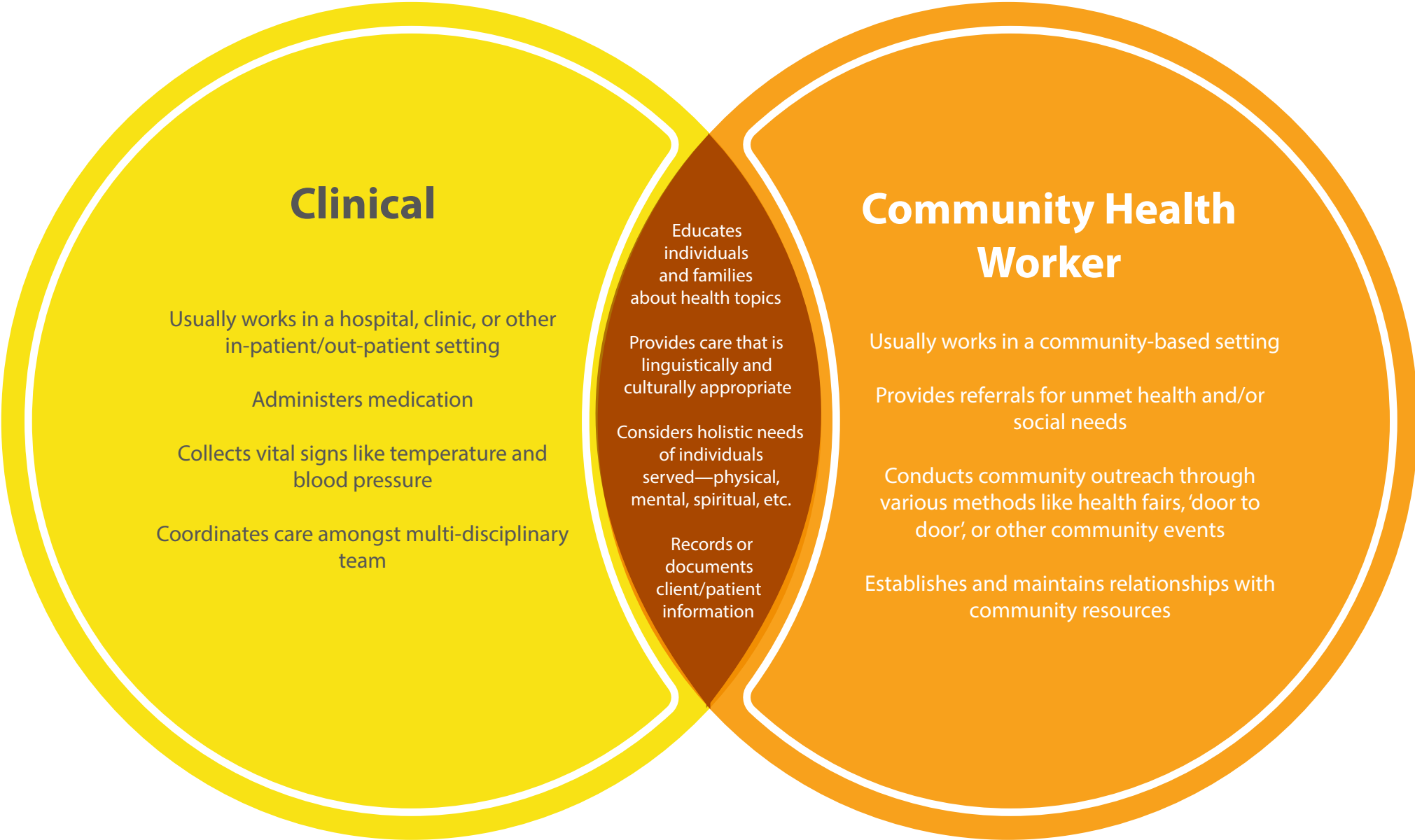
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