

Alachua County Community Health Worker Program

Quarters 1 and 2 FY 23-24

July 1, - December 31, 2023

Background: The Alachua County Community Health Worker Program (CHW Program) was formed through a partnership between the UF Workforce and Professional Development, CareerSource of North Central Florida, Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, Pastor Gerard Duncan of Community Partners and Engagement Consultants, and the Florida Department of Health in Alachua County.

The goal of the CHW Program is to improve the health and well-being of Alachua County residents by training, employing, and connecting CHWs with community agencies. The intent is for these CHWs to then assist Alachua County residents with navigating the health care system and connect them with appropriate resources. Through the CHW Program, eligible candidates obtain professional training and certification while community agencies benefit from a pool of qualified candidates that can further their mission in the community.

Prior to the partnership with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, the CHW Program had begun the recruitment, training, and agency placement process with multiple candidates. However, the buy-in and readiness from agencies regarding placement did not progress as quickly as the interest of the CHW candidates. Consequently, several candidates were lost during the process as they pursued more timely sources of employment.

CHW Recruitment: Recruitment for the CHW Program is primarily conducted by Pastor Gerard Duncan of Community Partners and Engagement Consultants. Pastor Duncan introduces the CHW Program and engages with potential candidates at weekly orientation sessions held at CareerSource. Pastor Duncan also promotes the CHW program through networking with community advocates.

The eligibility screening of candidates is conducted by CareerSource. All candidates are screened to determine the appropriate funding mechanism. Candidates may be eligible for training and placement funding via the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or via the CHW Program allocated funds. Eligibility is determined based on:

- Family size
- Income
- Education level

Six candidates have been successfully enrolled into the CHW program, with seven additional candidates pending enrollment.

CHW Education & Training: Prior to the partnership with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, CHW education and training for WIOA eligible candidates was provided via an online training course by UF Office of Professional and Workforce Development. Non-WIOA eligible candidates were educated via the BESTYou 2.0 training facilitated by Dr. Laura K. Guyer. The training process has been updated to require that all CHWs complete both the online training course offered by UF Office of Professional and Workforce Development as well as the BESTYou 2.0 training. The BESTYou 2.0 training will now be facilitated by the CHW Program Administrator. All CHWs must now complete both trainings prior to their placement with an agency.

It is anticipated that all previously placed CHWs will complete the BESTYou 2.0 training by April 30, 2024. All CHWs will receive additional on the job/job-specific training after they have been placed at their respective agency.

Competencies covered by the CHW online training course include:

- Advocacy
- Community Education
- Informal Counseling
- Outreach
- Social Support

Topics covered by the BESTYou 2.0 training include:

- Alachua County Health data
- Social Determinants of Health in Alachua County
- Potential Role of CHWs in Alachua County
- Service Delivery as a CHW
- Documentation and Productivity

CHW Placement: CHWs are matched to community agencies that have partnered with the CHW Program. The matching process is based on agency-requested skills and CHW interest as well as interviews. Agencies with staff that function in the capacity of CHWs may also request that staff enroll in the CHW Program for formal training.

Six CHWs have been successfully placed at partner agencies in Alachua County from July-December 2023. These CHWs have been placed at four community agencies:

- 2 at UF Health Cancer Center
- 1 at DOH-Alachua
- 2 at the Food is Medicine Center
- 1 at Gainesville 4 ALL

The CHWs reside in various zip codes across Alachua County, including those zip codes that have a higher prevalence of health disparities (32601, 32609, 32641). All CHWs have been placed in agencies that provide services to their “home” zip codes. An

example of this is the Gainesville 4 All agency, whose CHW resides in and serves the agency's clients in 32609.

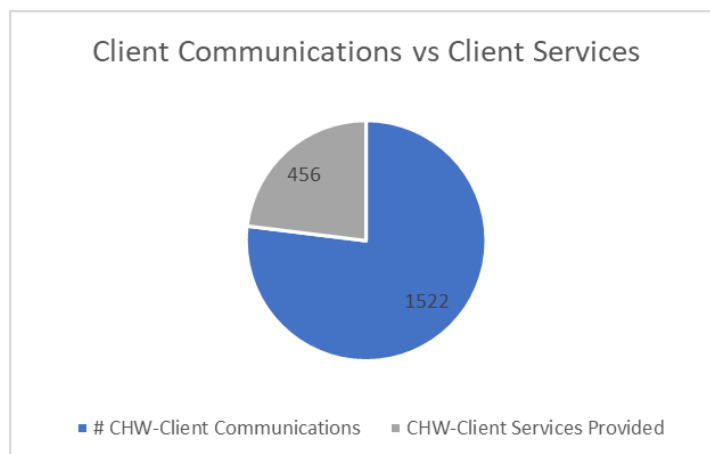
Agency Recruitment: Recruitment for agency partnership is primarily conducted by the Program Administrator. Approximately 16 agencies have been contacted in solicitation of partnership. These agencies were approached based on the diverse services provided to the residents of Alachua County including housing, health care, and education. Nine agencies responded expressing interest, and several meetings have been scheduled for preliminary discussions. Interested agencies are:

