

# COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER CERTIFICATION IN OHIO

## FINDINGS FROM THE 2025 OHIO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

The 2025 Ohio Community Health Worker (CHW) Statewide Workforce Assessment examined certification, training, and workforce experiences using individual and group interviews, surveys of CHWs and employers, stakeholder input, and Ohio Board of Nursing (OBN) certification data (July 2025).

**1,341**

CHWs certified by the Ohio Board of Nursing, *more than double* the number in 2018

**71**

Ohio counties with certified CHWs, with the greatest concentration in Franklin, Cuyahoga, and Hamilton counties

**1 in 3**

CHWs show an ongoing commitment to the profession by maintaining certification for *five or more years*

### CERTIFICATION IS VALUED—AND EXPECTED

- Participants report that certification strengthens:
  - Professional identity
  - Community trust and credibility
  - CHW confidence and ability to serve their communities effectively

CHWs also greatly value their training programs not only for the knowledge and practical skills they gain but also for the strong sense of community and professional networks developed through training.

### CHW TRAINING

Training is a foundational component of building and sustaining the CHW workforce in Ohio.

- There are 14 OBN-approved CHW training programs statewide.
- Certification requires formal training, supervised fieldwork, and continuing education.
- Participants identified several areas for additional training—including mental health awareness and support and trauma-informed care—among many other topics.

**71.3%** of employers require certification at the time of hire (or mandate it within set timeframe)

## CHALLENGES IN CERTIFICATION AND RENEWAL

### For initial certification, participants described:

- Too few OBN-approved training programs or infrequent offerings in a region
- Lack of information provided by the training program on how to apply for the certification
- An overly complex web based administrative system to navigate
- Requiring a copy of an inaccessible high school diploma though the applicant has a post-secondary degree

### For certification renewal, participants reported:

- Cost barriers due to obtaining continued education and biennial renewal
- Gaps in continuing education
  - Limited availability of required Category A trainings, with only one referencing CHWs in the title (as of October 2025)
  - Minimal CHW-specific offerings
  - Existing listings often reflect nursing-focused language not inclusive of CHWs



## CHANGES STAKEHOLDERS WOULD LIKE TO SEE

- Simplify the initial certification process, especially for those with higher education or out-of-state credentials.
- Simplify and clarify the certification renewal process, including CE tracking and submission.
- Create a centralized, user-friendly portal for CHWs so that those seeking initial certification can easily find where to get their training for certification and certified CHWs can easily locate continued education opportunities necessary for renewal.
- Provide easily accessible ethics and Category A CEUs free of charge.
- Reevaluate the placement of CHW certification under the Board of Nursing, considering establishing different certifications for CHWs or pairing with a board more aligned with their work.
- Address financial and logistical barriers to certification, including cost, scheduling, and documentation requirements.
- Ensure CHWs are represented on boards overseeing certification.
- Create career ladders within the CHW profession to allow for advancement.