Advancing Community Health Through CHWs:
Research, Recommendations & Action

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Before We Get Started...

Presentation Slides & Recording

- A copy of today's presentation and the webinar recording will be emailed to all registrants after the session.

Questions

- Please submit your questions throughout the webinar using the Q & A feature.

Live Q & A Session

- We have reserved time at the end of today's presentation to answer as many of your questions as possible.

Agenda

- Community Health Workers: Vital Informants and Communicators
- Identifying the “CHW Information Ecosystem”
- Findings and Recommendations from Illinois CHWs
- Panel Discussion
- Q & A

Community Health Workers: Vital Informants & Communicators

HMA

Happy
CHW Awareness Week!

5 días para celebrar a los trabajadores de salud comunitaria: del 24 al 28 de agosto de 2026.

Comparte tu historia, publica tus fotos y etiqueta a ILCHWA en las redes sociales.

1 Día 1: Trabajadores de salud comunitaria en acción —
Anime a los trabajadores de salud comunitarios a que tomen fotos y nos etiqueten en los canales de redes sociales de ILCHWA.

2 Día 2: ¿Por qué los trabajadores de salud comunitaria? —
Soy trabajador de la salud comunitaria porque... _____

3 Día 3: Por qué funcionan los trabajadores de salud comunitaria —
¿Qué quieres contarle a la gente sobre tu trabajo?

4 Día 4: ¿Qué significa para ti ser un trabajador de salud comunitaria?

5 Día 5: Enfoque en los trabajadores de salud comunitarios —
Comparte una selfie que describa quién eres.

Inspiras. Empoderas. Transformas.

ILCHWA
Juntos somos mas fuertes

Etiquétanos: @ #ilchwa / #ilchwachwsrock2026

facebook.com/ilchwanetwork1 instagram.com/ilchwa_chw/

5 Days to Celebrate CHWs
August 24 to August 28, 2026

Share your story, post your photos, and tag ILCHWA on social

1 Day 1: CHWs in Action —
Encourage CHWs to take photos and tag us on ILCHWA's social channels.

2 Day 2: Why CHWs? —
I am a CHW because.... _____

3 Day 3: Why CHWs Work —
What do you want to tell people about your work

4 Day 4: What does being a CHW mean to you?

5 Day 5: CHW Spotlight —
Share a selfie that describes who you are

You inspire. You EMPOWER. You Transform.

ILCHWA
Together we are stronger

Tag us: @ #ilchwa / #chwsrock2026

facebook.com/ilchwanetwork1 instagram.com/ilchwa_chw/

Membership

Over 700 CHWs, employers/organizations, and allies across Illinois

Composition

Roughly 80% are CHWs, with the rest being employers/organizations and allies

Geographic Reach

Members span from Rockford and Waukegan in the north, to Peoria, Joliet, and Springfield centrally, and East St. Louis and Carbondale in the south—with most members based in Chicago and its suburbs

The Value of CHWs

Connecting communities to health systems for better outcomes and trust

- Trusted connectors between communities and health systems
- Improve chronic disease management and mental health
- Reduce readmissions, support access and engagement
- Provide social health screening and navigation to services that address health related social needs

CHW Impact

Turning connection into measurable health impact

- **Engagement:** Locally recruited workers are from and of the communities they serve; skilled in building trust and reaching those in need.
- **Access Support**: CHWs facilitate access to primary care, behavioral health, and social health resources.
- **Proven Effectiveness**: CHWs enhance chronic disease management, mental health, and diabetes control in underserved communities;
- **Reduced Costs:** CHW models have shown reductions in medical costs (e.g., $1,223 → $983 per patient); lowered readmission rates (from 40% → 15%). Programs in states like Colorado achieved a $2.28 return for every $1 spent.

