



Core Competencies, Chapter 7

Using Peer Supports, Community Health Workers, and Promotores

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Definition and Why Using Peer Supports, Community Health Workers, and Promotores is Important to Integrated Complex Care

The health and social needs of complex patients are typically too extensive to successfully manage by a clinical team alone. Emerging approaches to patient-centered comprehensive care extend the care team to include peer supports, community health workers and promotores. The American Public Health Association defines a community health worker as a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. In clinical settings, they coordinate their efforts closely with the care manager to help patients with health care needs ranging from appointments and transportation, to medication management and health education. They can serve as key advocates and connections to resources for patients and their families.

Example

(From Lebron et al., 2015). RG was a single parent of an adolescent with hearing loss, who faced challenges of financial barriers, unemployment, immigration status, lack of health insurance and limited funds for food and medicine for his daughter and himself. He was diagnosed with diabetes, hypertension, colorectal polyps, anxiety and depression. RG was assigned to a community health worker who went to work establishing a relationship of trust and empathy, and began a thorough assessment of health, social and resource needs. The community health worker obtained free medical supplies from a pharmaceutical company, located a local food bank, and acquired temporary financial assistance for his daughter. Clearly, assisting the patient with a stabilization of social and financial circumstances, he was better able to focus on improving his health and that of his daughter.

Narrative Description

Community health workers are trained in relationship-based approaches and culturally responsive care. They create and cultivate egalitarian relationships based on mutual trust, understanding and respect. They serve as a link between patients, communities and health and human service agencies. They provide informal counseling and support, health education, advocacy, and capacity building on individual and community levels. In some cases, they can provide first aid and emergency assistance with both medical and socio-economic problems. Their work is built on a foundational skill set including effective communication and strong interpersonal skills, teaching and service coordination skills, advocacy, flexibility and a creative and energetic approach to collaborative problems solving with patients and their families.

As such, Community Health Workers assist in improving access to services, helping patients understand the health and social service system, enhance provider-patient communication, increase appropriate rates of service utilization and taking advantage of all relevant and available resources, decreasing costs for comprehensive health care delivery, improving adherence to health recommendations, and reducing the need for emergency and specialty services.

Available Resources

1. Community Health Workers Guide
http://sylvester.org/documents/ReducedCarino_CHW_Guide.pdf
2. RHI Hub – Community Health Workers
<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/community-health/community-health-workers/2/resources>
3. Kaiser Health News - In L.A., Community Health Workers Are Part Of The Medical Team
<http://khn.org/news/in-l-a-community-health-workers-are-part-of-the-medical-team/>
4. SAMHSA – Wellness Coaching: A New Role for Peers, created by Dr. Peggy Swarbrick.
http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/workforce/Swarbrick_research.pdf

BHICCI Plan for Learning / Teaching / Coaching

- Clinic team and primary care providers READ the materials presented in Core Competency 7 - Using Peer Supports, Community health workers and promotores (Using Peer Supports) core competency, and discuss with the practice coach.
- PARTICIPATE OR ATTEND Web-training or In-Person Presentation: Training on Using Peer Supports.

Skills Needed for Competency; How will Competence in this area be Measured?

Following completion/verification of the above learning/teaching/coaching plan, each primary care professional/complex care manager will have the opportunity to practice his/her new skills under supervision. Following this, the supervisor will rate the clinician’s competency in each of the following by:

1. Case discussion of 3 or more complex care patients/clients, or
2. Chart review of 5 or more patients/clients, or
3. Supervisor direct observation of peer, community health workers or promotores interaction with 3-5 patients/clients.

COMPETENCY AREA	EVIDENCED BY:	SUPERVISOR’S RATING*
Use of peers, health workers, and promotores in care team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinician demonstrated understanding of appropriate role of health workers and peers on care team. • When appropriate, clinician coordinates care with health worker and peer which may include sharing of care plan and clinical duties. 	1 2 3 4 5

*1= Excellent results with no need for prompting or support.
 3 = good results and/or required some prompting or support.
 5 = required much support and/or was unable to complete necessary skills.