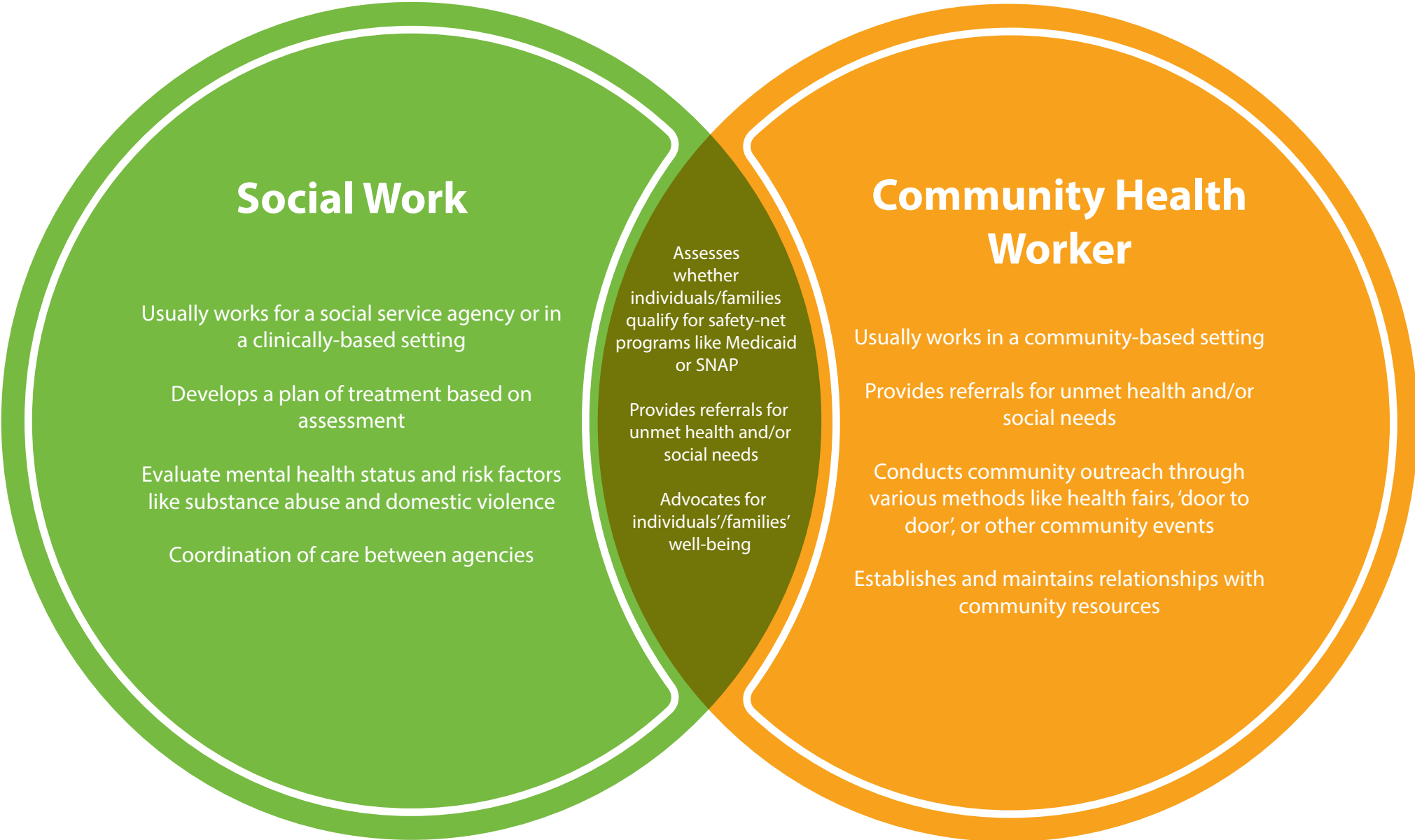
Appendix A: CHWs & Other Careers

