

Community Health Workers Review Board

Meeting April 25, 2025

2:00 – 4:00pm

Meeting can be viewed [HERE](#)

1. Call to Order

- **CHW Review Board Members present:** Dr. Janice Phillips, Wandy Hernandez, Kristin Hartsaw, Ricardo Anderson, Leticia Boughton Price, Noelle Moore, Tracey Smith, Esther Sciammarella, David Sanders, Emma Villarreal, Kevin Wood, Angela Ellison, Ryan Croke, Rep. Camille Lilly, Ashley Colwell, and Monica Cuevas.
- **CHW Review Board Members not present:** Lubia Nunez-Montelongo, Ket Herena, Latoya Greenwood, Ofelia Figueroa, Dr. Shami Goyal, and Rep. Maura Hirschauer.
- **IDPH staff present:** Sarahjini Nunn, Patricia C. Montalvo, Melissa Stalets, Allison Nickrent, Dr. Sameer Vohra, and Marcella Kincaid.
- **Invited Guests present:** Leslie Carnahan, Liz Velek, Judith Sayad, UIC; Chris Azpilcueta, Interprenet.
- **Other Guests present:** EB York, Laura Markin, and Cealisa Johnson(Cece), UChicago Medicine; Eugenia Olison, IDPH; Liz Velek, MATEC; Marina Zhang and Riley Barker, SGA Youth and Family Services; Elise Betkowski, DePaul University; Kara Cunny, College of Lake County; Marcia Burgess and Makeda Coutee, HMPRG; Caitlin Burke, OSF; Kaye Barnes, Kim Nelson and Erin Jones, SIU School of Medicine; Maureen Burns, Eva Haubrich and Rachael Telleen, HAP Foundation; Emily Inman, IPHA; Gloria West, City Colleges of Chicago; Fatema Mirza, Worry Free Community, Charisse Montgomery, Chestnut Health Systems, and Karen Phelan.

2. Approve March Board Meeting Minutes

- Leticia Boughton Price moved to approve the minutes from the March 21, 2025 Board Meeting after noting a correction to her last name.
 - David Sanders seconded the motion.
 - *Motion Passed*

3. Board Process Decisions and Reminders

- Janice Phillips reminded Board Members and guests of the Board protocols for being recognized to speak, public comment period, Board Members attendance, and the mission of the Board.

4. Introduction of New Member

- Ricardo A. Anderson, PhD, Mental Health Recovery Support Specialist II, Illinois Department of Human Services, briefly introduced himself and provided a synopsis of his education and experience.

5. Comments from the IDPH Director

- Dr. Sameer Vohra expressed his appreciation for the work of the CHW Review Board and emphasized the importance of building a strong certified CHW workforce to improve health equity and building trust in healthcare across Illinois. He encouraged continued collaboration as the certification rules move toward finalization and shared examples of CHW impact throughout the state. Dr. Vohra highlighted Chasity Maze (Project ECHO, Southern Illinois) for building trust among at-risk youth and Estella Diaz (Brighton Park, Chicago) for providing grief counseling and addressing mental health needs in culturally sensitive ways. In closing, Dr. Vohra reaffirmed that CHWs are essential to improving health outcomes across Illinois and expressed ongoing commitment of the leadership of IDPH, HFS, the Governor's office, and other partners to advance CHW certification and reimbursement efforts.

6. Public Comment Period

- **Laura Markin** sought clarity on Illinois CHW certification requirements for state residency. She explained that University of Chicago Medicine (UCM) serves communities in both Illinois and Indiana, making cross-border employment important. She urged clear guidance so agencies can design their programs accordingly.
- **Cealisa Johnson (Cece)** asked for clarification about certification testing within CHW training programs. She raised concerns about ensuring unbiased, legitimate assessments, uniform practices, and clear guidelines for reporting scores.
- **EB York** commented on the potential inclusion of simulation as a substitute or supplement for field experience. She stressed that real, client-facing experiences are invaluable. She urged that any simulation be clearly defined and structured to maintain quality and inquired about funding support for high-quality simulation programs.

7. Update from Materials Review Committee

- Wandy Hernandez, Chair, provided a brief update on the committee review of web content language, clarity and accessibility. She stated the web vendors will make

revisions based on committee's input and reported that the committee will tentatively reconvene in May to review updates. Wandy Hernandez moved for approval of the Material Review Committee Minutes.

- Emma Villareal seconded the motion.
- Rep. Lilly abstained.
- *Motion passed.*

8. Revisit Review Board Timeline for Administrative Rule Review

- Sarahjini Nunn presented an update on timeline and the targeted dates for submitting the final administrative rules package for approval.

