

Advancing High Quality Care: Community Health Worker Pilot Project

Goal: Advance health equity by improving access to culturally competent within the rapidly diversifying western suburbs of Chicago.

Background: In 2017, Community Memorial Foundation (CMF) and Healthy Communities Foundation (HCF) collaborated to fund models of healthcare delivery that utilize Community Health Workers (CHWs), thus improving access to care and growing the healthcare workforce in the western suburbs of Chicago. CMF and HCF funded five organizations with diverse missions and target populations to address the *Regional Health and Human Services Agenda* priority to create communities with accessible, high quality health and human services for all. As part of this pilot project, CHWs and supervisors participated in a learning collaborative to facilitate engagement and content experts to strengthen participant skills and knowledge.

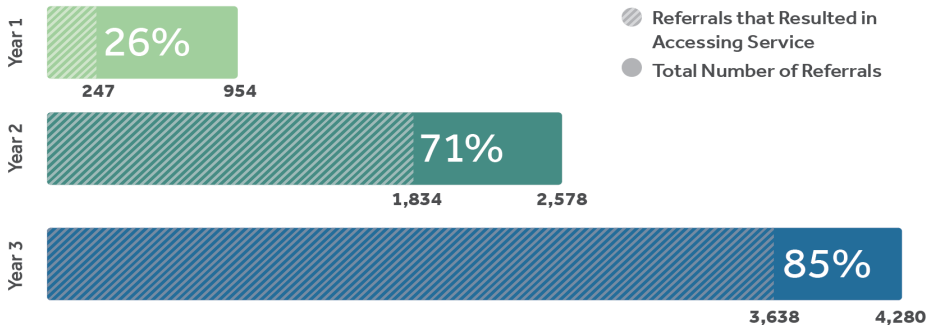


ALIVIO MEDICAL CENTER
An Active Presence for a Strong Community

Objectives: CHWs at the following organizations provide ongoing peer support and case management to navigate access to health care and achieve collaboratively developed health goals within an integrated, interdisciplinary care coordination team. The overall objectives of these efforts include:

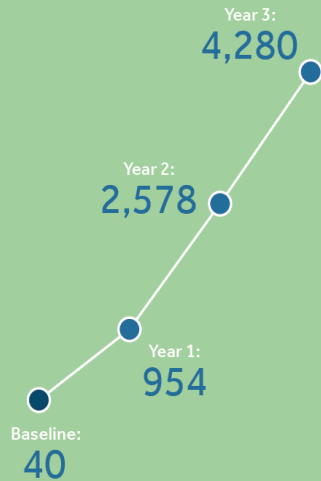
- Increased quality of contacts reached within the target service area
- Increase rate of referrals to other services
- Increase number of referral organizations to strengthen referral network
- Strengthened organizational capacity for delivery of services
- Participation in all learning collaborative trainings
- Development of program-specific outcome objectives

Closed-Loop Referrals



Referrals resulting in accessed services increased from **26% in Year 1** to **71% in Year 2** and **85% in Year 3**. In Year 1, organizations faced challenges in determining the outcome of a referral. In the second year, HealthConnect HUB, a widely used social care network designed for collaboration within community-based organizations, was incorporated. With this integration, organizations were able to connect directly with referral locations for a warm hand off and creating a robust system for documenting the outcome of referrals.

Total Referrals

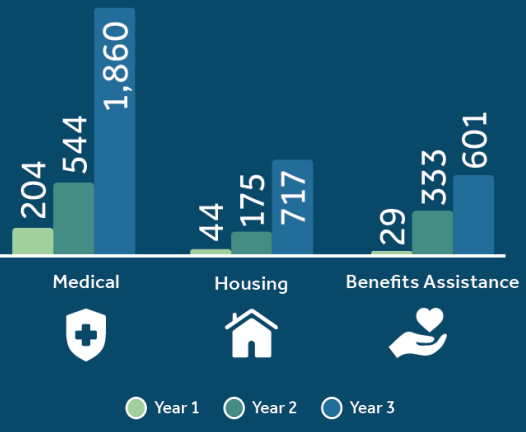


At the conclusion of the pilot, CHWs across all organizations made **7,812 referrals** for service, representing a near **100x increase over baseline**.

“We need community health workers to stick around because of what we all know, which is that 80% of what happens to a person’s health happens outside a doctor’s office.”

- Denise Octavia Smith, ED of the National Association of Community Health Workers

Predominant Referral Types



Since the pandemic hit in early 2020, CHWs and their organizations have made dramatic shifts in their outreach strategies, demonstrating nimbleness in shifting focus. CHWs continue to play a vital role as social work extenders and connectors of community members to needed resources. Year 2 saw a rapid shift to online modalities, with corresponding broad reaches via community webinars and live social media presentations. The wide-reaching programs resulted in less conversions to referrals for contacts. In this third year, there was an increase in the *quality* of contacts, with corresponding increases in client engagement and referrals, despite the ongoing chaos brought on by the pandemic. As the impacts of the pandemic continue, it's not surprising that referrals for medical, housing and benefit assistance represent the largest year-over-year increases echoing pandemic-related health and economic challenges.

“CHWs are the voice and ears of the community.”

– CHW supervisor, reflecting on the value of CHWs

Value of the Community Health Worker

Key stakeholders at each organization emphasized the vital role CHWs play in their organizations. Initially, the CHWs connected people with resources and conducted outreach. The role has grown to increasing each organization’s visibility within the region. The role has also grown in complexity; CHWs work with clients to establish stable housing and achieve attainable goals related to their needs.

“We have found during the pandemic a new appreciation for our CHWs from our Senior Leadership.”

– CHW Supervisor

Organizational Goals

At the end of Year 2, each grantee developed unique measurable goals as a result of participation in the learning collaborative activities to focus on for Year 3 of the pilot. All goals were achieved.

Organization	Goals/Outcomes
Aging Care Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reach at least 900 unduplicated participant encounters ✓ Provide individualized referrals and research to 50 individuals who need more detailed information ✓ Provide clinical support to 30 individuals ✓ Establish relationships with at least 4 new community organizations
Alivio Medical Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reach at least 700 unduplicated participant encounters ✓ Reach at least 20 organizations who will participate in at least 1-2 events per month ✓ At least 70% of participants will receive health education and referral information
BEDS Plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reach and provide referrals to at least 250 unduplicated individuals ✓ At least 180 unduplicated individuals will successfully follow through on referrals
Healthcare Alternative Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ At least 250 unduplicated individuals will receive referrals ✓ At least 100 unduplicated individuals will follow through on referrals ✓ At least 60% of participants will demonstrate increased knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS, issues facing older adults and be able to access services such as Medicaid
Mujeres Latinas En Accion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Generate at least 50 referrals to domestic violence/sexual assault services; of these, at least 20 will follow through on referrals ✓ Host 6 Café en Accion/Community Forums, engaging at least 50 residents ✓ Host 6 trainings on Know Your Rights, public charge, and other pertinent immigration topics, engaging at least 50 residents



The Community Health Worker Pilot is supported by Community Memorial Foundation and Healthy Communities Foundation. The project is coordinated by Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, with Sinai Urban health Institute serving as trainer and evaluator.