

Become a Community Health Worker!

Why Should I Become a Community Health Worker?

Parents and caregivers of children with special needs already have the experience they need to become one!

What is a Community Health Worker?

CHWs have a unique understanding of the experience, language and/or culture of the communities they serve.

They may carry out one or more of the following roles:

- Providing culturally appropriate health education, information, and outreach in community-based settings such as homes, schools, clinics, shelters, local businesses and community centers
- Bridging and/or culturally mediating between individuals, communities and health and human services, including actively building individual and community capacity
- Assisting people to access the services they need
- Providing direct services, such as informal counseling, social support, care coordination and health screenings
- Advocating for individual and community needs*



Why Should I Get Certified as a CHW?

If you are just starting out, getting certified as a CHW:

- Gives professional recognition to the hours you've spent caring for your special needs child/ren
- Opens the door to job positions such as outreach workers, community health advisors, peer health educators, family partners, youth workers, and more. Even if they don't have "Community Health Worker" in the job title, many of these positions strongly prefer individuals with CHW certification!

If you are already a Family Partner or in a related profession, getting certified as a CHW:

- May open the door to promotion or other job opportunities
- Helps protect you in case of complaints about your work
- Looks great for the organization that employs you



*Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health



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How do I become a Community Health Worker?

Start your CHW certification application at
<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-community-health-worker-certification>



The Application

CHW certification requires you to fill out an application form, document your related work and/or educational experience, and provide three references, a 2x2 passport photo, a signed and notarized CORI acknowledgement form, and a \$35 application fee. (See if the organization you work for will pay for it!) The link for the application is above.

Do you already work as a Family Partner, Therapeutic Mentor, or in a related position?

This'll be a breeze. Your main task will be to list what hours you've worked and where you worked them.

You'll also be required to list three references. Most will be supervisors willing to verify your work history. Be sure to ask them ahead of time if you can list them as a reference. If you haven't seen them in awhile, give them an updated copy of your resume so they know what you've been up to.



Are you just starting out?

No problem! Do you volunteer at your child's school? Have you attended workshops and trainings related to advocacy and helping children with special needs? Paid work, unpaid work, and internships all count!

If you don't have enough hours yet, start documenting! Write down everything you do that's related to serving your community.