

Community Health Workers in Rhode Island



Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training

1511 Pontiac Avenue • Cranston, RI 02920-4407

(401) 462-8000 • TDD: (401) 462-8006

www.dlt.ri.gov

Governor Donald L. Carcieri • Director Sandra M. Powell

*DLT is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program.
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon
request to individuals with disabilities.*

Published September 2009

Community Health Workers in Rhode Island

January – March 2009

Introduction

Community Health Workers are generally considered to be frontline public health workers. They are trusted members of or have a close understanding of the community they serve. This relationship enables these workers to minimize social and cultural barriers between community, health and social service institutions. Community Health Workers often act as a bridge to complement and enhance the work performed by many other health and social service professionals.

Some Community Health Workers are linked to the community they serve by a shared language and/or culture, while others may share a common life experience. Many other Community Health Workers care for and are advocates for elderly and disabled populations.

Although there is no official definition for a Community Health Worker, formal participation of these workers in the health and human services systems has been documented in the United States since the 1950's (from Giblin PT. Effective Utilization

and evaluation of indigenous health care workers. Public Health Rep. 1989;104 (4):361-368 and Meister JS, Warrick LH, de Zapien JG, Wood AH. Using Lay health worker: case study of a community-based prenatal intervention. J Community Health. 1992;17 (1):37-51.) Through their work, Community Health Workers build family and community capacity and promote individual, family, and community health through a range of activities such as informal counseling, advocacy, social support provision, and community education. Community Health Workers often engage in effective community advocacy for improved access to better quality resources for a streamlined comprehensive health care and public health infrastructure.

“Community Health Worker” is an umbrella term inclusive of many other job titles, such as Outreach Educators/Specialists, Community Health Advisors/Assistants, Lay Health Advocates, and Community Health Representatives/Promoters. Many of the surveyed employers also considered Nurses, Certified Nursing Assistants, Group Home Workers and Home Health Care Aides to be *Community Health Workers* as well.

Rhode Island is one of the first states in the country to assess the size of its Community Health Worker workforce, and the first to predict the demand for such workers now and in the future. The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training in cooperation with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the Transcultural Community Health Initiative with the Center for Primary Care and Prevention at Brown University was charged with the responsibility of collecting information on the state's Community Health Worker workforce. Information concerning the Community Health Worker workforce was obtained directly from establishments classified in industries* that are considered to be the most likely to employ this occupation.

The Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training and the Rhode Island Department of Education gratefully acknowledge Making Connections Providence and the Annie E. Casey Foundation for their financial support and their commitment to increasing opportunity for disadvantaged children and families.

*Industries surveyed are listed in the Methodology section.

There are an estimated 3,350 Community Health Workers employed or serving as volunteers at 143 establishments located in Rhode Island. This workforce includes 1,979 full-time and 1,154 part-time workers and 217 volunteers. Included in this workforce are Outreach Educators and Specialists, Community Health Representatives, Advisors, Assistants, and Promoters; as well as Nurses, Certified Nursing Assistants, Group Home Workers and Home Health Care Aides.

During the first three months of 2009, forty establishments reported job openings for 116 full-time, 43 part-time, and 110 volunteer Community Health Worker positions. Another 71 establishments reported the need for an additional 265 Community Health Workers for which they were **not** actively recruiting. In addition, 49 small establishments that do not currently employ Community Health Workers indicated that they would welcome volunteers for such a position.

<u>Establishments</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-time</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
	<i>Filled Positions</i>			
143	3,350	1,978	1,155	217
	<i>Vacant Positions</i>			
40	269	116	43	110
	<i>Needed Positions Not Recruiting</i>			
71	265	n/a	n/a	n/a

Large employers those with 250 or more workers, are more likely to rely on the services of Community Health Workers than are small (10 to 49 workers) or medium-size (50 to 249 workers) establishments. Large employers are also more likely to employ Community Health Workers full-time while small employers rely more on part-time workers and volunteers.

	<u>Establishments</u>			<u>Estimated Employment</u>			
	<u>Total</u>	<u>With CHW's</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Full- time</u>	<u>Part-time</u>	<u>Volunteer</u>
Total	1,199	143	11.9%	3,350	1,978	1,155	217
Small Employers (10 to 20 workers)	778	68	8.7%	424	80	204	140
Medium Size Employers (50 to 249 workers)	345	55	15.9%	1,577	879	683	15
Large Employers (250 or more workers)	76	20	26.3%	1,349	1,019	268	62

CHW - Community Health Worker

Over one-quarter (26.3%) of the 76 large establishments classified in industries identified as likely to employ Community Health Workers have these workers in their employ. Large establishments employed a total of 1,349 Community Health Worker mostly in full-time positions. Approximately 16 percent of the medium size establishments employed an estimated 1,577 Community Health Worker with full-time employees representing over half (55.7%) of their workforce. Less than 10 percent of the small establishments employ Community Health Workers mostly in part-time (48%) and volunteer (33%) positions.

