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MACHW:

MACHW is a statewide network of community health workers (CHWs) from all disciplines. We formed in March 2000 to lead the movement to organize, define, and strengthen the profession of community health work.

MACHWs Definition of a CHW:

A community health worker is a public health professional who promotes full and equal access to necessary health and social services by applying his or her unique understanding of the experiences, language and culture of the communities he or she serves.

Editor-in-Chief
Lisa Renee Siciliano

Writing and Editing:
Anne Schlereth

Massachusetts Community Health Worker (MACHW) Network Newsletter

What's New at MACHW

New Board of Director Members

MACHW is honored that our board members come from many unique backgrounds, both culturally and professionally. MACHW's BOD has a keen awareness and understanding of public health needs in the communities they live and work in. Our board members are CHWs and supporters from public health and human service organizations. Additionally, MACHW's board members are geographically diverse. BOD members currently are from Boston, Worcester, Framingham, Holyoke, Pittsfield, and Cape Cod. MACHW's board contributes to this common forum

knowledge and information pertinent to guide CHWs through a range of issues in their respected fields. (See page seven for a complete listing of MACHW's Board of Directors)

New MACHW Board Chair

Lisa Renee Siciliano was elected as MACHW's newest Board Chair for the upcoming year. She replaces Durrell Fox, who has been MACHW's Chair since 2001. Lisa Renee has vast experience as a community health worker and has represented MACHW and CHWs on both local and national levels. Currently she holds the position as Community Organizer at the Massachusetts Public Health

Association and worked to obtain a reduced membership fee for CHW's to join the organization. Lisa Renee has been a MACHW member since 2000 and is looking forward to the upcoming year.

New Project Coordinator

MACHW welcomes staff member Anne Schlereth, brought on board as MACHW's Project Coordinator. After earning a BSW, Anne worked in both public health and human service sectors. Working primarily for non-profit community based organizations, Anne's

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MACHW Featured in the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, 2003 Annual Report

In an article published in the BCBS 2003 Annual Report, the foundation addressed their work to strengthen the voice for access by funding advocacy groups, such as MACHW. Under the foundation's Strengthening the Voice for Access program, MACHW received a grant to fund its advocacy

trainings for CHWs and community members, and for program development. Sarah Iselin, the Foundation's director of Policy, Research and Evaluation, stated in the article, "Our 'Voices' grantees are organizations that are working to get consumers involved in advocacy and policy development. They are the front-line forces in the day-to-day fight on issues of health care access and are focused on organizing their

constituents around policy issues." MACHW is honored to have been featured in this article, along with other strong advocacy organizations such as, the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, and Health Care for All.

Thank you, to the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, for your support and thoughtful recognition of Massachusetts CHWs.

Are Community Health Workers (CHWs) Professionals?

By Lisa Renee Siciliano, CHW

Community health workers (CHWs) are emerging nationally as an essential public health workforce. Our emergence is not unlike that of social workers or nurses in the past and we are facing some of the same challenges. Those of us in the field and our supporters realize the vital role we play in both assisting communities with access to the health care and human delivery system and in improving health status. Our roles range from conducting outreach to vulnerable populations about existing services to assisting communities to organize to bring needed services into communities, and everything in between. Currently, there is ongoing debate in regard to CHWs. The debate is not about whether or not the CHW model works. There appears to be consensus among CHWs and supporters that many families, individuals and communities access services and that health status can be improved when CHWs are working in the community. I'm sure you are asking yourself, what is the debate about, if not about the effectiveness of CHWs?

Many emails traveled over the wires one recent weekend asking the question, "Are CHWs public

health professionals and is community health work be a profession?" Many views were expressed. Some hoped their comments would clarify the issue, others openly shared their confusion and still others of us voiced strong opinions on one side of the issue. I can only offer my personal point of view, which I feel confident is shared by many other CHWs, and, I hope, by most of our supporters and allies. We are public health professionals and many of us have chosen community health work as our profession.

Many professions within public health and human services have struggled with the same issue. Over time most are now considered professionals and their chosen field a profession, including social workers, substance abuse counselors and nurses. During the 15 years that I have been a CHW, I have heard us referred to by many job titles and we have been lumped into various classifications. In my home state of Massachusetts, we have over sixty job titles and are recognized as professionals and specialists in some arenas, and in others as paraprofessionals. Some classifications are acceptable to me and others

are not. One classification that is not acceptable to me, and that I encourage my fellow CHWs to hold steadfast against, is that of "paraprofessional." Paraprofessional implies "not quite, almost or sort of" professionals. CHWs are not "almost, sort of or not quite" anything and the people we work with don't "almost, sort of or not quite" receive services. We often go the extra mile, when others have closed down and gone home for the day, to assure that communities and individuals receive all the services they are entitled to from other professionals. Being considered a paraprofessional encourages program administrators to pay poor wages, offer poor benefits and provide poor working conditions! Are other professionals asked to work for less than a living wage, piece together a full time position from two or more part-time positions or work for little or no benefits? I think not!

