

# Community Health Worker (CHW) Core Competencies Enhancement Project Focus Groups Findings

July 2025

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# Background



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# Competency Updates Background



## Current Texas CHW Core Competencies


1. Communication
2. Interpersonal
3. Service coordination
4. Capacity-building
5. Advocacy
6. Teaching
7. Organizational
8. Knowledge base on specific health issues

Updates approved August 2024 → Effective February 1, 2026



# Background: Summary of Changes



- Enhanced Existing Competencies
    - Interpersonal Skills → Interpersonal and Relationship-Building Skills
    - Service Coordination Skills → Service Coordination and Navigation Skills
    - Teaching Skills → Teaching and Education Skills
  - New Competency
    - Evaluation and Research Skills
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# Methods



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# Method Information



- Five focus groups (FGs) were conducted virtually from January 14-23, 2025
  - 1-2 hours each
- Recruitment considerations:
  - length of certification as a training site
  - training provider type
  - geographic representation across public health regions
- 18 Participants: CHWs and CHW Instructors (CHWIs)
- 12 Training Centers

# Methods cont.



- FGs explored several key areas:
    - Understanding of the recent updates to the core competencies
    - Anticipated opportunities and positive changes
    - Potential challenges for implementation
    - Cost and resource implications
    - Impact on CHW and CHWI roles
    - Suggested support needs and recommendations
  - Analysis → Qualitative thematic analysis using manual coding to identify key themes and patterns
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# Results



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# Results - Overall



The analysis identified six main thematic areas:

1. Understanding and Awareness of Changes
  2. Implementation Opportunities
  3. Implementation Challenges
  4. Support Needs
  5. Resource Impact
  6. Recommendations
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# Understanding & Awareness

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- Strong recognition of alignment with national C3 standards
- Evaluation and research competency viewed as particularly significant
- Widespread agreement that updates formalize existing CHW practices
- Timing appreciated - reflects current CHW role evolution

*"The competencies were updated so that they align more along the side of a national CHW workforce to help upskill CHWs"*

# Implementation Opportunities



- Professional Growth
  - Enhanced CHW marketability and credibility
  - Validation of CHW expertise in research
- Community Impact
  - Improved service delivery through enhanced evaluation skills
  - Enhanced relationship-building focus

*“These additional competencies will not only serve the clients and the community members that they're serving...they would also align with the evolution of the workforce.”*

# Implementation Challenges



- Resource Constraints
  - Staff time for curriculum updates
- Curriculum Adaptation
  - Questions about submission processes
- Instructor Preparedness
  - Need for evaluation/research training
- Student Learning Barriers
  - Teaching complex concepts accessibly

*"Just because I'm an instructor, doesn't mean I know how to [or] have specific skills around evaluation and research. It's going to maybe be a learning curve for me."*

# Support Needs

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- Resource Materials
  - Templates, guides, multi-lingual materials, and case studies for curriculum development
- Technical Assistance
  - Provide individual technical assistance to training centers
- Communication
  - Timeline expectations and submission processes

*"A template, a guide, or a sample would be ideal to help people because... we are grassroots, so it's not like we have a health science center helping us."*

# Resource Impact

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- Primary Impact: Staff Time
  - Challenge for single-person operations and those with multiple responsibilities
  - Organizational commitment
  - Need for dedicated implementation time
- Minimal Material Costs
  - Leveraging existing resources

*"The time in creating the curriculum is probably maybe the biggest piece of that. But again, I know for the ones I'm involved in, we have that [existing curriculum]. We're probably going to more pull from what we already have and make sure it aligns."*

# Stakeholder Recommendations



- Regular communication
- Develop standardized templates for evaluation/research competency
- Create centralized resource repository with approved materials
- Ensure bilingual accessibility of all resources

*“Examples or case studies in which they show how CHWs have participated in research... the role they played.”*

# Summary




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# Conclusion



- Overall Positive Reception
    - Participants view the updated competencies as valuable enhancements that align with national standards and recognize existing CHW practices.
  - Key Takeaways
    - Evaluation and Research competency generates particular enthusiasm
    - Challenges are manageable with proper support and resources
    - Staff time is primary resource need - minimal material costs
    - Clear implementation support will ensure successful adoption
    - Benefits outweigh challenges for CHW professional development
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# Next Steps



- Implementation Timeline
  - Effective Date: February 1, 2026
  - Current Phase: Execute implementation plan, resource development based on focus group findings
- <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/chw-core-competencies-update>

# Thank you!

CHW Core Competencies Enhancement Project Focus Groups Findings

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