



# Introduction to the Community Health Worker/Promotor/a Model

Teresa Rios and Noelle Wiggins



# Objectives

By the end of the presentation, participants will know more about:

- The historical roots of the CHW model
- Roles and competencies of CHWs
- Recent developments in the CHW field
- The unique contribution can CHWs make to reducing health inequities

# Agenda

- Introduction Noelle
- The term “CHW” Tere
- Who are CHWs? Noelle
- History of the CHW model Tere
- Roles and skills of CHWs Noelle
- Demonstrated outcomes Noelle
- Recent developments Tere

# Teresa Rios

- Promotora with the El Niño Sano Project, 1988-1991
- Promotora with the La Familia Sana Project, 1991-1994
- Co-founded Oregon Public Health Association CHW Committee, 1994
- Project Coordinator for the Madres en Marcha Project, 1992-1995
- Helped to design and manage the La Comunidad Sana Project, 1995-1998
- Advisory Board of the Natl. Community Health Advisor Study, 1995-1997
- Chair of the APHA CHW Special Primary Interest Group, 2001-2003.



# Noelle Wiggins

- Trained and supported CHWs in a rural, conflictive area of El Salvador, 1986-1990
- Directed the La Familia Sana Program, 1990-1995
- Assoc. Dir. of the Natl. Community Health Advisor Study, 1995-1997. Co-authored chapter on Roles and Competencies of CHWs.
- Initiated and managed the Poder es Salud/Power for Health Project, 2002-2005. This CBPR project funded by the CDC investigated whether CHWs who used popular education could successfully promote health and reduce health disparities in the African American and Latino communities.



What is one thing you know or  
have heard about CHWs?



# Community Health Worker

(Rios and Wiggins, 1997)

- Community Health Workers are carefully chosen community members who participate in training so that they can promote health in their own communities.
- Communities can be defined by race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, geography, disability status, or other factors.



# Community Health Worker

## (APHA CHW SPIG 2005)

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 . . . between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A CHW also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support and advocacy.



What caught your attention in the  
radio play?



# Qualities of Community Health Workers (Wiggins & Borbon, 1997)

- Membership in or shared experience with the community being served
- Personal strength and courage
- Friendly, outgoing, sociable
- Patient
- Open-minded/non-judgmental
- Motivated and capable of self-directed work
- Caring, compassionate
- Empathetic



# Qualities of Community Health Workers

- Committed/dedicated
- Respectful
- Honest
- Open/eager to grow, change/learn
- Dependable, responsible, reliable
- Flexible and adaptable
- Desire the help the community
- Persistent
- Creative/resourceful



# Skills of Community Health Workers

- Communication Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Teaching skills
- Service Coordination Skills
- Advocacy Skills
- Capacity-Building Skills
- Knowledge Base
- Organizational Skills



# Roles of Community Health Workers

- Cultural mediation
- Health education
- Building individual and community capacity
- Informal counseling and social support
- Advocacy
- Connection to resources
- Direct service (e.g. screenings, material aid)



# Demonstrated outcomes of CHW programs

- Improved utilization management
- Increased access to preventive care
- Enhanced patient-provider communication
- Improved compliance with prescribed care
- Preventive health education and behavior change
- Chronic disease management
- Enhanced social support
- Improved understanding within the health care system about community norms and needs
- Addressing the social determinants of health



# Recent developments in the CHW field



Thank you!