



**INCHWA**  
Indiana Community Health Workers Association  
*Building a Healthier Indiana*

## CHW Advocacy Toolkit

Community Health Workers can play an integral role in advocacy and meaningful change in their communities, both for the clients they serve and for the support and recognition of the CHW profession. This toolkit will review why CHWs are crucial to advocacy efforts and how they can effect change in their communities.

### Table of Contents:

INCHWA Advisory Board Members Authors of the 2024 Advocacy Tool Kit .....	2
What is a CHW? .....	3
What is a Community Health Worker? .....	3
Evidence for CHWs .....	3
What makes CHWs so effective? .....	4
What do CHWs need to succeed? .....	4
History of CHWs in Indiana .....	4
Origins of Community Health Workers in Indiana .....	4
Expansion and Recognition of CHWs in Indiana .....	5
CHWs in Modern Indiana Healthcare .....	5
CHW Involvement in Advocacy .....	6
How to Advocate in Your Community .....	6
Scenario Examples .....	10
Action Items .....	11

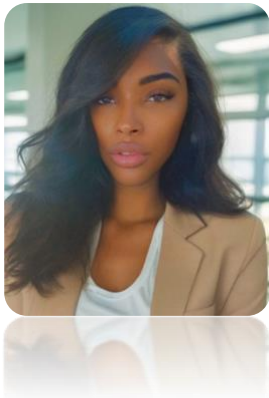
# INCHWA Advisory Board Members

## Authors of the 2024 Advocacy Tool Kit



**Phyllis Morgan** CCHW

Phyllis is a Supervisor for Community Health Workers and Community Weavers at Eskenazi Health. She has been an employee at Eskenazi Health for ten years and has worked as an Operation Supervisor in Patient Access. Phyllis is a former nurse in the US Army. Phyllis is passionate about helping patients and community members become better versions of themselves. She lives by the motto “Be the change you want to see in life” and exhibits it daily in her professional and personal life. For Phyllis, community commitment is a priority; her work allows her to fulfill this passion. Phyllis is a vital member of the Community Health Worker team at Eskenazi and continues to support and encourage her team to grow and develop.



**Tomorrow Thomas** CCHW

Tomorrow is a Certified Community Health Worker with over ten years of experience in healthcare. Throughout my career, I have held various positions in research, clinical trials, health education, and community outreach. Passionate about health equity, public health education, and advocacy for minority and underserved communities, I am dedicated to improving healthcare access and outcomes for all. My commitment to these causes allows me to effectively contribute to diverse healthcare initiatives and promote positive change in our community.



**McKenzie Reed** CCHW

McKenzie has worked as a Community Health Worker for CICOA Aging and In-Home Solutions since April 2022. She got her CHW certification in September 2022, and while working directly with clients, she supported them during their admission to and discharge from the hospital or nursing facility. As of March 2024, McKenzie serves CICOA as the CHW Coordinator, helping to manage and implement new and ongoing CHW programs within the agency and creating a long-term sustainability plan.

# What is a CHW?

## What is a Community Health Worker?

The American Public Health Association defines a Community Health Worker (CHW) as a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of their community. This trusted relationship allows the CHW to act as a liaison between health and social services and the community, helping to improve access to services and the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.

A CHW also enhances individual and community capacity by improving health knowledge and self-sufficiency through outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.

### Other names for CHWs

Community Health Advocate  
Family Health Advocate  
Outreach Worker  
Patient Advocate  
Behavioral Health Aide  
Patient Educator  
Health Coach  
Patient Health Navigator  
Recovery Coach  
Community Care Coordinator  
Public Health Aide  
Village Health Worker  
Health Promoter

### What do CHWs do?

- Outreach and community mobilization
- Community/cultural liaison
- Case management and care coordination
- Home-based support
- Health promotion and health coaching
- System navigation
- Participatory research
- Patient Advocacy
- Health Education
- Promote Health Equity

### Evidence for CHWs

As research in this field advances, studies demonstrate the impact of Community Health Workers (CHWs) on health outcomes and cost-effectiveness. As part of the healthcare team, CHWs have been shown to:

- 1) Ensure access to healthcare
- 2) Coordinate timely access to primary care, behavioral health, and preventive services
- 3) Help individuals manage chronic conditions.

