

# Connecticut State Innovation Model



## Community Health Workers: SIM Initiatives

The Connecticut State Innovation Model's (SIM) vision is to establish a health care system that *improves health and eliminates health inequities; ensures superior access, quality, and care experience and; improves affordability by reducing healthcare costs.*

Community health workers (CHWs) are recognized by national and local health leaders, as well as in the Affordable Care Act, as important members of the health care workforce, and are increasingly being used as integral members of primary health care teams. The evidence shows that they can help improve health care access and outcomes; strengthen health care teams; enhance the quality of life for people in poor, underserved, and diverse communities; and reduce growth in health care costs.

The State Innovation Model provides funding to promote the use of CHWs along the healthcare continuum and help prepare this workforce to become members of inter-professional primary care teams.



### What is the role of a Community Health Worker?

Team-based care is foundational to establishing a patient-centered medical home, where an individual's health care is coordinated in a holistic way to address all of their needs. CHWs serve as an extension of the healthcare team serving individuals in their homes or communities. They can address cultural, linguistic, health literacy, and social-determinant barriers that make it difficult for individuals to receive the healthcare services they need.

The role of CHWs varies greatly depending on the setting in which they work and the need they are intended to address. For example, CHWs can provide health education and coaching, identify resources, assist with adherence to treatment plans, and ensure that individuals get the healthcare and social services they need. They may also provide informal counseling and social support, advocate for individuals and communities, provide direct services (such as basic first aid); administer health screening tests, and build individual and community capacity.

The role of CHWs will be considered in several SIM initiatives including:

- **Clinical & Community Integration Program (CCIP):** The [Practice Transformation Task Force](#) is currently developing standards for CCIP that include the use of Community Health Workers. These standards will be required of Advanced Networks and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) that participate in Medicaid's Quality Improvement & Shared Savings Program (MQISSP). CCIP funding will include technical assistance to chosen provider entities.
- **Population Health Plan:** SIM is funding the development of a Population Health Plan, which includes Prevention Service Centers and Health Enhancement Communities. CHWs may provide services within Prevention Service Centers and may also be part of other elements of our population health model.

## Focus Areas for SIM-funded Community Health Worker initiatives

The State Innovation Model Program Management Office has contracted with the University of Connecticut Health Center to implement the CHW initiatives outlined below. UConn Health has subcontracted with [Southwestern Area Health Education Center](#) (AHEC) to help support this work. AHEC has experience and expertise in workforce development and community collaboration.

Approximately \$1 million in federal test grant funds will support the following CHW initiatives over a four year period, beginning in 2015:

### Community Health Workforce Development



- **CHW workforce inventory** to determine who employs them, who they are, how are they utilized, and their impact on each region.
- **Apprenticeships** to identify, develop and implement community-based CHW placements and protocols for apprenticeships. Will work with the Department of Labor.
- **Community resource survey** to identify geographic needs and resources available for CHWs, in conjunction with Community Health Needs Assessments.
- **Technical assistance** to assist existing and potential CHW employers.

### Infrastructure & Policy



- **CHW Advisory Committee** will be established to provide guidance and recommendations on CHW initiatives.
- **Healthcare Innovation Steering Committee** will provide oversight of all SIM CHW initiatives.

### Education & Community Integration



- **Create curricular materials** to support CHW workforce development.
- **Educate** and distribute information about geographic resources available for CHWs in CT.
- **Hold information sessions** for regional stakeholders, hosted by the CHW Association of CT to describe CHW roles and functions.
- **Create marketing materials** to educate stakeholders, employers and payers about the value of CHWs.
- **Coordinate CHW Workforce state-wide meeting** of employers of current CHWs, and other stakeholders.