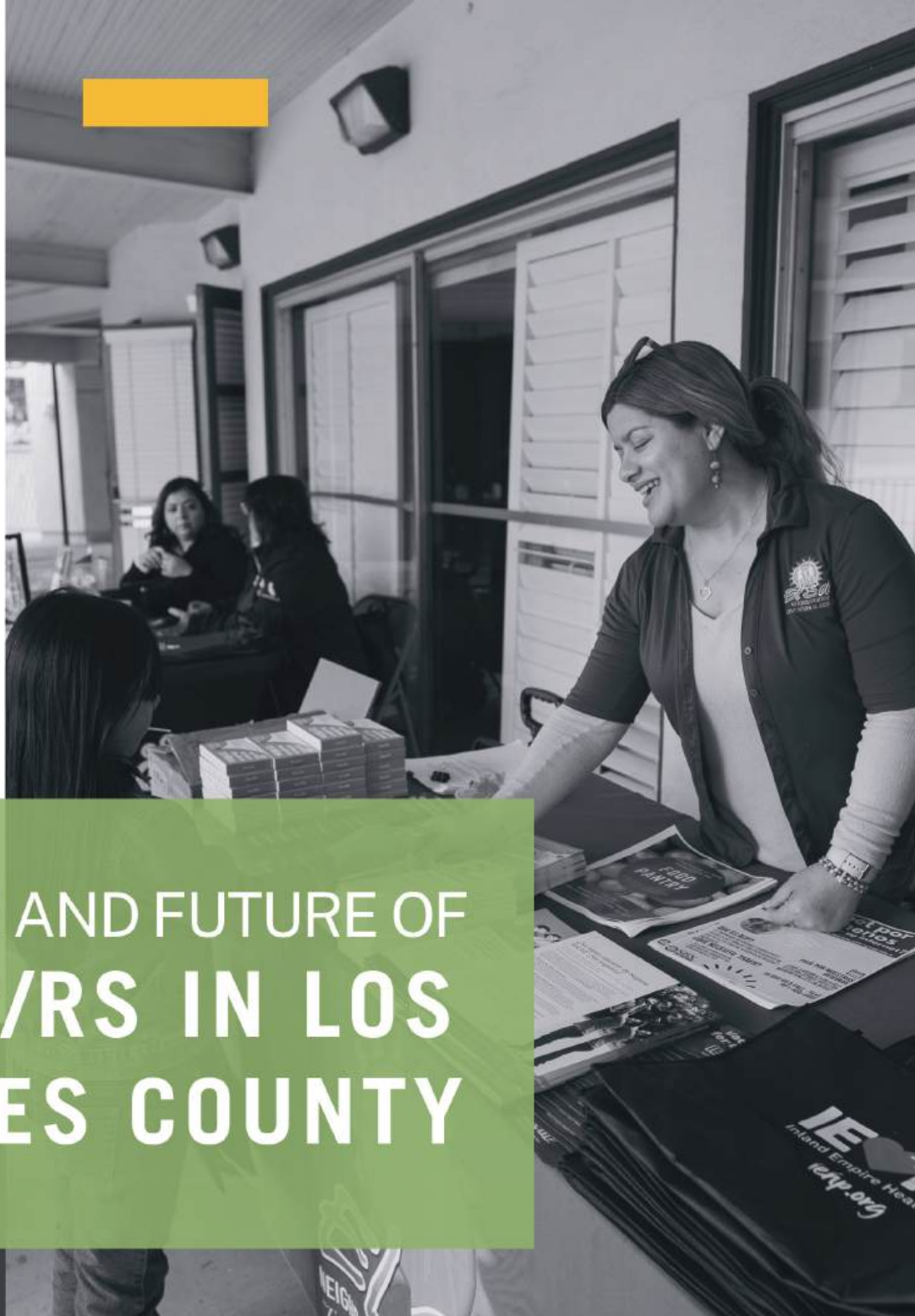


THE ROLE AND FUTURE OF CHW/P/RS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY



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**Center for
Strategic
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Health Workers/ Promotores/ Representatives (CHW/P/Rs) play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between healthcare systems and underserved communities across Los Angeles County. As trusted members of their communities, CHW/Ps bring a deep understanding of cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic factors, enabling them to effectively address health disparities and promote health equity.

This report synthesizes findings from multiple sources, including the 2024 CHW/P/R Policy Agenda, the CHW/P/R Info Hearing, the VyC LA County CHW/P/R Assessment, the LAC Health Departments' CHW/P/R Workforce One-Year Action Plan, and the scholarly work "The Community as a Full Partner" by Chen et al. Together, these documents provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of CHW/P/Rs in Los Angeles County, the challenges they face, and strategic recommendations for the future.




