

Alachua County Community Health Worker Program

Quarter 2 FY 2024

January 1 -March 31, 2024

Background: The Alachua County Community Health Worker Program (CHW Program) was formed through a partnership between the UF Office of Professional and Workforce 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.

CHW Recruitment: Recruitment for the CHW Program is primarily conducted by Pastor Gerard Duncan of Community Partners and Engagement Consultants. The eligibility screening of candidates is conducted by CareerSource. At the end of quarter 1, it was discussed and subsequently approved by the Healthcare Advisory Board that recruitment for the CHW Program be capped at 10 candidates. At that time, priority would pivot from candidate recruitment to candidate mentoring. From January 1st to March 31st, 2 candidates have been successfully enrolled into the CHW Program, with 4 candidates pending enrollment.

CHW Education & Training: All CHWs are required to complete the online training course offered by UF Office of Professional and Workforce Development as well as the BESTYou 2.0 training. For quarter 2 FY 23-24, 4 CHWs have completed the online training course. The next BESTYou 2.0 training is scheduled for June 25th and 26th.

CHW Mentorship: Mentorship is primarily conducted by Pastor Gerard Duncan. Pastor Duncan meets with each CHW at least once a month to check in, address CHW concerns, and provide guidance on topics outline in the CHW Program Mentorship Guidelines.

The goals of mentorship are:

- Provide CHWs with access to a professional network and support system, development opportunities and assistance in navigation of career path.
- Facilitate discussions with CHWs regarding career interests, assistance in translating education and training to career, provide guidance and resources.
- Provide exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences. Assistance in improving interpersonal skills and identifying areas for growth.

Topics covered during mentorship include:

- CHW-identified personal/professional goals within program and explore.
- professional development opportunities.
- Building interpersonal relationships/networking.
- Good communication skills with coworkers and clients.
- Importance of good personal health, attitudes, and self-esteem.
- Navigating conflict resolution.
- Best practices for community engagement.
- Best practices for community advocacy.
- Self-care for CHWs.
- Best practices for work-life balance.
- Best practices for time management and organization.
- Adapting to workplace culture and dynamics.
- Identifying and addressing gaps in knowledge/skills.
- Other topics as requested by CHW and/or CHW Program Administrator

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.

Agency Recruitment: Agencies are approached based on the diverse services provided to the residents of Alachua County including housing, health care, and education. For quarter 2 FY 23-24, 13 agencies have been contacted in solicitation of partnership. Six agencies responded expressing interest and meetings are being scheduled for preliminary discussions.

There has been increased interest in CHWs both county-wide and nationally. The Children’s Trust of Alachua County recently announced a “Youth Health Request for Proposal (RFP)” that seeks to “expand access to quality healthcare services for children and youth of families” residing in Alachua County. This RFP requires that applying agencies incorporate CHWs in the provision of services.¹

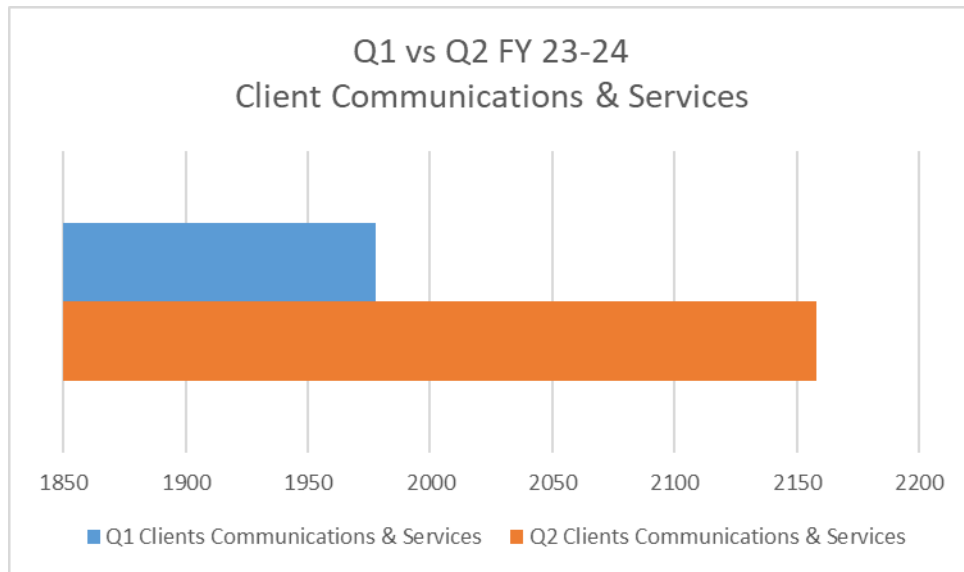
On March 7th, 2024, Senator Bob Casey (D-Pa.) introduced the *Community Health Worker Access Act* in Congress. This bill proposes investments in the CHW workforce by improving reimbursement for services provided by CHWs under Medicare and integrating reimbursement into Medicaid.² The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has finalized a new code that permits billing for administering SDOH risk assessments, and 2 new service codes that permit billing for Community Health Integration services performed by CHWs.³

