

**EMPOWERING  
COMMUNITY  
PHARMACIES**

**A GUIDE TO  
INTEGRATING  
COMMUNITY  
HEALTH WORKERS**

# Empowering Community Pharmacies: A Guide to Integrating Community Health Workers

Megan G. Smith, PharmD, BCACP; Geoffrey M. Curran, PhD; Benjamin S. Teeter, PhD; Adrian J Williams, MS; Meghan Breckling, PharmD, BCACP; Heidi Charton, BA; Cynthia L. Mosley, BBA

Department of Pharmacy Practice, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, Arkansas

## **Corresponding Author:**

Megan G. Smith, PharmD, BCACP, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, 4301 W. Markham St, Little Rock, AR, 72205; Email: msmith4@uams.edu

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## **Contributing Partners:**

Arkansas Community Pharmacy Enhanced Services Network (Arkansas CPESN).  
[www.arkansascpesn.com](http://www.arkansascpesn.com).

Arkansas Community Health Worker Association (ARCHWA). <https://www.archwa.org/>



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# INTRODUCTION

Community pharmacies are consistently cited as the most accessible and frequently visited health care settings.[1] This positions them well to deliver a range of services to address their community's health and needs.[1,2] An estimated 48.1% of the overall U.S. population lives within 1 mile of a pharmacy, 88.9% within 5 miles and 96.5% within 10 miles. [1] Community pharmacists are also one of the **most frequently seen healthcare professions**. A study of Medicare beneficiaries showed the median number of visits to community pharmacies was significantly higher than encounters with primary care physicians (13 vs 7 visits).[1,3] This high frequency of contact with patients allows for a **strong and trusted relationship** extending beyond medication use to knowing about patients' health behavior and values. In fact, in Arkansas, pharmacists are among the most accessible healthcare professionals; there are at least two pharmacists in every county.[4] Arkansas also has a very strong community pharmacy network called the Arkansas Community Pharmacy Enhanced Services Network (Arkansas CPESN).[5] This network of 186 pharmacies work together sharing resources and contracting together for direct patient care services and is in 59 of 75 Arkansas counties.

One theme important to rural patients is having a trusted, long-term relationship with individual clinicians and personalized care.[6] Researchers and public health professionals have been exploring the impacts of community health workers (CHWs) on the health behaviors and outcomes since the 1980s.[7] The American Public Health Association defines CHWs as trusted members of the communities they serve that identify the needs of patients, provide education, and facilitate connections to needed resources.[8] Current evidence suggests that CHWs can reduce health disparities through addressing social determinants of health and enhancing connections to healthcare providers and services. [7,9,10] Research is growing on different outcomes impacted by community health workers including diabetes,[11] cardiovascular disease,[12] and cancer.[13]

The contents within this toolkit was developed with support funded by the UAMS Translational Research Institute. The content was developed from in-depth interviews and surveys of Arkansas pharmacy owners and their employed community health workers and stakeholder feedback from Arkansas CPESN and Arkansas Community Health Worker Association (ARCHWA).

*This is important, more than just a study and an exercise to get data. It's a strategy to create outcomes for the future. It's building your program for the future of what's coming. And you want to be a player in this space. You don't want to be passed over because it's going to be a great opportunity.*

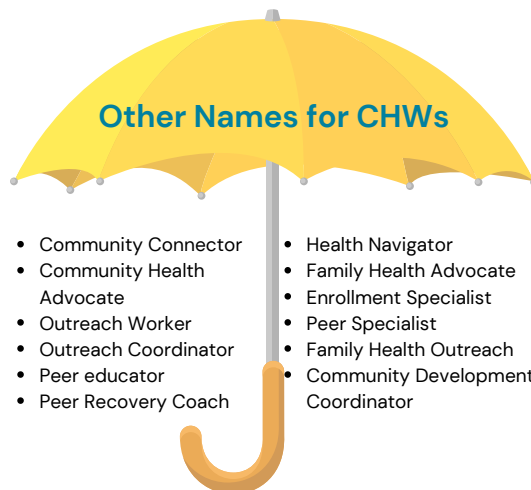
*-Duane Jones, Arkansas CPESN*

# CHWs OVERVIEW

## What is a Community Health Worker?

A community health worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served.

