
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 2436

Brief Description: Defining community health workers and their roles.

Sponsors: Representatives Robinson, Riccelli, Pollet, Ormsby and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Defines community health worker and the ten roles of community health workers.

Hearing Date: 1/16/18

Staff: Kim Weidenaar (786-7120).

Background:

Community health workers (CHWs) are known by a number of names and may be referred to as community health advisors, lay health educators, peer health promoters, and promotores de salud, among other names. Community health workers are not defined in statute, although some states have enacted laws regarding CHWs.

The Community Health Worker task force was established in 2015 to create policy change recommendations aligning the CHW workforce with the Healthier Washington initiative. The task force focused on making recommendations supporting integration of CHWs into community health and the health care system. The task force included 55 members from across the state including legislators, representatives from health care delivery systems, community based organizations, local health jurisdictions, tribes, professional associations, labor, CHWs from a wide range of sectors, and others. The task force issued a report in December 2015 that detailed recommendations related to the definition of CHWs, their roles and skills, CHW training and education, and CHW financing and sustainability.

Summary of Bill:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Community Health Worker task force's recommended definition of community health workers (CHWs) and their roles are statutorily defined in an effort to create consistency across the state. Community health worker is defined as a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of or who has a uniquely close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison, link, or intermediary between health and social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A frontline public health worker is someone who works to improve community health.

The roles and activities of CHWs as identified by the Community Health Worker task force are defined as:

- cultural mediation among individuals, communities, and health and social service systems;
- providing culturally appropriate health education and information;
- conducting outreach;
- care coordination, case management, and system navigation;
- providing coaching and social support;
- advocating for individuals and communities;
- building individual and community capacity;
- providing direct services;
- implementing individual and community assessments; and
- participating in evaluation and research.

These roles and activities may be carried out with adequate supervision.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.