

Innovations

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Under the Umbrella: Connecting Enrollment to Community Health Workers

Community Health Worker (CHW) “is an umbrella term for job titles, such as community health advisor, family advocate, health educator, liaison, promoter, outreach worker, peer counselor, patient navigator, health interpreter, and public health aide. CHWs understand the populations and communities they serve and are seen as trusted leaders” (Cragin, et. al., 2014, p.viii).

By engaging community stakeholders, such as CHWs, states can learn about and address operational barriers to Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid enrollment and retention.

CHWs that are fully embedded in the

communities they serve are best able to help the uninsured explore healthcare coverage options. CHWs understand the value of health insurance because they have in depth knowledge about both healthcare coverage and the specific health needs of the community. They can help explain the application process and troubleshoot problems for individuals who have little experience with health care coverage and/or need information delivered in a culturally appropriate manner (Cragin, et. al., 2014).

CHWs can address and relate multiple issues that prevent the uninsured from obtaining health care coverage (Cragin, et. al., 2014). CHWs are not only advocates for primary and preventative care, but they are also case-managers who provide consumers with

the necessary tools and knowledge to help them maintain coverage. CHWs foster consumer responsibility and self-sufficiency, and act as advocates when necessary.

CHWs are able to overcome barriers and help people access healthcare and healthcare coverage. Martinez, et. al. (2010), believe that, based on CHWs effect on these challenges, CHWs “play a critical role in addressing the drivers of health care costs and improving quality of care.”

This Innovations report will highlight CHW projects to demonstrate how the effective traits of using CHWs as an outreach and enrollment strategy translates into best practices for enrollment and retention into Florida KidCare.



Community Health Workers from: Jessie Trice Health Care Center, Miami, Florida; Health Council of Southeast Florida, Palm Beach Gardens; and Florida Department of Health-Broward County

Community Health & Florida KidCare

According to Chavez and Ray (2013), it is estimated that seven out of ten uninsured children are eligible for free or low-cost insurance through Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP), such as Florida KidCare. Chavez and Ray (2013) also found within their study of the Federally Qualified Health Center Network in South Central Florida that "Community Health Centers (CHCs) are uniquely positioned to identify and address many of these consumer enrollment barriers through outreach and enrollment strategies that fit the needs of the populations they currently serve." The key factor to this success has been the CHC's use of community health workers (CHW) to provide outreach to facilitate enrollment and retention into Florida KidCare.

CHW's outreach strategies include, "providing enrollment materials and assistance in Spanish or other languages; making home visits to patients with limited access to transportation; and providing hands-on enrollment assistance to those patients with lower literacy rates and limited computer access" (Chavez and Ray, 2013). CHW's have substantial roles, and they offer communities an array of health and social services. "Historically, CHW's have been well positioned to break down barriers to help people receive the care they need when they need it" (Martinez, et. al., 2010).

Leah Suarez, Director of Programs with the Health Council of Southeast Florida (HCSEF), affirms "CHW's are trusted individuals; they are beneficial in partnerships to have in the community. They advocate and go the extra mile. Not only are they providing enrollment assistance, they assist families and children on how to utilize health care coverage."

Within Florida, being a CHW can mean many different things, due to the different levels of community health work. At HCSEF, there are outreach workers, patient assisters, navigators, care managers, and care coordinators, but they all fall under the same umbrella, CHW's. The innovative tactic of the HCSEF's CHW's is that they are able to reach people outside the normal scope of outreach. HCSEF is located on the Treasure Coast, which has limited resources. Yet, the foundation of the CHW's Florida KidCare outreach is serving as a multi-county liaison, which includes being responsible for recruiting and training local organizations to serve as Certified Application Assistance Sites, monitoring and tracking the progress of recruited application sites, and provide technical assistance on the Florida KidCare application process. These CHW's are self-educated about healthcare coverage opinions for kids, stay updated on the application process for Florida KidCare, and know who to contact when there are issues with applications.