Nursing & Residential Care Facilities (1,398) and Ambulatory Health Services (1,023) are by far the largest employers of Community Health Workers in the state, accounting for over 70 percent of the workforce. Nursing & Residential Care Facilities are more likely to employ full-time workers (69.6%) who assist older and disabled populations. Establishments in Ambulatory Health Services tend to rely more on part-time (53.2%) and volunteer (13.5%) staff.

Approximately 646 Community Health Workers are either employed or volunteering at a third of the hospitals in the state. Establishments in Educational Services employ nearly 200 Community Health Workers, while small numbers are found among insurance companies, charitable organizations and in Public Housing Authorities.

Community Health Workers Employment by Industry							
	Establishments			Estimated Employment			
	<u>Total</u>	<u>With CHW's</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Full- time</u>	<u>Part-time</u>	<u>Volunteer</u>
Total	1,199	143	11.9%	3,350	1,978	1,155	217
Educational Services	163	43	26.4%	194	31	156	7
Ambulatory Health Services	439	27	6.2%	1,023	341	544	138
Hospitals	17	6	35.3%	646	576	13	57
Nursing & Residential Care Facilities	160	17	10.6%	1,398	973	412	13
Social Assistance	173	38	22.0%	71	49	22	0
Insurance Carriers & Charitable Organizations, Social Advocacy Groups	230	3	1.3%	5	5	0	0
Public Housing Authorities	17	9	52.9%	13	3	8	2

CHW - Community Health Worker

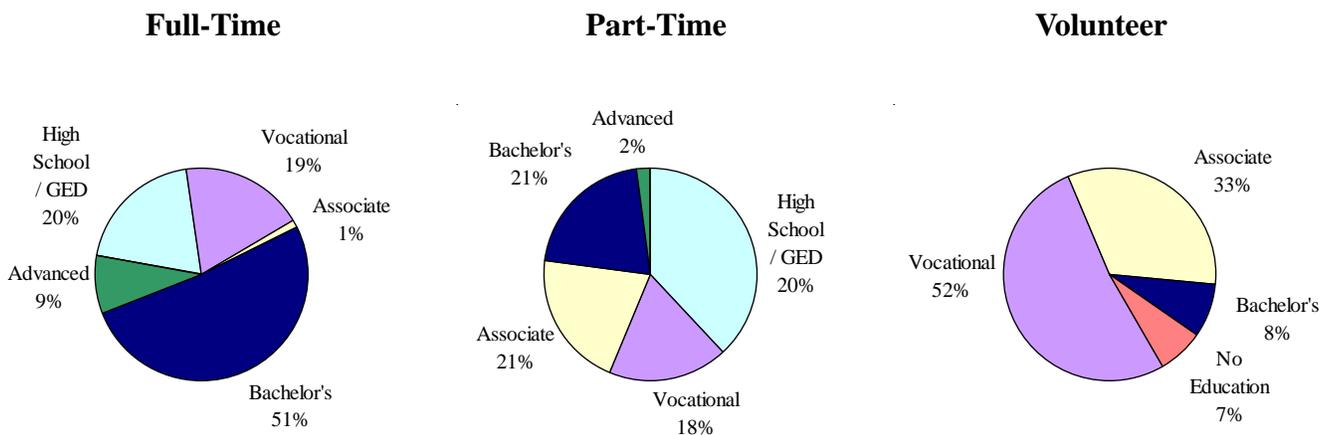
Approximately 28 percent (40) of the establishments require Community Health Workers to have common experience or share language and culture with the community they serve. A requirement reported by mid-size (56%) and large (42%) establishments, but not by small establishments. Nursing & Residential Care Facilities, Hospitals and Social Assistance establishments were also more likely to have this requirement accounting for 53 percent, 50 percent and 40 percent, respectively, of the establishments classified in these industries with Community Health Workers on staff.

Community Health Workers with Common Experience or Language and Culture			
<u>Establishments with Requirements</u>	<u>Estimated Employment at Establishments</u>		
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>	<u>Volunteer</u>
40	643	431	65

In all, forty establishments require Community Health Workers to share common experience, language or culture with the community they serve. Employment for these forty establishments included an estimated 643 full-time, 148 part-time and 65 volunteer positions.