CHWs are public health professionals! We have been embraced as professionals by well-respected organizations for public health professionals. The American Public Health Association and the Massachusetts Public Health Association, among others, have taken public positions recognizing CHWs as public health professionals.

Many other national organizations, such as the Institute of Medicine and the National Rural Health Association, have written statements on the vital role we play in health care access.

I am urging my fellow CHWs to take steps now to ensure that CHWs are recognized as professionals by other public health professionals. Educate! Each time you hear CHWs referred to as anything other than professionals, speak up. Take the opportunity to educate others about CHWs, much in the same way we take opportunities to educate communities about health. Get involved! There are national initiatives led by CHWs, including the APHA CHW SPIG, to define who we are as a workforce.

Don't leave it to others; you

may not be satisfied with the end result. Organize! If there is not a venue in your region for CHWs, to come together for networking and support, start one. Begin talking to other CHWs you are in contact with.

Become an active MACHW member in your region.

Stay active! Defining our field and taking a stance is not an easy task, nor is it something that can be accomplished quickly. Don't get frustrated after two or three calls or meetings. Within each discipline we may have different roles and job titles. Different regions of the state may have a slightly different take on our day-to-day activities to fit the region's needs. However, regardless of our job title, discipline, or region of the state, as a profession we

must have a unified front. We can't be divided on the question, "Are CHWs professionals?"

"CHWs are essential to public health, and we have to educate other professionals to understand that this is where we belong and where we're needed. People will not be well, and there will not be an end to health disparities, unless CHWs are intricately involved. We're critical to promoting a healthy society."

Source: Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Massachusetts; 2003 Annual Report

Do you want to get more involved in community health initiatives? Join public health advocacy organizations! Contact these groups about membership opportunities:

MACHW:

Anne Schlereth
413-536-7385 Holyoke
617-524-6696 (110) Boston
annemachw@yahoo.com

Or, contact any of MACHWs Board of Directors listed on MACHWs brochure

Massachusetts Public Health Association:

Libby Manly
617-524-6696
lmanly@mphaweb.org

American Public Health Association:

Member Services
202-777-2400
membership.mail@apha.org

Health Care for All:

Denise Lau
(617) 275-2926
lau@hcfama.org

Statewide Update/Information:

National Update/Information:

Did you know that CHWs have a Special Primary Interest Group (SPIG) at the American Public Health Association? The CHW SPIG's focus is to support the role of CHWs within the field of public health, to reduce health disparities, and improve health status.

Local contact: Durrell Fox, CHW SPIG Chair, 617-262-5657, Dfoxnehec@aol.com

Walk The Hill, November 9th 2004, Washington, DC:

Walk Capitol Hill with thousands of other public health professionals to advocate on issues important to public health. This day will start with a rally and briefing about the outlook for public health in Congress. Our advocacy efforts on the Hill will concentrate on important public health issues.

Lakitia Mayo, Director of Grassroots Advocacy, lakitia.mayo@apha.org (202) 777-2515
<http://www.apha.org/legislative/walkhill/index.htm>

Public Health Budget Increased by 19 Million

Sources from the Massachusetts Public Health Association

In January 2004, Governor Romney proposed cutting the Department of Public Health (DPH) budget. His proposal for cutting over \$30 million for the coming year was turned down in the legislative process. Fiscal year 2005 budget estimates \$19 million more in the DPH budget than in the year just ended!

For FY05, the legislature added \$6 million to restore adult immunizations; protected DPH funding at its current level (averting the loss of 48 full time positions with a \$2.4 million cut originally approved by the House); increased funding

over current levels for school health services, community health centers, substance abuse services, teen pregnancy prevention, family health services, dental, health, and other programs; and restored funding that had been eliminated in prior years for hepatitis C and other diseases and disability prevention programs.

This is good news for Public Health programs and services. It is also a great representation of what can be achieved through advocacy efforts! CHWs involved with MPHA and other coalitions helped

make this happen; by voicing opposition to the proposed cuts and contacting local legislators with their concerns.