This trusting relationship enables the CHW to serve as a liaison / link / intermediary between health / social services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.



## Where do CHWs Work?

Clinics and Medical Offices	Community-Based Organizations	Community Health Centers	Pharmacies
Hospitals	Schools	Healthcare Insurance Plans	Police Departments

## What activities are within their scope?

- Conducting initial interviews with new clients
- Providing culturally appropriate health education and information
- Supporting clients in changing behaviors
- Building trust with clients
- Providing case management services
- Interpretation and translation services
- Accompanying clients to appointments
- Determining eligibility status
- Retention of clients
- Home visiting
- Community organizing

Courtesy of Arkansas Community Health Worker Association

# CHWs IN ARKANSAS

Arkansas Employer Survey, Dec 2022– April 2023

349

Paid CHWs in Arkansas

65

Volunteer CHWs in Arkansas

65

Unique Employers

36

CHWs are certified, since  
inaugural launch May 2022

## ARCHWA Advocacy Initiatives

Over the summer of 2023, ARCHWA formed an Advocacy, Sustainability & Medicaid Reimbursement Subcommittee from the established Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The subcommittee has 23 members with CHWs and Stakeholders.

The subcommittee meets regularly and has goals related to research, planning an Arkansas Advocacy / Capitol Day, Medicaid Reimbursement and also planned National CHW Awareness week activities in Arkansas.

Through May 31, 2024, ARCHWA has health disparities grant funding through the Arkansas Department of Health in collaboration with the UAMS College of Public Health with outcomes related to the work of this subcommittee.

Nationally, there are proposed changes in the 2024 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule that would support the work of CHWs.

Courtesy of Arkansas Community Health Worker Association

# PATIENT STORIES

## CHW Successes in Pharmacy



*"I was able to fill out a couple of forms for people about two years ago for them to get their Dexcom meters sent directly from the company that makes them at no cost to them, or maybe five dollars a month, because they could not afford them with their health insurance copays ... And so facilitating that for them has just literally been life-changing for one family. They were able to take a vacation for the first time in sixteen years because they weren't having to pay for diabetic testing supplies. All because I took two hours out of my day two years ago to fill out a form for them. And so that in my mind is what a CHW, to make your community, to make healthcare more accessible to your community."*

**-Adrian, Arkansas Community Health Worker**



*... And so if I can do that by helping someone fill out a form that they can't read or explaining something, or if even I can't explain it, finding the person who can, I think information gathering is a huge task that people probably need to be able, I feel like all high school kids need to learn how to find out information, for lack of a better way of explaining it, like if you don't know the answer this is how we find it, and even if you call the wrong person four times it will still help you figure out who the right person is."*

**-Christine, Arkansas Community Health Worker**



# PATIENT STORIES

## CHW Impact on the Community



*CHW Impact on the Community* "...we volunteer just with the various activities around [city] that the chamber puts on, so we're there to greet people and to help hand out paper, just basically whatever they would like us to do because we think it's a great way to be a presence in our community."

**-Brandon, Arkansas Community Health Worker**

*"I think that there's just a great need for that in rural Arkansas, just to be a go-between between, between somebody who has doctor in front of their name and terrifies people, like you don't want to ask that question to somebody who is, in air quotes, important, but the mom that you see at the soccer game on Saturday mornings is way more approachable."*

**-Rachel, Arkansas Community Health Worker**





# HIRING A CHW

## Benefit of CHW to Community Pharmacy

- Being in the pharmacy allows for **more engagement** with the public
- Pharmacies are accessible resource for patients
- Reduced workload stress on pharmacists and other staff, and administrative support
- Dedicated **outreach** efforts to bridge customer service gaps and provide additional support to patients based on community needs
- Dedicated personnel to **provide education** and additional resources for patients

As illustrated by Daly and Jacobs, the specialized skills of community health workers and pharmacy staff offer a unique role.



