

Community Health Worker Certification Program:

Using Popular Education to Improve Health Literacy in Underserved Populations

Project Team: Sharon Vance, BS, CHES; Noelle Wiggins, Ed.D, MSPH; Teresa Rios CHW; Beth Poteet, MSW; Arika Bridgeman-Bunyoli, MPH, CHW; Ben Escalante, B.Div, CHW; Pei-ru Wang Ph.D.

Introduction

Staff at the Community Capacitation Center (CCC) have designed The "We Are Health" curriculum based on the core roles and competencies identified in the National Community Health Advisor Study (Wiggins and Borbón, 1998).

Community Health Workers (CHWs) need a close understanding of the communities they serve; we seek out trusted community members already doing this type of work to participate in the trainings.

At the Community Capacitation Center, we believe CHWs have been promoting health literacy long before this term came into broad usage.

We use popular education to build capacity in the CHWs so they can better promote health literacy.

Communities of focus include:

- Immigrants/refugees
- Communities of color
- English language learners
- Those experiencing low health literacy
- Those experiencing health disparities.
- Those most affected by health inequities

"We Are Health"

The curriculum *covers these topics:*

- 1) **Orientation to the Health and Social Service System**
 - Introduction to the CHW Series
 - Access to Care
 - The Community Health Worker Profession
 - Patient Centered Primary Care Medical Home
 - Introduction to Public Health
 - Working with Multi-Disciplinary Teams
- 2) **Skill Base**
 - Teaching – Introduction to Popular Education
 - Community and Individual Strengths and Needs Assessments
 - Communication Skills
 - Community Engagement (Outreach) Skills
 - Community Organizing Skills
 - Counseling Skills
 - Cross-Cultural Skills
 - Leadership and Advocacy Skills
 - Self-Care Skills
 - Service Coordination and Collaboration Skills
- 3) **Health Issues**
 - Mental Health
 - Nutrition and Exercise in Promoting Health
 - Social Determinants of Health

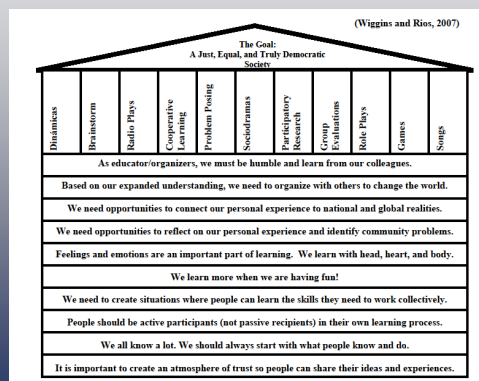
Popular Education

We use popular education (also known as empowerment and Freirean education) to facilitate the "We Are Health" trainings.

Some of the main ideas of popular education are: 1) We are all teachers and learners; 2) Everyone knows a lot as a result of her/his life experience; and 3) The goal of education should be to create healthier and more just communities.

Participants build capacity to use popular education to provide health education, facilitate groups, and create plans and goals with community members.

House of Popular Education



Results

Outcome Measures – July 2013 – June 2015

Number of community members completing training	180
Number of individual classes attended (Includes Continuing Ed.)	4,227
% if participants who reported an increased ability to promote health	97%
% of participants who reported increased understanding of the relationship between inequality and health	95%
% of participants that demonstrated increased knowledge of health, health systems, and health disparities	75%



Impact: Return on investment calculations for CHW programs range between \$2.28 to \$4.80 for every dollar spent on CHWs (Oregon Health Authority, 2012).

Bibliography

1. Wiggins, N., & Borb'on, I. A. (1998). Core roles and competencies of community health workers. In Final report of the National Community Health Advisor Study (pp. 15–49). Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
2. Wiggins, N & Rios, T (2007). An Introduction to Popular Education. Community Capacitation Center, Multnomah County Health Dept. All rights reserved.
3. Oregon Health Policy Board (2012). The Role of Non-Traditional Health Workers in Oregon's Health Care System. Oregon Health Authority.