



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
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Frequently Asked Questions: Community Health Worker Certification

Section #1: Questions 1 - 5 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 certification process that recognizes and strengthens the work of community health workers while simultaneously reducing barriers for qualified CHWs to becoming certified.

Since 2012, the Board of Certification of Community Health Workers has been making policy decisions, drafting regulations for CHW certification, screening and approving CHW Education & Training Programs to ensure compliance with the ten core competencies, as well as reviewing and approving CHW continuing education courses. The Board is chaired by the Commissioner of DPH (or his or her designee) and includes ten additional members appointed by the Governor who represent diverse constituencies throughout the Commonwealth.

CHWs have 4 designated seats on the Board.

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

Community Health Workers in Massachusetts are defined as public health workers who apply their unique understanding of the experience, language, and culture of the populations they serve 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, 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; and
- Additional roles as may be identified by the Board that may emerge in the development of Community Health Worker practice.

3. What are the pathways to CHW Certification?

There are 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 July 31, 2025. There is no training requirement for the Work Experience Pathway.

(2) The CHW Training and Work Experience Pathway requires applicants to demonstrate at least 2,000 hours of CHW work over the past 10 years and successfully complete a Board-approved CHW Education & Training Program.

4. What are the 10 Core Competencies for CHWs?

The 10 Core Competencies for CHWs, as established by the 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

5. How to apply for CHW Certification?

You would have to create an account on the [Health Professions Licensing Portal](#) or log in to your existing account. Our [website](#) has additional information on the required documents and the application process. If this is your first time using this new portal, please visit the Health Professions Licensing System [User Guide](#).

Section #2: Questions 6 - 7 Board-Approved Education & Training Programs

6. What do Board-approved CHW Education & Training Programs do?

CHW Education & Training Programs that are approved by the Board are stand-alone programs who provide instruction, training and experience that is designed specifically to provide the knowledge and skills that are essential to community health work. CHW Education & Training Programs focus on the cultivation of knowledge and skills related to the ten core competencies for CHWs. The successful completion of an approved CHW Education & Training Program will count towards the training requirement in the application of CHWs who apply through the CHW Training and Work Experience Pathway. In addition to providing core competencies training, CHW Education & Training Programs may offer CHW supervisor training.

7. How did the Board develop the standards for CHW Education & Training Programs?

The 10 Core Competencies and the standards for CHW Education & Training Programs were developed over several years with input from CHW partners, allies, employers, training programs, and CHWs themselves. All CHW related regulations went through the regulatory review process which allows for partner and public engagement in public hearing(s).

Section #3: Questions 8- 13 Eligibility for Education & Training Program Approval

8. What are the requirements or criteria to be eligible to apply to be a Board-approved CHW Education & Training Program in MA?

Please carefully review [272 CMR 5.00](#), which outlines the approval requirements, minimum standards for full approval, and obtaining and maintaining Board approval. The CHW Education & Training Program Application is available on the Board's [website](#).

9. If a CHW Education & Training Program provides more than 80- hours of core training, how many hours can be taught online?

A maximum of 70% of 80 hours (56 hours in total) can be taught online, regardless of the total number of hours offered by the program. During the COVID-19 pandemic the Board voted to waive the cap on the number of online hours. The waiver currently remains in place through July 31, 2028. The Board will deliberate retaining or rescinding this in the coming months.

10. My CHW Education & Training Program does not offer 80 hours of the 10 Core Competencies outlined; is my program eligible to apply?

No, the regulation mandates that the training program offers a minimum of 80 hours of CHW Education & Training based on the 10 Core Competencies outlined above.

11. According to the regulations, at least 40% of the hours of instruction must be taught or co-taught by faculty who are CHWs. Who qualifies as a CHW instructor?

Any instructor who meets the [definition](#) of a CHW in the regulations will count as a CHW faculty. All faculty teaching core competency training at approved CHW Education & Training

Programs must have the knowledge and skills to effectively teach the proposed curriculum. Both CHW and non-CHW faculty must be qualified in this way. 40% of the total hours of instruction must be taught or co-taught by at least 1 CHW.