\* = Training in the Social Determinants of Health and community resources

**Figure 4. Integration of Community Healthcare Workers into Community Pharmacy**

Reference: Chris Daly, David Jacobs, A Community Pharmacy Driven Toolkit. [https://communitypharmacyfoundation.org/resources/grant\\_docs/CPFGGrantDoc\\_99859.pdf](https://communitypharmacyfoundation.org/resources/grant_docs/CPFGGrantDoc_99859.pdf)

# HIRING A CHW

The Community Health Worker (CHW) role is crucial for effective community outreach. They act as the pharmacy's eyes, ears, arms, and legs in the community. This outreach can significantly improve a pharmacy's visibility, accessibility, and reputation as a helpful resource, making a remarkable difference in connecting with people and providing assistance. Certain skills are crucial for the CHW to have to perform effective outreach.

## CHW Key Traits

Empathy	Active listener	Some healthcare experience	Organized
Excellent verbal communication	Problem-solver	Warm, relatable personality	Involved in the community
Dedication to community health	Relationship-building skills	Approachable	Likes talking to people

## Recommended Roles and Responsibilities

In the landscape of community health, the roles and responsibilities of a community health worker (CHW) employed by a pharmacy are as varied as they are vital. These individuals serve as bridges between the healthcare system and the communities they serve. CHW employment encompasses diverse models, accommodating both **full-time and part-time** commitments. Their dedicated hours, protected to perform this invaluable work, allow them to effectively connect with other CHWs and offer essential support to the community. While many agree that at least part-time engagement is necessary, CHW and pharmacy technician roles can be seamlessly integrated with other pharmacy responsibilities. In addition, there is potential for a full-time role, particularly in the context of specific projects and pharmacy's expansion of health services. In essence, a CHW's role within the pharmacy framework opens the door to a consistent commitment to community outreach, enriching the lives of those they serve while embracing the potential for growth and innovation.

# HIRING A CHW

## Sample Roles and Responsibilities

- Identify patients in need, especially elderly and low-income
- Help with insurance questions (Rx coverage, coupons, savings cards), managing email and voicemail lines, handling general inquiries, and organizing vaccine clinics.
- Educate patients on vaccines by dispelling misinformation
- Host, organize, and market vaccine events outside of the pharmacy; education only or vaccinators on site
- Create marketing and educational flyers, social media content, mailers, pamphlets
- Patient engagement included phone calls (initial & follow-ups) and in-person meetings
- Recruit interpreters to assist at vaccine clinics
- Utilize a variety of social media to promote services and programs (Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat)

## Examples & Resources

- Organize and attend community events such as church gatherings, school orientations, home visits to provide education and/or administer vaccines
- Leverage community relationships with churches, Boys & Girls clubs
- Partner with health care agencies
- On site events at large employers in the area