9. Administrative Rules Review

- Sarahjini Nunn reintroduced the Administrative Rules for **Subpart A: Definitions.**
 - Leticia Boughton Price requested to redefine the 'Community Health Worker' definition to ensure it accurately reflected the roles, responsibilities, and identity of CHWs as described by national authorities like the American Public Health Association (APHA) and Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and to avoid limiting or misrepresenting the scope of work.
 - Melissa Stalets clarified that the definition was proposed to ensure alignment with APHA and BLS.
 - Leticia Boughton Price suggested revising the 'CHW Review Board' definition to emphasize the Board's advisory role to IDPH, not "just during program development", but also during implementation.
 - Allison Nickrent advised that language appearing in italics comes directly from the Act and can't be changed. However, language can be added on.
 - Tracey Smith was concerned with the language defining Continuing Education (CE) "approved by the department." She thought this was misleading because it sounds like each course must have prior approval by IDPH. Tracey suggested "approved by the Department" be replaced with a more accurate phrase "meets standards set by the Department".
- Sarahjini Nunn reintroduced the Administrative Rules for **Subpart B: Role of the Board.**
 - Leticia Boughton Price suggested revised language to define the role of the Board. Allison Nickrent clarified that the Board could not change language that was taken directly from the Act.
 - Dr. Phillips called for final comments on Subparts A and B before proceeding with a roll call vote.
 - Yes: Dr. Phillips, Wandy Hernandez, Kristen Hartsaw, Ricardo Anderson, Ryan Croke, Angela Ellison, Leticia Boughton Price, Noelle Moore, Emma Villarreal, Tracey Smith, Ashley Colwell, David Sanders.
 - Abstain: Rep. Camille Lilly

- Sarahjini Nunn began reviewing **Subpart C: CHW Certification.**
 - **Work Experience Pathway.** Sarahjini introduced revisions to the Work Experience Pathway section that waives the educational requirement for those seeking certification through “grandfathering.”
 - Rep Lilly raised concerns about the educational requirement being revisited considering that the Board conducted a straw poll on this last month.
 - Melissa Stalets clarified this was an exception for those being grandfathered in through the Work Experience Pathway. Melissa reiterated that the education requirement remains intact for all other pathways.
 - Tracey Smith raised concern regarding the phrase “attests to having observed the individual.” She asserted that the language may create barriers for individuals qualifying under prior work experience up to five years ago as the person who directly observed their work may no longer be present to provide the attestation.
 - Rep. Lilly suggested using annual performance evaluations as documentation to support such attestations.
 - Leticia Boughton Price renewed the discussion regarding formal education requirements for CHW eligibility for certification and advocated for 8th grade graduation rather than high school diploma or GED. Leticia emphasized that certified training programs would ensure CHWs acquire the necessary skills and competencies and requiring a high school diploma could present unnecessary barriers for capable individuals, especially those with lived experience and no formal credentials.
 - Emma Villareal acknowledged the need to support entry-level CHWs but stressed the importance of preparing them for a complex and evolving healthcare environment.
 - Tracey Smith expressed a concern for consistency across certification pathway and shifted her position to support removing the high school diploma requirement.
 - Ricardo Anderson suggested a compromise: requiring 8th grade education while stating a high school diploma or GED as “preferred”.
 - Angela Ellison raised concern about setting CHWs up for failure if they lacked foundational literacy and technical skills needed to complete certification or succeed in the field.
 - Rep. Lilly reaffirmed her support for a high school diploma or GED, citing alignment with expectations in healthcare settings.
 - David Sanders similarly emphasized the importance of basic academic and professional skills for workforce readiness and patient safety.
 - Dr. Phillips referenced the Board’s straw poll at the prior meeting in which a majority favored requiring a high school diploma/GED for new CHWs.
 - Dr. Phillips provided some additional information on formal education level from two training programs that trained over 700 CHWs in the last year. Fewer than 4% of participants did not have a high school diploma/GED. This is the

approximate percent of applicants we would expect to exclude from certification. Given the discussion and this new information, Dr. Phillips conducted a second straw poll on the same question if the minimum formal educational requirement should be high school/GED, 8th grade or if the rules should remain silent on the topic. The results of the straw poll were **7 in favor of high school/GED, 7 in favor of 8th grade, and 0 in favor of remaining silent.**

- Sarahjini addressed the process for applicant rights following the denial of a CHW certification application as outlined by the Administrative Law Judge. Applicant who are denied certification can reapply. Following the second denial, the applicant must be offered a hearing.

Subpart D: Feedback on Selected Items from Approved Rules

- Will revisit during the next meeting.

10. Second Public Comment Period

- Fatema (Worry Free Community nonprofit)
 - Advocated for 8th grade education minimum
- Emily Inman (IPHA)
 - Recommended requirement for synchronous (real-time) training hours be reduced.
 - Employers prefer more asynchronous (self-paced) training, so they don't lose staff for long periods.
- Charisse Montgomery (Chestnut Health Systems, Granite City IL)
 - Inquired about whether Illinois would recognize CHW certifications from MO. She explained she became certified as a CHW in Missouri because Illinois did not have a certification pathway at the time even though she lived in Illinois.
 - Concerns were expressed about whether Illinois CHW curriculum would include components related to certified peer recovery specialist, particularly in the context of substance use recovery.

11. Schedule of Board Meetings and Announcements

Sarahjini announced the upcoming CHW Review Board meeting dates and confirmed calendar invites have already been sent to members. The schedule is as followed:

- Schedule of Board Meetings
 - Friday, May 30, 2-4pm
 - Friday, June 27, 2-4pm
 - Friday, August 22, 2-4pm
 - Friday, October 10, 2-4pm
 - Friday, December 12, 2-4pm

12. Adjournment

- Dr. Phillips moved to adjourn the meeting.
- Esther Sciammarella second the motion.
- *Motion approved*