Section #1: Questions 1 - 4 CHW Certification

1. What is the Board of Certification of Community Health Workers (BOCCHW) and who are its members?

In 2010, “An Act Establishing a Board of Certification of Community Health Workers,” was signed into law, and took effect in 2012. The purpose of the Board is to create a competency-based process for certification that recognizes and strengthens the work of CHWs, while simultaneously reducing barriers for effective CHWs to become certified.

Since 2012, the Board of Certification of CHWs has been making policy decisions to inform the regulations on certification of individual CHWs and approval of CHW training programs.

The Board is chaired by a designee of the commissioner of DPH and includes ten additional members appointed by the governor and representing diverse constituencies. CHWs have 4 seats on the Board.

2. What is the definition and scope of a Community Health Worker (CHW)?

The CHW definition and scope of practice are defined in the Massachusetts regulations for CHW certification as a public health worker who applies his or her unique understanding of the experience, language, and culture of the populations he or she serves in order to carry out one or more of the following roles:

- Providing culturally appropriate health education, information, and outreach in community-based settings such as homes, schools, clinics, shelters, local businesses, and community centers;
- Bridging or culturally mediating between individuals, families, communities and health and human services, including actively building individual and community capacity;
- Assuring that community members access the health and human services they need;
• Providing direct services, such as informal counseling on access to health and human services, social support, care coordination and health screenings
• Advocating for individual, family and community needs pertaining to access to health and human services.

3. What are the pathways to CHW Certification?

There will be two pathways to CHW certification in Massachusetts:

(1) **The Work Experience Pathway**, requires applicants to document at least 4,000 hours of CHW work over the past 10 years. Work done as a volunteer (not paid) can be included in the 4,000 hours. This pathway will be available until 2021. There is no training requirement for the Work Experience Pathway. *(Available immediately)*

(2) **The Training and Work Experience Pathway**, requires applicants to demonstrate at least 2,000 hours of CHW work over the past 10 years AND successful completion of a Board Approved CHW Training Program *(This pathway will only be available after the Board begins to approve CHW training programs.)*

4. What are the 10 Core Competencies for CHWs?

The 10 Core Competencies for CHWs, as established by the MA Board of Certification of Community Health Workers, are:

1. Outreach Methods and Strategies
2. Individual and Community Assessment
3. Effective Communication
4. Cultural Responsiveness and Mediation
5. Education to Promote Healthy Behaviors
6. Care Coordination & Systems Navigation
7. Public Health Concepts and Approaches
8. Advocacy and Community Capacity Building
9. Documentation
10. Professional Skills and Conduct
For a detailed description of the above list of core competencies, visit https://www.mass.gov/service-details/core-competencies-for-community-health-workers
Section #2: Questions 1 - 9 Eligibility for CHW Certification

1. What are the eligibility criteria for CHW Certification?

To qualify for CHW certification, you must meet the following criteria:

a) Your work experiences align with the CHW definition
b) Be at least 18 years of age
c) Be of “Good Moral Character (GMC)” as outlined in the Suitability for Certification policy
d) Satisfy the training and/or work requirements based on pathway chosen
e) Be deemed competent in each of the 10 core competencies (See Section #1: Question 4 for a list of the 10 core competencies), by at least three individuals who agree to submit professional references directly to the Board of Certification of CHWs and meet the following criteria.

2. What is the Suitability for Certification policy?

The law established that an individual must have Good Moral Character. The Board developed the Suitability for Certification Policy, which summarizes how it will assess Good Moral Character.

- CHWs understanding of the CHW Code of Ethics developed by the Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers (MACHW)
  https://www.mass.gov/policy-statement/18-01-suitability-for-certification-policy
- CHWs understanding of the CHW Professional Standards of Conduct as outlined in the regulations.
- History of involvement with the criminal justice system though the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI)
- Any disciplinary actions with other licenses
3. How will the Board look at your criminal history?