Essential Resources

Computer, printer, phone, email

Additional Resources

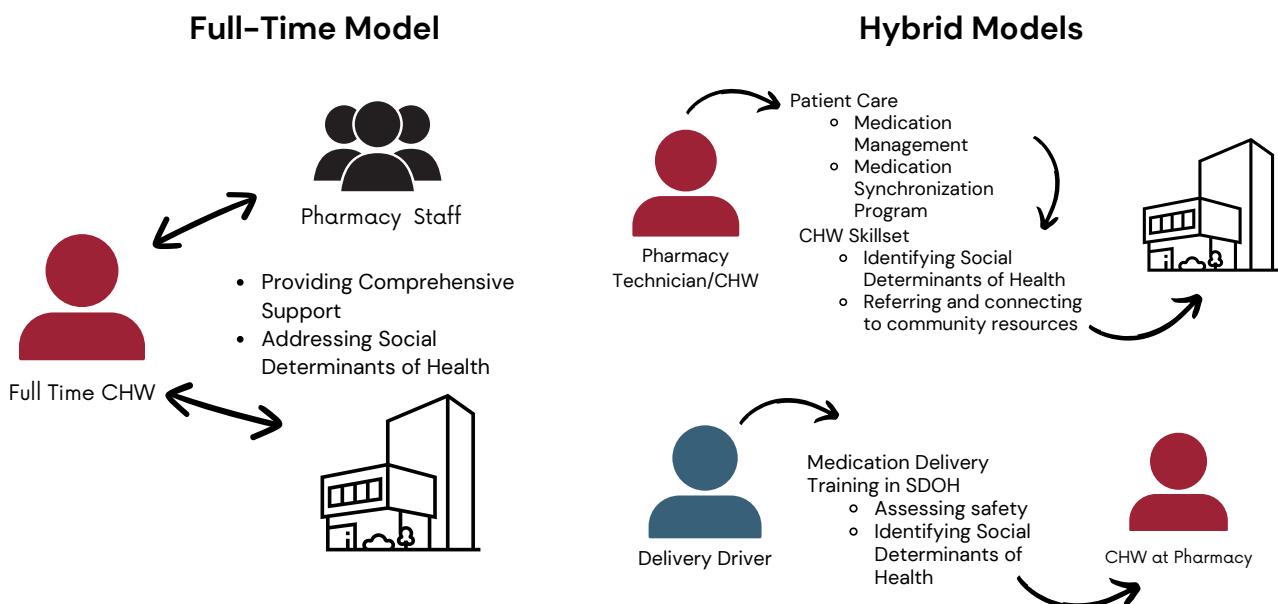
Dedicated work space or exam room, company vehicle

# HIRING A CHW

## Recommended Services for CHWs in Community Pharmacy

- Prioritized list of interventions
  - Educate and schedule all ACIP-recommended vaccines
  - Health screenings
  - Medication adherence
  - Naloxone education
  - Basic health education: suicide prevention education, mental health, diabetes
- Identify and triage social determinants of health (SDOH) concern
- Screen patients for SDOH
- Assess patient for SDOH
- Refer patients to internal pharmacy programs to resolve SDOH
- Refer patients to external community resources to resolve SDOH
- Care coordination with other providers
- Provide insurance assistance and medication assistance programs
- Assist senior citizens with health insurance plans & medication coverage
- Bridge to health department for non-medical services

## Employment Models



# HIRING A CHW

**Create a career ladder for your staff!**

	Pharmacy Technician	Pharmacy Technician and Certified CHW	Certified Pharmacy Technician and Certified CHW
Motivational Interviewing			✓
Basic health education and screening			✓
Medication assistance programs		✓	✓
Identifying access, financial, or social needs		✓	✓
Connecting to community resources		✓	✓
Answering patient medication questions	✓	✓	✓
Filling Prescriptions	✓	✓	✓
Processing Sales	✓	✓	✓

# VALUE & ROI

## Why Invest in Community Health?

Health care reform has ushered in value-based care programs for delivering and paying for healthcare. The most valuable aspect to any healthcare organization is engagement with their patients – a clear strength of community pharmacy. Community pharmacies need to position themselves for that return on investment in the future because payers are looking for a total health solution.

[CMMI Health](#) Care Innovation Awards (HCIA) Meta-Analysis and Evaluators Collaborative An investigation of over a hundred innovative care delivery models revealed that only those using CHWs lowered cost (\$138 per beneficiary per quarter).

[Maryland CHW Outreach](#) Program on Healthcare Utilization Patients saw savings of \$2,245 per year with a total saving of \$262,080 across 117 patients per year.

