

CHW Workforce Sustainability Matrix

Pillar	Definition	How It Sustains the CHW Workforce	What Employers Can Do to Create Sustainability
Financing	Predictable, multi-year funding aligned with prevention and navigation work.	Reduces grant dependency, prevents layoffs during budget shifts, supports competitive wages, and stabilizes retention.	• Embed CHWs in operating budgets, not soft funds • Align CHWs to value-based contracts • Track avoided utilization and cost offsets • Explore PMPM or quality improvement cost structures
Policy Legitimacy	Formal recognition of CHWs in state plans, contracts, and regulatory frameworks.	Protects the role during leadership changes; makes CHWs part of the required infrastructure.	• Include CHWs in compliance and quality frameworks • Reference CHWs in strategic plans • Advocate for Medicaid/state recognition • Align job classifications with state standards
Scope Protection	Clear definition of CHW competencies and boundaries.	Prevents burnout and role drift; maintains professional identity and community trust.	• Develop clear job descriptions • Avoid substituting CHWs for clinical staff • Provide competency-based training • Educate managers on appropriate role use
Career Pathways	Structured advancement and wage progression within the profession.	Increases retention; reduces attrition due to stagnation; builds leadership pipeline.	• Create tiered CHW roles (Entry, Senior, Lead) • Offer endorsements/specializations • Tie wage growth to competency milestones • Include CHWs in leadership development programs
Operational Integration	Embedding CHWs into workflows, documentation systems, and care teams.	Makes CHWs infrastructure rather than add-ons; protects role during restructuring.	• Integrate CHWs into EHR systems • Include them in interdisciplinary meetings • Build referral loops with clear accountability • Incorporate CHWs into staffing models
Data Architecture	Systems that measure prevention, barrier resolution, and risk mitigation.	Makes relational work visible; defends funding; supports ROI discussions.	• Track social barrier resolution • Compare utilization before/after CHW involvement • Develop dashboards for CFO/HR • Align reporting with Medicaid quality metrics

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Reflective Supervision	Trauma-informed supervision that supports emotional sustainability.	Reduces burnout, improves retention, and strengthens ethical practice.	• Schedule protected reflective supervision time • Train supervisors in trauma-informed leadership • Provide peer support spaces • Monitor burnout indicators
Community Trust	Protection of CHW credibility and advocacy role in the community.	Maintains engagement, preserves the core value of the role, and strengthens outcomes.	• Allow time for community presence • Protect advocacy functions • Establish community advisory input • Avoid over-medicalizing the role
Cross-Sector Funding	Shared financial investment across healthcare, public health, employers, and philanthropy.	Reduces dependence on a single funding stream and buffers against economic shifts.	• Develop partnerships with public health • Engage employers in co-funding • Participate in braided funding initiatives • Seek managed care collaboration
Narrative Alignment	Shared understanding of CHWs as prevention and risk mitigation infrastructure.	Shapes investment decisions; influences executive buy-in; protects funding during downturns.	• Educate boards and CFOs on CHW ROI • Frame CHWs as workforce stabilizers • Publish impact stories with data • Align messaging with organizational strategy

Systems Insight for Employers

Sustainability is cumulative.

If financing is strong, but:

- Supervision is weak → burnout rises.
- Scope is unclear → role erosion occurs.
- Data is absent → funding becomes vulnerable.

The system destabilizes.

Employers that succeed in the long term do not focus on a single pillar. They:

- Budget structurally
- Integrate operationally
- Measure strategically
- Supervise reflectively
- Advocate institutionally