

# ABSTRACT

## Community Health Workers as Extenders of the Behavioral Health Workforce in Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics



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## Abstract

Community health workers (CHWs) provide support between patients, providers, and community resources that could benefit patients seeking behavioral health services. The increasing investment and implementation of the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model across the country presents opportunities to utilize CHWs to broaden behavioral health service availability. This qualitative study used literature reviews and semi-structured interviews to survey the landscape of CHW utilization in CCBHC settings. Inductive reasoning and a thematic analysis found common threads across CCBHC demonstration sites. Through interviews with key stakeholders, this study found that CHWs are not currently commonly employed in the CCBHC settings. Common threads of staffing challenges, telehealth, underemployment, and reimbursement were identified as potential barriers to the use of CHWs in this setting. Evidence is building that CHWs have a positive impact on health outcomes and cost savings to healthcare systems. Within the field of behavioral health, it will be important to educate and build awareness among clinic directors and other providers about the CHW workforce and their particular qualifications that could benefit those served by CCBHCs. This is a timely issue with many current policy implications as states begin changing or creating legislation to increase access to CHWs.

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