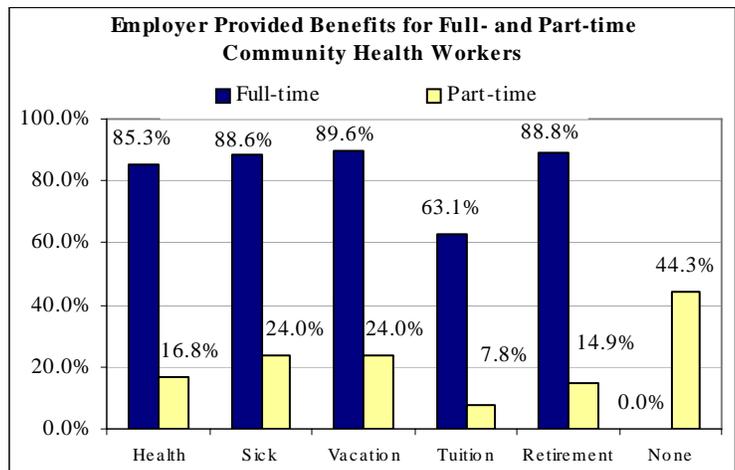
College degrees - Bachelor's (51%) or Advanced (8%) are generally required by employers for full-time Community Health Workers positions. Employers are less likely to require college degrees for part-time or volunteer positions. Nearly all employers required that their full-time, part-time and volunteer staff have work experience in a related position.

Educational Requirements for Community Health Workers



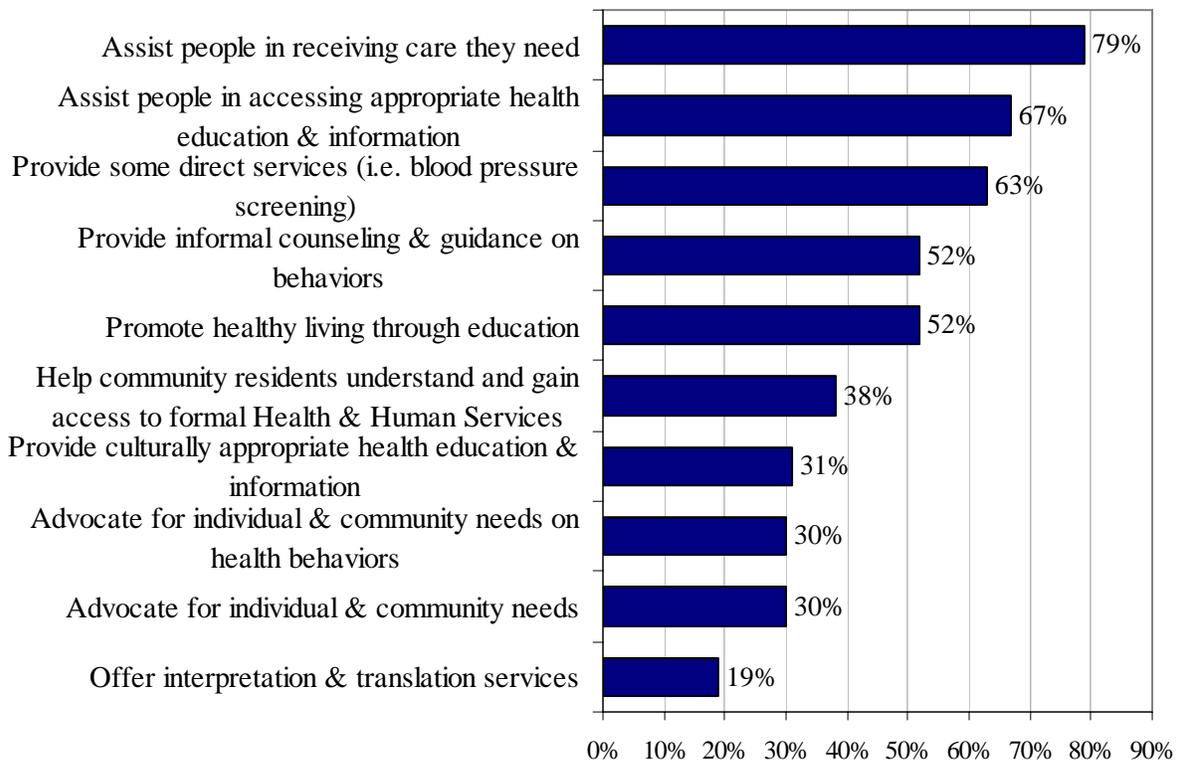
The annual salary for Community Health Workers averaged \$47,540 for full-time workers; the median wage was \$34,730 with reported wages ranging from \$26,000 to \$83,200 per year. For part-time workers reported wages ranged from \$10 to 45 per hour. The average wage was \$13.04 per hour and the median wage was \$12.00 per hour.