- Clinical
- Social Work
- Educational

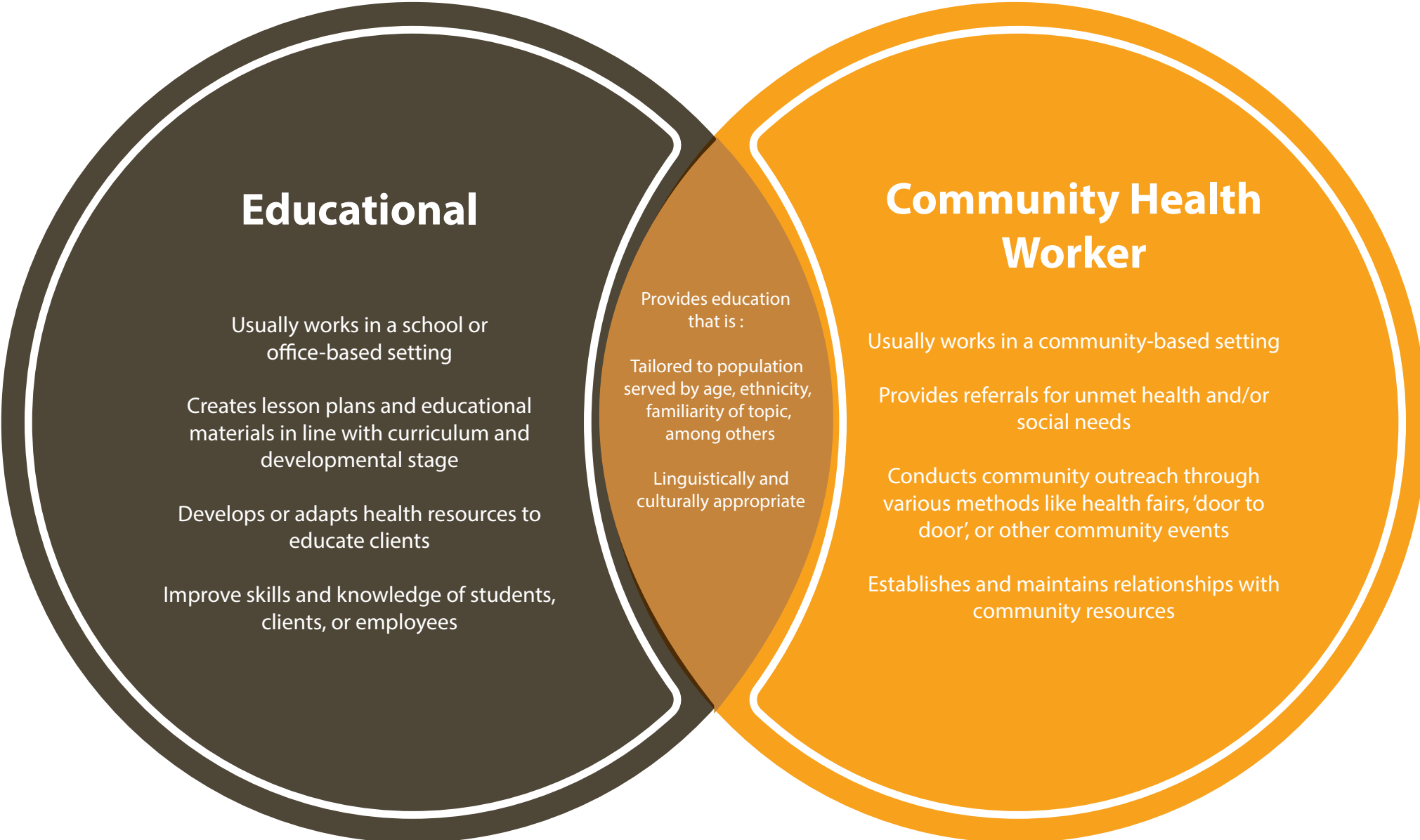
Community Health Workers share similarities and differences with clinical careers, like phlebotomist, nursing assistant, or nurse. The Venn diagram below outlines a few characteristics that are shared, as well as distinct between these career types.



Community Health Workers share similarities and differences with social work related careers, like eligibility specialist, case manager, or social worker. The Venn diagram below outlines a few characteristics that are shared, as well as distinct between these career types.



