



## San Diego County Capacity-Building Collaborative Helps Advance the Community Health Workers/Promotores Workforce in Medi-Cal

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Over the past several years, the state's awareness of the community health worker, *promotor*, and representative (CHW/P/R) workforce has increased dramatically. California has made several investments and policy changes that seek to support and amplify the role of CHW/P/Rs, including adding a new Medi-Cal CHW benefit. Although community health workers, *promotores*, and representatives have a long history of connecting and listening to those not well served by the traditional health care system, integrating their work into Medi-Cal brings opportunity. But it also comes with challenges and barriers that need to be addressed to ensure that these new benefits reach their full potential.

**"We are learning that everyone needs to come together and to learn together. The policy and regulatory environments are shifting so much. And everything is happening all at once."**

**—Kitty Bailey, CEO, San Diego Wellness Collaborative**

In 2022 the San Diego Wellness Collaborative and its partners became part of the statewide [Community Health Worker/ Promotor/ Representative \(CHW/P/R\) Workforce Capacity-Building Collaborative](#), which was launched by the California Health Care Foundation in partnership with Health Leads in June 2022. The San Diego team was cofunded by the [Alliance Healthcare Foundation](#).

This project includes four regional groups working to advance health equity by developing and deploying financially sustainable CHW/P/R models that will positively impact the health of their communities. These regional groups include the Central Coast; Alameda County; Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties; and San Diego County and include a variety of partners such as managed care plans, academic institutions, community-based organizations, and others.

The San Diego Wellness Collaborative's participation in the statewide capacity-building collaborative is a natural extension of their work with the San Diego Accountable Community for Health (ACH), a multisector initiative that builds new relationships between clinical and community partners. Supporting the advancement of CHW/P/Rs is one of the health equity priorities for San Diego's ACH.

San Diego local leaders convened 10 community-based organizations interested in leveraging and expanding their CHW/P/R workforces by testing out the new Medi-Cal CHW benefit. Together, they developed and focused their efforts on two overarching goals:

- Build the capacity of community-based organizations so they can expand and sustain the CHW/P/R workforce in San Diego County, utilizing the new benefit implemented by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS).

- Help up to 10 local community-based organizations contract either directly or through an intermediary for the Medi-Cal CHW benefit and deploy 10+ CHW/P/Rs sustained by Medi-Cal.

The San Diego Wellness Collaborative helped its partner community-based organizations with several capacity-building activities, including these:

- Conducted a readiness assessment for Medi-Cal CHW services to help organizations determine whether they could contract with plans on their own.
- Provided trainings on Medi-Cal, CalAIM, and CHW service requirements.
- Developed tools, including:
  - A pro forma spreadsheet for community-based organizations to manage finances
  - Identifying workflows to meet DHCS requirements for Medi-Cal billing
  - Working with case management systems and modules with DHCS data requirements

Underlying all of San Diego’s work are the principles that CHW/P/Rs should have access to thriving wages and stable careers, that employers need to understand the value and uniqueness of the CHW/P/R workforce, and that CHW/P/R voices are central to all of their work.

One of the San Diego Wellness Collaborative’s primary partners is the San Diego County Promotores Coalition. The Promotores Coalition has regularly contributed its expertise, lessons learned, and perspectives of its members to shaping best practices for other community-based organizations to adopt and adapt. Together, the San Diego team and the Promotores Coalition hosted a CHW/P/R convening in English and Spanish, which was attended by 40 CHW/P/Rs. This reflects the value of centering the voices of CHW/P/Rs.

The San Diego Wellness Collaborative has successfully implemented multiple Medi-Cal contracts for CHW services, including three with Medi-Cal managed care plans (MCPs) and six with community-based organizations. In addition, one community-based organization contracted directly with an MCP to provide CHW services.

Looking forward, San Diego has established two communities of practice to continue their CHW/P/R work and to help organizations develop successful Medi-Cal CHW services.

1. Community-based organizations and CHW/P/Rs implementing Medi-Cal CHW services.
2. Organizations providing support for Medi-Cal CHW services implementation. This community includes academics, training organizations, health care plans, and those involved in workforce development.

In addition, the San Diego team is conducting an evaluation of the implementation of Medi-Cal CHW services to identify successes, key challenges, and the financial impact of these contracts.

**“It is important to emphasize the cross-site learning that has happened with this collaborative. The opportunity to connect with other regions has also been very fruitful. We have learned a lot from the other regions. And we have built relationships that will benefit the advancement of CHW/Ps statewide going forward.”**

**—Kitty Bailey, CEO, San Diego Wellness Collaborative**