

# The CHW Common Indicators Project: CHW-Driven Measurement to Sustain the Profession

## POLICY BRIEF

### CHW Measurement and Evaluation for the New Era

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uprising for racial justice, Community Health Workers<sup>1</sup> (CHWs) are increasingly recognized as crucial actors in the struggle to improve health and eliminate health inequities. Multiple funding streams are becoming available and institutions that did not previously employ CHWs are gearing up to do so.

As health and social service systems and related systems increase opportunities for CHW employment, efforts to collect data and evaluate CHW initiatives must:

- Benefit from the active leadership and engagement of CHWs themselves;
- Build on 60+ years of research and evaluation experience with and about CHWs; and
- Collect process and outcome measures that sustain the integrity of the profession and support program improvement.

### The CHW Common Indicators Project

In 2015, 16 CHWs and research/evaluator allies from 5 states came together to create the CHW Common Indicators (CI) Project. Despite being unfunded in its early stages, national consensus about the need for common indicators led to the Project's rapid growth. The CI Project now engages over 180 people in more than 30 states. An average of 50 people participate in bi-monthly Advisory Group meetings.

***The purpose of the CI Project is to contribute to the integrity, sustainability, and viability of CHW programs through the collaborative development and adoption of common process and outcome constructs and indicators for CHW practice.***

### What are the objectives of the CI Project?

1. Identify, develop, and promote uptake of a brief set of specific process and outcome *indicators* that can be used across CHW programs, regardless of setting and community.
2. Identify a larger set of process and outcome *constructs* that can be recommended for CHW research and evaluation nationally, but which cannot be collected uniformly in all settings.

### What does the CHW Common Indicators Project offer?

- A set of common process and outcome indicators vetted by CHWs and other important stakeholders
- A successful model for engaging CHWs in research and evaluation about their own profession.

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<sup>1</sup> As used in this policy brief, the term "Community Health Worker" or "CHW" includes Promotoras/es de Salud and Community Health Representatives.

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## A set of ready-to-use process and outcome indicators

Thanks to funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)<sup>2</sup>, since 2019 the CI Project has developed *specific indicators for 10 priority concepts*. CHWs and other stakeholders actively engaged in the indicator development process via focus groups, interviews, a national Summit, and on-going meetings of the Advisory Group. The priority indicators are being piloted in multiple sites around the country. A full description of the indicators is available [here](#).

## How have CHWs been involved in the CI Project?

Since its inception in 2015, CHWs have been at the forefront of the CI Project. Five of 16 attendees at the organizing Summit were CHWs, three of whom co-facilitated the Summit. CHWs have presented about the project at conferences, facilitated CI meetings and events, and published peer-reviewed journal articles and blogs about the project. Currently, leadership of the CI Project includes a 6-person Leadership Team, 50% of whom are CHWs, and a 4-person CHW Council.

## Why is CHW-driven measurement essential?



**Self-Determination:** The CHW Section of the American Public Health Association recommends that any group making policy for the CHW field be at least 51% CHW. The principle of self-determination requires that CHWs lead the development of measurement for their own profession.



**Measurement drives practice.** Because continued funding is often linked to specified outcomes, CHWs are often encouraged to focus their efforts on achieving those outcomes. Therefore, it is essential to choose important outcomes that CHWs are uniquely able to achieve.



**CHWs are uniquely positioned to inform measurement in their field.** While CHWs have sometimes been involved as data collectors, they have seldom been engaged as full partners in all stages of research. This means CHW studies and evaluations have often lacked the crucial perspectives of those closest to and most informed about the work.

## JOIN US!

To learn more about the CHW Common Indicators Project, click [here](#).

To get involved, please contact: [chwcommonindicators@gmail.com](mailto:chwcommonindicators@gmail.com).

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<sup>2</sup> Federal Award Number: 5-NU38OT000286-02, CFDA Number: 93.421. The statements in this brief reflect the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or official position of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.