Fact Finder:
32.3 million Americans are poor; 12.1 million of them are children. One out of every six American children is raised in poverty.
from, *Community Action Partnership Website*

Fact Finder:
CHW's provide health education and information to low-income consumers, assuring these individuals get the services they need, and advocate for individual and community needs.
from, *The Community Health Advisory Study*

MassHealth Updates

Sources from Health Care for All

-On September 9th the House and Senate approved a supplemental budget. This bill includes \$4 million to continue coverage for elderly and disabled legal immigrants. In the next 10 days, the governor will either veto this provision or sign it into law. If this provision is vetoed, basic health care for 3000 elderly and disabled legal immigrants will be eliminated. For updated information on this policy initiative to: www.hcfama.org

-MassHealth is the state's Medicaid program, providing health services to nearly a million Massachusetts residents. A coalition meets regularly called the MassHealth Defense Group. This coalition responds to major budgetary program cuts throughout Massachusetts. The group represents many different organizations from across the state and welcomes CHW involvement. Go to www.hcfama.org for meeting times. Scroll under Policy and Advocacy to MassHealth Defense.

Advocacy Training

Want to Further Develop Your
Advocacy Skills?

MACHW Invites You to Host an
Advocacy Training Workshop

You will:

- ✓ Be able to define Community Health Worker
- ✓ Gain a greater understanding of the role advocacy plays in eliminating health disparities
- ✓ Be able to identify and utilize strategies to build relationships with legislators and policy makers
- ✓ Increase your ability to identify and utilize personal and organizational advocacy strategies
- ✓ Heighten your communication skills as a public speaker

To schedule advocacy training at your organization, or with a local CHW network, please contact:

Anne Schlereth
617-524-6696 X110 (Jamaica Plain, MA)
413-536-7385 (Holyoke, MA)
annemachw@yahoo.com

*Massachusetts Community Health Worker
Network Advocating for Access Project is
funded by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of
Massachusetts Foundation*

Advocacy has purposeful results:

- to enable social justice advocates to gain access and voice in the decision making of relevant institutions;
- to change the power relationships between these institutions and the people affected by their decisions, thereby changing the institutions themselves; and
- to bring a clear improvement in people's lives

from the Advocacy Institute Website

Advocacy Tips

How to Write an Editorial

Here are some key tips to keep in mind:

Make one point (or at most two) in your letter or fax. State the point clearly, ideally in the first sentence.

Make your letter timely. Try to tie the issue you want to write about to a recent event.

Refute or support specific statements, address relevant facts that are ignored, but do avoid blanket attacks on the media in general or the newspaper in particular.

Check the letter specifications of the newspaper to which you are writing. You also must include your name, signature, address and phone number.

Look at the letters that appear in your paper. Is a certain type of letter usually printed?

Support your facts. If the topic you address is controversial, consider sending documentation along with your letter.

Find others to write letters when possible. This will show that other individuals in the community are concerned about the issue.

Monitor the paper for your letter. If your letter has not appeared within a week or two, follow up with a call to the editorial department.

Write to different sections of the paper when appropriate. Sometimes the issue you want to address is relevant to the lifestyle, book review or other section of the paper.

An increasing number of broadcast news programs (60 Minutes, All Things Considered, etc.) also solicit and broadcast "letters to the editor." Don't forget these outlets.

Please sign your letters as an individual or representative of a community group.

from www. Journalism.org

Advocacy Toolkit Update

As posted in our last newsletter, MACHWs board and staff are currently working on the development of an advocacy toolkit for community health workers. The goal of the toolkit is to provide some basic advocacy guidance to CHWs. We hope this will be a useful tool for CHWs to connect with other groups and individuals and combine their advocacy power in both a policy and legislative setting. This will be a benefit to both CHWs and communities to assist in the elimination of health disparities. Our most current activity on the toolkit was adapting the information and content to an electronic document so that we can update and modify the toolkit as development progresses.

Also, our Board of Directors and Project Coordinator recently had a meeting to establish a timeframe for the completion of the toolkit. The main objective of that meeting was to create a timeframe that would allow MACHW to develop a highly effective, user-friendly toolkit that will help CHWs utilize it with confidence and ease.

MACHW will have the toolkit available in the upcoming months/Yr. 05. This section will be updated throughout the toolkits development.