Community Health Workers share similarities and differences with education related careers, like teacher, health educator, or corporate trainer. The Venn diagram below outlines a few characteristics that are shared, as well as distinct between these career types.



Appendix B: CHW Career Web Vignettes

- CHW to Clinical Careers Vignettes
- CHW to Social Work Careers Vignettes
- CHW to Careers in Education Vignettes
- CHW to CHW Supervisor Vignette
- CHW to a Career as an Advocate Vignette



Community Health Worker Career Web Vignettes

Clinical Work

The following document is an addition to the CHW career web model. It includes fictional vignettes designed to provide examples of individuals progressing along each path within the CHW career web. This vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to another career as a Phlebotomist.

Community Health
Worker → Phlebotomist



Diana was employed as a CHW at a community health center (CHC) for about six years. Her responsibilities included performing outreach, screening for social determinants of health needs, and providing referrals. During her time as a CHW, she enjoyed watching her colleagues perform their clinical duties, particularly the laboratory staff. She decided that she would be interested in finding a position more clinically driven and task-focused. In fact, she was beginning to feel burnt out in her role as CHW and felt like she could never do enough to help patients and their families. She began talking to individuals in the care team to get a sense of where she should go. She made a point to mention that she did not want to go into an extensive education program. Based on her preferences, many of her colleagues recommended that she become a phlebotomist. They explained that it would require a short educational course as well as certification, and with her experience the process would be quick. Per their recommendation, she decided to venture into becoming a phlebotomist.

Diana began the journey to becoming a phlebotomist by enrolling in a program at a vocational tech school. Her prior experience helped her breeze through the program in about nine weeks. Following the completion of the education program, she started looking into becoming certified. It was not required in the state, but employers commonly required it. She decided to take the exam as it would expand her options for finding employment. She took the exam and after one attempt earned her certification. Once she became certified, she started to search for jobs. The CHC she worked at was not hiring, but her colleagues did send recommendations to organizations that were hiring. She very swiftly found a position and began her career as a phlebotomist at a diagnostics center.

Community Health Worker → Certified
Nursing Assistant → Licensed Practical
Nurse → Registered Nurse



The vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to another career. For example, one story is about a CHW and their journey to becoming a Registered Nurse.

Community Health Worker → Certified Nursing Assistant

Emilia worked as a CHW at a non-profit that focused on assisting individual health needs in the community. The program that she worked for specialized in maintaining health and wellness for the elderly. She enjoyed many aspects of her job, including providing social support, helping patients get around in their home, and conducting home safety assessments. However, when she joined the health field, she originally wanted to be a nurse. She became a CHW because she felt connected to the older African American individuals in the community and wanted a job where she could help them. Additionally, her mother was a CHW and showed her how they connect and assist the community. The role provided her valuable experience, but it was time to pursue her original goal of becoming a nurse. She knew to become a registered nurse there would be a substantial investment to meet the education requirements. She figured to begin her path into the nursing profession she could start as a certified nursing assistant (CNA). The position required minimal schooling and provided professional experience. Ultimately, she decided to embark on the journey to becoming a CNA.

Emilia enrolled in a state-approved education program at a vocational school. The program was short, so she maintained her job as a CHW during its duration. After six weeks, she completed the program and received a certificate of completion. She then began to look into becoming certified in her home state. She took the exam through the state board of nursing and became certified. Once she completed schooling and became certified, she began looking for positions. She knew that working with the elderly was her passion and she wanted to maintain that in her new role. She ended up finding a position at a nursing home and began her career as a CNA.

Community Health Worker → Licensed Practical Nurse → Registered Nurse

Vanessa was a CHW at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) for about two years. Her role as a CHW included duties like outreach, informal counseling, and helping doctors communicate with patients. She enjoyed this role but needed to find a role with higher compensation to support her growing family. The CHWs at the FQHC where she worked were very integrated into care teams and Vanessa interacted with many registered nurses (RNs). She knew that they made a higher wage and as a RN she could maintain the work she enjoyed with a scope of practice that allowed her to have clinical responsibilities like giving medications and conducting patient assessments. Before she made the decision, she wanted to chat with some of the RNs. They told her the process would require her to obtain an associate degree and certification by passing the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN). She was worried about the time commitment required to go back to school but decided that in the long term it would be worth it.

