

# ADDRESSING HEALTH INEQUITY IN GREATER MINNESOTA: BUILDING COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER CAPACITY

Minnesota Rural Health Conference – Duluth, MN

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# What is a Community Health Worker (CHW)

- a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of the communities they serve.



(APHA)

# Also know as...

- Promotores(as) de salud
- Outreach workers
- Community health representatives
- Patient navigators
- Care coordinators
- Health Coaches
- Lay health advisors
- Care guides



# Affordable Care Act

- CHW's have been recognized as an important member of the health care workforce.



## Triple Aim

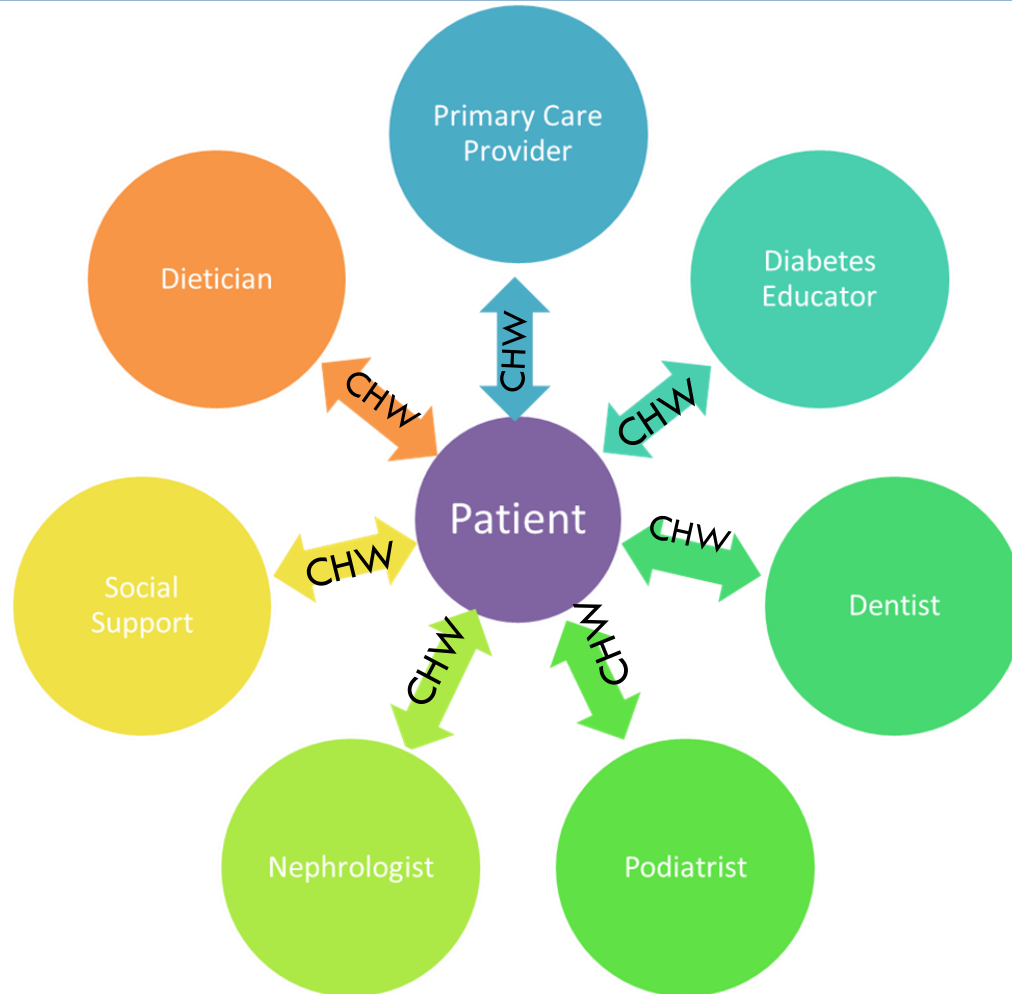
(Rosenthal et al., 2010)

# What is a CHW's role

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- Educate and empower patients to become self-sufficient in caring for their own health and making smart choices
- Enforce and support evidence based recommendations by serving as a liaison
- Culturally appropriate, one-on-one, adapted to individual needs

