

'25



CHW

CONFERENCE

Bemidji 2025

NOVEMBER 6 & 7

Thursday, November 6th

DAY 1 SCHEDULE

1:00PM

CHECK IN | SNACKS | VENDORS |
POSTERS

2:00PM

OPENING PLENARY
SUZANNE KOEPPLINGER
*"FOSTERING COMPASSION &
STRATEGIC THINKING"*

3:00PM

BREAKOUT SESSION 1

4:00PM

BREAKOUT SESSION 2

5:00PM

BREAKOUT SESSION 3

6:00PM

DINNER & NETWORKING
VENDORS | POSTERS

6:30PM

DISCUSSION PANEL:
*"CHWS' ROLE IN SUPPORTING AGING
POPULATIONS AND ELDERS"*

8:00PM

END OF DAY 1

VIEW ALL PRESENTER BIOS



DAY 1 DETAILED SCHEDULE

Thursday November 6th			
1:00pm- 2:00pm	Check in Snacks Vendors Poster Presentations		
2:00pm- 2:45pm	Opening Plenary Fostering Compassion and Strategic Thinking Suzanne Koepplinger MA -Catalyst North Consulting		
	Mississippi Room	Sunken Island Room	Diamond Point Room
3:00pm- 3:45pm	Unpacking Stigma and its impacts on substance use disorder Laura Rosier LSW Wilderness Health	Innovative expansions to Rural Health Care with Unlicensed Dental Assistants (UDA's) and Community Health Workers (CHW) in SW Minnesota Sarah Wovcha, JD, MPH Children's Dental Services & Megan Nieto, CHW CHW Solutions	Becoming a vaccine advocate Tabitha Hanson MPH, DNP, RN MN Department of Health
4:00pm- 4:45pm	Health Outcome Disparities: What Northwestern Minnesota is Doing About Them John Fick BA, MA, JD Sanford Health/Northwest Minnesota Community Health Hub & Sofiya Pdberetskaya, BA Sanford Health & Trista Hill, CHW Northwest Minnesota Community Hub	Skills for Success: A New Research Curriculum for CHWs to Enhance Work Opportunities Denita Ngwu, CHW & Anita Tamang SoLaHmo Partnership for Health and Wellness	Supporting Cancer Patients After Diagnosis: Is there a role for CHWs? Matt Flory American Cancer Society
5:00pm- 5:45pm	Making An Impact In Oral Healthcare in Rural Minnesota Wanda Jarchow #Luv1LuvAll	Learning from Community: Breaking Down Barriers to Chronic Disease Management for People with Disabilities Georgie Kinsman, MPH & Kim Matteen Minnesota Department of Health	Sustainable CHW Roadmap for Minnesota: How we can build on this plan together! Rachel Stoll, CHW Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance & Kristen Godfrey-Walters, MPH Minnesota Department of Health
6:00pm-6:30pm	Dinner Networking Vendors Poster Presentations		
6:30pm- 8:00pm	Discussion Panel: CHWs' Role in Supporting Aging Populations and Elders in Rural Settings		
6:30pm-6:40pm	Introduction of Panel	Connie Norman, CHW	Red Lake Nation
6:40pm-7:00pm	Challenging Ageism: Practical Strategies for CHWs	Melissa Lyon, EdD	Central Minnesota Council on Aging
7:00pm-7:20pm	Minnesota Aging Pathways	Melissa Hoeft, MSW	Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging
7:20pm-7:40pm	Insights from a Community-Based Participatory Model in Rural and Indigenous Communities on AD/ABRD in Northern Minnesota	Kelsie Larson, RDN, MPH & Kirsten Cruikshank, MSW	Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team
7:40pm- 8:00pm	Q & A Panel Discussion facilitated by Connie Norman, CHW		