Issues Identified: A previous barrier to agency partnership was the CHW Program’s subsidization structure that left agencies with limited time to incorporate wage-related expenses into their budget. This structure was modified to allow for more flexibility, and

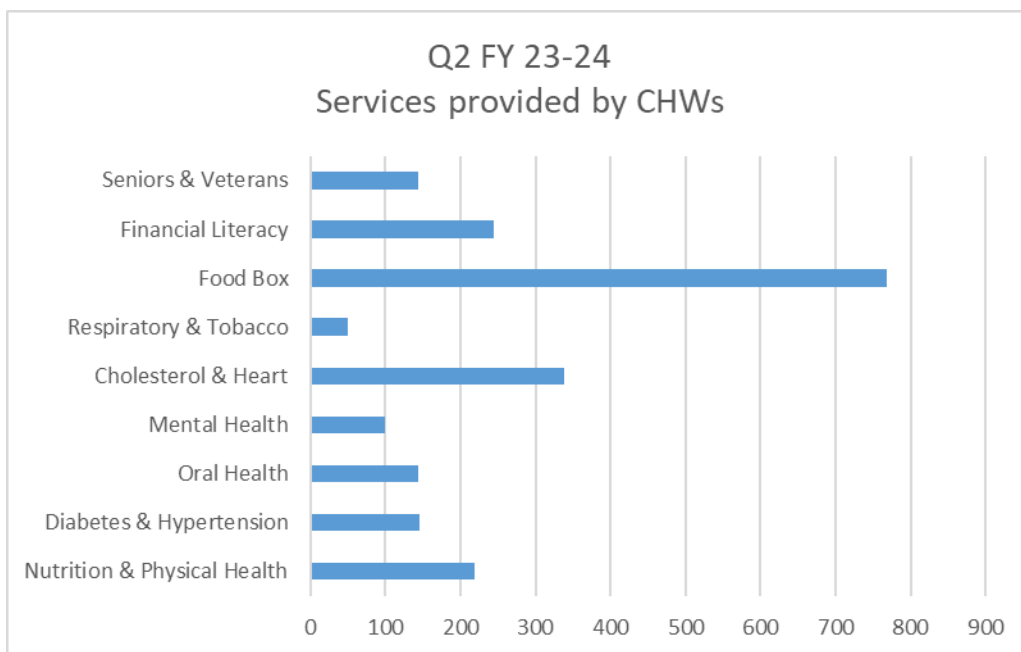
agencies continued to express interest in the program. Another barrier to agency partnership is the “CHW Program Agreement” that agencies must sign to receive CHW placement or access wage-reimbursement. Agencies have expressed concerns about the contract’s wording regarding CHW retainment.