# Example



# Need for CHW's in Rural MN

- Medically Underserved Area (MUA)
- Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)



# Need for CHW's in Rural MN

- High levels of social determinates
- Impact of social determinates
- Geographic spread
- Digital Divide
- Negative health behaviors
- Rural lifestyle

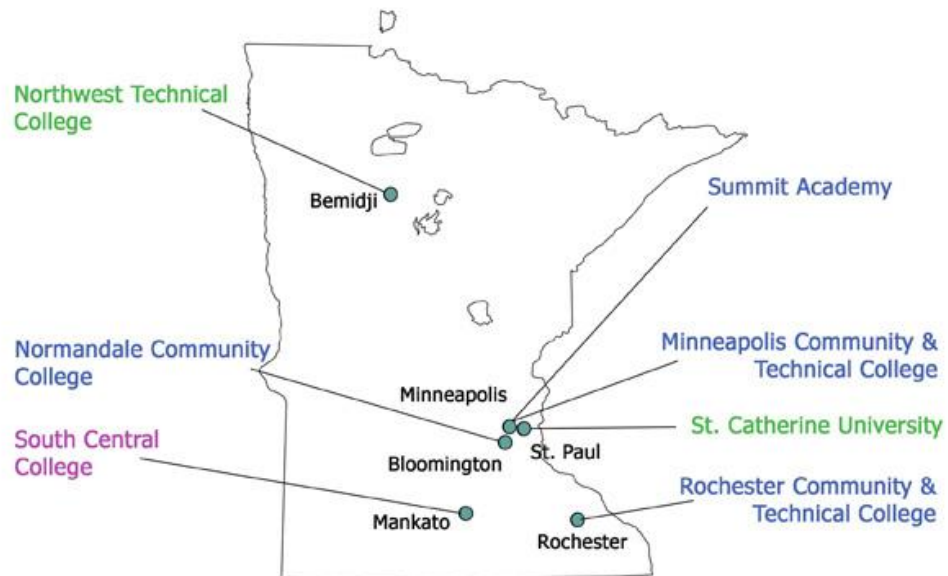


# Success with CHW's

- Disease specific projects
- Population specific projects
- Event specific projects



# Location of CHW Certificate Programs in Minnesota



**Program Types:**

- Online Format
- Hybrid - Online & In-person Format
- In-person Format

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# healthy northland

STATEWIDE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



# Healthy Northland

- *Healthy Northland* seeks to improve the quality of life and health of all people in northeastern Minnesota.

Made possible by the Minnesota Department of Health  
Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)

# Healthy Northland

## Healthy Northland— A Collaboration of

2 - Community Health Boards

7 - NE MN Counties:

