

# CROWD

Center for CHW Research, Outcomes, and Workforce Development



## Quarterly Newsletter

Issue VI: May 2020

### **A Message from CROWD**

As people across the country and world unite amidst COVID-19, we hope you and yours are healthy and coping with the unprecedented challenges brought by the pandemic. The pandemic has garnered increased national attention to health disparities, attention we hope will lead to wider recognition of the depth and tragedy of health inequities throughout the U.S. We are hopeful that understanding of the critical and transformative work of community health workers (CHWs) will also be brought to light in the response efforts within healthcare systems and beyond to address social issues being magnified by COVID-19. We are grateful to CHWs worldwide for their service during this time of crisis and always.

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### **SUHI's CHWs and CROWD Respond to COVID-19**

As frontline public health workers and trusted members of the community, community health workers (CHWs) provide critical services that improve health care access and promote understanding of health problems and the healthcare system. SUHI's CHWs generally do this through community-based outreach, patient home visits, and in-clinic patient visits.

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, CHWs are needed more than ever as additional stressors are added to already vulnerable communities. For example, social isolation, ongoing health challenges, increasing difficulty in accessing the health care system, food insecurity, and increased unemployment rates are all disproportionately impacting historically disinvested communities. The need for social distancing and limits on who can work in healthcare settings means it is currently not appropriate for our CHWs to be stationed in the hospital or physically in the communities. Not having direct access to patients and community members in the hospital, clinics, community locations and homes accelerated our thinking about how CHWs can continue to do their critical work during this time. While SUHI's CHWs maintain their telephone follow-up with patients, we are taking steps to enhance our CHWs' ability to meaningfully connect with patients, provide education, and increase access to valuable resources. Steps include:

- Telehealth access to conduct health risk assessments, social needs assessments, education and disease management education;
- Following-up post-discharge with Sinai Health System's COVID-19 patients discharged to home;
- Conducting Diabetes Prevention Programs virtually;
- Reaching out to high-risk families to educate and answer questions about COVID-19;
- Developing a virtual COVID-19 training for CHWs from the west suburban pilot program (see article below) and delivery to SUHI's CHWs;
- Adapting CROWD's core skills training to a virtual platform;
- Brainstorming how we can train and support CHWs during this public health crisis.

## CHW Learning Collaborative in Western Suburbs Embarks on Year Two

In collaboration with Health and Medicine Policy Research Group, Healthy Communities Foundation, and Community Memorial Foundation, CROWD received continued funding to design and facilitate trainings and meetings for organizations using CHWs across Chicago's western suburbs including Aging Care Connections, Alivio Medical Center, BEDS Plus, Healthcare Alternative Systems, and Mujeres Latinas en Acción.

Throughout the year, CROWD is conducting continuing education trainings and designing interactive and participatory learning collaboratives for CHWs and supervisors, based on the goals developed and prioritized by the group to enhance their knowledge and skills.

When the week-long foundational core skills training scheduled for March was postponed due to the ongoing pandemic, CROWD trainers Kim Jay and Fatima Padron quickly pivoted and created a virtual, two-hour training to educate the participating CHWs on COVID-19. This was the first time the group gathered virtually; nonetheless, Kim and Fatima were able to design the session to be interactive and engaging. The training focused on understanding the basics of COVID-19, how to explain COVID-19 to the CHWs' respective constituents, and CHWs' role during emergency response efforts.

### ***"Luckily, we were part of a collaborative..."***



Jocelyn Moreno, a CHW from Mujeres Latinas en Acción, has found being part of the learning collaborative very beneficial: "I have now been working as a CHW for a year....originally working from the Pilsen office; I was trained to work in a specific way. When my team moved to the North Riverside location and started working in the southwest suburbs we realized we had to change our whole strategy because what we were trained to do previously was not working. The communities were not responding....this was the first time our organization had stepped foot into these new communities so there was no blueprint to follow...we knew we had to create a new plan, but we did not know who to turn to because our work was never done in these specific areas. Luckily, we were part of a collaborative...during our CHW meetings and trainings each organization would share what was working, what was not, and what help was needed. This was extremely helpful given our situation. They shared some resources, insight, gave us tips on doing outreach, and would invite us to their events. We would bounce ideas and give feedback continuously, which allowed us to grow individually as an organization."

## CROWD Team Delivers "By Far the Best Training" to DuPage County

In January, CROWD trainers Kim Jay, Fatima Padron, Rhonda Lay, and Yesenia Galvan trained a group of nearly 20 CHWs and CHW Supervisors from the DuPage County Health Department in CROWD's 40-hour core skills training, a foundational curriculum designed to prepare CHWs across disciplines, cultures, and geographic location.



While some participating CHWs were new to the role, others had more than 20 years of experience. In an anonymous post-training evaluation, all participants selected they "strongly agreed" that the training enhanced their knowledge and skills. One participant stated, "By far the best training. Time flew by [the training] kept our attention, and [was] very engaging." When asked what they liked most, one person stated, "The trainers and the way they got the group to participate and not single people out. Not all of us learn the same way."

## Focus Group Funded by Lloyd A. Fry Foundation



On January 30, 2020, 19 participants from 15 organizations joined SUHI staff for a facilitated discussion that utilized interactive and consensus-building activities to discuss identified gaps in the CHW community, find root causes and determine need for a CHW learning collaborative. CHWs, CHW supervisors, program managers and directors from organizations such as Cook County Health & Hospitals System, Mujeres Latinas en Acción, Rush University Medical Center and Southwest Organizing Project, among others, participated in the discussion. The

focus group was led by Janet Padilla, an experienced facilitator who designs and facilitates strategic planning sessions, consensus building workshops, and various other participatory sessions for organizations nationwide. She ensured group members' ideas and opinions were heard and valued in the process as they discussed the possibility of developing a citywide and robust CHW learning collaborative.

Participants endorsed the development of a learning collaborative, as well as the following four recommendations:

1. Advocacy work
2. Leadership training and development
3. Standard curriculum and training
4. Measuring impact

CROWD is excited for a future that includes a thriving CHW learning collaborative expertly facilitated and designed for interactive learning and skills building. Combining the knowledge gathered with the commitment of our partners, we are prepared to secure the support needed to make it a reality. We promise to keep everyone informed!

### What is CROWD?



CROWD is here to assist you and your organization with “all-things CHW” - hiring and integration needs, training, program development, evaluation, and even CHW direct service. Please contact us to learn more; we are eager to talk with you!

**To learn more about CHWs, CROWD, and how CROWD can help your work, visit [www.suhicrowd.org](http://www.suhicrowd.org)**