The Board developed the Suitability for Certification policy to address the following and can be found via the following link: https://www.mass.gov/policy-statement/18-01-suitability-for-certification-policy

- Aim of balancing protection of the public with ensuring criminal history review is job related and not overbroad.
- Allow for transparency in the CORI Review process and ensure applicants are aware of their rights.
- Prevent blanket bans to allow for case by case decision-making
- Review convictions that are considered job-related
- Define and consider rehabilitation and mitigating factors

4. Will my application be disqualified if I have a Criminal Offender Record Inquiry (CORI)?

No, your application will not automatically be disqualified if you have a CORI.

CORI is the last part of the application process and is only completed after you meet all other criteria for Certification. This review of the application is called “Suitability for Certification,” and it comes at the end of the application review.

- There will be no automatic disqualifications.
- The Board will consider only convictions and open cases.
- The Board will not see or consider arrests, juvenile offenses, or sealed items.

In evaluating CORI, the Board will strongly consider evidence of rehabilitation efforts, such as education and training, addiction treatment, and evidence of work history, including volunteer work.

5. Will I need to submit a CORI every time I apply for a certification renewal?

CORI is only required as part of your original application for certification. It will not be required for certification renewal.

6. What if the CORI law changes?

If the Massachusetts criminal record changes, the Board will change its Suitability for Certification policy to comply with the new legal requirements.
7. **Who can deem me competent in the 10 Core Competencies?**
   Three professional references must deem you competent in the 10 Core Competencies. As part of the application, you are required to submit three (3) professional references.

8. **Who can be a professional reference?**
   Your references should be people who have direct knowledge of your CHW work and are able to rate you in the 10 Core Competencies. For details about the 10 Core Competencies for CHWs, see Section #1: Question 4.
   - At least 1 must be an individual who is a current or former supervisor from your work experience as a community health worker in the United States;
   - At least 2 must be based on work experience in the United States; and
   - References may not be provided by an individual who is a family member of the applicant or current or former client of the applicant in the applicant’s capacity as a community health worker

   Reference forms are included in the application packet and must be signed and dated by the individual making the reference.

9. **Some of my CHW work has been outside of the US, can my reference come from another country?**
   If you have worked as a CHW outside of the US, you may obtain references from other countries. However, **two references must be based on work experience in the U.S. and your current or former supervisor reference must be from a work experience in the U.S.**
Section #3: Questions 1 - 4 Approved CHW Training Program

1. Which pathway requires completion of an Approved CHW Education and Training Program?

In order to qualify for CHW certification through the Training and Work Experience Pathway (described in Section #1: Question 3), an applicant must have successfully completed Core Competency training at a CHW Education and Training Program that has been approved by the Board in addition to completing 2,000 hours of work experience.

2. How do I find an Approved CHW Education and Training Program?

A list of approved CHW Education and Training programs will be maintained and published by the Board on the Board’s website once the Board starts to approve CHW Education and Training Programs.

3. What if I took my training before my training program was approved?

When the Board begins to approve CHW Education and Training programs, each approved program will receive an effective date of approval.

- For some of the approved programs, their effective date may be retroactive.
- If the retroactive date of approval covers the dates when you took your CHW core competency training, the CHW Education and Training program can provide you with a certificate of completion to use in your application to the Board.

The Board will only accept CHW core competency training completed at an approved CHW Education and Training program. A list of approved CHW Education and Training programs will be published on the Board’s website.

4. What kind of proof do I need to show from the Approved CHW Education and Training program?

Approved CHW Education and Training programs are required to provide a certificate of completion to students who successfully complete the program.

If you are applying through the Training and Work Experience Pathway, the certificate of completion awarded by the Approved CHW Education and Training Program is the proof
that you need, and must be submitted in an envelope sealed and signed by the Program where you completed your CHW core competency training.
Section #4: Questions 1 -13 CHW Certification Application

1. How do I determine if I can apply?
   
   **Step #1:** Do I meet the CHW Definition?
   
   **Step #2:** Do I meet the eligibility criteria to apply?
   
   **Step #3:** Do my work hours support one of the two available pathways?
   
   *(See Exhibit A following FAQs)*
   
   **Step #4:** Do I have 3 references to demonstrate competency in the 10 Core Competency areas?
   
   If you can answer yes to Steps 1-4, then move forward to the final step.
   
