

Community Health Workers in Delaware:

Advancing Health Equity Through Workforce Development and Policy

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Community Health Workers (CHWs) embody the spirit of public health: a community-driven, health equity–focused workforce guided by justice and collaboration. They connect communities to preventive and life-saving care, promote healthy environments where all individuals can thrive, and help people stay healthier within their own communities. At their core, CHWs are a profession rooted in trust.

As funding, services, and entire communities come under pressure, CHWs remain on the frontlines—standing up for the communities they come from and serve. In today’s landscape, we are asking more and more of our CHW colleagues. In return, we must provide the support they need through sustainable funding and meaningful recognition of the value and impact they deliver every day.

In Delaware, CHWs have long been part of the healthcare landscape, supporting individuals and families across hospital systems, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), community-based organizations, state agencies, and Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs). They have worked under various titles—such as Health Advocate, Navigator, Health Ambassador, and *La Promotora*—and have historically experienced differing levels of training and support.

In 2019, the Community Health Workers Association of Delaware (CHWADE) was established by CHWs, for CHWs, with their communities at the center. CHWADE’s mission is to collectively advocate, empower, educate, connect, and support Delaware communities to advance health equity, social justice, and optimal well-being. The organization is a collaborative network of CHWs, allies, and partners across the state, all committed to supporting CHWs and advancing this shared mission.

Since then, CHWADE has grown significantly, achieving 501(c)(3) status in 2023 and building momentum for CHWs statewide. Years of collective effort have led to meaningful progress, including the passage of Senate Joint Resolution 2 (SJR 2) in 2025 and the launch of CHW certification in 2026.

Signed by Governor Matt Meyer on May 22, 2025, SJR 2—sponsored by Senator Marie Pinkney and Representative Kamela Smith—directed the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA) to submit a report to the Delaware General Assembly by January 1, 2026. This report addresses the provision of Medicaid coverage for CHW services. CHWADE looks forward to continued collaboration with the legislature and DMMA as Delaware works toward becoming the 25th state to adopt Medicaid reimbursement for CHWs.

While SJR 2 marks important progress toward sustainable funding, CHWADE has also been working closely with partners to establish CHW certification. In 2025, CHWADE secured funding for certification implementation through the generous support of ChristianaCare and the Delaware Academy of Medicine and Public Health’s Delaware Health Force. Certification officially launched on January 1, 2026—an achievement that not only supports future Medicaid

reimbursement but also strengthens recognition of CHWs' vital role in the healthcare workforce. It ensures consistent, high-quality core competency training and establishes a long-term workforce development pathway.

The growth of CHWADE has helped unite individuals and organizations passionate about CHWs and health equity. This shared commitment is essential for an association powered by volunteer leadership and member engagement. However, passion alone is not enough. The CHWADE has greatly benefited from tangible support provided by its partners, including funding, advocacy, research, technical assistance, and training. Key partners include the Delaware Division of Public Health, the Delaware Academy of Medicine and Public Health, ChristianaCare, and the Delaware Healthcare Association, along with many other organizations represented across its membership.

As Delaware moves toward a healthcare system that fully integrates certified and sustainably funded Community Health Workers, the CHWADE invites you to join this effort. Be part of a mission-driven movement to advocate, empower, educate, connect, and support communities across the state—advancing health equity, social justice, and well-being for all Delawareans.

Learn more and get involved: <https://chwadelaware.org/>

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