In 2017, the Diabetes Impact Project—Indianapolis Neighborhoods (DIP-IN) was an 8-year initiative to tackle health disparities in three racially and ethnically diverse Indianapolis areas significantly affected by type 2 diabetes. Community Health Workers (CHWs) collaborated with DIP-IN to specifically assist individuals with diabetes residing in these communities who have hemoglobin A1c (HbA1c) levels exceeding 7.9% and are at high risk for diabetes-related complications. The CHWs conducted home visits and worked with a caseload of 75 to 100 clients to promote better diabetes-related behaviors and address social determinants of health that

pose obstacles to personal health. Clients enrolled in the program received CHW support until they could maintain HbA1c levels below 7.0 for a minimum of 3 months and no longer had significant social needs.

## What makes CHWs so effective?

A fundamental principle of community engagement is that the communities' rights of self-determination and autonomy regarding participation must be respected. As members of the communities they serve, community health workers (CHWs) possess valuable inside knowledge and cultural competency, allowing them to form strong relationships with their clients. CHWs are selected for their empathy, non-judgmental attitude, and excellent communication skills, which help them earn the trust of their clients. This trust is essential for overcoming barriers to accessing care, such as mistrust of the health care system, low health literacy, language barriers, and cultural differences. CHWs have successfully engaged with underserved and high-risk populations through their community outreach work, reducing health disparities.

## What do CHWs need to succeed?

• Training and continuing education	• Career advancement opportunities
• Defined roles and responsibilities	• Steady, reliable funding
• Backup from healthcare professional	• Public and Professional Recognition

## History of CHWs in Indiana

### Origins of Community Health Workers in Indiana

The origins of Community Health Workers (CHWs) in Indiana can be traced back to the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this time, there was an increasing recognition that traditional healthcare approaches were not effectively addressing the health needs of underserved populations. As a result, innovative programs were developed to improve community health, including using CHWs.

In 1979, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) established the "Promotoras de Salud" program as one of the earliest examples of Community Health Worker (CHW) programs in Indiana. This program involved training bilingual community members to act as health educators and advocates for the Latino community. They focused on maternal and child health, nutrition, and disease prevention.

## Expansion and Recognition of CHWs in Indiana

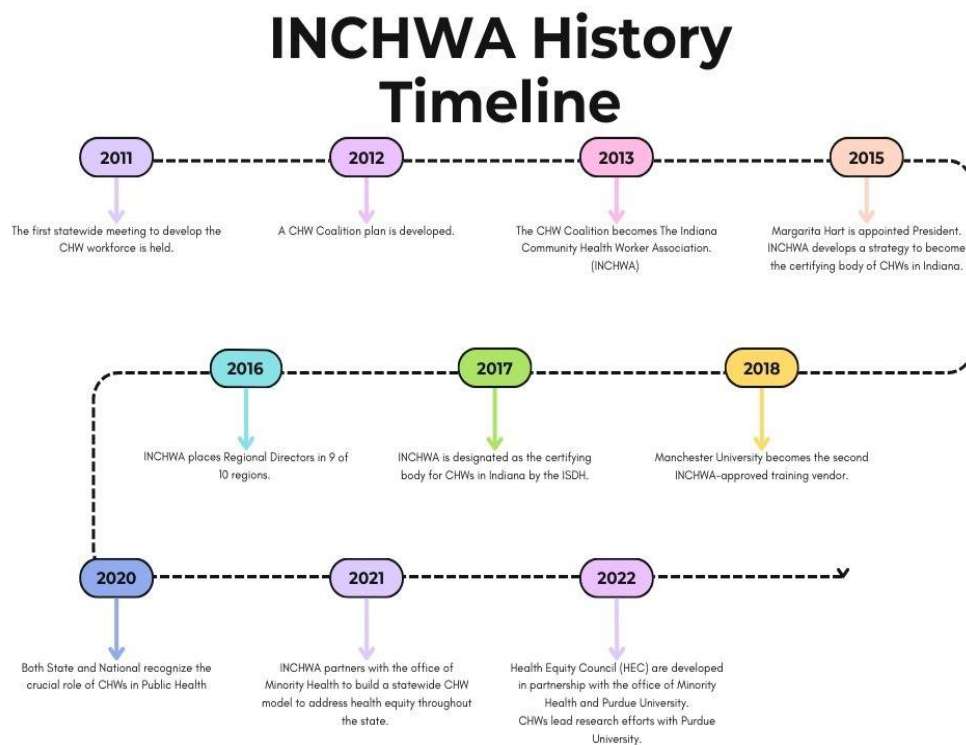
Over the years, the role of CHWs in Indiana has expanded beyond the initial focus on maternal and child health. Today, CHWs play a crucial role in addressing various health issues, including chronic diseases, mental health, substance abuse, and health equity.

