

# The Role of Community Health Workers in Addressing Food and Nutrition Security and Social Support\*

## Who are Community Health Workers?

Community health workers (CHWs) are frontline public health workers whose shared culture, language, and experience support their unique role as mediators, bridge builders, and navigators between their communities and clinical, behavioral health, public health, and social services. CHWs play a key role in improving health by addressing adverse social conditions or social determinants of health.



**85.6%**  
of CHWs provide food & nutrition support



**75.4%**  
of CHWs provide social support



**85.2%**  
Access to Healthcare



**78.8%**  
Community-Clinical Linkages



**68.2%**  
Health Insurance



**67.8%**  
Housing



**66.5%**  
Transportation

## How do CHWs help improve food and nutrition security and social support?

Social factors such as where we live, our income, access to healthcare, education, availability of healthy food, and many other complex factors affect up to 80% of our health and well-being. Addressing these areas can help people be healthier.

The National Association of Community Health Workers surveyed its membership to identify CHW roles in addressing food security and social support in the communities they serve and challenges that affect their work. The survey found that CHWs played a vital role in connecting community members to the key service areas during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the need for food and nutrition access and social support increased.

## How can organizations better support CHWs?

Health is complex and is affected by multiple factors at the individual level, through relationships, within a community, and across society. This creates many opportunities for CHWs to support the work of organizations and make them stronger. According to surveyed CHWs, organizations can support and leverage the work CHWs are doing in several ways.



Develop a resource hub with up-to-date resources and services in the community.



Involve CHWs in program planning, implementation, and evaluation to build trust within the community and compensate them for their work.



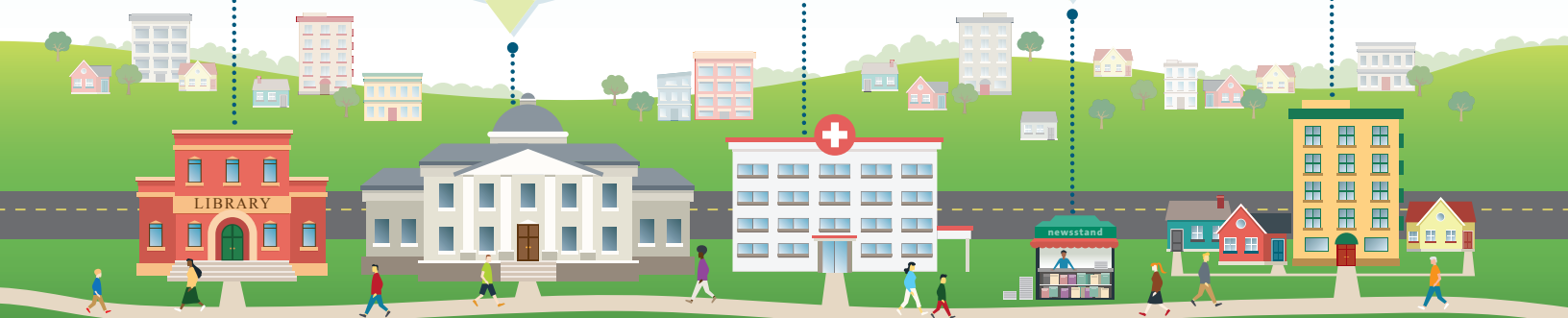
Integrate CHWs with health care, behavioral, and social service professionals to expand whole-person services.



Demonstrate CHWs' unique contributions to health in published articles and reports.



Mentor CHWs and train them to serve on boards and citizen and patient committees.



\*This infographic accompanies the paper, "CDC and NACHW. *The Role of Community Health Workers in Addressing Food and Nutrition Security and Social Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. CDC Division of Diabetes Translation, Atlanta, GA, August 2022." All sources are listed in the paper.