Similar to the CHW's with HCSEF, The Florida Department of Health – Broward County has been providing Florida KidCare application assistance and outreach for 15 years. Providing services throughout a large, urban county, the Health Department houses facilities with services that include: WIC, dental care to low income families for children, immunizations, etc. The Health Department stations CHW's in facilities that have the largest flow of recipients of the health department services. The Florida Department of Health of Broward County, Florida KidCare Outreach Program provides one-on-one application assistance to ensure new and continuous benefit coverage for eligible families. The Florida KidCare Outreach Programs employs CHW's who use a multi-prong approach to address client issues and reduce barriers to KidCare insurance coverage. The CHW's serves as the primary source for applications and outreach materials for partner programs and agencies that serve potentially eligible populations; these include but are not limited to schools, child care centers, after school programs, and social service agencies. KidCare Outreach Staff also partners with CareerSource to provide application assistance and community resources to dislocated employees.

While the primary role for these CHW's is to assist families with uninsured children to apply for Florida KidCare, it is their secondary responsibility, as peer educators, that make the Broward County CHW's distinctive. The Health Department is unique in Broward County because there are so many organizations that provide services to children including United Way, federally qualified health centers, Memorial Health Care, Broward Health, Kids in Distress, Children Services Council, Family Central, and the Children's Medical Services Network. All of these organizations make up the Health Department's Florida KidCare Coalition. The CHW's utilize the Coalition as a means to educate children's service providers about Florida KidCare and provide updates on the application process.

While HCSEF and the Health Department's CHW's are vital to connecting uninsured, but eligible children to affordable health care coverage, the Jessie Trice Community Health Center, Inc. uses CHW's to connect children and families to health care utilization. Jessie Trice has been providing CHW services to Miami-Dade County since 1967. The center's target population is the uninsured and underinsured, with 95% of that population living at or below the federal poverty level of 200%. It originally serviced its first patient from a trailer and now, 40 years later, owns and operates 16 facilities with two new facilities coming by 2015.

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Community Health & Florida KidCare (Continued)

Jessie Trice provides services that address the most urgent needs including heart disease, cancer, pediatric hypertension, asthma, and cardiovascular disease. These diseases have the greatest impact on the patient and are most responsible for the greatest number of years of life lost in the community that Jessie Trice serves.

With funding through the Children's Trust, Jessie Trice offers CHW services through the HealthConnect program. HealthConnect is a comprehensive, three-tier, quality-driven health initiative, with the goal of having the healthiest children possible in Miami-Dade County. The HealthConnect CHW's:

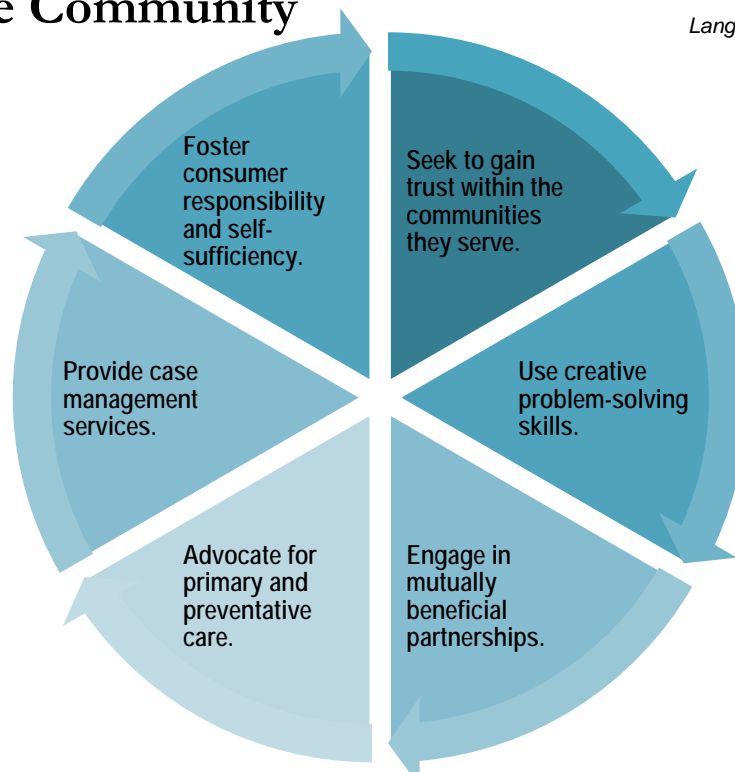
- Connect children and families to low-cost medical insurance options and health services with the help of health navigators.
- Provide information and support through home visitations by family coaches to all new and teen mothers.
- Link children and families to a team of nurses/nurse practitioners, social workers, and health aides to public schools to provide needed health and mental health services.