Over 80 percent of employers provide health benefits (85%), retirement (89%); sick leave (89%) and/or vacation pay to their full-time Community Health Workers. Tuition reimbursement is offered by 63 percent of the employers. Community Health Workers employed part-time are much less likely to receive benefits, with 44 percent indicating that they provide no benefits to their part-time staff. Approximately one-quarter provide sick leave and or vacation pay, 17 percent provide health benefits, 15 percent retirement and just 8 percent offer tuition reimbursement.



Establishments indicated that the Community Health Workers in their employ perform a variety of functions the most common of which are assisting people in receiving the care they need (79%) and in accessing appropriate health education & information (67%). Over 60 percent of the establishments indicated that their Community Health Workers provide some direct services such as first aid and blood pressure screenings as well as personal care and homemaking.

Functions of Community Health Workers



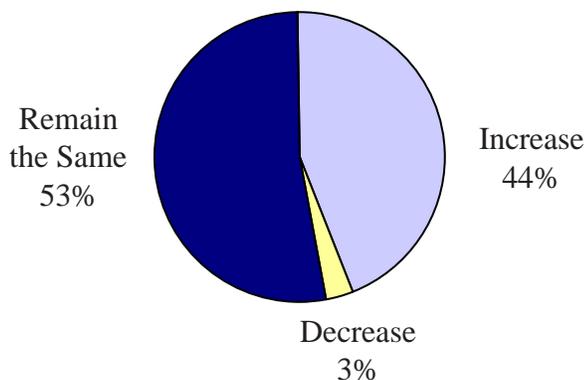
Establishments indicated that the most common methods used for funding Community Health Workers positions are fee for service (38.8%) and grants (24.1%). Nearly 20 percent receive funding through state departments and/or taxes and seven percent are reimbursed for the services they provide. Four percent of the establishments indicated that they are able to provide community health worker services due to a total volunteer staff or donations.

Over 95 percent of the establishments expect their need for Community Health Workers to increase (44%) or remain the same (53%) over the next five years. The major reason cited for the increase need for Community Health Worker is an “aging population”, cited by half the establishments that expect the demand to increase. Establishments also felt that there will be increase need for their services from students,

<u>Type</u>	<u>Percent of Establishments</u>
Fee for Service	39%
Grants	26%
State Budget	13%
Local Taxes	7%
Reimbursement	7%
Volunteers	4%
Donations	4%

*Establishments may rely on more than one source of funding

Need for Community Health Workers Over the Next Five Years



public housing residents residing in family developments, people without health insurance. Keeping individuals in their homes longer as well as substance abuse prevention will also increase the need for Community Health Workers. As health cost rises, the need for Community Health Workers will also rise as Community Health Worker will be needed to assist with treatment and preventative care.

Lack of funding was the major reason cited for the number of Community Health Workers remaining the same. There is also concern that the increasing educational requirements for Community Health Workers will result in a decrease in volunteers. Currently, less than 10 percent of establishments require education beyond an Associate Degree for their volunteer staff. Just three percent of the establishments expect the need for Community Health Workers to decline with decrease need for childcare cited as main the reason. However, two-thirds of the establishments that indicated the need Community Health Workers will increase over the next five years do not believe that they will be able to increase their Community Health Workers staff due to inadequate funding.

Employers cited an “aging population” as the main reason for the increase in the expected need for Community Health Workers over the next five years.

In addition, 300 establishments indicated that they believe approximately 3,500 of their employees spend on average 30 percent of their time doing work associated with community health workers. Time spent on community health worker activities varies from 100 percent for five workers classified as Student Health Coordinators to as little as 4 percent for the fifteen workers classified as Psychologists.

Reported occupations in which workers spend more than 50 percent of their time performing functions associated with community health workers include Certified Nursing Assistants (62%), Opticians & Ophthalmic Assistants (68%), Admissions, Discharge and Surgical Coordinators (75%).

Occupations with large numbers of workers spending at least 20 percent of their time performing functions associated with community health workers include Registered Nurses (1,655), Certified Nursing Assistants (596), Physicians/ Ophthalmologists/ Optometrists (300), Opticians & Ophthalmic Assistants (207) and Social Workers (80).

