



**Leavitt Partners White Paper Summary
August 2018**

Overview

Utah is known for its healthy populations, low cost of health care, and innovative practices. Although the state ranks fourth in the nation for overall health, improvements can be made in the quality of life and to decrease health costs - especially, in minority and high-risk populations. Community Health Workers (CHW) offer a cost-effective and culturally appropriate alternative to traditional outreach methods. CHWs are frontline public health workers who serve as a bridge between patients, health care providers, and social service providers.

CHWs are uniquely trained and positioned to address social and care management needs while allowing nurses, physicians, social workers, and other licensed workers to practice at the top of their license and focus on diagnosis, treatment, and administration of care. Often members of the populations and communities in which they work, CHWs build trusted relationships, which improve interactions and support successful outcomes. They speak a common language, come from a similar culture, and have a deeper understanding of the populations' needs. Their goal is to provide education about disease prevention and lifestyle modification, and provide informal counseling and coaching in addition to extending support to targeted individuals.

Healthcare Savings Incentive

A recent study estimated the savings from CHW interventions range from \$1.81 to \$5.58 for every \$1.00 spent. Another study estimated an expected savings of 7.1 percent in the third year. In Utah, Holy Cross Ministries, an organization that employs CHWs, assisted 89 percent of their target population, Hispanic and other minority populations, to obtain health care coverage or services. They find that CHWs improve the physician-patient relationship and increase patients' trust in the healthcare system.

CHW Outcomes

Community Health Worker interventions have been shown to improve outcomes for patients with chronic conditions by enhancing disease prevention, reducing 30-day hospital readmissions, improving mental health, promoting positive lifestyle behavior change, increasing linkages to primary care, decreasing hospital costs, and improving patient and provider satisfaction. There are many populations in Utah who could benefit from services CHWs provide.

Recommendations

Evidence shows that targeted CHW interventions enhance the care experience, improve health outcomes, and have potential to reduce the cost of care. Increasing the engagement of CHWs across Utah's communities can improve access to care and management of chronic conditions while decreasing pent-up demand for care, cultural barriers, and avoidable use of the emergency department. Costs within the system may decrease, efficiency will increase, and patient and provider satisfaction will improve. Community Health Workers add fuel to the vehicle that drives improvement and achieves health care goals.