   **Step #5:** Submit your application, fee, and supporting documents

2. Can I receive help filling out this application if my primary language is not English?
   
   Yes, applicants should feel free to seek assistance in filling out the application and in communicating with the Board if needed. The application is only available in English. In addition, all communication with applicants will be conducted in English. TTY is available.

3. Is “grand parenting” available?
   
   Yes, experienced applicants can apply via the Work Experience pathway. This pathway is available for the first 3 years and allows experienced professionals to obtain certification without additional training requirements.

4. My work duties fit with the CHW definition, but I work under a different job title; am I still eligible to apply for CHW certification?
   
   “Community Health Worker” is an umbrella term for a number of job titles that perform one or more of the CHW roles. CHW Certification is competency-based and your eligibility to apply for certification will be determined based on whether or not you meet the qualification requirements listed in section #2 question #1.

   Regardless of your title, if the work being performed fits the CHW definition, then you are eligible to apply. Some of the most common job titles for CHWs in Massachusetts include, but are not limited to: Community Health Educator, Enrollment Worker, Family
Advocate, Family Planning Counselor, Doula, Family Support Worker, Health Advocate, HIV Peer Advocate, Outreach Worker, Outreach Educator, Patient Navigator, Peer Advocate, Peer Leader, Promotor(a) de Salud, Street Outreach Worker.

(See Exhibit B following FAQs)

5. Who reviews my application and how long will it take?

Your application is reviewed by the Board of Certification of CHWs, which is located in the Bureau of Health Professions Licensure (BHPL) in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH).

- BHPL staff reviews your application for completeness. If something is missing, the staff will notify you once via e-mail and your application will be marked incomplete. Your application will not be reviewed for eligibility until it is marked complete.
- If your application is complete, BHPL staff reviews your application to see if you qualify based on the criteria established by the Board.
- If the application is complete and matches the criteria, BHPL staff will approve your application.
- If the application is complete and additional information is required to confirm eligibility, BHPL staff will forward the application for Board review based on the next available Board meeting date. The Board will then review the application and make a decision. Sometimes, you might be asked to come speak to the Board if they have any questions.

Once all of your completed application materials have been received by the Board, please allow 3-5 weeks for your application to be reviewed.

If your application is approved, you will receive a certification card. If your application is denied, you will receive a letter in the mail that will include the reason(s) for denial and options for reapplying.
6. **What does the Board do with my personal information?**

Upon receipt by the Board, your application information becomes a public record available to the public upon request. The Board retains a copy of all files in compliance with document retention standards set by law.

- Should a public record be made for your application file, private information such as date of birth and social security number will be redacted as they are protected by the Fair Information Practices act. We do not release your date of birth or social security number pursuant to M.G.L. c. 66A (FIPA) except to the Department of Revenue.
- You can use your place of business as your address, instead of your home if you would like to keep your home city or town private. If this information is subpoenaed, we may have to provide your street address.
- The Board does not ask or retain information about your immigration status.

7. **Why do I have to submit information about other professional licenses and Board certifications?**

The Board will need to know if you have been disciplined in another professional field. This information will be used to assess your suitability for certification. Even if you have been disciplined in another field, it does not mean you won’t qualify for CHW certification. The Board will want to understand the circumstances leading to the discipline and any mitigating factors.

8. **What if I lapsed in renewing another professional license or I was missing CEUs to be able to renew?**

Failure to renew or missing CEUs in another field will not affect your CHW certification application.

9. **Where can I find a free notary?**

Some places offer free or low-cost (typically $5 or $10) notary services. Some examples include:

- **Banks and Credit Unions** where you already have an account. Call ahead to make sure there is a notary on duty.
• **Public Library.** Be sure to make note of the library's service hours.

• **Local Government Offices.** Your local city hall or court office is likely to have a notary on staff, and often they make their services available to the public.

• **Campus Legal Services.** If you're a student at a college or university, you might be able to get free notary service at the legal services department.

• **The Organizations You Belong to.** Many groups offer free or low-cost notary services as a benefit.

