



NEWS RELEASE

CDC Awards 3-Year Funding for Community Health Workers to Address COVID-19 across Ohio

The Healthcare Collaborative of Greater Columbus (HCGC) has been awarded a 3-year, \$5 million dollar per year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to manage a statewide, comprehensive initiative to engage Community Health Workers (CHWs) around the state to provide coordinated connection to COVID-19 education, care and social services.

The project will expand CHW's participation in the overall public health response through case investigation, COVID-19 related education and information sharing, and most importantly, CHWs roles in eliminating barriers to accessing the COVID-19 vaccine.

The CDC initiative, titled Community Health Workers for COVID Response and Resilient Communities (CCR) will provide funding via HCGC to ten regionally focused Pathways Community HUBs (PCHs) across the state. Each PCH is a member of the Ohio Network of Certified Community Pathways HUBs and provide service to 66 of Ohio's 88 counties, accounting for over 7 million residents. PCHs across Ohio are subcontracted with 70 community-based organizations called Care Coordination Agencies (CCAs) within their respective regions. There are currently 205 CHWs employed by the PCHs across the state who will expand COVID-19 care resource coordination through the CCR initiative.

"This statewide approach will support and expand the efforts of CHWs, boots-on-the-ground, community members, who are trusted experts to help their neighbors continue to navigate this public health crisis," said Carrie Baker, HCGC President & CEO. "Through this funding, we envision deploying CHW best practices for public health efforts related to the current pandemic and increasing the use case for CHWs and the HUB model to equitably address any public health, social determinants of health, or medical issue facing our neighbors and our communities."

HCGC, a regional healthcare improvement collaborative, manages one of the largest PCHs nationally and statewide, the Central Ohio Pathways HUB (COPHUB). COPHUB serves an average of 650 clients working with over 50 COPHUB CHWs. In 2021, 13 community based CCAs in Central Ohio are working collaboratively in COPHUB.

"At the onset of the pandemic, CHWs working for COPHUB engaged their clients in COVID-19 education by the thousands, assisting central Ohio clients in understanding the ever-changing, complex, and sometimes confusing navigation of a novel virus and an increasingly devastating social situation," said Jenelle Hoseus, CEO of COPHUB. "This opportunity brings additional world-class training resources and partnerships among all HUBs across the state that otherwise weren't yet available," said Hoseus.

Other partners on this grant award include Partners in Health (PIH), Ohio State University College of Public Health Center for Health Outcomes Policy and Evaluation (OSU HOPES), Nationwide Children's Hospital and Strategic Research Group. CHW trainings will encompass instruction from Nationwide Children's Hospital on how to effectively engage community members to encourage participation in public health efforts to curb the uptick in COVID-19 cases. PIH will provide in depth trainings on the epidemiological and social implications of the pandemic, giving CHWs in depth knowledge to make them thought leaders and trusted messengers in their communities. Finally, the Ohio State University College of Public Health will expand statewide their novel COVID-19 "equity mapping tool," successfully piloted in Franklin County at the height of the pandemic to each PCH service areas. The mapping tool will use COVID-19 case rate and vaccine uptake data to inform public health strategy and CHW deployment to the neighborhoods that are most at risk for

further negative impact of the pandemic. Strategic Research Group and OSU HOPES will provide evaluation of outcomes related to this effort.

“As a model, Community Pathways HUBs across Ohio and the country have demonstrated success in maximizing grant and/or public funding by *reducing duplication* in care coordination, *reducing variation* in resources among individuals regardless of language, ethnicity, race or socio-economic challenges, and *reducing other costly consequences* for clients with multiple barriers, such as the cost of eviction and rehousing, or the cost of an Emergency Department visit when a primary care visit was more appropriate,” said Carrie Baker, President & CEO of HCGC. “To apply this approach to this ongoing pandemic will only benefit individuals in our communities as we tackle and emerge from COVID safely and equitably.”

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About HCGC and The Central Ohio Pathways HUB

As one of over 30 Regional Health Improvement Collaboratives (RHICs) across the country, the Healthcare Collaborative of Greater Columbus is a neutral, safe space collective impact 501c3 nonprofit that brings together providers, hospitals, social service agencies, public and private insurance, employers, government, public health, patients, and consumers to improve the equity, access, and quality of healthcare and the overall health for all people in the Columbus region. HCGC provides data, facilitation, quality improvement coaching and technical assistance to its partners in Central Ohio. HCGC’s Central Ohio Pathways HUB has been in operation since January of 2019, began serving clients in March 2019 and became nationally certified in November 2019. HUB CHWs are employed by 12 agencies in Central Ohio, each sub-contracted with the HUB, to operate a standardized risk mitigation/care coordination model. HUB agencies include Franklin County Public Health, Union County Public Health, Ross County Health District, The Columbus Urban League, The Breathing Association, Wellness First, LLC, Physicians CareConnection, PrimaryOne Health, United Church Homes, Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services-ETSS, Destined Pathways and Urban Strategies. The HUB enables these agencies and their CHWs to reduce variation and duplication of services and be reimbursed for outcomes by completing “pathways.” Pathways address all aspects of health, social services (including food, transportation and housing needs) as well as adult/career education, insurance and employment attainment. For more information, visit: www.hcgc.org.

About the Ohio Network of Certified Pathways Community HUBs

Ohio’s ten Pathways Community HUBs (PCHs) joined to form the Ohio Network of Certified Pathways Community HUBs (ONCPCH) in 2020. The Vision of the ONCPCH is that Ohio’s health, behavioral, and social policies and funding acknowledge and enhance the role of PCHs to achieve health equity for all people in Ohio. While each PCH is built of, for and by the community it serves, the Organization strives to: Educate the Organization’s members regarding policy changes, partnerships, areas of collaboration as a statewide group, or other opportunities where speaking with a collective PCH voice or spreading/scaling a collective PCH innovation will benefit all; Advocate on behalf the PCH Model with government and policy leaders; Provide PCH technical assistance and support to one another on areas of best practice and/or common ground; Foster collaborations among members in Ohio. Member PCHs include: Better Health Partnership HUB, Cleveland; Bridges to Wellness HUB, Tuscarawas County; Central Ohio Pathways HUB, Central Ohio; Community Action Pathways HUB, Stark County; Community Health Access Project, Mansfield; Health Care Access Now, Cincinnati; Mahoning Valley Pathways HUB, Youngstown; Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB, Toledo; Pathways HUB Community Action, Akron; Stark County THRIVE and____, Canton. Additional information on the HUB model can be found at www.pchi-hub.com.

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