

Abstract

Unity Care NW supports Community Health Workers (CHWs) as an integral component of health care teams, delivering services in health promotion in response to the medically unengaged, communities affected by housing insecurities. The Community Outreach Navigation Network of Engagement Care Teams (CONNECT) program integrates a best practices approach of CHW led interventions, that is patient-centered, to address social drivers of health.

Background

The traditional infrastructures of health care systems are overwhelmed in meeting demands of intergenerational population assessments. Furthermore, provisions for youth and family-based health services are underrepresented amongst housing insecure communities. One possible solution is to establish the integration of CHW led on-site efforts to accommodate emergent needs; increasing mobility of health care access may significantly improve health outcomes. The American Public Health Association (APHA) CHW Section's definition of a CHW is increasingly recognized as the nationally accepted definition:

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are frontline public health workers who are trusted members of and/or have an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables CHWs to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. CHWs also build individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.

Methodology

CONNECT will demonstrate a scalable CHW program in supportive interventions to administer a comprehensive form of risk and resiliency efforts. These provisions will establish a warm hand off to clinical staff. Interventions will be delivered at community hubs and academic institutions to engage housing insecure populations to mitigate barriers to health. Pilot sites include Whatcom Community College, Options High School, Ferndale High School, Maple Alley Café (Opportunity Council), as well as in house, Unity Care NW Homeless Access Day. The CHW role will demonstrate:

- Mobile and fluid approach to initial and follow up visits (meeting where client is at)
- Health Education
- Emotional and peer networking support



- Appointment setting and scheduling in real time
- Dental, Behavioral Health referrals
- Review summaries and identify further need for assessments of existing patients in the electronic health record
- Resource coordination
- Facilitation of health care services (at-risk assessments, detection, and intervention)
- Mitigation and advocacy around social determinants of health
- Follow up services (promoting a Pathway model engagement)
- Orientation events and outreach for integrated health programming, increasing health care access to individuals, students, and/or their families

Challenges

Current challenges include staffing, access to funding streams and future CHW deliverables in health promotion congruent with the Pathways model and Medicaid Transformation Demonstration. CHW led interventions amongst housing insecure communities hopes to demonstrate the intersectionality of community based primary care and at-risk homelessness in Whatcom county.