10. **How is my competency in the 10 Core Competencies determined?**
   In order to be certified, an applicant must be rated competent in all 10 Core Competencies by at least one reference. Therefore, make sure your reference can assess you in at least 8 of the 10 core competencies. Applications that lack a rating in one of the core competencies will be incomplete.

11. **Can I submit my references directly with my application?**
   References must be submitted with the application in sealed envelopes. Applicants may provide each reference a blank form with envelope for completion.

12. **What if I change my name or address?**
   Community health workers (both applicants and already certified CHWs) must notify the Board in writing of any changes in address or name within thirty (30) days after the change to ensure you receive materials about certification renewal and other information released by the Board.

   You may update your address and/or marital status via mail to the Board of Certification of Community Health Workers 239 Causeway Street, Floor, Boston, MA 02124.

13. **How do I contact the Board?**
   The Board can be contacted via the following methods:
   - Toll Free: 1-800-414-0168
   - Telephone: (617) 973-0800
   - TTY: (617) 973-0988
   - Fax: (617) 973-0980
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
Bureau of Health Professions Licensure
239 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114

E-mail: multiboard.admin@state.ma.us
Address: 239 Causeway Street, Floor, Boston, MA 02114
Section #5: Questions 1 - 3 CHW Certification Renewal

1. Do I have to renew my certification?
   Yes, your certification is valid for two years.

2. What are the requirements for certification renewal?
   You must complete 15 hours of continuing education per your renewal cycle to renew your certification before it expires, or it will no longer be valid.

3. What is the renewal process?
   The Board will notify you 90 days in advance of your expiration of your renewal cycle. The Board will also provide instructions on how to submit it electronically.

   You may apply for certification renewal by submitting your online renewal application form to the Board of Certification of CHWs.
Section #6: Exhibit A

1. Worksheet to calculate number of hours for work experience.

Work Hours Calculation Sheet

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Total Hours:
Section #6: Exhibit B

1. Examples of “job duty” in “Part B: CHW Work Experience” section of the CHW Certification Application.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

**Health education:**

- Providing people with information, tools, and encouragement to help them improve their health and stay healthy over time
- Providing guidance about health prevention
- Helping people understand their health condition or diagnosis
- Helping people understand how to take their medication as recommended by their provider
- Emphasizing and reinforcing the care team’s recommendations and plan of care.

**Coordinating care including referrals:**

- Helping people understand the step-by-step processes to referrals from or to healthcare providers and community service organizations
- Helping people navigate through health care and specialty treatments
- Helping people understand eligibility requirements and other information about health insurance, social services agencies and public health programs
- Helping to connect people to any additional resources to protect and promote health behavior.

**Advocacy for individuals and/or communities:**

- Working with or on behalf of people to exercise their rights and gain access to resources
- Encouraging clients to identify and prioritize their personal, family, and community needs
• Advocating on behalf of clients and communities, as appropriate, to assist people to attain needed care or resources in a reasonable and timely fashion.

**Community or individual needs assessment:**

• Gathering and combining information from people or different sources to better understand the needs of clients, their families and their communities
• Assessing barriers that prevent people from understanding health care and treatment recommendations, and how to access health care, and other social services
• Helping people to identify their goals and barriers to change

**Activities to increase community and/or individual capacity:**

• Helping people develop the confidence and ability to assume increasing control over decisions and resources that affect their health and well-being
• Community capacity building involves promoting individual and collective empowerment through education, skill development, networking, organizing, and strategic partnerships

**Disease prevention and management:**

• Raising awareness about healthy behaviors and empowering people and communities to engage in healthy behaviors and disease prevention
• Providing information on how to access screening and preventive services
• Helping to inform people about how to make changes that reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases or how to manage other morbidities such as Asthma, cancer, diabetes, hypertension, etc.
• Helping people understand how to adhere to medication, as recommended by their care team
Outreach:

- Contacting, engaging with, and helping people to learn about and how to use resources to improve their health and well-being
- Initiate and sustain trusting relationships with individuals, families, and social networks in order to connect them to healthcare and public health services