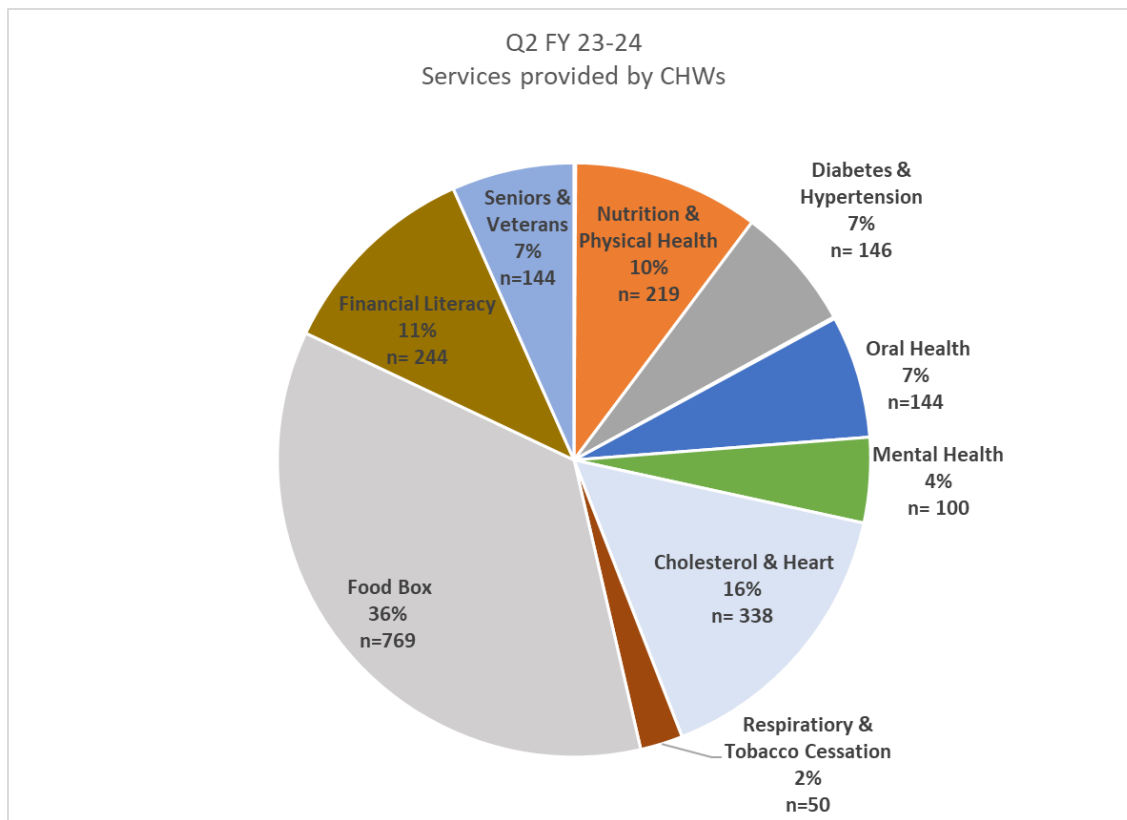
CHW Services & Data

For quarter 2 FY 23-24, CHWs provided over 2100 services to clients either in person or via phone.



The CHWs attended 32 community events and provided information on agencies providing services such as financial literacy, tobacco cessation, oral health, mental health, and nutrition services. This information is summarized below:





Case Study: A CHW address social differences through education and family support

The challenge: In 2022, The Florida Department of Education reported that Alachua County Public Schools had the “largest disparity of reading levels between Black and white students in the state.” Data showed that the reading levels for white students were at 72% while the reading levels for Black students were at 25%.^{4,5} Research has shown that students unable to read proficiently by the third grade are more likely to drop out of school and are more likely to be placed in juvenile detention if they are unable to read proficiently by the fourth grade.⁶

The solution: Gainesville For All (GNV4ALL) is a local nonprofit agency that was formed as an initiative between The Gainesville Sun and the Community Foundation of North Central Florida. Its mission is to address barriers that impact community growth. The agency is home to the Gainesville Empowerment Zone’s Family Learning Center, which provides accessible carer and education to families in Alachua County. A CHW was hired in January to connect parents to county-wide resources.

The results: The CHW has communicated with over 300 Alachua County residents, connecting them to resources on healthy foods, mental health, and financial literacy. She checks in with approximately 45 families monthly to assess social needs, and organized 5 community outreach events, including the “Growing Greatness Spring Celebration” that occurred in March 2024.

References

1. *2024-01 youth health request for proposal (RFP)*. Children's Trust of Alachua County, Florida. (2024, April 11). <https://www.childrenstrustofalachuacounty.us/programs/page/2024-01-youth-health-request-proposal-rfp>
2. Partners in Health. (2024, March 7). Congress introduces the Community Health Worker Access Act. <https://www.pih.org/article/congress-introduces-community-health-worker-access-act>
3. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; Medicare Learning Network. (2024, January). MLN9201074 - Health Equity Services in the 2024 Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule. Baltimore.
4. DesVergers, C. (2022, March 22). Alachua county reading gap persists between black and white students. *WUFT* . Retrieved May 17, 2024, from <https://www.wuft.org/education/2022-03-22/alachua-county-reading-gap-persists-between-black-and-white-students>.
5. Florida Department of Education. (n.d.). (rep.). *Florida Department of Education's Strategic Plan*. Retrieved May 17, 2024, from <https://edudata.fldoe.org/StrategicPlan/reports/ClosingTheGap.html>.
6. The Annie Casey Foundation. (2011, April 8). Third Grade Reading Skills & Drop Outs. *Third Grade Reading Skills & Drop Outs- The Annie Casey Foundation* . May 17, 2024, <https://www.aecf.org/blog/poverty-puts-struggling-readers-in-double-jeopardy-minorities-most-at-risk>