Staff That Perform Community Health Work Work as a Part of Their Jobs

<u>Title</u>	<u>Estimated Number</u>	<u>Portion of Time</u>
Admissions, Discharge & Surgical Coordinators	50	75%
Care Givers	42	25%
Case Workers	35	10%
Certified Nursing Assistants	596	62%
Dietitians	5	25%
Directors & Administrators	13	5%
Emergency Workers & Paramedics	45	8%
Family Workers	5	15%
Health Science Faculty	200	3%
Licensed Practical Nurses	116	18%
Medical Assistants & Technicians	98	7%
Nurse Practitioners	47	24%
Opticians & Ophthalmic Assistants	207	68%
Physicians/Ophthalmologists/ Optometrists	300	33%
Psychologists	15	4%
Registered Nurses	1,655	20%
School Nurse/ Health Teachers	42	23%
Social Workers	80	20%
Student Health Education Coordinators	5	100%
Substance Abuse Specialists	12	20%

Conclusion

Rhode Island was one of the first states in the country to assess the size of its Community Health Worker workforce, and the first to predict the demand for such workers now and in the future. Survey results indicate that there are approximately 3,133 filled positions, 217 volunteer positions and 534 vacant positions for Community Health Workers at 143 establishments located in the state. In addition, 49 establishments that do not currently employ Community Health Workers indicated that they would welcome volunteers for such a position. While few employers (3%) expect the need for Community Health Workers to decrease over the next five years, the majority (53%) feel that the size of the workforce will remain essentially the same mainly due to limited funding.

Many of the surveyed employers also considered some of the Nurses, Certified Nursing Assistants, Group Home Workers and Home Health Care Aides in their employ to be Community Health Workers since the job responsibilities at the surveyed establishments included functions similar to those of the Community Health Worker. It is likely that in standard occupational survey in which employers select the most appropriate job title for their employees based on a list of occupations provided, many employers would not classify these workers as Community Health Workers but would use the more traditional title of Nurse, Certified Nursing Assistant, etc. In addition, 300 establishments indicated that they believe approximately 3,500 of their employees spend on average 30 percent of their time doing work associated with community health workers, further emphasizing the need for such workers.

The Labor Market Information unit wishes to thank the many organizations and their staffs who assisted us by responding to the Community Health Worker survey. Without their assistance this report would not have been possible.

Survey Methodology and Limitations

The information in this report was derived from a sample of establishments classified in industries identified as likely to employ Community Health Workers. The Labor Market Information (LMI) unit of the Department of Labor and Training surveyed 502 of the 1,197 establishments with ten or more employees classified in these industries. The selected sample represented 42 percent of the establishments in this restricted universe. All establishments with 250 or more employees were included in the sample. Other respondents were randomly selected from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages file. Responses were received from 231 establishments or 46 percent of the sample. The sample was weighted at time of selection and responses were reweighed at the end of the collection period. The respondents represented 19 percent of the selected universe.

The survey instrument included the definition of the Community Health Worker promoted by the American Public Health Association's CHW Special Interest Group. Establishments were asked to determine how many, if any of these workers they employed, the major functions they performed, the experience and education requirements for the positions, as well as average wages and benefits provided. Information was also collected on methods of funding, other positions performing similar functions, current job openings and anticipated future demand. The estimated number of Community Health Workers employed or volunteering in Rhode Island is based on responding establishments' interpretation of the definition provided.

The Office of Management and Budget announced in the January 21, 2009 edition of the Federal Register that a distinct job description for the "Community Health Worker" will be added to the 2010 Standard Occupation Classification system. The new detailed occupation 21-1094 - Community Health Worker will be listed under the broad occupation 21-1090 - Miscellaneous Community and Social Services Specialists which is found in the Community and Social Services Occupations Major Group (21-0000).

Survey Responses by Industry and Size of Establishment

	<u>Total (10 or more) Universe</u>	<u>Percent of Universe Responding</u>	<u>Small (10 to 49) Employees</u>	<u>Medium (50 - 249) Employees</u>	<u>Large (250 or more) Employees</u>	
Total	1,197	231	19%	70	122	39
Insurance Carriers & Related Activities	100	19	19%	7	9	3
Elementary & Secondary Schools	105	36	34%	7	16	13
Colleges & Universities	12	5	42%	0	1	4
Other Education Institutions	46	6	13%	6	0	0
Ambulatory Health Services	437	55	13%	25	26	4
Hospitals	17	11	65%	0	2	9
Nursing & Residential	160	58	36%	4	51	3
Social Assistance	173	19	11%	9	9	1
Religious, Grant Making, Social Advocacy and Civil & Social Organizations	130	16	12%	9	7	0
Public Administration - Housing Projects	17	6	35%	3	1	2

