IDPH
Illinois Department of Public Health

EMPLOYER BRIEF FOR CHW CERTIFICATION

What Employers Need to Know and Next Steps



Community Health Workers (CHWs) are frontline public health professionals who serve as trusted connectors between communities and health and human service systems.

Community Health Worker services are now eligible for reimbursement.

Illinois Public Health Association
IPHA

Community Health Workers
Help. Guide. Thrive.

Learn more about CHW certification and next steps:
HELPGUIDETHRIVE.ORG

What Is a Community Health Worker?

A Community Health Worker is a trusted community member who:

- Engages in service coordination and conducts system navigation
- Advocates for and builds capacity of individuals and communities
- Conducts outreach
- Provides culturally effective health education and information
- Provides health coaching and social support
- Conducts individual and community assessments
- Serves as a community/cultural liaison among individuals, communities, and health and social service systems
- Participates in evaluation and research

CHWs often share lived experiences, languages or cultural connections with the communities they serve.

Why Employ CHWs?

Organizations that integrate CHWs into their workforce benefit from:

- Reduced no-show rates and improved follow-up
- Increased trust and engagement with communities
- Improved care coordination and service utilization
- Stronger connections between clinical and community services
- Progress towards improving social determinants of health
- CHWs complement, not replace, clinical and social service roles

Why This Matters

CHWs play a vital role in addressing social determinants of health, improving access to services, and advancing equity across Illinois.

When employers invest in CHWs, they help reinforce community programs, improve community health, support organizations serving unhoused residents, and create more **responsive public health systems.**

Who can employ CHWs?

- Community-Based and Nonprofit Organizations
- Public Health and Human Services Programs
- Schools and Community Partnerships
- Organizations Serving The Unhoused
- Clinics and Hospitals
- Health Departments
- Your Local Organization

Roles may vary based on organizational needs and community priorities.
CHWs can be employed by a variety of organizations across fields and sectors.

CHW Certification in Illinois

CHW certification in Illinois is now available and is expected to:

- Lower overall healthcare costs through increased engagement
- Improve appointment no-shows and follow-up compliance
- Increase Medicaid reimbursement opportunities through billable CHW services
- Reduce preventable emergency department visits and hospital readmissions
- Improve value-based payment performance and shared savings outcomes
- Enhance care coordination and helps close gaps in care, reducing provider workload by addressing social and non-clinical needs
- Address social determinants of health to prevent costly complications
- Build stronger community partnerships and referral networks
- Reduce health disparities in high-risk populations

Supporting CHWs as Employers

Strong CHW programs are built on:

- Clear role definitions and expectations
- Appropriate supervision and support
- Opportunities for training and professional development
- Honoring lived experience and community knowledge
- Equitable compensation and career advancement opportunities

Employer support is critical to CHW retention and success.

What Employers Can Do Now

Employers can now:

- Learn about the CHW role and how it aligns with organizational goals
- Review current CHW job descriptions and responsibilities
- Support CHWs in documenting training and experience
- Plan for how certification may be supported once implemented
- Stay informed through trusted partners and workforce updates
- Prep internal systems for billing
- Contact an ambassador to get the process under way

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Version. 3.0 - 11/2026

Funding is made possible by a grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health.