## Short Term Returns

- Local county grants or federal grants
- Increased service demand by patients
- Increased sales of OTC, Rx, and services
- Increased medication adherence



# VALUE & ROI

## Long-Term: Medicare Star Ratings 2027

Health Equity Index (HEI) reward for the 2027 Star Ratings further incentivizes Parts C and D plans to focus on improving care for enrollees with social risk factors (SRFs)

HEI summarizes performance among Low Income Subsidy/Dual Eligible (LIS/DE) and disability status enrollees across multiple Star Ratings measures into a single score.

- Score on HEI is translated into a reward added to the overall and summary Star Ratings for contracts that qualify.
- The HEI reward will be implemented beginning with the 2027 Star Ratings (measurement years 2024 and 2025).

Read More here:

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/path-forwardhe-data-paper.pdf>

## Impact for Pharmacies

- Plans will be searching for providers of these services
- Plans will be focusing on new metrics to determine covered networks and providers
- Implementing a Health Equity team and program will give you a competitive edge

## Funding Opportunities

- Affordable Care Act (ACA)
- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV)
- Medicaid Reimbursement
- Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP)
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Innovation Center
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Grant Programs
- National Association of Community Health Workers (NACHW)

The National Association of Community Health Workers has published a comprehensive review of sustainable financing for CHW Employment.

<https://nachw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SustainableFinancingReportOctober2020.pdf>



# TOOLS

1

CHW Training & Certification

2

Sample Job Description

3

Sample Interview Questions

4

Sample Marketing

# TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

CHW certification is established and maintained by the Arkansas Community Health Worker Association. There are three tracks to apply for certification and three recognized training programs: Tri-County Health, Arkansas Rural Health Partnership and UAMS Community Health and Research.

	Experiential Track	Traditional Track	Apprenticeship Training Track
Age Requirement	18	18	18
Application Cost	\$50	\$50	\$50
Training Requirements	N/A	Complete an approved 120-hour core competency training program including 80 hours of didactic training and 40 hours of guided field practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete an approved 120-hour core competency training program including 80 hours of didactic training and 40 hours of guided field practice</li> <li>• Complete 80 hours of supplemental training which supports core competencies and professional development               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Limited-time supplemental track specific for pharmacy-embedded CHWs!</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Experience Requirements	4 years total (8,240 hours) with 2 years in Arkansas	2 years total (4,160 hours) with 1 year in Arkansas	1 year total (2,080 hours) with 1 year in Arkansas

# TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

## Apprenticeship Track (continued)

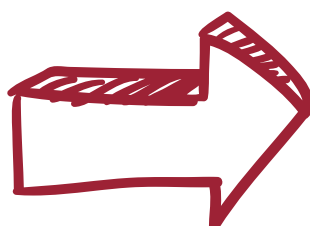
UAMS Community Health & Research training program is known as the Training and Apprenticeship Program (TAP). TAP is a yearlong 160 hour training program that provides extra opportunities to CHWs including 80 hours of supplemental learning, monthly mentoring, technology support, and wrap around services.

**For a limited time through a CDC grant, participation fees are waived, lodging is provided, and a monthly stipend is provided to participants.** Find out more: <https://nwa.uams.edu/chr/programs/health-equity-and-access/community-health-workers/>.

The class schedule for the Core Training is:

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Training is from 8 AM – 5 PM</b> <b>Daily Class Type:</b>
Monday	In-person training
Tuesday	In-person training
Wednesday	Virtual Classroom and On-demand training
Thursday	Virtual Classroom and On-demand training
Friday	Virtual Classroom and On-demand training
Monday	Virtual Classroom and On-demand training
Tuesday	Virtual Classroom and On-demand training
Wednesday	Virtual Classroom and On-demand training
Thursday	In-person training
Friday	In-person training

CHWs working at Arkansas CPESN pharmacies, who participate in the TAP program will be enrolled in pharmacy specific supplemental education for an additional 80 hours. See more next page!