In 2015, the Indiana General Assembly passed Senate Enrolled Act 441, recognizing Community Health Workers (CHWs) as essential to the state’s healthcare workforce. This paved the way for the development of statewide certification and training standards. Subsequently, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) established the Indiana Community Health Worker Credentialing Program, which provides a standardized certification process for CHWs in the state.

## CHWs in Modern Indiana Healthcare

Community Health Workers (CHWs) in Indiana are employed in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, community-based organizations, and public health departments. They collaborate with healthcare professionals, social service providers, and community members to address health disparities and improve overall community health.

The Indiana Community Health Worker Association (INCHWA) was established in 2011. Our organization plays a vital role in supporting CHWs in Indiana by offering networking, professional development, and advocacy opportunities. The picture below shows a timeline of our history.



## CHW Involvement in Advocacy

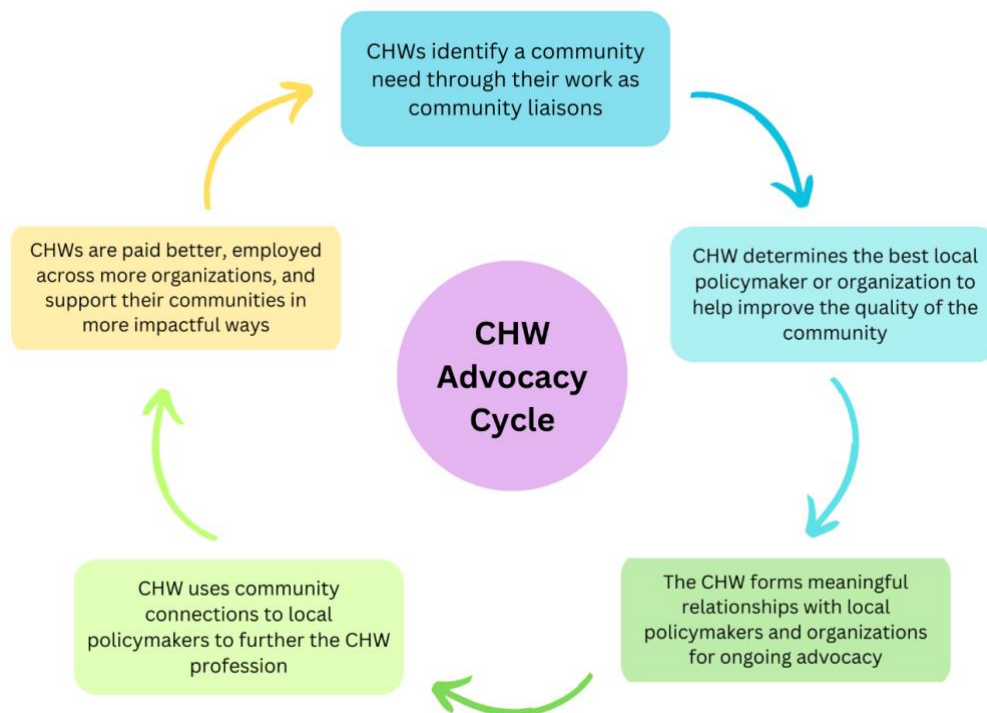
CHW advocacy is a core competency of CHWs. It involves connecting with patients and speaking with providers about their SDOH barriers and their communities' concerns. This could include identifying, locating, and connecting to community resources. The CHW advocates for the patient with the providers of needed healthcare services.

CHWs can identify causes that others might not see. They may know that a community needs a playground for the children or a nearby grocery store. The CHW would be aware of groups needing to be included in healthcare screenings or vaccinations. By being involved with advocacy, the CHW will help patients and communities improve their quality of life.

By continuing to advocate for their clients to local policymakers, CHWs can create connections with these individuals and advocate for furthering the CHW profession.

## How to Advocate in Your Community

Community Advocacy plays an important role in a Community Health Worker's daily function. A CHW mainly shows community advocacy by providing outreach and establishing relationships with key community leaders.



