

Julie Ann St. John
Susan L. Mayfield-Johnson
Wandy D. Hernández-Gordon *Editors*

Promoting the Health of the Community

Community Health Workers Describing
Their Roles, Competencies, and Practice

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Foreword

Greetings from the Community Health Worker (CHW) team of Lisa Renee Holderby-Fox and Durrell Fox. We are pleased to welcome you to *Promoting the Health of the Community—CHWs: Describing Their Roles, Competencies and Practice!* Together we have approximately 58 years of experience as CHWs—28 and 30 years, respectively. Since the early 1990s, we have served our communities both in paid and volunteer CHW roles in community and clinical settings to promote health. In addition, we have served as CHWs for the CHW workforce—promoting a healthy workforce locally and nationally. We met two decades ago while organizing CHWs in Massachusetts to develop a statewide CHW network, which later became an association. This led us on the path to promote policy change to sustain and support the workforce, including successfully drafting legislation.

We are honored to serve as founding leadership of local, regional, and national CHW associations, coalitions, and networks. We have provided guidance to several national CHW projects and initiatives—often as a team. These initiatives have informed and progressed the local and national CHW movements. Our resumes include: providing leadership to the Center For Sustainable Health Outreach (CSHO) and the Unity Conference; the Community Health Worker National Educational Collaborative (CHW-NEC); the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) 2007 Community Health Worker National Workforce Study; the Community Health Worker Core Consensus (C3) Project; the American Public Health Association (APHA) CHW Section; and the short-lived American Association of CHWs (AACHW). Most recently, we are founding board members of the National Association of CHWs (NACHW). Additionally, Lisa Renee served two terms as an appointed member to the National Healthcare Workforce Commission created by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Over the years, we have proudly served our communities and contributed to achieving a vision where individuals, families, communities, and the CHW workforce are supported to thrive and to attain their optimal health and growth potential. We acknowledge that inequities and disparities continue to exist and have a profound impact on our communities and the CHW workforce. Hence, the struggle continues, and we shall overcome. We celebrate our advances and our continued

work to address these inequities through utilizing currently available tools and by embracing the development of new resources, including the development of this book as a useful tool to apply in education and in practice. We believe the continued struggles for health equity have led to valuable lessons learned from each other, our family, communities, peers, and colleagues. We celebrate the dedication, role, and stories of CHWs. However, others have been telling the CHW story for too long. Over the past two decades, we have been encouraging our CHW peers to own and tell their stories and truths. Perhaps that is why the editors of this book, which tells the stories of CHW teams across the country, have asked us to contribute by writing this foreword.

We have known and worked with the editors of this book for many years. Although the number of years and projects we have worked together on varies, our relationships with the editors are all based on our shared desire to promote, sustain, and elevate the CHW workforce and profession. We have worked closely with our CHW peer and editor, Wandy D. Hernandez-Gordon, on numerous national CHW projects, policy efforts, and initiatives, including most recently serving as founding board members for NACHW. We have all served as past chairs of the APHA CHW Section. During our terms as chairs of the APHA CHW section, we assisted to lead efforts to develop a national CHW standard occupational code and APHA policies that support CHW self-determination and majority involvement on CHW workforce development task force and initiative teams. Susan Mayfield Johnson is a public health practitioner, researcher, and long-time CHW ally whom we have worked with and collaborated on many CHW professional and leadership development opportunities for two decades, including CSHO, the Unity Conference, APHA CHW section and other CHW meetings, conferences, and additional training opportunities. We have had the pleasure of working with Julie St. John and the many others as members of the National Community Health Worker Core Consensus (C3) Project team and the APHA CHW Section the past several years. Durrell has also worked with Julie on a statewide project in Massachusetts that utilized a curriculum that Julie developed to train CHWs in the areas of senior home visits to assess safety and prevent senior falls. In addition to calling these amazing women colleagues, they are also friends. We have met members of their families and have welcomed new members to all their families over the years. We consider them part of our family and valued members of our growing CHW family.

A rallying cry for CHW self-determination “Nothing about us, without us!” has increasingly been embraced by CHWs and allies nationally over the past few years. This book is an excellent example of an equitable partnership supporting CHW authors as members of 36 chapter teams made up of approximately 100 authors from across the country, providing a platform for CHWs to articulate and illustrate some of the day-to-day actions and activities that are essential to fulfilling CHW core roles. Teams of CHWs and allies across the country, consisting of voices from Alaska, Hawaii, east and west coasts, northern and southern states, and the middle of our country, have contributed their experience and wisdom to bring this book to life. Although CHWs are a diverse workforce who works in diverse communities, CHW core roles are foundational and common across the country.

Chapter 2 weaves the story of the C3 Project—a national project focused on engaging CHWs and stakeholders throughout the research process to build consensus around CHW scope of practice (roles) and CHW competencies, which include CHW core skills and qualities. The C3 story shares information about the project's methods and findings and also illuminates valuable information about how the journey of the project findings and recommendations were guided and navigated by CHW leadership on the project team and, even more powerful, were shaped by hundreds of CHWs through a rigorous CHW network/association review process.