Source: Community Health Workers: Evidence of Their Effectiveness

The Community Health Information Ecosystem

HMA

Why This Matters Now

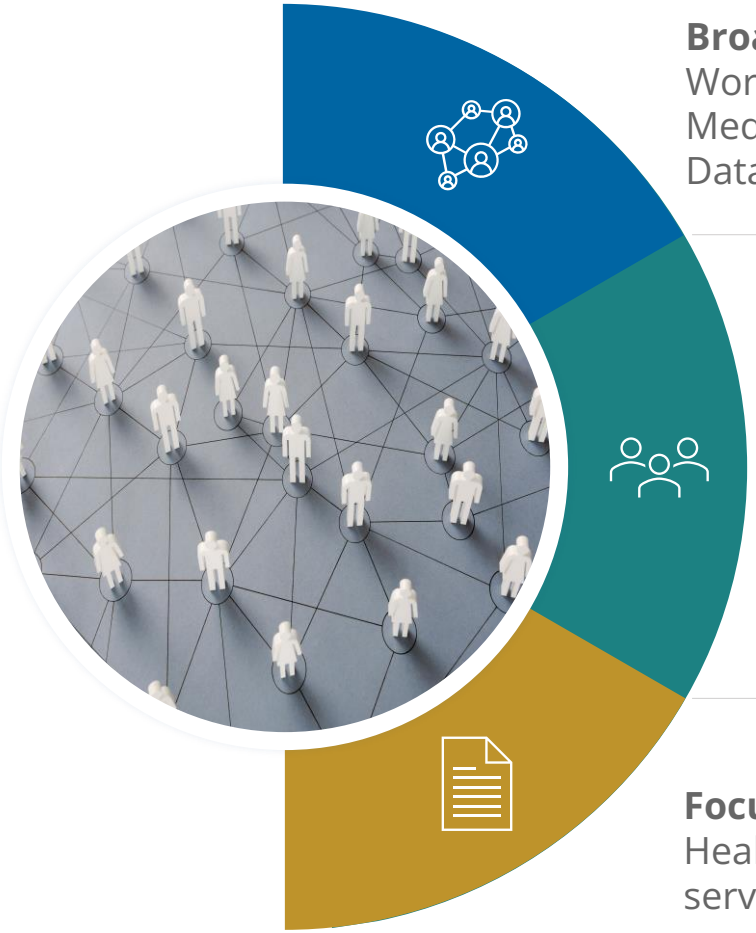
CHWs are essential **trusted communicators, navigators, and sources of community insight**.

At the same time

- CHW funding is under pressure
- Federal and state policy environments continue to shift
- Health, benefit, and service information is changing quickly
- Misinformation and community distrust create additional strain
- CHWs are often expected to bridge system gaps individually

The **systems around CHWs need to be better organized to support the work CHWs are already doing.**

Where This Fits in the Larger Ecosystem



Broader CHW Ecosystem
Workforce development | Training | Certification | Supervision | Financing | Medicaid/Medicare implementation | Care coordination | Closed-loop referrals | Data systems | Community partnerships | Governance

CHW Information Ecosystem
How information, guidance, data, service updates, referral information, and community feedback move to, through, and from CHWs

Focus of this Assessment
Health-related information flow, public health guidance, resource information, service updates, and community feedback

Enabling CHWs to be Trusted Messengers

HMA

Cook County Illinois CHW Information Ecosystem Assessment Approach

HMA's assessment included:

- Landscape scan of CHW communication practices and evidence-informed models
- Four key informant interviews
- Six focus groups
- Stakeholders including CHWs, CHW supervisors, organizational leaders, and entities involved in CHW research, training, advocacy, and implementation

Analysis focused on:

- Current information pathways
- Trusted sources
- Validation practices
- Feedback mechanisms
- Misinformation risks
- Workforce supports
- Infrastructure opportunities

CHWs Draw on Many Sources—Without One Shared Path

WHAT WE HEARD

INFORMATION SOURCES

ORGANIZATIONAL
Employers & supervisors
Internal trainings & staff meetings

PUBLIC + COMMUNITY
Public health agencies
Community-based organizations

NETWORKS
CHW associations & listservs
Peer networks & learning collaboratives

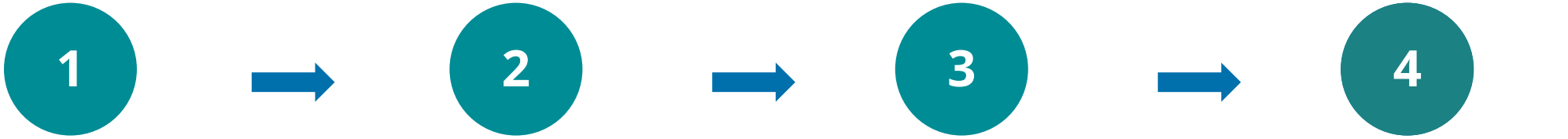
RELATIONSHIPS
Resource & referral partners
Informal collaborators and informants

The Cook County ecosystem is active and asset-rich—yet fragmented, with no single way information is shared or accessed.

