

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

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Background



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

Methods



Methods



- 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



- 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

Results



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

Understanding & Awareness



- 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

- 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

- 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.”

Conclusion



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

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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