12. What does my CHW Education & Training Program need to give to CHWs who successfully complete the core competency training?

CHW Education & Training Programs must provide a certificate of completion to all successful graduates. The certificate must include the name of the organization, name of the course, name of the participant, and date of successful completion.

13. What if a CHW took our CHW Education & Training before my training program was approved?

Each CHW applicant should refer to this [webpage](#) to ensure that any program they completed is on the list of approved programs as of their application date. The listing will note the start date for their approved programs. If the CHW does not have a certificate for the approved training program, the CHW can request the approved program to issue a certificate of completion. If the program is not approved as of the CHW's application date, then the program does not qualify and does not count towards the certification.

Section #4: Questions 14 - 20 CHW Education & Training Program Application

14. How can we apply to be a Board-approved Education & Training Program?

The CHW Education & Training Program approval process includes two steps. As part of your application to the Board, you will need to submit proof of licensure or exemption from licensure by the Massachusetts Division of Occupational Licensure, which is separate from DPH.

First, you will need to submit a [Licensure Determination Form](#) to the Office of Private Occupational School Education, this form is available on the [DOL's website](#). You will receive DOL's decision, including approval or exemption, if applicable. The Board recommends obtaining a financial certificate that states that your organization is financially able to provide training to the public-at-large. Once the certificate is received, you may submit it to complement the entire application packet.

Second, after you receive DOL's decision you can proceed to apply to be an approved Education & Training Program by completing your application through the [Health Professions Licensing Portal](#). If this is your first time using this new portal, please visit the [Health Professions Licensing System User Guide](#).

You must review and agree to adhere to the Attorney General's regulations specific to for-profit and occupational schools outlined in [940 CMR 31.00](#).

15. Approximately how long will the CHW Education & Training Program application review process take?

The CHW Education & Training Program application review process takes approximately 2-3 months, provided the submitted application is complete. A completed application **must** have DOL Licensure Determination. The Board may ask representatives from the CHW Education & Training Program to meet with the Board to answer any questions Board members may have about the application.

16. Once approved by the Board, how long does CHW Education & Training Program approval last?

Per [regulation 272 CMR 5.05\(7\)\(a\)](#), once approved, the CHW Education & Training Program must submit a completed annual report each year to maintain their approval status. Additionally, approvals expire every four years and a completed renewal application is required to continue their approval status.

17. How will I know the status of our application?

CHW Education & Training Programs will be notified by the Board of their application status. The Health Professions Licensing Portal will display an approved status and an approval letter will also be sent via mail.

18. How will CHWs know if our program was approved?

A list of [Approved CHW Education & Training Programs](#) is available on the Board's webpage.

19. Can my CHW Education & Training Program lose its approval?

Yes, if the Board receives information indicating that an approved program does not meet one or more minimum standards, the Board may re-evaluate the program's approval status which may become suspended or revoked.

20. What if there is a change to the organization's name, address, leadership, or approved program?

A CHW Education & Training Program must notify the Board in writing of any changes in name, address, or leadership personnel within thirty (30) days after the change to ensure you receive materials about any status change and other information released by the Board and the Board's evaluation of program curriculum changes. You may submit updates by logging into the [Health Professions Licensing Portal](#).

Section #5: Contact Information

The Board of Certification of Community Health Workers can be contacted via the following methods:

Toll Free: 1-800-414-0168
Telephone: (617) 973-0806
TTY: (617) 973-0988
Fax: (617) 973-0980
E-mail: multiboard.admin@mass.gov
Web Page: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/Board-of-certification-of-community-health-workers>

US Mail: Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Bureau of Health Professions Licensure
Board of Certification of Community Health Workers
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

The Office of Community Health Workers can be contacted via the following method:

E-mail: chwinfo@state.ma.us
Web Page: <https://www.mass.gov/community-health-workers>

US Mail: Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Bureau of Health Professions Licensure
Office of Community Health Workers
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108