CHWs Are the Information Infrastructure

WHAT WE HEARD

Their essential work follows a repeatable workflow—but remains informal, under-recognized, and unevenly supported.



1 VERIFY

Validate information
Reconcile conflicting guidance

2 ADAPT

Translate and tailor messages
Respond to misinformation and fear

3 CONFIRM

Check resource availability
Call organizations directly

4 ELEVATE

Identify service gaps
Raise community concerns

CHWs are not simply delivering messages—they are validating, adapting, confirming, and feeding intelligence back into the system.

Five Gaps Break the Information Flow

WHAT WE HEARD

Each failure point weakens trust, access, or action.

	GAP		WHAT IT CAUSES
1	**Fragmented coordination**	→	No shared mechanism to validate and synthesize information.
2	**Uneven access**	→	Access depends on employer, supervisor, network, or personal relationships.
3	**Outdated resource information**	→	Contacts, eligibility rules, and availability change frequently.
4	**Weak feedback loops**	→	Community intelligence does not consistently move upstream or prompt action.
5	**Workforce strain**	→	CHWs absorb information complexity and community stress without adequate support.

Information Alone Cannot Guarantee Access

WHAT WE HEARD

An accurate referral succeeds only when information and access both work.

ACCESS BREAKS WHEN…

- Services are unavailable
- Eligibility rules have changed
- Language access is limited
- Capacity is full or unclear
- People do not feel safe sharing information
- A service exists—but is not practically accessible