- GRACE Marketplace
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program
- Alachua County School Board-Migrant Education Program
- The Children's Trust of Alachua County
- Rural Women's Health Project
- Helping Hands Clinic
- Greater Duval Neighborhood Association
- UF Health Obstetrics/Gynecology Clinics
- Gainesville Community Counseling Center

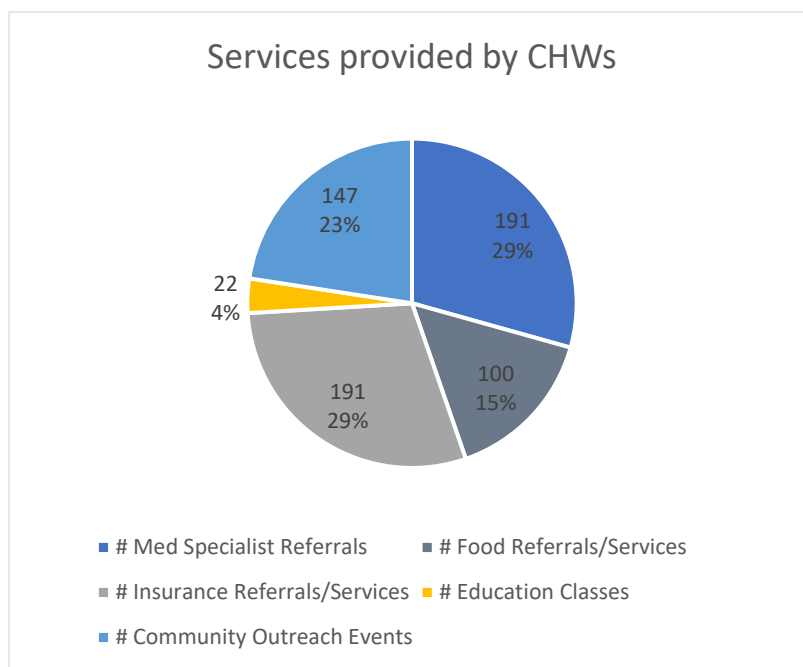
Issues Identified: An often-cited barrier to agency partnership is the wage subsidization structure. Although, to date, larger agencies have not requested wage subsidization, smaller agencies are dependent on it. The CHW program offers subsidization for CHW's wages. However, the early structure of this component was limited to 50% of wages for six months. This did not allow adequate time for agencies to incorporate the wage-related expenses into their budgets. Consequently, the subsidization structure was modified to allow for more flexibility in accommodating agency needs.

CHW Services & Data

In the first and second quarters, CHWs communicated with over 1500 unduplicated clients either in person or via phone. In addition, 456 clients received direct services from CHWs regarding insurance navigation, referrals to medical specialists and education classes, etc.



CHWs attended dozens of community events, led health education classes, provided basic health screenings, and assisted clients with one-on-one health care navigation. Most events and services were targeted toward zip codes 32601, 32609 and 32641. This information is summarized below:



Findhelp Data

In the first and second quarters, the CHW Program Administrator was able to verify that 104 agencies that serve Alachua County were enrolled in the Findhelp database. Zero agencies were removed (inactivity, program closure, inability to provide services etc.). Next steps for the CHW Program Administrator involve incorporating Findhelp utilization into the BESTYou 2.0 training and potential collaboration with UF Health to maximize agencies' knowledge and utilization of the resource.

Case Study: A CHW enables Elderly Client to receive surgical treatment

The challenge: Many adults are at risk of not accessing critically needed care due to lack of insurance and the inability to access and utilize resources. Barriers such as lack of transportation, lack of social support, and lack of financial resources can lead to poor health and poor quality of life. Poor vision can often lead to a poor quality of life with an increase in risk for falls, loneliness, social isolation, and anxiety and other associated mental health issues.¹ WeCare, a program that assists uninsured Alachua County residents with accessing specialty medical services, faced a unique situation. They had a client who needed optical surgery for whom they had made all the arrangements, including financial coverage and transportation. However, the client did not have the family or social support that was required by the surgeon and surgical center to be present before, during, and after surgery. If this issue could not be resolved, the client would not be able to have the surgery and would have to continue living with compromised vision.

The solution: For this client, WeCare requested the assistance of the CHW based at the Florida Department of Health in Alachua County. The CHW met the client at the surgical center and assisted them with the activities related to check in, received the explanation of the surgical procedure and anticipated timeline, and provided social and emotional support prior to the surgery. The CHW remained present at the surgical center during the procedure, as was required. When the client was out of recovery, the CHW ensured the client understood the recovery instructions and when to seek medical attention. The CHW stayed with the client as their medication wore off and assisted them with getting lunch. After lunch, the CHW ensured the client got to his Uber ride and the client went home.

The results: The client was able to receive the necessary surgery through the combined support of WeCare and the CHW and was able to regain his independence. WeCare spoke with the client in the following days and the client indicated they were extremely grateful for the CHW's assistance and that they enjoyed her company.

Reference

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, September 27). *Vision loss and Mental Health*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/resources/features/vision-loss-mental-health.html#:~:text=Vision%20loss%20can%20affect%20your%20physical%20health%20by,Depression%20is%20common%20in%20people%20with%20vision%20loss.>