

## **Code of Ethics for Community Health Workers**

A Community Health Worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community they serve. This trusting relationship enables the CHW to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community, facilitating access to services and improving the quality-of-service delivery and cultural competence. A CHW also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through various activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.

### **Purpose of this Code**

The Community Health Worker Code of Ethics is grounded in the core values of the American Association of Community Health Workers. This Code serves as a framework for Community Health Workers, their supervisors, and their employers to address the ethical challenges encountered in the profession.

Employers, curriculum developers, and CHWs are urged to reference this Code when developing Community Health Worker programs. Each Community Health Worker has a duty to pursue excellence by delivering high-quality service and the most accurate information to individuals, families, and communities.

The Code of Ethics is grounded in widely recognized principles relevant to all professionals in health and social services (such as promoting social justice, health, and dignity). However, it does not cover every ethical challenge that Community Health Workers encounter; the lack of a specific guideline does not mean that ethical obligations are absent. Community Health Workers are urged to contemplate their ethical responsibilities towards the communities they assist and to communicate these reflections. with others.

## **Article 1. Responsibilities in the Delivery of Care**

Community Health Workers foster trust and strengthen communities by advancing the health and social welfare of their clients. In instances of conflict among individuals, groups, agencies, or institutions, Community Health Workers must evaluate all concerns and prioritize those that enhance the well-being and quality of life of the individual or client. The following guidelines uphold the professional integrity of Community Health Workers.

### **1.1 Honesty**

Community Health Workers are dedicated professionals committed to achieving optimal health results for their communities. They convey the possible benefits and drawbacks of available services, including the programs they operate under.

### **1.2 Confidentiality**

Community Health Workers honor the confidentiality, privacy, and trust of the individuals, families, and communities they serve. They are knowledgeable about and comply with HIPAA, employer policies, and applicable state and federal confidentiality laws related to their responsibilities.

### **1.3 Scope of Ability and Training**

Community Health Workers are truthful about their qualifications, competencies, and limitations regarding the services they may provide, and they should not misrepresent their qualifications or competencies to individuals, families, communities, or employers.

### **1.4 Quality of Care**

Community Health Workers are dedicated to delivering excellent services to individuals, families, and communities. They accomplish this by pursuing ongoing education and training, and by ensuring that the information they share is current and precise.

### **1.5 Referral to Appropriate Services**

Community Health Workers recognize when client concerns exceed their expertise and direct clients to suitable health, wellness, or social support services as needed.

### **1.6 Legal Obligations**

Community Health Workers must report any actual or potential harm to individuals in the communities they serve to the proper authorities. They also bear the responsibility of adhering to the regulations established by state and federal governments, as well as their employing organizations. In some cases, obligations to society at large or specific legal duties may take precedence over loyalty to individual community members.

## Article 2. Promotion of Equitable Relationships

Community Health Workers focus their efforts on the well-being of the whole community. They value and respect each community member's expertise and knowledge. They strive to create equitable partnerships with communities to address all health and well-being issues.

### 2.1 Cultural Humility

Community Health Workers possess expertise in the communities in which they serve. They maintain a high degree of humility and respect for the cultural diversity within each community. As advocates for their communities, Community Health Workers have an obligation to inform employers and others when policies and procedures will offend or harm communities or are ineffective within the communities where they work.

### 2.2 Maintaining the Trust of the Community

Community Health Workers, usually drawn from the communities they serve, gain their effectiveness from the trust these communities have in them. They are careful to act in ways that preserve this trust.

### 2.3 Respect for Human Rights

Community Health Workers respect the human rights of those they serve, advance principles of self-determination, and promote equitable relationships with all communities.

### 2.4 Anti-Discrimination

Community Health Workers do not discriminate against any person or group based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, social status, disability, or immigration status.

### 2.5 Client Relationships

Community Health Workers maintain professional relationships with clients. They establish, respect, and actively maintain personal boundaries between them and their clients.

## Article 3. Interactions with Other Service Providers

Community Health Workers build professional collaborations with other service providers to effectively support the community.

### 3.1 Cooperation

Community Health Workers prioritize the welfare of those they assist, setting aside personal differences to collaborate with anyone or any organization committed to delivering care to individuals in need.

### 3.2 Conduct

Community Health Workers uphold integrity in delivering health and social services. They honor the rights, dignity, and value of every individual and are ethically bound to report any

misconduct (such as sexual harassment or racial discrimination) to the appropriate authority.

### **3.3 Self-Presentation**

Community Health Workers are honest and open about their background and training with other service providers.

## **Article 4. Professional Rights and Responsibilities**

The Community Health Worker profession is committed to achieving excellence in community well-being. Rooted in shared values, Community Health Workers are tasked with maintaining the profession's principles and integrity as they help families make decisions that affect their health. They recognize and leverage the strengths of individuals, families, and communities to enhance overall community capacity.

### **4.1 Continuing Education**

Community Health Workers must stay informed about developments that significantly influence their service delivery capabilities. They aim to enhance their professional expertise and skills through education and involvement in professional organizations.

### **4.2 Advocacy for Change in Law and Policy**

Community Health Workers serve as advocates for change, influencing policies that support social justice and ensure accountability from systems towards communities. Policies that enhance public health and well-being empower Community Health Workers to offer improved care to the communities they support.

### **4.3 Enhancing Community Capacity**

Community Health Workers assist individuals and communities in achieving self-sufficiency, fostering the development of opportunities and resources that enhance their autonomy.

### **4.4 Wellness and Safety**

Community Health Workers prioritize their personal well-being—encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual health—and endeavor to foster a secure environment for both themselves and the communities they support.

### **4.5 Loyalty to the Profession**

Community Health Workers are dedicated to their profession and strive to support the initiatives of fellow Community Health Workers globally.

### **4.6 Advocacy for the Profession**

Community Health Workers are advocates for the profession. They are members, leaders, and active participants in local, state, and national professional organizations.



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*Supporting the workforce of Indiana's CHWs as part of the health care delivery system.*

#### **4.7 Recognition of Others**

Community Health Workers acknowledge the professional contributions and achievements of others.

**NOTE:** The Code of Ethics listed above was disseminated during the annual Statewide CHW Summits and on our webpage [here](#). Concerns about non-compliance with the code of ethics should be sent to [incommunityhealth@gmail.com](mailto:incommunityhealth@gmail.com), initiating a process to address any misunderstandings or compliance issues.