

ECHO IDAHO

Diabetes and Metabolic Conditions

The Community Health Worker Role in Rural Idaho Communities



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UHC Community Plan of Idaho

Key Learning Objectives

- What is the role of a Community Health Worker
- Core Responsibilities of a CHW
- Unique Aspects in Rural Idaho
- The “Why” Behind the Work
- Specific Client Case- the impact my role played in their health journey
- ICHWA- What is it and why it’s so important to Idaho
- Questions



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What Is The Role Of A Community Health Worker

- **Role of a Community Health Worker (CHW) in Rural Idaho**

A Community Health Worker in rural Idaho serves as a **trusted bridge between individuals, communities, and the healthcare system**. Their role is both practical and relational, focused on improving access to care and supporting overall well-being in areas where services can be limited.



Core Responsibilities Of A CHW

- **Care Coordination:** Help individuals navigate healthcare systems, schedule appointments, and connect to medical, behavioral health, and social services.
- **Resource Connection:** Link community members to essential resources such as transportation, food assistance, housing support, and financial aid programs.
- **Health Education:** Provide culturally relevant education on chronic conditions, preventive care, and healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Advocacy:** Advocate for individuals and families to ensure their needs are understood and addressed within healthcare and community systems.
- **Outreach & Engagement:** Build relationships with rural, tribal, and underserved populations, often meeting people where they are—literally and emotionally.
- **Barrier Reduction:** Identify and help remove obstacles such as transportation challenges, technology gaps, stigma, and lack of trust in healthcare systems.



Unique Aspects In Rural Idaho



- Serving **geographically isolated communities** where access to care is limited
- Supporting **tribal communities** with respect for cultural values and historical context
- Addressing **provider shortages** and long travel distances for care
- Building **long-term trust** in communities where relationships matter deeply

The “Why” Behind The Work



- At its core, the “**why**” of a Community Health Worker is deeply rooted in ***compassion, equity, and connection.***
- **To bridge gaps:** Ensure no one falls through the cracks due to systemic barriers or lack of resources.
- **To empower individuals:** Help people take control of their health and navigate complex systems with confidence.
- **To build trust:** Create meaningful, lasting relationships—especially in communities where trust must be earned over time.
- **To advocate for equity:** Support underserved populations in receiving the care and respect they deserve.
- **To improve outcomes:** When barriers are removed and support is present, individuals and families can achieve healthier, more stable lives.

A Meaningful Time I Made A Difference

One of the most meaningful experiences in my role was supporting a Tribal member over the course of more than three and a half years. During that time, I was able to walk alongside him through both his mental and physical health journey, building trust and consistency in our relationship.

I provided ongoing support through weekly visits, coordinated care services (CSCC), monitored his vitals and stats, and assisted with medication management. I also attended medical and behavioral health appointments with him to ensure he felt supported, understood his care plan, and had an advocate present when navigating complex systems.

Recognizing the importance of community and family, I worked to involve his loved ones in his care, strengthening his support system and helping bridge communication between providers and family members. Advocacy played a key role throughout—ensuring his voice was heard, his needs were met, and barriers to care were addressed.

This journey was not just about services, but about relationship-building, trust, and honoring his path toward wellness. His passing on February 20, 2026, was a profound loss. However, I am deeply grateful to have been part of his story and to have supported him with dignity, respect, and compassion.

Rest in Peace – 2/20/2026



Why ICHWA Is Important In Idaho



*The **Idaho Community Health Workers Association (ICHWA)** plays a vital role in strengthening Idaho's healthcare system by supporting and elevating Community Health Workers (CHWs). CHWs serve as trusted bridges between healthcare providers and the communities they serve—especially in rural, tribal, and underserved populations.*

ICHWA is important because.....

- **Advocates for CHWs** by promoting recognition of their role as essential members of the healthcare workforce
- **Provides training and professional development** to ensure CHWs have the skills and tools to effectively support members
- **Promotes health equity** by helping reduce barriers to care, including cultural, geographic, and social challenges
- **Supports workforce development** by creating standards, resources, and opportunities for CHWs across Idaho
- **Strengthens community connections** by empowering CHWs to build trust and improve outcomes through culturally responsive care

*Overall, ICHWA helps ensure that individuals—especially those in underserved and tribal communities—receive compassionate, coordinated, and accessible care. **To learn more, visit <https://www.ichwa.org>***

Key Points And Takeaways

- **CHWs are essential in improving access, trust, and health outcomes—especially in underserved communities.**
- The CHW role is hands-on, relationship-driven, and centered on reducing barriers to care.
- **CHWs in rural Idaho must be adaptable and deeply community-focused to effectively meet members where they are.**
- The work is purpose-driven—rooted in compassion, advocacy, and making a lasting impact.
- **Long-term relationship-building and advocacy can significantly impact a member’s health journey and quality of life.**
- ICHWA strengthens the CHW workforce and ensures communities receive culturally responsive, accessible care.

A Community Health Worker in rural Idaho is a relationship-driven advocate who connects people to care, removes barriers, and ensures communities are supported, heard, and empowered to achieve better health outcomes.



Questions?



References And Acknowledgements For My Presentation

- **ICHWA- Idaho Community Health Workers Association** [Home | IDAHO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS ASSOCIATION](#) (slide 8 image)
- www.Shutterstock.com 2149713853 (slide 2 image)
- <https://www.aha.org/news/headline/2018-10-18-aha-nul-release-resources-building-community-health-worker-programs> (slide 9 image)
- https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=caring+hands+heart&asset_id=541202397 (slide 6 image)
- <https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/communication-gm1220259331-357234886> (slide 3 image)
- <https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/beautiful-flower-growing-out-of-crack-in-asphalt-space-for-text-hope-concept-gm1488043800-513333157> (slide 1 image)
- Shalana Bonar- personal photos (slides 5, 7 & 10)
- Shutterstock.com 2605478789 (slide 4 image)

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