After the conversations with the RNs, Vanessa enrolled in a nursing degree program at a community college. She found the program to be challenging but felt her experience as a CHW helped her through the coursework. She completed the program in about three years. During her time in school she worked part-time as a CHW and reduced her spending to stay financially afloat and prepare for the student loan payments after graduation. After earning her associate degree in nursing, she signed up for the NCLEX-RN on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing website. She took the test twice and passed on the second try. Once she earned licensure, she began looking for positions as an RN. During her time in school she had maintained her CHW position at the FQHC. A month after she became licensed an RN position opened up at the FQHC. She had good standing at the FQHC, and leadership knew she was looking to become an RN. They ended up offering her the position and she began a career as a RN.

Community Health Worker →
Dietitian/Nutritionist



This vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to another career as a Dietitian/Nutritionist.

Maria had worked as a CHW at a non-profit that focused on promoting healthy living and nutrition in the community. Her responsibilities as a CHW involved group education and case management, especially for families who were managing chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. She enjoyed the majority of her responsibilities but wanted to find new ways to develop and possibly go back to school to grow professionally. She loved her job and had a personal connection as her mother also had diabetes. She recalled that her mother gained a lot from working with a dietitian. Maria's mother recommended that she should look into the role. The role maintained some of the same qualities as her current role and gave her a reason to go back to school. Maria did some additional research and saw that she needed to obtain a bachelor's degree, supervised training, and become registered. After weighing all the pros and cons, she decided to start the path to becoming a dietitian.

Maria started her journey as a dietitian by enrolling in a dietetic program at a state college. The program she enrolled in allowed her to get her supervised training while finishing up school. She figured this would save time in the overall process. However, she ended up having to move a couple of hours away in order to enroll in the program she wanted. She left her position as a CHW and began working for student health services on campus. After five years, she graduated with a bachelor's in dietetics and completed her supervised training. Following graduation, she signed up with the Commission of Dietetic Registration, to take her credentialing exam. She passed the exam on her first attempt and became a registered dietitian nutritionist. Once she was registered, she began searching for jobs. It took some time for her to locate a position, but eventually she found a dietitian job with a health care company.



Community Health Worker Career Web Vignettes

Social Work

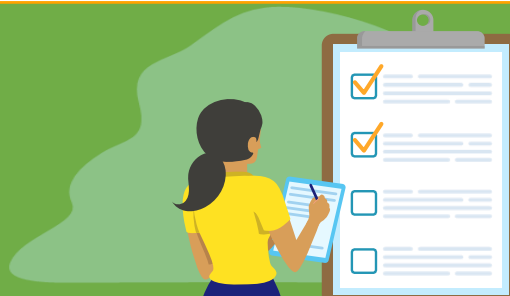
The following document is an addition to the CHW career web model. It includes fictional vignettes designed to provide examples of individuals progressing along the social work path within the CHW career web. This vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to another career as an Eligibility Specialist.



Marco was employed as a CHW at an organization that links individuals in the community to safety-net programs like Medicaid and CHIP. His position required a lot of traveling and walking in the community so that he could reach individuals in remote areas. As he aged, it became difficult for him to get around making him consider a career change into a job that was more sedentary. He wanted to maintain similar work and at this point in his life he did not want to have to go back to school. He began looking online through Indeed and asked other CHWs if they had any recommendations for possible career options.

Eventually, Marco came across the eligibility specialist role. The role had similar responsibilities to his job as a CHW, such as assessing whether individuals qualify for safety net programs. Additionally, it would not require him to go back to school and he would be able to work in an office environment. He did notice that the role recommended strong experience with computers, which he did not have much experience in. He decided he would take a basic computer course before applying for jobs to ensure he was prepared. He searched for a position for about a month until he got an interview at a social services office that was looking for an eligibility specialist. The position preferred knowledge in Medicaid and CHIP, which he had previous experience with because of his work as a CHW. He ended up getting the position and began his career as an eligibility specialist.