# TRAINING & CERTIFICATION

## Pharmacy Specific Supplemental Education

- The curriculum is developed by the CPESN HealthEquity Special Purpose Network.
- Pharmacies who have a CHW in the TAP program will receive 6 months reimbursement for membership in Health Equity Special Purpose Network.
- The Live classes are held virtually, and are usually in the evening for 1–2 hours.
- 60 hours of service learning.



Topic/Lecture	Faculty	Due Date	Format
Community Health Workers and Pharmacies: A Win-Win Solution	John A Galdo, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, BCGP	Week 1	On-Demand
Chronic Disease Management, Health Outreach, and Understanding Z-Codes and Assessments	Bianca Daisey-Bell, PharmD	Week 1	On-Demand
Service-Learning Small Group	Ashley Stone, PharmD; John A. Galdo, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, BCGP	Week 2	Live (via Zoom)
Community Diagnosis, Outreach, and Advocacy in Practice	John A Galdo, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, BCGP and Stephanie Toney, CCHW, RN, BSN	Week 3	On-Demand
Conducting Interviews and Providing Patient-Centered Care	Joshua Kinsey-Brunk, PharmD	Week 4	On-Demand
CHW Panel	Bianca Daisey-Bell, PharmD	Week 5	Live (via Zoom)
Chronic Condition Review: Hypertension	Ashley Stone, PharmD	Week 6	On-Demand
Chronic Condition Review: Diabetes	Michelle Garvin, MA, CRC, CPhT, CHW	Week 7	On-Demand
Patient Cases	John A Galdo, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, BCGP	Week 8	Live (via Zoom)
Creating a Health Equity Service in Pharmacy	John A Galdo, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, BCGP	Week 9	On-Demand
Service-Learning Small Group	Ashley Stone, PharmD; John A. Galdo, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, BCGP	Week 10	Live (via Zoom)
Service-Learning Wrap Up	Ashley Stone, PharmD; John A. Galdo, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, BCGP	Week 12	Live (via Zoom)

# SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

The Community Health Worker will be responsible for promoting healthy living, providing education and resources, and connecting patients with healthcare services within the local community. The Community Health Worker will develop and manage relationships with local community-based, faith-based, and/or non-profit organizations to connect community members to pharmacy services and resources. The Community Health Worker engages in a range of activities such as outreach, screening and assessment, health education, care coordination/service navigation, and community education and engagement.

## Key responsibilities:

- Collaborate with pharmacists to identify community health needs and develop strategies to address those needs.
- Develop and deliver health education materials to patients, families, and community groups.
- Assist patients in accessing healthcare services and navigating the healthcare system.
- Collaborate with local healthcare providers and community organizations to promote health and wellness initiatives.
- Conduct outreach to underserved populations and marginalized communities to promote health equity and reduce health disparities.
- Maintain accurate records of patient interactions and provide regular reports on program activities.

# SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

When interviewing CHWS consider the following:

**Does the candidate belong to the community you serve?** A key element of CHWs is their shared cultural background with the population they serve. It's this cultural connection that makes CHWs so special – and their role so effective in improving health outcomes.

**Does your CHW speak the language of the community?** In the case of immigrants or other minorities, language skills are key in giving the population the best chance at accessing healthcare.

**Is there a bias or background element that could impact care?** While this isn't always the case and should be evaluated on an individual basis, certain cultural sensitivities are worth keeping in mind.

7 must-have soft skills for CHWs:

- The ability to draw clear boundaries with the community, other staff, and themselves.
- Emotional resilience. Empathy and connection are key for CHWs. But it's equally important to develop a high EQ (emotional quotient or emotional intelligence) and develop coping skills to prevent burnout and other mental health issues.
- Cultural sensitivity and an existing cultural connection. Are they able to communicate as peers with your community?
- The ability to work independently and be successful in team environments. When you hire a Community Health Worker, you need someone who's self-directed yet has the ability to work collaboratively.
- The ability and willingness to learn new things. This includes new technology or tools, challenging situations in the field, and dealing with other issues on the go.
- Organizational skills. Are they able to organize and prioritize their work with minimal guidance?
- Clear communication. Are they able to clearly communicate an idea or resource?

# SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Sample Questions

- Tell me about yourself and what interested you in this position.
- Share an experience you had in dealing with a difficult person and how you handled the situation.
- Can you tell me about a time when you helped coach or mentor someone? What improvements did you see in the person's knowledge or skills?
- Share an experience in which you successfully shared a difficult piece of information. (Make sure that the candidate has open lines of communication).
- Tell me how you organize, plan, and prioritize your work.
- What are some of your biggest strengths or what are you really good at?
- On the other side of that coin, what are some areas in which you struggle or feel like you have room for improvement?
- Please share an experience in which you presented to a group. What was the situation and how did it go?
- Can you tell me about a time when you were presented with an ethical dilemma in a work setting and what was the outcome?
- Tell me how you cope with stress.
- How do you personally practice self-care?
- Tell me about a time when you developed your own way of doing things or were self-motivated to finish an important task.
- Can you tell me about a time when your patience was tested? How did you keep your emotions in check?
- How do you handle ambiguity?
- Tell me about a time when you did not have clear guidance at a job. How did you handle that?
- How would you describe your communication style? What is your preferred method of communication? What are some strategies you use to avoid miscommunication?
- Provide a time when you worked in a rapidly evolving workplace. How did you deal with the change? (Make sure the candidate is flexible.)
- Provide a time when you dealt calmly and effectively with a high-stress situation.
- Share an experience in which personal connections to coworkers or others helped you to be successful in your work. (Make sure candidate works well with others.)
- Can you tell me about your experience with working with people from different cultures and/or backgrounds? What is something you learned from your experience?
- How do you deal with conflict? With either peers or clients?
- Tell me about a time when you experienced conflict at work and how did you deal with it?



# MARKETING

Engaging current customers is the best way to connect, empower, and grow your services. Arkansas CHWs suggested advertising your CHW and their unique role. Their suggestions and a sample poster are provided.

Hang signage about services

Designate a direct phone number and email

Create pamphlets to distribute at vaccine clinics

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## SDOH Toolkit for Community Pharmacies

A social determinants of health (SDoH) program toolkit outlining processes to be implemented in the community pharmacy setting. Completed an extensive review of literature to identify best practices of establishing a SDoH program with the following major sections: (1) Overview of SDoH, (2) New Roles for Pharmacy Staff in a SDoH Pharmacy, (3) Development of Key Skills for CHWs and SDoH Specialists, (4) Implementation Plan – Phase I, (5) Implementation Plan – Phase II, (6) Additional Considerations, (7) Pharmacy Spotlights, (8) Appendices (intervention forms and resources).

Citation: Amanda A. Foster, Christopher J. Daly, Tripp Logan, Richard Logan, Heather Jarvis, John Croce, Zarina Jalal, Troy Trygstad, David M. Jacobs, Implementation and evaluation of social determinants of health practice models within community pharmacy. Journal of the American Pharmacists Association. Volume 62, Issue 4. 2022.

Click here for full toolkit:

[https://communitypharmacyfoundation.org/resources/grant\\_docs/CPFGrantDoc\\_99859.pdf](https://communitypharmacyfoundation.org/resources/grant_docs/CPFGrantDoc_99859.pdf)

## Rural Health Information Hub

This toolkit compiles promising practices and resources to support rural communities seeking to develop CHW programs. The target audiences for the toolkit are rural organizations including healthcare providers; nonprofit organizations; faith-based organizations; businesses; networks; and community-based organizations.

For more information about rural community health programs, including how to develop and implement a program, visit the [Rural Community Health Toolkit](#).

## Arkansas Community Health Worker Association

The Arkansas Community Health Worker Association (ARCHWA) is a professional association designed to support community health workers across Arkansas in their mission to improve health outcomes and health care.



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# NOTES



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