# Overview of Local Policymaker Roles

## Governor

*Chief Executive Officer of the Indiana State Government*

1. **Executive Authority:** The governor is responsible for enforcing state laws and overseeing the executive branch of government.
2. **Legislative Role:** They propose a budget to the state legislature, recommend legislation, and have the power to veto bills passed by the legislature.
3. **Commander-in-Chief:** The governor is the commander-in-chief of the Indiana National Guard.
4. **Appointments:** They appoint members to various boards and commissions and certain state officials.
5. **Ceremonial Duties:** The governor represents the state at official functions and events.

Overall, the governor of Indiana plays a crucial role in shaping state policies, managing state affairs, and representing the state's interests.

## Lieutenant Governor

*Second-in-Command to the Governor of Indiana*

1. **Succession:** The lieutenant governor assumes the role of governor if the governor is unable to serve due to resignation, death, or incapacity.
2. **President of the Senate:** The lieutenant governor serves as the president of the Indiana Senate, where they can cast tie-breaking votes if needed.
3. **State Boards and Commissions:** They serve on various state boards and commissions, influencing policy decisions.
4. **Special Assignments:** Depending on the administration's priorities, the governor may assign specific duties or initiatives to the lieutenant governor.

Overall, while the lieutenant governor's primary role is to be ready to assume the governorship, if necessary, they also play a significant role in state government through legislative involvement and representation.

## Attorney General

*Chief Legal Officer for the State of Indiana*

1. **Legal Counsel:** They provide legal advice to state agencies, boards, and commissions.
2. **Litigation:** The attorney general represents the state in legal matters and defends the state in lawsuits.
3. **Criminal Prosecution:** They prosecute certain criminal cases at the state level.
4. **Consumer Protection:** They enforce consumer protection laws and investigate consumer complaints.
5. **Opinion Issuance:** They issue legal opinions interpreting state laws for state officials and agencies.

Overall, the attorney general in Indiana plays a crucial role in upholding the law, protecting the state's interests, and ensuring legal compliance across various sectors.

## General Assembly

*State Legislative Body  
Responsible for Making and  
Passing Laws*

1. **Lawmaking:** The General Assembly drafts, debates, and passes legislation affecting the state.
2. **Budget:** It approves the state budget proposed by the governor and appropriates funds for government operations.
3. **Oversight:** It conducts oversight of state agencies and programs to ensure they operate effectively and within the law.
4. **Representation:** It represents the interests and concerns of Indiana citizens through elected representatives in both the House and the Senate.
5. **Constitutional Amendments:** It can propose amendments to the Indiana Constitution, which must be ratified by the voters.

Overall, the General Assembly plays a critical role in shaping Indiana's laws, budget, and governance, while also serving as a forum for public debate and policy development.

## Indiana Senator and House Representative

*Elected Member of the General Assembly*

1. **Lawmaking:** Senators and House Representatives draft, propose, and vote on legislation that affects the state of Indiana.
2. **Representation:** They represent the interests and concerns of their constituents from their respective districts.
3. **Committee Work:** Senators and House Representatives participate in committee meetings where bills are discussed, amended, and voted upon before going to the full Senate.
4. **Budget:** They are involved in the state budget process, including reviewing and approving budget proposals.
5. **Oversight:** Senators and House Representatives oversee the implementation of laws and government agencies to ensure they operate effectively and efficiently.

The differences between a Senator and a House Representative are:

1. Senators are elected to represent a **larger district** within Indiana comprised of a broader constituency
2. Senators are elected for a **4-year term** and House Representatives are elected for a **2-year term**
3. The Senate consists of **50 members** and the House of Representatives consists of **100 members**.
4. The Senate is led by the **Lieutenant Governor**, and the House of Representatives elects a **Speaker of the House**.

Overall, Indiana Senators and House Representatives play a crucial role in shaping state laws, policies, and budgets, while also serving as advocates for their constituents at the state level.



## Indiana Supreme Court

*Highest Judicial Authority in  
Indiana*

1. **Final Appellate Jurisdiction:** The Indiana Supreme Court hears appeals from lower courts, including cases involving constitutional issues, significant legal questions, and certain criminal matters.
2. **Legal Interpretation:** It interprets and clarifies state laws and the Indiana Constitution to ensure consistency and fairness in legal decisions statewide.
3. **Administrative Oversight:** It oversees the judicial system in Indiana, including setting rules for court procedures and attorney conduct.
4. **Disciplinary Authority:** It has disciplinary authority over attorneys practicing law in Indiana, ensuring ethical conduct and professionalism.