Community Health
Worker → Social Worker
→ Clinical Social Worker



This vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to another career as a Clinical Social Worker.

Jennifer worked as a CHW at a health clinic for around two years. During her time as a CHW, most of her responsibilities revolved around providing social support for domestic violence victims. She enjoyed almost all aspects of her job as a CHW. However, the program she worked was grant-funded resulting in uncertainty around whether funding would get renewed every year. The stress due to financial uncertainty led Jennifer to begin searching for a new position. She looked at other CHW programs in the area but most of them were also grant-funded. She then decided to consider positions outside of CHW work. She wanted to maintain many of the same responsibilities and still be able to assist the community. During her time as a CHW she worked with many social workers who had duties that interested Jennifer professionally. To gain more information she had a conversation with a social worker who worked in the same clinic. They told her about the responsibilities within the role and that there could be considerable schooling depending on the route Jennifer wanted to go. Her coworker explained that an entry-level position required a bachelor's degree and an advanced role entailed a master's. She was very intrigued by the work done by social workers but was concerned about the schooling involved. However, she always enjoyed being in school and knew she qualified for federal funding to help pay for school. After careful consideration, she decided to embark on the social worker path.

Jennifer began the journey by enrolling in a social worker program at a local university. At the start of the program she was unsure what direction to go within social work. Throughout her time, she began to enjoy being in school and became close with one of the professors who was a former clinical social worker. As Jennifer worked more with this professor, she quickly grew passionate about clinical social work and focused her education in that direction. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in social work she decided to start looking for a job. After searching for many months, she found an entry-level role at a hospital doing administrative social work. She chose this role as the organization had a professional track to becoming a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW).

To continue her path to becoming an LCSW Jennifer still needed to acquire a master's degree, complete supervised experience, and pass a clinical licensure exam. After a year in her role as a social worker Jennifer enrolled in a clinical master's program. She applied for a program at the same university she obtained her bachelor's. She ended up getting into the program and after two years earned her master's in clinical social work. Her employer was understanding of her desire to become an LCSW and allowed her to work part-time as a social worker while in school. Following graduation, she started supervised clinical training at the hospital where she was employed. She continued supervised training for about two years until she felt comfortable to take the exam to receive licensure. Following one failed attempt, she got her state clinical licensure. She eventually attained a position at the hospital she worked at for many years and began her career as an LCSW.



This vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to another career as a case manager.

Jose started working as CHW at a children's hospital after completing his associate degree in psychology. He had always lived in a rural area that was predominantly Latino. He had a great relationship with the community and always wanted to find a meaningful job where he could help the community. He took the role as a CHW to fulfill his mission to assist the community but did not see himself staying in the profession forever. The role also required most work to be done out in the community and he wanted an office position. Before becoming a CHW he had considered becoming a case manager. He had not pursued the role because it required a bachelor's degree and, at the time he was not ready to continue school. He felt like after a few years as a CHW it was time to finish up his degree and move into a case manager role.

Jose joined a psychology bachelor's program at a community college. Most of the credits from his associates program transferred over, so he was able to finish in two and a half years. After obtaining his bachelor's in psychology, Oliver started looking for case manager jobs. The majority of the positions he saw required a couple of years of experience, and Oliver was able to use his time as a CHW to fulfill this condition. Eventually, he found a position at a health care company in a program that focused on case management for severe mental illness. He obtained the role and began his position as a case manager.

Jose worked as a case manager for a couple of years. He enjoyed the role but felt like there were certain aspects of being a CHW that he missed. He missed having a secure connection with the community and did not like working in an office as much as he thought he would. He previously saw the CHW role as a bridge into other professions but after working in an office realized how much he appreciated his time as a CHW. Additionally, there was not a pay increase in transitioning from a CHW to a case manager. After some time, he decided that he would leave his position as a case manager and go back to CHW work. He began looking for a CHW position and found one at a health center in the area. The role focused on case management for behavioral health which fell into his area of expertise. He ended up applying for the role and got it. From then on out he realized his passion was in CHW work and he maintained the position for many years to come.