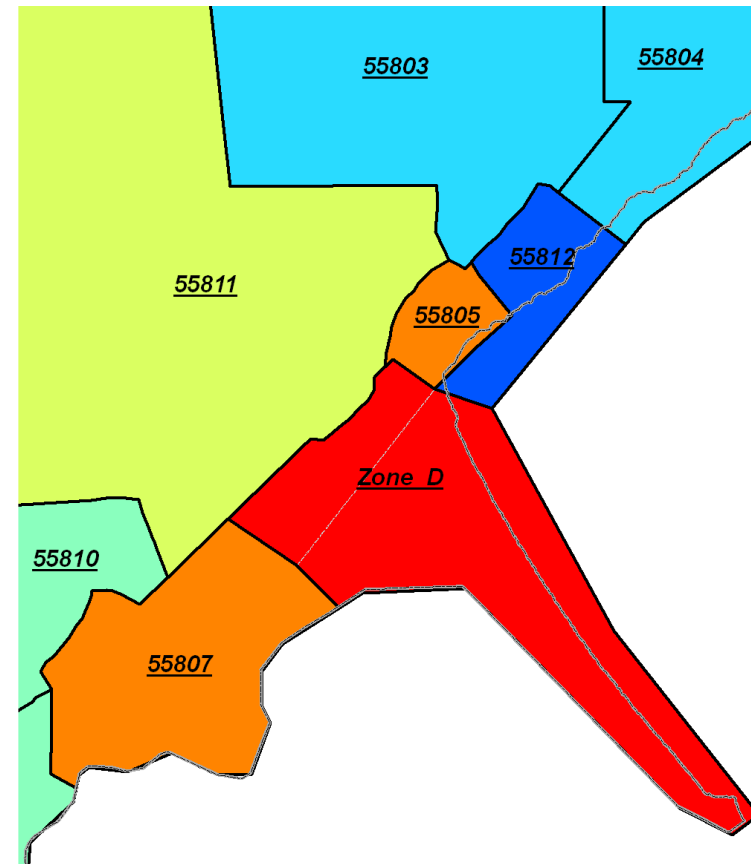
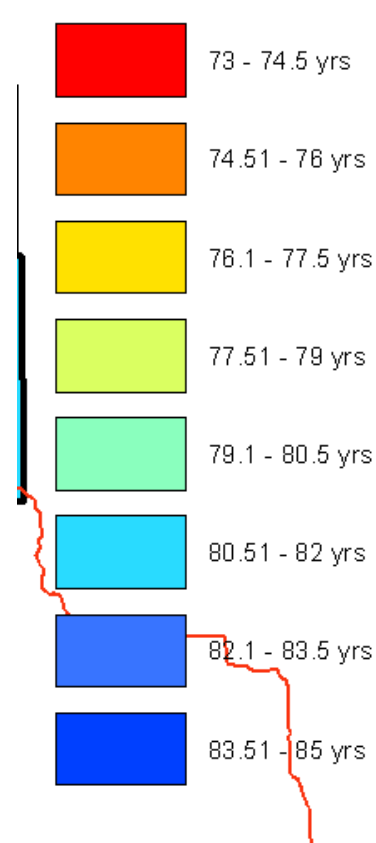
- Aitkin, Itasca & Koochiching
- Carlton, Cook, Lake & St. Louis



# Health Inequity – Healthy Northland

## Life Expectancy in Zip Codes & Zones

in Duluth 1.2 year difference in life expectancy – based on zip code



# Health Inequity – Duluth

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- The Central Hillside neighborhood (Red) and its neighbor to the west, Lincoln Park (Orange), have many of the social and built environmental conditions that negatively impact life expectancy.



# Health Inequity - Duluth

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- Both neighborhoods have:
  - high concentrations of low income people with lower education levels
  - higher concentration of Native American, African American and other communities of Color

# Healthy Inequity - Duluth

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- older housing stock with substandard conditions
  - limited or no access to affordable healthy food choices
- limited or no access to safe places for exercise

# Community Health Worker - Pilot

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- Pilot strategy to build capacity for Community Health Workers in Duluth
- Build Community Capacity for Health
- Assist individuals and families in navigating the health/human service systems

# Community Health Worker Pilot

- Provide Advocacy for Individuals and Communities experiencing Health Inequity
- Recruit/Train CHWs from the communities that they will serve
- Provide culturally appropriate and family/community centered services

# Healthy Northland

## CHW - Pilot

- Designated SHIP – One Time Supplemental Funding to:
  - Recruit and enroll 2 Duluth community members in the Northwest Technical College's Community Health Worker certification program
  - Convene Public Health, Health Care and Community Service partners to explore opportunities for using CHWs in current and/or innovative programs

# CHW - Pilot

- Application for the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant - was approved, but left unfunded ☹️
- Accountable Community for Health Grant (ACH) – Myers-Wilkins School Project:  
Healthy Northland and Generation Health Care Initiatives partnered to convene Duluth organizations/resources – grant application

# Community Health Worker – The Real Story!

- Deborah Hernandez



Completed Northwest Technical College's  
CHW program (with flying colors!)  
– May 2015

The successes and challenges of the journey.

# Lessons Learned

- Minnesota's CHW Coursework and Certification is rigorous, and provides a good foundation
- Candidates may need a mentor and IT support in order to be successful.  
Plan for it!



# Lessons Learned

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- The “Chicken or the Egg”

In greater MN we need to work on both building CHW staff capacity, and cultivating readiness for organizations/collaborations to employ CHWs

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