

Certification for Community Health Workers

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SANTA FE—Department Begins Grandfathering Process for Experienced Community Health Workers

The New Mexico Department of Health will begin to certify the first community health workers (CHW) in the state. The Department is focusing certification efforts on experienced CHWs and will be utilizing the grandfathering process. It is estimated that there are between 800 and 900 CHWs in New Mexico. As part of Governor Susana Martinez's Healthcare Workforce Initiative in 2014, legislation was passed and signed creating the Community Health Workers Act. It established a voluntary certification process for CHWs.

"For more than a year, the New Mexico Department of Health has been setting up the infrastructure to begin voluntary certification for community health workers. The department is pleased to announce the grandfathering process for experienced community health workers," said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary Retta Ward. "The purpose of grandfathering is to provide experienced community health workers the opportunity to earn certification through a combination of employment and or volunteer service."

A CHW is a front-line public health worker who is a trusted member of their community, and who has a very good understanding of the community served. CHWs help develop close relationships with patients, and play a critical role in reducing health disparities and managing chronic diseases. Community health workers are also known as promotoras and community health representatives.

Requirements for the grandfathering process:

- Verification by a current or former supervisor of proficiency in the core competencies.

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- Two letters of reference on agency/program letterhead.
- Applicants must provide formal, verifiable documentation to support each requirement.
- 2000 clock hours of formal CHW work and/or volunteer CHW experience within the scope of work and core competency field.
- Following the grandfathering application, mandatory background check.

Please take a look at the Office of Community Health Workers Certification FAQ for answers to many of the most common questions about certification.

The Department of Health's Office of Community Health Workers accepts only hard-copy applications for certification. All inquiries regarding certification may be directed to ***comm.healthworker@state.nm.us***

. You can also call the Santa Fe office at (505) 827-0015 or the Las Cruces office at (575) 528-5145.