Introduction

CHW/P/Rs are frontline public health workers with a unique understanding of the communities they serve. This understanding allows them to effectively bridge gaps between healthcare systems and communities, particularly in underserved areas. Their role is multifaceted, encompassing health education, advocacy, service coordination, and social support. CHW/P/Rs are increasingly recognized as crucial players in achieving health equity and improving public health outcomes across Los Angeles County.



Who are CHW/P/Rs?

CHW/P/Rs are trusted members of the communities they serve. They often share the same cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds as the people they support, making them uniquely positioned to build trust and provide culturally competent care. Their roles are diverse and can include titles such as *promotoras*, peer specialists, and community outreach workers. CHW/P/Rs are not just healthcare providers but also advocates, educators, and liaisons who empower communities to take charge of their health.



WHAT DO CHW/P/RS DO?

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CHW/P/Rs perform a variety of essential tasks for community health, including:



Health Education and Outreach

Educating community members about health issues, preventive care, and available services.



Navigation and Advocacy

Helping individuals navigate the healthcare system, understand their health conditions, and access necessary services.



Support and Counseling

Providing emotional support and informal counseling to individuals dealing with health issues.



Linkage to Resources

Connecting individuals with community resources such as food assistance, housing support, and healthcare services.





CHW/P/Rs in California

In California, CHW/P/Rs have become integral to the state's public health strategy, particularly as the state faces growing health disparities. The CHW/P/R workforce in California is diverse, working in various settings, including clinics, community-based organizations, and public health agencies. The state has recognized the importance of CHW/P/Rs through efforts to standardize their roles, provide training structure, and secure sustainable funding.

State Effort and Strategic Planning

California has made significant strides in integrating CHW/P/Rs into its healthcare system through:

- **Policy Development:** Establishing frameworks for training certificates and standardization of CHW/P/R roles.
- **Funding Initiatives:** Securing funding streams for CHW/P/R programs, particularly through Medi-Cal and the Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) office.
- **Training and Certificates:** Developing training programs that equip CHW/P/Rs with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively serve their communities.

Los Angeles County CHW/P/Rs

In Los Angeles County, CHW/P/Rs are recognized as vital to improving health outcomes, particularly in underserved communities. The VyC LA County CHW Assessment and the LAC Health Departments' CHW Workforce One-Year Action Plan highlight several key insights:

- **Strengthening the Workforce:** LA County has focused on enhancing the capacity of CHW/P/Rs through training, support, and strategic partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs).
- **Challenges:** CHW/P/Rs face challenges such as inconsistent funding, lack of professional recognition, and barriers in the application and onboarding process.
- **Recommendations:** The reports recommend improving recruitment processes, offering ongoing professional development, and ensuring sustainable funding for CHW/P/R programs.



CBOs' Challenges and Recommendations

CBOs that employ CHW/P/Rs face several challenges:

- **Funding Inconsistencies:** CBOs often rely on short-term grants, which makes it difficult to sustain CHW programs. Multi-year funding and consistent contracts are recommended to provide stability.
- **Capacity Building:** Smaller CBOs may lack the infrastructure to support CHW/P/Rs adequately. Recommendations include offering capacity-building training and technical assistance to help these organizations manage CHW/P/R programs effectively.
- **Contracting Barriers:** The contracting process with LA County can be complex and time-consuming, particularly for smaller organizations. Simplifying this process and offering support for CBOs could improve partnerships and outcomes.

CHW/P/Rs' Challenges and Recommendations

CHW/P/Rs themselves face several key challenges:

- **Professional Recognition:** CHW/P/Rs often lack formal recognition, limiting their career advancement opportunities. Establishing a structured training certificate process and integrating CHW/P/Rs into formal healthcare teams are recommended solutions.
- **Training Needs:** CHW/P/Rs require ongoing training to stay effective in their roles. This includes both initial training when they are first employed and continuous professional development opportunities.
- **Work Environment:** Many CHW/P/Rs work in challenging environments, including dealing with clients in crisis. Providing trauma-informed care training and supportive supervision can help address these challenges.



Key Findings

The Essential Role of CHW/P/Rs in LA County

CHW/P/Rs in Los Angeles County are instrumental in advancing public health goals by providing health education, system navigation, advocacy, and support directly within their communities.


Challenges in LA County

Despite their crucial role, CHW/P/Rs in Los Angeles County face significant challenges, including inconsistent and short-term funding, lack of standardized training and certification, limited professional recognition, and barriers in the application and onboarding process.

