



UNIVERSITY of HAWAII®  
**MAUI COLLEGE**

**CHW Curriculum**  
**Program Evaluation Report**

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**TAACCCT IV – Health Sector**  
**Community Health Worker/Health Navigator I**  
**Certificate of Competence**

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## **THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE**

In healthcare, public health and social services fields, Community Health Workers (CHW) are valued for their strong connection to the communities they serve. They effectively bridge the gap between providers and patients of differing ethnic and cultural backgrounds. CHWs facilitate access to healthcare and social services for minorities, and improve the cultural competence of services. Through outreach, education, and social support, they also empower individuals and communities to meet their own needs. Evidence of their effectiveness in improving health outcomes for underserved and disadvantaged populations has grown substantially over the last two decades.<sup>i</sup> CHWs have been shown to improve outcomes for patients with chronic disease,<sup>ii</sup> increase appropriate healthcare utilization,<sup>iii</sup> and promote positive health behaviors.<sup>iv</sup>

Despite the promise of CHWs to improve access to and quality of health care, development of the workforce has been hampered by unsustainable short-term grant funding.<sup>v</sup> Consensus is growing among CHWs and stakeholders that standardized CHW training will lead to increased health care integration of and more stable funding for CHWs.<sup>vi,vii</sup>

CHWs and stakeholders have begun to coalesce around an agreed upon set of CHW roles, scope of care, and training requirements.<sup>viii</sup> Efforts to define the CHW field began in 1998 with the publication of the first national survey of the CHW workforce,<sup>ix</sup> followed by an update in 2007.<sup>x</sup> Continuing to build upon this work, the CHW Core Consensus (C3) Project released a progress report in 2016 outlining CHW core roles and skills endorsed by the wider CHW and stakeholder communities.<sup>xi</sup> The C3 report marked a critical step in the movement toward a nationally recognized set of core competencies on which to build standardized training programs and stable reimbursement streams.

Currently, the length and content of training provided to CHWs across the nation vary widely. Some CHWs enter the field with little or no formal training, while others complete college certificates totaling as many as 20 college credits. Fifteen states have either established, or are moving toward, formalizing training requirements for CHWs.<sup>xii</sup>

## **THE UHMC-CHW CERTIFICATE PROGRAM**

Through support from a Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training (TAACCCT) grant, in 2015 the University of Hawai'i Maui College (UHMC) initiated the development of a CHW Certificate Program (UHMC-CHW) to be offered in Maui County and later disseminated to three other University of Hawai'i Community College campuses. The certificate is made up of five courses.

<b>Courses</b>	<b>Credits</b>
CHW Fundamentals	3
Introduction to Counseling & Interviewing	3
Case Management	3
Health Promotion/Disease Prevention	3
Capstone Practicum	3
Total Credits	15

The certificate can be completed in one year, although students move through the program at their own pace. Students earn 15 college credits, which can ladder to UHMC’s Associates in Human Services and a planned Kapi’olani Community College Associates in Public Health. The courses follow a progression of the core attitudes, skills, and knowledge of the CHW profession, from basic understanding of the core competencies taught in CHW Fundamentals (e.g. ethics and cultural humility), to the capstone Practicum, where students are placed in clinical and community-based agencies, to apply knowledge and skills learned in class to the field.

Two resources critical to the initial development of the UHMC-CHW included the CHW Core Consensus Report (C3), and the CHW-National Education Collaborative (CHW-NEC) guidebook.<sup>xiii</sup> The C3 report is acknowledged by CHWs and stakeholders nationwide, and describes the qualities, roles and skills that make up the core competencies of the CHW profession.<sup>xi</sup> The UHMC-CHW is designed to teach the 11 core skills outlined in the C3 Core Consensus Report.

<b>C3 Core Skills</b>	<b>UHMC-CHW Courses</b>
Communication	CHW Fundamentals; Counseling & Interviewing
Interpersonal and Relationship-building	CHW Fundamentals; Counseling & Interviewing
Service Coordination and Navigation	Case Management
Capacity Building	All
Advocacy	All
Education and Facilitation	Health Promotion/Disease Prevention (HP/DP)
Individual and Community Assessment	Case Management; HP/DP
Outreach	CHW Fundamentals; HP/DP
Professional Skills and Conduct	All
Evaluation and Research	HP/DP
Knowledge Base	All

The CHW-NEC outlines the promising practices for curriculum development and pedagogical design, and was created with input from over 20 colleges offering CHW training. The following CHW-NEC recommendations served as a blue print for creating a college-delivered training program at UHMC that is responsive to the unique needs of CHWs in Hawai’i.

