



Healthy Start FAQ: Understanding the Role of Community Health Workers in Healthy Start

On July 9, 2015, Katie DeAngelis of the EPIC Center facilitated a webinar focused on the valuable role that Community Health Workers (CHWs) play in Healthy Start programs through their work of assisting with and promoting maternal health. To better understand the dynamics of CHWs, the Healthy Start EPIC Center partnered with an outside researcher to explore the critical role played by CHWs through a survey of all HS grantees. The survey aims to describe the role of CHWs in HS, including their background, experience, and primary responsibilities in addition to exploring training, career advancement opportunities, potential impact on HS participant health outcomes, and progress around certification. The HS EPIC Center plans to use the survey results to support CHWs who are part of HS Project teams, including the development of a customized training program accessible to all Healthy Start grantees.

The webinar reviewed the purpose and format of the survey, as well as how the Healthy Start EPIC center plans to use the results.

Almost 100 people attended, indicating high interest in learning more about the survey. The EPIC Center greatly appreciated the participation of all attendees, especially the shared excitement around having a core competency-based training for CHWs.

During the presentation, attendees asked a large number of great questions which have been compiled and answered below.

In case you or a colleague missed the webinar, you can find a recording of the presentation on the [EPIC Center website](#).

What is the goal of the study?

The goal of the study is to describe the role of CHWs in Healthy Start, including their background, experience, and primary responsibilities. The survey also includes questions on the training received, career advancement opportunities, potential impact on Healthy Start participant health outcomes, and progress around certification programs. The goal is to define the minimum criteria required to serve as a Healthy Start community health worker.

How will the survey results be used?

The Healthy Start EPIC Center will use the results of the study to support CHWs who are members of Healthy Start Project teams. This will include the development of a customized training program that will be accessible to all Healthy Start grantees. The Healthy Start EPIC Center anticipates that this customized training program will be a series of prerecorded, online e-learning modules that CHWs can view at their convenience. The Healthy Start EPIC Center is committed to working closely with grantees and community health workers to ensure that the content and format of this training program meets the needs of the HS program while minimizing the burden on staff.



Who should complete the survey?

This survey should be completed by one person at your organization with knowledge of the CHW program at your Healthy Start Project sites. This may be a Program Manager, CHW supervisor, or other similar role. An email with the link to your organization's survey was sent to all Healthy Start Project Directors on July 9th. We ask that Project Directors please forward the email to the appropriate person at your organization.

How much time will it take?

We expect the survey to take about 30 minutes. Each organization can submit one response, but you are able to save your responses and come back to the survey after you begin.

When are responses due?

Please complete the link no later than August 7.

How with the survey be distributed?

The survey was distributed as a link to an online questionnaire to Healthy Start Project Directors on July 9th. Please email katie_deangelis@jsi.com if you are a Project Director but did not receive a link.

How are you defining a CHW?

For the purposes of this survey, please include information on all individuals whose duties may include outreach, health coaching, health education, home visitation, care coordination, helping with navigation, patient advocacy and/or community engagement, and in particular individuals who do not likely do not hold a professional license or provide clinical care. You may use a different title for these individuals, although we use the term community health worker for simplicity.

For this survey, we are interested in all CHWs who interact with your Healthy Start program participants, regardless of whether they are direct employees or contracted from other agencies. In order to complete the survey, it may be necessary to communicate with someone at contracted agencies in order to answer questions regarding background, training, and roles of your contracted community health workers.

Have you established the core competencies for community health workers in Healthy Start?

Defining the core competencies of community health workers in Healthy Start is a primary goal of the survey results. In the questionnaire, we provide a list of core competencies that have been used in other settings, and ask Healthy Start sites to indicate which roles are most often conducted by community health workers. This will allow us to prioritize competencies that have relevance for the greatest number of Healthy Start community health workers.

How can community health workers participate in this initiative?

The Healthy Start EPIC Center would like to host 3 to 4 focus groups of community health workers at various grantee sites to ask them about their experience, barriers, facilitators, and their recommendations for what to include in a training program for Healthy Start community health workers. If you think you might be able to help us locate participant community health workers and host this focus group, please email katie_deangelis@jsi.com.

EPIC Training FAQs



What are the long term goals for the results of the survey?

In the short term, the goal is to define and describe Healthy Start community health workers, in order to develop a standardized training curriculum that meets the Healthy Start program's needs. With the results, and depending on grantee interest, it might be feasible and desired to convene one or more working groups of Healthy Start sites to share best practices and determine how to use the results for broader policy change. One topic that was of interest among participants on the Understanding CHWs in Healthy Start Webinar, which could be discussed in the proposed working group, was around liability issues. In the long term, it is the hope that standardization will help the Healthy Start program advocate for alternative payment methodologies, including the potential for insurance reimbursement.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Please direct any questions you have about the survey to Katie DeAngelis at the Healthy Start EPIC Center (katie_deangelis@jsi.com).