When asked about the most important practice of Jessie Trice's CHW's, Sornia Joseph, Chair of the Florida KidCare Coalition of Miami-Dade County, shared that it is the face-to-face, direct application assistance and tailored outreach to help children and families connect to healthcare coverage that builds relationships that lead to trust in health care. Martinez, et. al. (2010) claims there is evidence that demonstrates CHW's improve health outcomes: "CHW's have been shown to effectively connect and enroll people in health insurance," thus securing access to health care. CHW's "know the communities where they work" and build trust with the people they serve thus breaking down barriers to using health care (e.g. health literacy, language, and mistrust of health care system) (Martinez, et. al. 2010).

Based on the statewide Florida KidCare data released by the Agency for Healthcare Administration, twenty-eight percent (28%) of all Florida KidCare enrollments in May 2014 were from the Treasure Coast (St. Lucie and Indian River Counties), Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties. As the primary outreach strategy for Florida KidCare within these counties, CHW's may be a promising practice, not only to enroll uninsured children into health care coverage, but also to ensuring appropriate health care utilization.

Highly Effective Community Health Workers

Lang, D. et. al. 2014



The Florida Community Health Worker Coalition



The Department of Labor “defined CHW’s as frontline, public health workers who function as liaisons between individuals and health and social service delivery systems” (Martinez, et. al., 2010). CHW’s build their own capacity by increasing their knowledge of the health care system and self-sufficiency through outreach, community education, and advocacy. Within Florida, CHW’s have the support of the Florida Community Health Worker Coalition, a group of volunteers dedicated to the promotion of the community health worker profession in Florida. Its structure includes co-chairs, a steering committee, and five working groups devoted to policy, curriculum, practice, networking/sustainability, and research. The Florida CHW Coalition has convened three statewide summits, two leadership institutes (one entirely in Spanish), and is planning to develop regional meetings for educational and mentorship opportunities. The Coalition has grown to include over 275 people. Monthly meetings are conducted by webinar/conference call, and are open to all. To implement CHW outreach into your Florida KidCare enrollment efforts, contact the Florida CHW Coalition to find out how to contact CHW’s in your area.

Families are comfortable sharing their private information with CHW’s because they know the CHW’s are educated to assist and navigate through the health care coverage system ... This trust is key to the success of CHW’s being able to work with families to enroll children into Florida KidCare.

Rebecca Miele, BCHD

For more information about FCCHW or to join the coalition, please visit:
<http://floridachwn.pharmacy.ufl.edu/>

Credits

Agency for Health Care Administration

Broward County Health Department

Chavez & Ray, Providing Pathways to Coverage

The Children’s Trust

Florida Community Health Worker Coalition

Florida Covering Kids & Families

Health Council of Southeast Florida

Jessie Trice Community Health Center, Inc.

Lang, D.et. al. Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved

Lawton & Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers & Babies

Martinez, Knickman, NYS Health Foundation

USF Health



This report has been made available through funding from the Agency for Health Care Administration.

