

FACT SHEET



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Sustainable Funding For Community Health Workers

The Problem: With an infusion of federal funds during the COVID-19 pandemic, Local Health Districts (LHDs) across the State expanded the use of Community Health Workers (CHWs) to address barriers to vaccine access, health literacy, substance abuse, community engagement and more.

Pandemic-era funding for CHWs is running out. Without action, Virginia could lose the majority of this trusted grassroots public health workforce in 2024.

Why Community Health Workers?

A CHW is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of the community. Decades of research has shown that CHWs improve health outcomes and are uniquely qualified to address the social determinants of health. Addressing the social determinants of health is ***essential to making progress on health disparities.***¹

Policy solution: *The budget for the next biennium must fund local health district CHW positions before funding runs out.*

Without funding earmarked for the Virginia Health Department to support CHWs in Local Health Districts, LHDs will lose capacity to build healthier communities and communities will lose trust in public health.

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. 2019. "Beyond Health Care: The Role of Social Determinants I Promoting Health and Health Equity." <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/beyond-health-care-the-role-of-social-determinants-in-promoting-health-and-health-equity/>

Costs: Effective CHW programs can save money. A growing body of literature has found that Community Health Workers lower health care costs and provide a return on investment (ROI).² According to a Virginia Department of Health Community Health Worker Workforce Funding Assessment survey, at least 112 CHWs connected to LHDs are in danger. To support the 112 positions, a sum of 5,588,000³ is required for salaries and an additional \$286,272 for computer rental, cell phone and supplies. ***In total, \$5,874,272 should be added to VDH funding and earmarked for CHWs in LHDs.***

Who benefits: Everyone. The Institute of Medicine defines public health as what we do together as a society to ensure the conditions in which everyone can be healthy. Community health workers are a cost-effective and evidence-based way to improve health outcomes in a community and essential to the Virginia Department of Health's vision for Virginia to become the healthiest state in the nation. LHD staff identify CHWs as the entry point for a health workforce pipeline. In the midst of rising shortages in the healthcare sector, we must support a profession that is a pathway to nursing.

² Kangovi S, Mitra N, Grande D, Long JA, Asch DA. Evidence-Based Community Health Worker Program Addresses Unmet Social Needs And Generates Positive Return On Investment. *Health Affairs*. 2020;39(2):207-213. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00981>

³ <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm>