

MedStar Georgetown University Hospital Community Health Workers (CHWs) Brief

What is a CHW?

As defined by the American Public Health Association, A CHW is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as an intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.

Who do CHWs serve?

CHWs can serve a variety of populations but often target marginalized and under resourced communities in the District. They can support children, adolescent, and adult physical and behavioral health.

Where do CHWs work?

CHWs are trained to work in a multitude of physical and behavioral health care settings. DC already has a robust CHW presence, including in government-funded program like DC Ends HIV or during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, CHWs can be found at health providers like La Clinica de Pueblo or Children's National Hospital.

Why Do We Need CHWS?

Significant institutional challenges, like historically rooted mistrust and systemic racism, often prevent under resourced and marginalized communities from accessing critical services. CHWs act as a bridge to crucial services, often living and working in these same communities. They utilize culturally competent training and lived experience to establish trust and ensure people receive the care they need.

How Can CHWs Be Supported?

Funding Opportunities

Community Health Workers are not currently eligible for Medicaid reimbursement through DC Medicaid. There are several pathways for **Medicaid**

reimbursement for CHWs:

- 1115 Waiver
- State Plan Amendment

Registration & Certification Opportunities

Certification, whether voluntary or mandatory, establishes a set of core competencies and can be administered by:

- State health department
- Independent certifying board
- CHW Association

What Are Other Jurisdictions Doing?

- For Medicaid Reimbursement
 - California's Medicaid program, Medi-Cal, reimburses for CHW services under its State Plan. The Department of Health Care Services pays managed care plans a capitated rate for CHW services.
- For Registration & Certification
 - Maryland and Virginia support voluntary certification for CHWs. Both states include CHWs in decision-making processes around this key part of workforce development.

To Learn More About ECIN – MedStar Georgetown University Hospitals

Given [strong evidence](#) of the benefits of CHWs, there has been [increased](#) focus on [integrating CHWs](#) into the health system through regulation, certification, and formalized financing structures. [Many jurisdictions](#) and the [federal government](#) have already taken these steps – and the District is [ripe with opportunity](#) to build on this momentum and build on existing opportunities to leverage funding and grow the CHW workforce in the District.

ECIN – MedStar Georgetown University Hospital is committed to improving healthcare access across the District, as well as mental health workforce development pathways for CHWs to specialize in Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health. Diverse CHWs career pathways are needed to continue to expand the District's healthcare ecosystem.



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