Outreach Worker Training Institute (OWTI)

Schedule

12-Hour Supervisor Certificate Course

October 5, 2004: CHWs and Supervisors: Roles and Needs

October 12, 2004: Strategies for Supervising CHWs

October 19, 2004: Conflict Resolution

October 26, 2004: Professional Boundaries in Community Health Work

45-Hour Community Health Worker Certificate Courses

Outreach Core Competencies

November 9, 2004: Presentation and Facilitation Skills

November 16, 2004: Interpersonal Skills

November 23, 2004: Communication and Interview Skills

November 30, 2004: Organizational Skills
December 7, 2004: Service Coordination Skills

December 14, 2004: Individual and Community Assessment Skills

December 21, 2004: Advocacy, Leadership, and Empowerment Skills

January 4, 2005: Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Skills

Community and Health Specific Competencies

January 11, 2005: Environmental Health

January 18, 2005: Maternal and Child Health

January 25, 2005: Women's and Men's Health

February 1, 2005: Geriatric Health

February 8, 2005: Mental Health

February 15, 2005: Substance Abuse and Addiction Overview

February 22, 2005: HIV/AIDS and STIs Overview

March 1, 2005: Capacity Building for Leadership (Elective)

March 8, 2005: Snow date

March 15, 2005: Snow date

All classes will be held on Tuesdays from 9:15-12:15pm, at Curry College, Worcester Campus, One West Boylston Street, Worcester, MA.

Contact: Tatyana Gorodetsky
Central Massachusetts AHEC
4 Lancaster Terrace, Worcester, MA 01609
Telephone 508-756-6676
e-mail tatyana@cmahec.org

MACHWs Next Meeting Schedule

Statewide Meeting

- **December 16**

Meetings are quarterly, the third Thursday, from 10am-12pm (unless otherwise noted)

For information contact

Lisa Renee Siciliano
Lrsiciliano@aol.com

Vicki Deschamps

vdeschamps@bhs1.org

Western MA Regional Meeting

- **November 4**

Meetings are every-other month, second Thursday (times change, see MACHW flyer for updates)

For information contact

Maritza Smidy
Maritza.smidy@sphs.org

Pam Smith

Pamela.smith@state.ma.us

Southeast Meeting

- **December 1**

For information contact

Camilla Monteiro
camillam@cacci.cc

Details about upcoming meetings will be sent in the mail and distributed in emails.

Please contact us if you have a change of address/phone/email, so that we can get MACHW information and meeting dates to you as efficiently as possible.

MACHW Board of Directors

Beatriz Ayala

Planned Parenthood

Gail Ballester

MDPH CHW Project

Antonia Blinn

*March of Dimes,
Massachusetts Chapter*

Vicki Deschamps

Berkshire North WIC

Durrell Fox

*New England HIV
Education Consortium*

Denise Lau

Health Care for All

Nghia Le

Community Healthlink

Camilla Monteiro

*Community Action of Cape Cod
and the Islands, Inc.*

Eliot Morales

ABCD Health Services

Jose Rivera

Center for Healthy Communities

Lisa Renee Siciliano

MA Public Health Association

Maritza Smidy

Providence Prenatal Center

Cassandra Summers

ABCD Health Services

Do you have information you would like to get out to CHWs?

The MACHW newsletter is a resource for many CHWs in our state. Please contact Anne Schlereth (contact information below) to have information included in the newsletter.

Please share this information with community health workers in your agency and community

MACHW

C/o MPHA
434 Jamaicaaway
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

www.mphaweb.org/pol_comm.html

Or,

Anne Schlereth, Project Coordinator
C/o MPHA
434 Jamaicaaway
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
617-524-6696 X110 (Jamaica Plain)
413-536-7385 (Holyoke)
annemachw@yahoo.com

Would you like to keep up-to-date with the most current issues for Community Health Workers?

MACHW is hosting a Yahoo group for community health workers. With heightened involvement, this online-group can become a great opportunity for CHWs to communicate with one another about the most up-to-date issues confronted in community health work. As well, it is a good way to share information; like program changes, job postings, and information about workshops and trainings.

Anyone who subscribes to the MACHW Yahoo group can send information to the entire group using only one email, MACHW@yahoogroups.com. You can also send email attachments and forward emails you have received that you think would be important to share with CHWs throughout the state.

Please call or email Anne Schlereth if you are interested in joining MACHWs Yahoo Group.

(“What’s New”, continued from page 1)

background in direct care service and program planning provide her a broad range of strong skills to bring to MACHWs initiatives.

New MACHW Members

Welcome to all of MACHWs newest members! By sharing critical information related to your work, you help CHWs receive recognition for the contributions made in the health care delivery system. We appreciate all of your participation with MACHW; creating a stronger voice for CHWs in Massachusetts!

Thank you MACHW members!