



## FLORIDA & PATIENT NAVIGATION

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### ***Focus: Community Health Workers (CHWs) -- Forging a path for statewide voluntary CHW certification***

#### **Background: Developing the Florida CHW Coalition**

In October 2010, the Florida Department of Health Comprehensive Cancer Control program received the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant DP10-1017 (Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Program). Florida's cancer umbrella, the Cancer Control & Research Advisory Council (CCRAB) Goal III Access to Care Committee identified Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Patient Navigators as key priority strategies to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes. The Department began promoting the work of CHWs by convening stakeholders and holding monthly conference calls to identify key issues. The first Florida CHW Coalition (FCHWC) strategic planning meeting took place in June 2011. Its mission: A statewide partnership dedicated to the support and promotion of the CHW profession in Florida. The Department facilitates the FCHWC, which has grown to more than 200 members.

The FCHWC continued to meet by monthly conference call and formed working subgroups: policy, curriculum, practice, networking/sustainability, and research. The Coalition formally adopted the American Public Health Association's definition of CHWs:

A CHW is a frontline health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the CHW to serve as a link between services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.

The policy group enlisted champions who introduced legislative bills to establish a statewide task force that would make recommendations about CHWs' involvement in the health care team, certification and overall workforce development in Florida. In 2013 and 2014, the bills passed the House floor unanimously but died in Senate committees.

#### **The Steps toward Voluntary Certification**

In 2012, the curriculum and practice subgroups conducted a national review of CHW curriculum that identified core competencies of CHWs. It identified roles and activities that were confirmed by a statewide survey of FCHWC membership. The summary of the review asserted that a voluntary certification process should be established that would include a "grandparenting" process whereby experienced CHWs could demonstrate their proficiency based on documented experience and education. The subgroup reviewed the processes other states, Texas and Minnesota in particular, followed for certification.

#### **Establishing a Relationship with the Florida Certification Board (FCB)**

The FCHWC reached out to the Florida Certification Board (FCB), a private, non-profit professional credentialing organization, which was established in 1983. The FCB maintains an active, certified population in excess of 28,000 professionals for 32 different credentials. As a member of the International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC), FCB administers certification examinations in multiple states, allowing reciprocity between 43 states, 17 countries and the armed forces.

The mission of the FCB is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Florida by regulating certified professionals through experience, education and compliance. Certification assures the public that CHWs have demonstrated a minimally acceptable level of professional competency. It also gives professional recognition to qualified CHWs through a process that examines required work competencies, assures an opportunity for ongoing professional development, and promotes ethical and professional practice by enforcing adherence to a Code of Ethics.

### **CHW Certification Implementation Team**

The CHW certification implementation team was convened in 2014. The role of the team is to be the content expert to the FCB as they develop a certification exam. The team is comprised of 24 members: nine CHWs, a physician, a Federally Qualified Health Care Center (FQHC), a nurse, a representative who possesses a Master of Social Work, insurance payers, academic curriculum providers and community-based organizations. Nearly half of Florida's counties are rural, so the team includes both rural and urban CHWs and organizations. The team met several times by telephone conference call/webinar, and the FCB developed an initial survey to determine job task frequency and importance. The team met in person to review core competencies and refine role delineation. That step is necessary for developing a **validation study**, the precursor to developing the exam. The validation study survey was distributed through various electronic lists, by paper at CHW symposia (Miami, July 17; Orlando, September 26). The FCB would like at least 200 responses to the study survey. The study survey is being translated into Spanish, and will be distributed online and by paper. The survey online will remain open until December 2014 to verify core competencies.

#### **CHW Core Competencies finalized by Florida's CHW Certification Implementation Team:**

- Five performance domains, 28 job tasks
- Performance Domains
  - Communication and Education (5 job tasks)
  - Resources (4 job tasks)
  - Advocacy (5 job tasks)
  - Foundations of Health (7 job tasks)
  - Professional Responsibility (7 job tasks)

The team is also refining the process for "grandparenting in" experienced and competent CHWs. The proposed **grandparenting** process is a time limited period, designed to allow current CHWs the opportunity to apply for certification without requiring additional training, experience or written testing. It will last a year, during which time the exam will continue to be refined. Grandparented CHWs will use the FCB standard certification application, assemble a portfolio documenting at least 500 hours of documented paid or volunteer experience providing CHW services and at least 30 hours of training in the core competencies. The portfolio will also include two letters of reference validating the CHW's experience and training. Application fee is \$50. CHW credential issued for a two-year period. The renewal fee is proposed to be \$100 and 10 CEUs will be required each renewal period.

#### **Anticipated Schedule:**

January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015: Grandparenting program will be open.

January 2015 - May 2015: Develop written exam. Implementation team becomes FCB CHW Advisory Board.

Finalize certification application process. January 1, 2016: Open full credential.

#### **For More Information:**

[www.FloridaCHW.org](http://www.FloridaCHW.org) watch the 10 minute DVD!

Like CHWs on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/FloridaCHWCoalition>

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