<b>Program Development</b>	Engage experienced CHWs and employers as advisors
	Start with an entry-level basic certificate program
<b>Curriculum Design</b>	Evaluate existing courses to support CHW curriculum
	Avoid pre-requisite requirements for admission
<b>Instructional Approaches</b>	Use flexible scheduling
	Provide instruction which is student-centered
	Integrate adult learning approaches into instruction

## COMMUNITY INPUT

Before launching the certificate program in fall 2015, our Program Specialist, Selene LeGare contacted agencies in Maui County to gather input and prioritize the C3 skills most important for local CHWs. Interviews were conducted with supervisors and directors from 24 organizations in clinical, community-based, and government settings. A summary report ranked the C3 skills in order of importance to employers,<sup>xiv</sup> and this provided the basis for weighting skills taught in the curriculum.

Community input was collected again after the first cohort completed classes in spring of 2016, via focus groups conducted with employers and CHWs in the summer of 2016. Findings were shared with other University of Hawai'i Community College campuses. Throughout the grant period, ongoing feedback was also collected directly from students in weekly class surveys. These students included incumbent workers from the community, as well as those new to the CHW field.

## EVALUATION

At the end of the grant, our Program Instructor, Charlie Schlather completed a comprehensive three-study program evaluation of the UHMC-CHW<sup>xv</sup> to determine its effectiveness in providing standardized, core competency training for CHWs. Highlights from this evaluation are shared below, with the complete results submitted for publication in *ProQuest* and available upon request.

In the first study, analysis of pre/posttest surveys of students in two UHMC-CHW courses showed statistically significant overall improvement in their knowledge and confidence in applying skills taught, as well as satisfaction with the courses meeting their training needs.

In the second study, individual interviews were carried out with eight CHW employers and practicum supervisors to solicit their perspectives on the impact the program had on students and agencies. In these interviews, employers linked student participation in the training program with greater confidence in and performance of the core roles and skills of the CHW profession.

*"The transformation, the knowledge that she took on,  
she has more confidence talking to her clients."  
-Employer*

Employers noted that students increased their understanding and application of many of the C3 skills – especially communication and outreach – and clearly connected these gains to participation in the program. Notably, communication and outreach were considered the most critical among the 11 core skills in earlier key informant interviews with Maui CHW employers. This feedback informed curriculum development, and it appears employers were pleased with student competence in these areas. Employers reported that students had also increased their confidence, leading to greater responsibility, leadership and career advancement. Students were seen as maturing in their role and expanding into other job duties.

*"They're maturing in their confidence . . .because of the skills  
they're learning through this program."  
-Employer*

Local employers confirmed prior reports in the literature that short-term grant funding continues to hamper job creation, raises and promotions for the CHW workforce. Additionally, it appears there may be a glass ceiling for those CHWs who desire career advancement but do not go on to attain a college degree.

In the third study, graduates of the program were surveyed to determine the impact the certificate had on their skills, professional life, and future career goals. The ethnic makeup of program completers appeared representative of the local population of community health center patients, confirming students from minority and underserved groups were successfully recruited, retained, and graduated. Students reported improvements in all 11 core CHW skills, with some of the largest gains found in the skills judged most critical by local employers.

A number of graduates experienced upward mobility, including wage increases, promotions, increased job satisfaction, and elevated professional status. Perhaps the most significant finding was that all 14 students planned to continue taking college courses. When one considers the feedback provided by employers in the second study, continuing on to attain a college degree appears the surest route to career advancement for CHWs.

Overall, results from this three-study program evaluation indicated the program was successful in teaching core CHW skills, building student confidence in applying those skills, and improving student performance in the field.

#### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- In the second study, a number of employers requested additional training, with behavioral health most frequently mentioned. In response to this emerging training need, our Program Instructor, Charlie Schlather became certified to teach Mental Health First Aid, a program recognized by the SAMHSA National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. This certificate has been integrated into a new three credit course, *Mental Health in Human Services*, now being offered through UHMC.
- Another valuable suggestion from an employer was for the college to mentor, train and support agencies new to the utilization of CHWs. If the college were to develop and offer training to support employers interested in incorporating CHWs into their agencies, this could lead to greater utilization of CHWs in Hawai'i.
- Several employers interviewed in the second study recommended further ways the college and community could collaborate. One employer proposed student field trips to visit agencies, while another requested UHMC-CHW courses be offered at agency settings to improve access for incumbent workers.

Employers and CHWs have played critical roles in the development and implementation of the UHMC-CHW certificate program. Partnering with these key stakeholders assured that the training met the needs of the community, which was seen in the clear match between student improvements and the skills most critical to employers. To remain relevant to the community, this training program will need to continue to elicit ongoing feedback from employers and CHWs.

Additionally, the program, employers, and CHWs can continue building CHW workforce capacity in Maui County by identifying, supporting, and training those individuals in our community who are a good match for the CHW role.

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