

Meeting Minutes: Community Health Worker Learning Collaborative (CHWLC) Workgroup Meeting

Date: Thursday, June 18, 2026

Time: 10:00-11:30 am

Location: Howard County Health Department, Heroes A Conference Room, 8930 Stanford Blvd, Columbia, MD 21045

Co-Chairs Present: Amanda Toohey and María José Candanoza

LHIC Staff Present: Miriam Anderson, Stephanie Foster, Maribet Rivera-Brute, Christine Ballou

1. Attendees

Members Present: Linda Ashburn; Carla Gates; Dr. Devlon Jackson; Kaitlyn Miranda Carrar; Karen Sider; David Wu; Shannon Blount; Stephanie Reid; Jennifer Lee; Nicki Sanders; Veronica Haile; Katherine Rookwood; and Ovan Shortt.

2. Agenda Items

2.1 Welcome and Introductions

Participants introduced themselves, shared their organizations and roles. Attendees represented a broad range of public health, healthcare, academic, and community organizations working to improve health outcomes throughout Howard County and Maryland.

2.2 Announcements

Several community announcements and upcoming events were shared:

- Howard County Community Baby Shower scheduled for July 11, 2026, 10 am – 12 pm for Howard County residents.
- Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services announced its Mom and Baby Mobile Health Unit, operating twice monthly.
- National Community Health Worker Awareness Week (August 24–28, 2026) planning efforts were introduced.
- Participants were encouraged to share success stories and outreach opportunities to highlight the impact of Community Health Workers.

2.3 Cancer Health Ambassador Program

Dr. Devlon Jackson from the University of Maryland School of Public Health and Greenbaum Comprehensive Cancer Center presented the Cancer Health Ambassador Program.

Program Overview

- Six-hour educational training focused on cancer prevention, screening, early detection, and clinical trials.
- Training includes information on breast, prostate, lung, and colorectal cancers.
- Participants must achieve an 80% or higher score on the post-test to become certified Cancer Health Ambassadors.
- Nearly 600 individuals have been trained across the program's ten-county service area.
- The program is funded through the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

Discussion Highlights

- The program met its annual training goal of approximately 100 participants and plans to expand beginning July 1.
- Training is open to community members, healthcare workers, nursing students, and recent graduates.
- No minimum enrollment requirement exists.
- Certification is voluntary and generally does not require activity reporting.



- Ambassadors participating in specific grant-funded projects may be required to report activities.
- Participants requested future inclusion of oral and/or oropharyngeal cancer information, including HPV-related content.
- Questions were raised regarding youth participation; currently, participants must be at least 18 years old.
- Discussion included the possibility of future education regarding GLP-1 medications and cancer prevention.

Partnership Opportunities

- Johns Hopkins Howard County General Hospital and other partners expressed interest in hosting training and promoting participation.
- The program will continue outreach efforts with local colleges, nursing programs, and community organizations.
- Future job opportunities related to lung cancer screening initiatives will be shared when available.

2.4 National Community Health Worker Awareness Week Planning

Participants discussed strategies for National CHW Awareness Week.

Key goals included:

- Increasing awareness of the Community Health Worker profession.
- Educating healthcare providers, schools, and community members about CHW services.
- Expanding partnerships and outreach opportunities.
- Highlighting CHW success stories.

Suggested activities included:

- Back-to-school outreach events.
- School professional development fairs.
- Distribution of brochures, flyers, and QR-code resources.
- English and Spanish educational materials.
- Social media and newsletter campaigns.

A list of volunteers for a planning committee was created to assist with coordination and event development. An HCLHIC staff will reach out to coordinate dates and times.



2.5 Vaccine Education and Community Health Worker Role and Professional Opportunities

Key Discussion Points

- CHWs are trusted messengers who can help community members navigate vaccine concerns
- Maryland vaccination rates remain above national averages but have declined since the COVID-19 pandemic
- Barriers to vaccination include:
 - Transportation challenges
 - Insurance confusion
 - Language barriers
 - Misinformation
 - Access to healthcare services

Vaccine Programs Reviewed

- Maryland Vaccine Program for uninsured and underinsured adults
- Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program serving eligible children through age 18

Best Practices for CHWs

Participants emphasized:

- Listening first
- Validating concerns
- Using plain language
- Sharing trusted resources
- Avoiding medical advice
- Connecting individuals with healthcare providers and services

School-Based Access

Discussion highlighted:

- School-based wellness centers
- Back-to-school vaccination clinics
- Opportunities to improve vaccine access for families

Training Needs

Participants expressed interest in:

- Motivational interviewing training
- Public Health Communications Collaborative resources



- Vaccine communication strategies that address misinformation while maintaining trust

Immunization Registry Discussion

Participants discussed access challenges with Maryland's immunization registry. It was reported that funding has been restored, and additional follow-up will occur to verify system access.

2.6 CHW Appreciation Day Recognition

The group recognized Community Health Worker Appreciation Day. Certificates of Appreciation were prepared for Community Health Workers in recognition of their dedication and service to the community. Participants were encouraged to submit additional nominations for recognition.

3. Next Steps and Action Items

Action Items/Resource Shared:

- HCLHIC Staff will contact those who would like to be part of the planning committee for the National CHW Awareness Week
- The Howard County Health Department, Vaccine Program, will share information about motivational interviewing
- The next CHWLC workgroup meeting will be on September 17, 2026, at 10:00 am. An invite will be sent closer to the meeting date.
- The next full LHIC will be held on July 16, 2026, at 9:00 am. To register, please click [here](#).
- Additional resources and opportunities were shared:
 - **Professional Development:** Carla announced a July 23 training on Implicit Bias and Structural Racism. The training meets state licensing requirements. The cost is \$50. Provides 3.5 hours of instruction. CEU approval is being pursued. To learn more, click [here](#).
 - **Youth Mentorship Program:** A Black Girls Mentorship Program will be launched in September. The program will support youth at risk of suspension or expulsion and provide mentorship and guidance. Click [here](#) to learn more.
 - **The Maryland Department of Health, Prevention and Health Promotion Administration, Office of Oral Health:** Shared the following resources: Low-cost dental provider directories; Rural health resources; and Spanish-language HIV and global health educational materials. Interested in learning



more and receive more educational materials, please reach out to Veronica Haile, DHSC RDH, HIV Program Manager at Veronica.Haile@maryland.gov.

- **Photovoice Event on June 29:** HCLHIC will be hosting the next photovoice event on June 29, 2026, 6-7:30 pm at the East Columbia 50+ Center. (NOTE: This event is now postponed. New date and time forthcoming.)
- **Resources about Vaccine Education:**
 - Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine Education Center: <https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-education-center/about-vec>
 - Voices for Vaccines: <https://www.voicesforvaccines.org/>
 - Vaccinate Your Family: <https://vaccinateyourfamily.org/>