This book includes several more illustrations of the critical importance of CHWs' role in the journey to advance the workforce. This journey truly models equity and CHW self-determination and leads to a destination that can have a positive impact on our communities, workforce, clinical and nonclinical providers, human services, and health and public health professionals. Part II of the book animates the C3 national list of CHW core roles by providing examples from the field representing the practical application of all ten national CHW core roles in action. To illustrate the core role of providing coaching and social support, there is a great story about "CHWs Extending Solutions to Violence." Overall, there are CHW models illustrating core roles from approximately 19 states and Tribal nations—which describe the national CHW scope of practice. There is some useful and practical information for readers interested in CHWs role in behavioral health, trauma informed care, oral health, cultural mediation, and systems navigation.

This book provides evidence that our CHW workforce makes a difference in people's lives, communities, and health outcomes. CHWs have been documented doing this work in the U.S. for decades and much longer internationally. Unfortunately, among policy makers and healthcare providers, there is still uncertainty of who we are as a workforce and the value we bring. We can think of no better resource to share the complete picture of the roles CHWs play, our contributions, impact on the communities we serve, and provide concrete examples, than the voices of CHWs. This is where the importance of this book lies. More than 20 teams of CHWs tell their stories. There is beauty in CHWs telling their own stories to provide examples of our nationally agreed upon core roles. The three editors, one of whom is a CHW, have over 60 years combined experience working with the CHW profession, and all were actively engaged with the C3 project. They are the right team to lead this project.

Over the course of our long careers, we have seen our workforce grow both numerically and professionally. We have seen opportunities for training and education expand and interdisciplinary collaboration and policies developed to support and sustain the workforce. Even with all the advances within the CHW workforce, there are still basic questions we are often asked like, "What do CHWs do?" and "How do we do it?" Until now, there has not been a comprehensive work to answer that question. *Promoting the Health of the Community: Community Health Workers Describing Their Roles, Competencies, and Practice* provides some long awaited answers.

CHWs occupy a special place in community health and wellness as well as in the lives we touch. We have shared our stories with each other, and this book provides a space to share our story with others in a meaningful way. Using the C3 framework

of CHW core roles to share our stories is a unique method to give life to the roles of CHWs through practical, concrete examples. The editors understand the value of CHWs telling our stories and have honored, “Nothing about us without us.” You are holding the next chapter in the collective CHW story. A collection of CHW stories in our own words, supporting the roles and skills of CHWs, is long overdue.

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March 2020

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Preface

We are honored and elated to share this first edition of this Community Health Worker (CHW) book. CHWs are increasingly important members of the healthcare and public health professions. Yet, in spite of the exponential growth of CHWs interventions, CHW training programs, and CHW certification and credentialing by state agencies, a gap persists in the literature regarding current CHW roles and skills, scope of practice, CHW job settings, and national standards. Hence, the purpose of the book is to provide information about CHWs, the roles CHWs play as change agents in their communities, describe the integration of CHWs into healthcare teams, and support and recognize the CHW workforce. Specifically, the book highlights core roles and skills of CHWs that came from The Community Health Worker (CHW) Core Consensus (C3) Project. CHW teams across the United States share their stories about core roles they do in their respective communities, with an introduction to various roles and two examples from CHW teams who explain how they carry out the respective role, challenges, successes, and lessons learned.

The intended audience includes those interested in CHW scope of practice and/or certification/credentialing, CHWs, anyone interested in becoming a CHW, policy makers, CHW payer systems, CHW supervisors, CHW employers, CHW instructors/trainers, CHW advocates/supporters, and communities served by CHWs. The primary audience will find this book useful for numerous reasons. First, the book highlights nationally recognized standards for CHW roles, skills, and qualities, which were updated in 2016 from the National Community Health Advisor Study in 1998; the audience will receive information about these updated standards. This book also tells the story of how CHW teams are practically implementing these roles within a variety of settings and serving as change agents in their respective communities. Second, this book is written by CHW teams doing the work; each chapter includes a CHW author. Third, entities considering the CHW model and

guidance on CHW scope of practice can utilize this book as a guideline developed by other successful CHW programs as defined by the chapter authors.

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Acknowledgments

We could not have completed this book without the thousands of Community Health Workers, Community Health Representatives, Promotores, and others in this field who tirelessly serve our communities every single day to make a difference in the lives of its representatives, around our nation and globally. You provided the stories and the inspiration for this book. Thank you for sharing your thoughts, ideas, challenges, and success stories with us.

You contribute to making our community's health more equitable. You make a difference in the communities you serve; you have made a difference in our lives.

We also want to thank Springer staff for their guidance and support in the development of this book, especially Janet Kim. We also want to acknowledge and thank Miranda Rice and Brady St. John for their administrative support in compiling this book.

Lastly, we thank our family, friends, and colleagues who encouraged and supported us throughout this project.

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