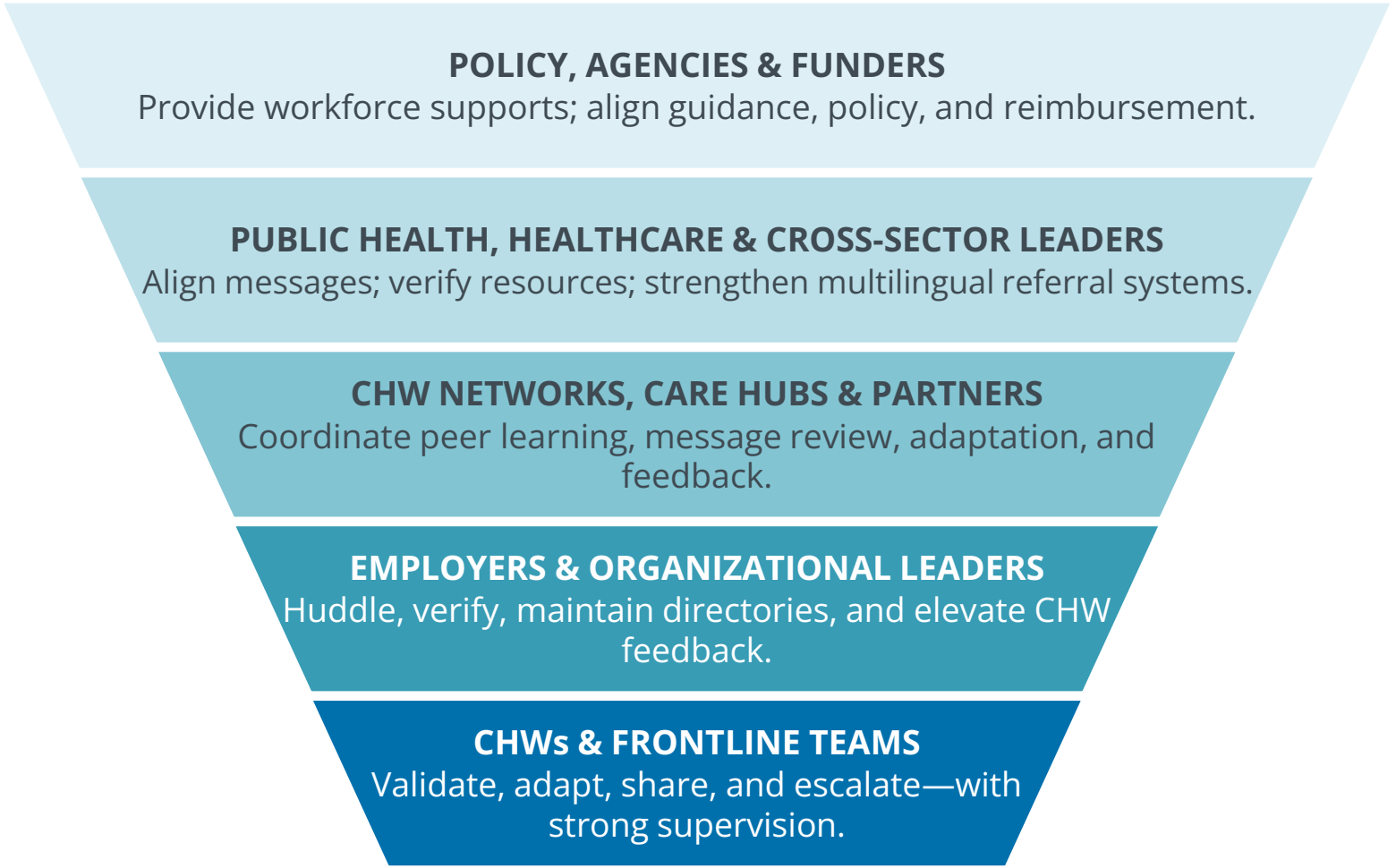
Recommendations

FROM CHWs

Community insight

Service gaps

Trust signals



TO CHWs

Validated guidance

Resources

Policy updates

Every Gap Has an Infrastructure Solution

Each failure point maps to a shared function that closes it.

GAP	INFRASTRUCTURE SOLUTION
Fragmented information	**Shared validation & synthesis** One coordinated function across systems
Uneven access	**Trusted multichannel dissemination** Consistent access beyond individual employers or networks
Outdated resources	**Resource verification & availability** Current eligibility, contacts, and service capacity
Translation burden	**Multilingual, CHW-reviewed adaptation** Culturally grounded materials ready to use
Weak feedback loops	**Structured feedback & escalation** Debriefs, documentation, and visible follow-through
Workforce strain	**Supervision, peer support & paid learning** Time and support to manage information and stress
Limited accountability	**Shared governance & evaluation** Clear ownership, measures, and action

The Opportunity In Cook County: Shared Infrastructure

Strengthen four shared functions already in motion—not a disconnected new system.

CORE CAPABILITY

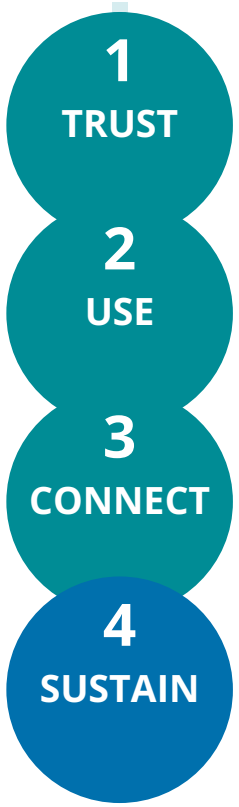
Trusted message validation
Confirm accuracy before information moves.

Multilingual, culturally grounded adaptation
Shape information for language, culture, and context.

Visible service availability
Show what is actually available—not only what exists.

Workforce support & reflective supervision
Give CHWs time, support, and space to manage complexity.

SHARED BACKBONE



COMPLEMENTARY CAPABILITY

Timely dissemination
Move validated information quickly through trusted channels.

Resource & referral verification
Keep eligibility, contacts, and service details current.

Structured CHW feedback loops
Move community intelligence upstream and show follow-through.

Governance & accountability
Clarify ownership, measures, decisions, and action.

Strong backbone + Core capabilities = Better information flow to, through, and from CHWs.

Panel Discussion

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Thank you!

HMA