Overall, the Indiana Supreme Court plays a pivotal role in upholding the rule of law, maintaining judicial independence, and ensuring justice is administered fairly and effectively across the state.

## Mayor

*Chief Executive Officer of a  
City or Town*

1. **Executive Leadership:** The mayor is responsible for the overall administration and management of the city or town government.
2. **Budget and Finance:** They propose and manage the city's budget, ensuring funds are allocated appropriately for services and infrastructure.
3. **Public Safety:** The mayor oversees law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency services within the municipality.
4. **Infrastructure and Development:** They plan and oversee the development of public works projects, including roads, parks, and utilities.
5. **Community Relations:** The mayor represents the city in public events, promotes economic development, and addresses community concerns.

Overall, the mayor plays a crucial role in shaping the growth, prosperity, and quality of life for residents within their jurisdiction in Indiana.

## City Council

*The Legislative Body for a  
City or Town*

1. **Legislative Authority:** The city council drafts, considers, and passes local ordinances (laws) and resolutions that govern the municipality.
2. **Budget Approval:** They review and approve the city's annual budget proposed by the mayor, ensuring funds are allocated appropriately.
3. **Policy Making:** They establish policies and guidelines for city operations, services, and development.
4. **Oversight:** They oversee the performance of city departments, agencies, and officials to ensure accountability and efficiency.
5. **Representation:** Council members represent the interests and concerns of their constituents, advocating for community needs and priorities.

Overall, the city council in Indiana plays a vital role in local governance, shaping policies, allocating resources, and oversees municipal affairs for the benefit of residents.

Two additional and crucial roles in the community are the Chamber of Commerce and the Township Trustee. The **Chamber of Commerce** advocates for businesses through lobbying provides networking opportunities and offers resources such as education and training to foster economic growth and community development statewide. It also conducts research and promotes Indiana as a favorable place to do business. **Township Trustees** can assist those in need by distributing relief and connecting residents to helpful resources when necessary. The Trustee is responsible for submitting an annual budget, paying and recording all financial guidelines according to the Indiana Code, and presenting an annual report.

## Scenario Examples

### Meet Doris



Doris is an older adult living in your community that relies on the use of a wheelchair for mobility, and also utilizes public transportation. When working with Doris, she tells you that the sidewalks between her home and the bus stop are severely cracked and missing in some places, causing her wheelchair to be unsteady or for her to have to maneuver her wheelchair in the street. Who should you reach out to in order to get the sidewalks in her neighborhood repaired?

**Answer: You should reach out to your local city council. These local policymakers typically handle infrastructure matters such as sidewalk maintenance and replacement within their jurisdiction.**

### Meet Emily and Lillian



Emily and Lillian are two local mothers that are engaged in a program that your agency runs to support single mothers and their children. During a group, you overhear Emily and Lillian discussing the lack of fresh produce at the one grocery store close to them, and that oftentimes, they have to choose pre-packed, less healthy options because it's what they can afford, even though they want to provide fresh fruit and vegetables to their children. Who should you advocate to on their behalf to improve food accessibility conditions in their area?

**Answer: You should schedule a meeting with your local Mayor to bring the issue to their attention and collaborate on action steps to improve food quality and accessibility in their area.**

## Action Items

Find and connect with your local officials

- Visit <https://in.wayeo.us/> to find the local policymakers in your area
- Connect with them and identify how you can help each other make your community a better place!

Make sure you're registered to vote

- Visit <https://indianavoters.in.gov/> to register to vote and/or check your voter registration.
- Voting in your local and state elections is one of the most powerful ways to impact your community!

Research bills being proposed in your area/statewide

- Visit <https://legiscan.com/IN/legislation/2024> to view bills currently proposed for Indiana Legislation to make sure you are educated on the impact they could have in your community.

Stay connected to INCHWA and other CHWs

- Visit <https://www.inchwa.org/> to stay up-to-date with CHW advocacy updates and ongoing training opportunities.
- Connect with other local CHWs to help find creative solutions and further the CHW mission!