Community Health Worker Career Web Vignettes

Education

The following document is an addition to the CHW career web model. It includes fictional vignettes designed to provide examples of individuals progressing along the Education career path within the CHW career web. This vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to another career as a teacher.

Community Health Worker → Teacher



Oliver worked as a CHW for many years at an organization that specializes in providing financial assistance. His role as a CHW involved providing financial education for individuals in the community. He enjoyed many aspects of his position, especially holding education sessions. However, he disliked the long drives to various locations to conduct each session and the lack of autonomy over the material covered. One day, during a conversation about considering a possible career change, Oliver's friend recommended he look into becoming a teacher. His friend explained that Oliver would continue to educate individuals but would stay in one location and have some creative freedom over his lessons. Oliver carefully considered transitioning into a teacher role but was apprehensive as he would need to obtain a bachelor's degree and was worried about paying off his student loans after graduation. Ultimately, he decided that this was the right path and because of his background in finance focused on becoming a high school economics teacher.

Oliver enrolled in a bachelor's program that allowed him to take some classes online so he could continue to work full time as a CHW. During the program he was required to work under a teacher for one semester and during this period he scaled back to part-time as a CHW. School was difficult for Oliver and he struggled to remain focused throughout but after seven years, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics. Following graduation, he left his position as a CHW and began working as a substitute teacher. It was a pay cut from being a CHW, but he could gain classroom experience while he studied for the teaching certification exam. During his time as a substitute, he began making connections and heard about an opening for an economics teaching role for the following school year. He swiftly completed his teaching certification and applied for the role. He received a job offer and started his role as a high school economics teacher in the new school year.

Community Health Worker → Health Educator



This vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to another career as a health educator.

Sofia was a community health worker (CHW) at a local non-profit that assists the community with preventative care. After three years, Sofia decided she would like a career change. The reason for this decision is she began to dislike the amount of time spent out in the field and not in an office environment. She enjoyed many aspects of her current position, specifically providing health education for the community. Ultimately, she wanted to find a job that incorporated health education with a balance of work in the office and the community. While looking up various careers she came across the health educator role. The position piqued her interest as it shared many of the same responsibilities as a CHW, including a focus on community education. She decided to explore further to determine whether this would be a viable career path. While doing research, she realized to become a health educator she would need to obtain a bachelor's degree and possibly become certified. This was an essential factor to consider, as there would be financial restraint while she was in school. She decided to move forward with the process and negotiated with her employer to work part-time while in school.

After four years, Sofia graduated with her bachelor's degree in community health education from a local college. Following graduation, she began her search into becoming a certified health education specialist. Obtaining certification was not a requirement for every employer, but Sofia decided it would further her chances of obtaining a position. She scheduled her exam on the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing website. After becoming certified, she got an interview for a health educator position at the state health department. The job required a bachelor's degree, certification, and three years of experience. She was able to use her years as a CHW to fulfill the experience requirement. Ultimately, Sofia got the position and is now working as a Health Educator.

Community Health
Worker → Corporate
Trainer



This vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to another career as a Corporate Trainer.

Elisa worked as a CHW at Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) for five years. In her role, Elisa went out into the community to visit families whose children had been diagnosed with asthma. The program was very successful in improving health outcomes for patients and as a result the FQHC began looking to expand the program. The program director was hiring more CHWs and asked Elisa if she would like to become a trainer to guide the new hires. She accepted and started her role as a CHW trainer.

After working as a CHW trainer for a couple more years, Elisa decided it was time to expand her expertise outside of CHW work. She always enjoyed being an educator but grew tired of focusing on CHW material and wanted to branch off into new topics. She decided to have a conversation with her supervisor about possible training positions within the FQHC that were outside of the CHW program. Unfortunately, there were no positions within the FQHC, but her supervisor recommended that Elisa look into becoming a corporate trainer. Elisa was told there was a local community college that offered a training certificate that could set her up for a position.

