

Nebraska Community Health Workers: A Statewide Assessment Ten Key Findings

Introduction:

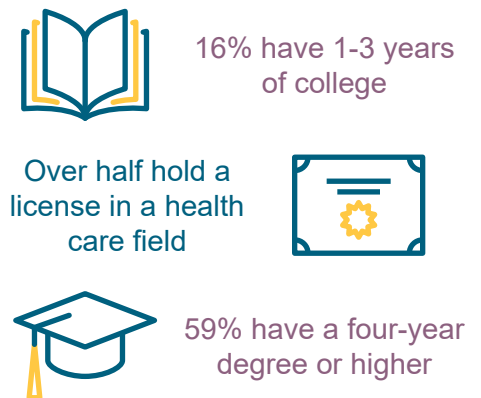
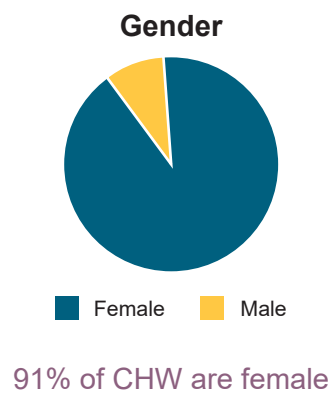
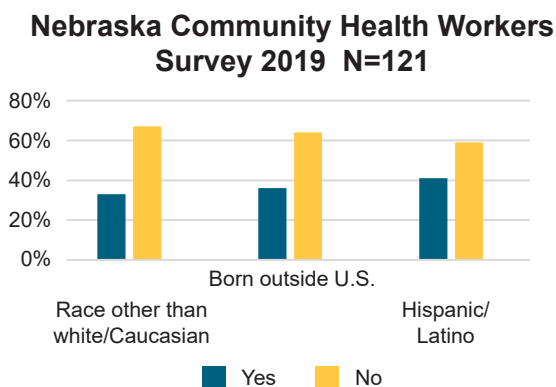
In 2019, Community Health Workers (CHW) in Nebraska shared their perspectives on the steps to developing, supporting, and sustaining a professional CHW workforce with a focus on maternal and child health.

65 CHW participated in 9 regional focus groups hosted by 5 local public health departments.

121 CHW participated in an online survey.

Key Finding 1:

The CHW Workforce in Nebraska is diverse, educated, and predominantly female.



Key Finding 2:

CHW express pride in their work.

"We are there to advocate for the client. But we are not only advocating; we are trying to close the gap in communication between the client and the provider."

"Sometimes, you need to listen to underneath what they're saying, because they can see an immediate need, but not know how to get there."

"One of the proudest moments is when you get a client who is improving on their health. You get to celebrate with them and see them take care of their health and get better."

Key Finding 3:

CHW identify unfavorable aspects of their work and the challenges they face.

- Systematic barriers, lack of time, and lack of funding/support
- Lack of validation for the CHW role
- Lack of resources for referrals
- Working off-hours to accommodate the needs of clients
- Lack of potential for advancement
- Stress and burnout
- Lack support from community
- Language barriers

Key Finding 4:

CHW identify major health issues and barriers to health in their communities.

- Lack of insurance coverage
- Need for health education
- Lack of health literacy
- Provider shortages
- Language barriers
- Transportation needs
- Need for medical interpreters
- Insufficient cultural understanding
- Mental health issues

Key Finding 5:

CHW identify their own training needs.

In focus groups, CHW identified the following training needs:

- Motivational interviewing
- Medical terminology
- Cultural competence
- Insurance terminology
- How to communicate in certain situations
- Maternal and child health topics

In the survey, over 40% of CHW reported they received no training prior to becoming a CHW.

Key Finding 6:

CHW identify maternal and child issues in their communities.

"I have noticed moms can't find work, can't find babysitters, and are being isolated. I am seeing a decline in their mental health."

- Mental health: depression and anxiety
- Lack of prenatal care
- Poverty and lack of financial support
- Child neglect
- Lack of health insurance
- Lack of affordable child care
- Unhealthy relationships
- Domestic violence
- Access to and knowledge of contraception

"Childcare is a major issue...(parents) tend to work at night and work different shifts than the 8-5 world. They leave their children with older children or others. Sometimes it's a problem."

Key Finding 7:

CHW are working to address maternal and child health issues in their communities.

Nearly 60% of CHW responding to the survey stated they currently provide maternal and child health services. These include: home visiting, prenatal counseling, maternal nutrition, newborn care, injury prevention, immunizations, and access to health services.

CHW in the survey ranked the following in order of focus areas of their work:

1. Behavioral and mental health issues
2. Chronic disease prevention
3. Obesity prevention
4. Child health
5. Chronic disease management
6. Newborn and infant health
7. Adolescent health
8. Reproductive-aged women
9. Prenatal health
10. HIV or STDs

Key Finding 8:

CHW believe health care providers and communities need education about the role of CHW.

Key Finding 9:

The CHW workforce lacks stability and career opportunities.

The CHW role should be more clearly defined, and the scope and contributions of CHW should be promoted.

Key Finding 10:

CHW believe the workforce would benefit from certification.

In the survey, 81% of CHW stated a certification program for CHW would be beneficial.

In the focus groups, CHW were strongly in favor of certification, but responses were more nuanced, with respondents seeing positive and negative sides to certification.

When CHW speak of certification, three themes emerge:



Find the Full Report: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/MCASH-CHW.aspx>

For more information, contact: dhhs.mcashfeedback@nebraska.gov

This work was made possible by Grant Number B04MC31500 from the Maternal Child Health Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. The contents of the work described are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not represent the official views of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.