LA County's Strategic Efforts

Los Angeles County has made commendable efforts to support and integrate CHW/P/Rs into its healthcare system. The county's initiatives focus on enhancing recruitment, providing comprehensive training, fostering supportive work environments, and building stronger partnerships with CBOs.

In 2024, Los Angeles County, in collaboration with the Center for Strategic Partnerships, contracted El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center to serve as the backbone support for the Los Angeles County CHW/p Consortium. This consortium is a key organizational structure created to drive the development and implementation of strategic actions and recommendations that strengthen L.A. County's initiatives, particularly in the area of CHW/P/Rs.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

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Strengthen Professional Recognition and Career Pathways

Establish a structured certificate process and clear career pathways for CHW/P/Rs in Los Angeles County to ensure they are recognized as essential healthcare professionals.



Enhance Training and Support

Develop robust training programs that equip CHW/P/Rs in Los Angeles County with the necessary skills to address complex community health needs.



Ensure Sustainable Funding

Advocate for multi-year funding commitments and consistent contracts to provide stability for CHW/P/R programs and the CBOs that employ them.



Develop Data and Technology Infrastructure

Invest in modernizing the data and technology infrastructure that supports CHW/P/R and CBO work.



Capacity Building for CBOs

Enhance the capacity of CBOs that employ CHW/P/Rs by providing technical assistance, training, and resources to build organizational infrastructure.



Foster Collaborative Partnerships:

Strengthen partnerships between CBOs and the county health departments to ensure that CHW/P/Rs are effectively supported and integrated into public health initiatives.



Policy Advocacy for Systemic Change

Engage in policy advocacy at the county and state levels to secure long-term support for CHW/P/Rs.

The Role of El Sol as the Backbone Entity

As the backbone entity for the consortium of CBOs that embrace CHW/P/Rs into their practice in Los Angeles, El Sol, in collaboration with partners, will play a critical role in addressing the key findings and implementing the strategic recommendations outlined in this report. El Sol's responsibilities will include:

Coordination and Leadership

- **Strategic Alignment:** El Sol will ensure that all efforts across the consortium are aligned with the overarching goals of improving health equity and enhancing the effectiveness of CHW/P/Rs.
- **Facilitating Collaboration:** El Sol will act as a central hub for communication and collaboration among CBOs, county health departments, and other stakeholders.

Capacity Building

- **Support for CBOs:** El Sol and strategic partners will provide technical assistance, training, and resources to CBOs to build their capacity to effectively employ and support CHW/P/Rs.
- **Professional Development:** El Sol and collaborative partners will oversee the development and implementation of standardized training programs for CHW/P/Rs and Supervisors.

Data and Technology Integration

- **Data Management:** El Sol will lead the development of a robust data and technology infrastructure to support the work of CHW/P/Rs and CBOs.

- **Technology Access and Training:** El Sol will ensure that CHW/P/Rs and CBOs have access to the latest technology and are trained in its use.

Advocacy and Policy Influence

- **Unified Voice for CHW/P/Rs:** El Sol and strategic partners will represent the collective interests of the consortium in advocating for policy changes at the local, state, and federal levels.
- **Policy Development and Implementation:** El Sol and strategic partners will work closely with policymakers to develop and implement policies that support the integration and professionalization of CHW/P/Rs.

Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

- **Resource Mobilization:** El Sol and collaborative partners will lead efforts to secure long-term funding and resources for CHW programs, ensuring their sustainability and growth.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** El Sol will oversee the monitoring and evaluation of the consortium's efforts, using data and feedback to continuously improve programs and strategies.



CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

Community Health Workers/Promotores/Representatives are indispensable in addressing the health needs of Los Angeles County's most vulnerable populations. This report calls for decisive action from county officials, healthcare providers, and community leaders to support CHW/P/Rs by implementing the strategic recommendations outlined. By doing so, Los Angeles County can strengthen its CHW workforce, promote health equity, and achieve better health outcomes across all communities.

As the backbone entity, El Sol will strategically lead and coordinate these efforts, ensuring that CHW/P/Rs are fully supported, empowered, and integrated into Los Angeles County's healthcare and human health system to drive lasting health equity. The time to act is now. Investing in CHW/P/Rs is not just a strategic imperative for Los Angeles County but a moral one— ensuring that all residents, regardless of their background or circumstances, have access to the care and support they need to lead healthy, fulfilling lives.



The Los Angeles County CBO CHW/P/R Consortium is a project that aims to unite CHW/P/R-focused CBOs across LA County for capacity building, infrastructure development, networking, and collaboration.



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