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Community Health Workers (CHW) can improve care coordination and health outcomes with sufficient investment

Analysis and Evidence-based of the role of CHWs in the Healthcare System

LOS ANGELES, CA — Community Health Councils (CHC) seeks to inform the current and ongoing dialogue about the impact Community Health Workers (CHWs) have had, and will continue to have on the healthcare system, particularly among vulnerable communities who experience disproportionate health disparities, such as South Los Angeles. Today, CHC releases a report, “The Role of Community Health Workers in Health Systems: A Multisectoral Exploration,” that demonstrates CHWs as a viable, community-centric solution to bringing education, social services, healthcare resources to communities experiencing severe health disparities and workforce shortage burdens. “Understanding the impactful role community health workers play serving as critical links between the patient and the healthcare provider should not be underestimated. Fortunately, CHWs continue to expand their role and advance efforts to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes” says, Veronica Flores, Chief Executive Officer, Community Health Councils

Throughout the process of preparing this report, CHC sought inclusivity by incorporating input from relevant cross-sector stakeholders to ensure findings and recommendations provide a multilayered perspective on current CHW roles in healthcare to support intersectoral recommendations to inform the safety net. As a result, the following recommendations are presented in the report:

- I. California must continue to build upon the work of various organizations and stakeholder groups to support and build awareness of CHWs as a valued member of team-based care in the healthcare workforce.

II. The healthcare infrastructure can better address the intersection between care coordination and strategies to address social determinants of health through the involvement of CHWs by:

- 1) Developing a statewide financing and reimbursement mechanism for clinics and other healthcare providers;
- 2) Supporting hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare systems to incorporate CHWs in team-based care medical education;
- 3) Creating funding opportunities to continually evaluate the return on investment (ROI) for using CHWs and their impact on social determinants of health;
- 4) Tracking the role of the CHW through data at the various levels, locally, County and Statewide; and
- 5) Continuing to strengthen the role of the CHWs supporting and evaluating her/his professional development and capacity building opportunities.

With the changing healthcare trends, the CHW role has grown to be more complex. Now CHWs are being integrated into healthcare teams to decrease health disparities because they can play a key role in addressing the cultural, linguistic, and health literacy gaps between patients and healthcare providers. According to Roberto Vargas, MD, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science “As health care providers and hospitals face growing financial pressures to achieve better population health outcomes the integration of CHWs into team-based medical care has great potential for good. However, we must also stay vigilant in ensuring that this unique discipline can maintain a balance between the efficiency goals of the health care system and their advocacy for vulnerable populations.” CHWs can help bridge the gap while respecting cultural beliefs.

The report is available online at [CHC's website](#).

Community Health Councils (CHC) is a non-profit, community-based health education and policy organization. Established in 1992, our mission is to promote social justice and achieve health equity in community and environmental resources to improve the health and well-being of under-resourced populations.