Growing Apprenticeships in Non-Traditional Sectors (GAINS) Application - NJ Department of Health - Community Health Workers

The NJ Department of Health is eager to establish a registered Community Health Worker (CHW) Apprenticeship program in healthcare statewide. A standardized community health worker training and certification program would allow the state to solidify an emerging and critical component of its workforce - creating a needed infrastructure to support them, and the institutions with which they contract. Through this work, the DOH can create a pipeline of qualified CHWs employable by public and private employers statewide. Further, the establishment of CHW core competencies and training will facilitate the opportunity to integrate community health worker services into the state Medicaid reimbursement system.

Often, the barriers to good health care are not medical, but have more to do with social, cultural or economic issues. Community health workers have an intimate understanding of the culture, languages and challenges of their neighborhoods and, therefore, are trusted by the people living there. CHWs can take on some of the nonclinical tasks that are now carried out by more highly trained and higher-paid nurses and physicians. CHWs can make sure individuals get to medical appointments, fill their prescriptions and have the basic necessities like housing and food.

In New Jersey, there is currently no standardization of training or practice among community health workers who are employed by hospital systems, payers, and community based organizations.

To establish the CHW Apprenticeship Program, DOH requires partnership with institutions of higher education (Essex, Camden, Ocean, and Mercer County Colleges & Seton Hall University) and employers. Per the federal program guidelines, DOH will partner with community colleges to provide the Related Technical Instruction (RTI), and also with multiple public and private employers to hire and provide on the job training. Public/Private employers will recruit, hire and deploy CHWs within communities. To begin, DOH will engage with county colleges, CHWs and stakeholders to formulate a plan for RTI and On-the-job learning. The training program will target the southern region and then expand throughout the state. The long term goal is to have the CHW Apprentice program available to all CHWs in New Jersey.

In addition, DOH will formulate a steering body that will convene and coordinate with three working groups: Curriculum, Outreach Recruitment & Retention, and Sustainability---known as Community Advisory Board (CHW CAB). The Curriculum workgroup will develop a
CHW curriculum that will be administered and adhered to by all partners in the CHW Apprenticeship Program. The CHW CAB will provide guidance and partnership throughout the development of the CHW Institute renamed the Colette Lamothe-Galette CHW Institute in memory of a public health champion and friend. Membership of the CHW CAB consist of DOH, County Colleges, CHW reps, and public and private employer representatives.

A community administrator will be identified and funded with the help of philanthropic partners to develop a data system to track progress of CHWs enrolled in the Apprenticeship Program, coordinate with employers to onboard CHWs, and also work with the county colleges to enroll and support CHW’s related technical instruction. Each partner will play an integral role in building and supporting CHW activities statewide. As the intermediary of this program, DOH will take the lead in coordinating the overall Apprenticeship program and the interactions of each of the partners. Table X below summarizes the role of each partner in the Program. To ensure participation in the program, DOH will require that all CHWs hired using state funds participate in and complete the CHW Apprenticeship Program.

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<th>Program Partner</th>
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| NJDOH                                  | • Convene, Direct, and Coordinate CHW Apprenticeship Program and supporting components  
• Implement NJ Statewide CHW Institute |
| County Colleges (RTIs)                 | • Devise or Adapt CHW training curriculum                            
• Provide 150 hours training per CHW  |
| Employers (Public/Private)            | • Provide 2,000 OTJ training hours to CHWs                           
• Recruit CHWs in service area         
• Receive $6,000 stipend per apprentice toward salary |
| CHW Community Advisory Board (CHW CAB) | • Assist with CHW Curriculum development                            
• Provide guidance to CHW RTI and Employer partners statewide         
• Design pathway to sustainability & career path for CHWs (Medicaid reimbursement) |
| Community Administrator (CA)           | • Provide TA and support to CHW Supervisors/Employers statewide      
• Track & monitor CHW course and OTJ training hours                    
• Issue Employer Stipend                                                  
• Issue CHW Certification upon satisfactory completion of requirements |
DOH will promote the Apprenticeship program among its large network of healthcare providers including but not limited to hospital systems, nursing providers, and community-based organizations. CHWs will be recruited by employers to fill vacant roles, and upon hire to join the Apprenticeship program. Employers will notify the community administrator of hires, and the CA will coordinate with the regional RTI to enroll them in instruction, as well as assist CHWs in navigating the process toward certification.

Figure 1. CHW Apprenticeship Program Design