Following that discussion, Elisa enrolled in the certificate program. During the program she continued her work as a CHW trainer. After about a year, she earned her certificate and began looking around for a position as a trainer. While she wanted to venture away from CHW training, she did not want to veer too far as it would require additional experience. Eventually, she found a position at a national non-profit that focused on providing enabling services. The role required the corporate trainer to educate enabling services staff at their various affiliates. Elisa got the role and has worked as a corporate trainer ever since.



Community Health Worker Career Web Vignettes

CHW Supervisor

The following document is an addition to the CHW career web model. It includes fictional vignettes designed to provide examples of individuals progressing along the CHW career path. This vignette is a story of a CHW as they move on to a CHW Supervisor role.

Community Health Worker →
Community Health Worker
Supervisor



Aaron worked as a CHW at a small non-profit that focused on providing preventative oral care. His role included duties like outreach, health education, and cultural facilitation between patients and dentists. He had also naturally started leading his team and trained all incoming CHWs. However, he was never appointed a leadership or trainer title. He had been in the position for nine years and was beginning to feel burned out by having the same responsibilities for so long. He wanted to find new ways to develop professionally but felt like he had exhausted all aspects of his job. He began to think about looking into a new position but did not want to leave CHW work. He had always been a part of his small rural community and being a CHW allowed him to continue caring for the community that he admired so much.

Another year went by and he had given up hope in resolving his feelings of burn out. Until one day his supervisor informed him that the organization was expanding the CHW program and wanted to add a CHW manager position. Aaron immediately knew that this could be the opportunity he was looking for to advance his professional development. He had been with the organization for a long time, but his supervisor explained that he would still have to apply and other CHWs in the program were interested. When he got home, he cleaned up his resume and applied for the position. He also practiced his interview skills with his wife because it had been a while since his last interview. He went into the interview confident though still nervous another CHW may get the role. The interview ended up going well and he was told that he would know the committee's decision in a week. After a couple of days his supervisor informed him that he had gotten the position. He began his career as a CHW manager and found many new ways to develop within the new role.



Community Health Worker Career Web Vignettes

Advocacy

The following document is an addition to the CHW career web model. It includes fictional vignettes designed to provide an example of individuals progressing along the Advocate career path within the CHW career web.

Community Health Worker →
Advocate



Cynthia had been a CHW for over ten years. She had experience working at both non-profits and health centers. She enjoyed working as a CHW and always had a passion for being a voice for the community. She had been in the CHW role for a long time and while she was passionate about the work, she desired to find something to further her professional development. She decided to look into other professions, like health educator, nursing, and social work. None of the roles she was seeing seemed like the right fit for her. Additionally, many of the roles required schooling or added credentials and she was not ready to go back to school. A few weeks went by and she was talking to a fellow CHW about her predicament. Her colleague told her that she should join the state's CHW association. Her time with the association would be unpaid but would allow her to advocate for the CHW profession while also developing her skills. She was very interested in becoming a CHW advocate and not concerned about the lack of pay since she was paid well in her current role.

Cynthia went onto the state association's website to set up an account and get in contact with someone in the organization. She ended up setting up a meeting with the association's director and they recommended that she join one of their workgroups. The director explained they meet once a month and provide an excellent opportunity to advocate for the CHW profession and community. Following their conversation, Cynthia decided to attend the first meeting to get an idea if it would be a good fit for her. She ended up enjoying the work-group and the fact that she could meet other CHW advocates too. Over the next couple of years, she advocated for many policy changes for CHWs, including certification, funding, and recognition.

About MHP Salud



MHP Salud offers training and consulting services for organizations committed to implementing Community Health Worker (CHW) programs. We have over 35 years of knowledge on how to design, implement, and evaluate CHW programs to share with CHWs, their supervisors, and professionals or grant writers working with CHW programs. Our offerings are affordable and can be tailored to meet the needs of any organization. Services are available in-person or virtually. Learn more by visiting our:

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