Opening Plenary Session

Fostering Compassion & Strategic Thinking

2:00pm-2:45pm



Suzanne Koeplinger, MA
Catalyst North Consulting

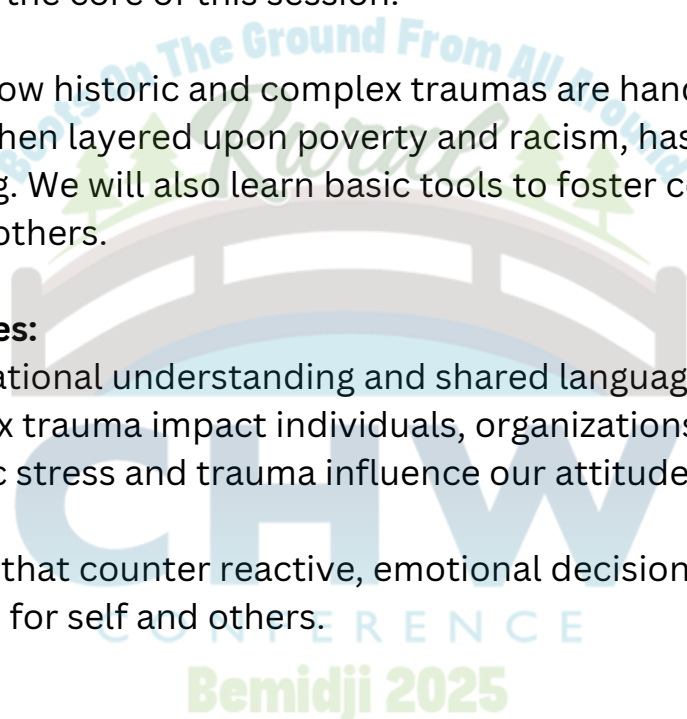
We each come into our work with unique gifts, biases, and coping strategies, which impact how we relate to those around us. Regular interaction with traumatized populations coupled with heavy workloads can impact us in unexpected ways and may reinforce a reactive worldview.

Understanding how our own central nervous system influences our behaviors and our health, and developing shared language and understanding around how trauma and toxic stress show up in our own lives and that of those we interact with be at the core of this session.

We will touch on how historic and complex traumas are handed down across generations and when layered upon poverty and racism, has a direct influence on decision making. We will also learn basic tools to foster compassion for ourselves and for others.

Learning Objectives:

- Develop a foundational understanding and shared language on how toxic stress and complex trauma impact individuals, organizations and systems.
- Explore how toxic stress and trauma influence our attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.
- Learn basic skills that counter reactive, emotional decision-making and foster compassion for self and others.



Breakout Session 1: 3:00pm-3:45pm

Mississippi Room



Laura Rosier, LSW
Wilderness Health

Unpacking Stigma and its impacts on substance use disorder

Through regional survey data and community conversations stigma remains one of the most significant barriers to effective treatment and recovery for individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) often rooted in cultural norms, moral judgements and systemic bias. In this session we explore the biological roots of stigma drawing on recent work in Northeastern Minnesota.

This session looks at how stigma manifests in healthcare, policy, and self. Participants will examine regional examples of stigma in media, reflect on how personal and cultural experiences shape perceptions and learn strategies to advocate for change.

Sunken Island Room



Sarah Wovcha, JD, MPH
Children's Dental Services

Innovative expansions to Rural Health Care with Unlicensed Dental Assistants (UDA's) and Community Health Workers (CHW) in SW Minnesota

"Boots on the ground all around" conference theme is fitting for our presentation about a unique statewide partnership to improve access to dental and medical care in the far SW rural areas of MN. What started out as a partnership with Children's Dental Services (CDS), providing rural dental access health for kids and pregnant women, expanded over several years, providing several grants leading up to the opportunity to improve Public Health Workforce in Rock and Nobles funded by HRSA. Partnerships with local dentists allowed opportunities for UDAs to obtain experience in the dental field and assisted with certification of inexperienced staff to work as CHW's in a Sexual-Reproductive Health clinic.

This partnership improved the workforce and helped bridge the workforce gaps in several dental offices. Additionally, adding bilingual CHW's to provide increased health equity and access for sexual reproductive clinics in the 15-county rural service area. The partnership and funding help to create a new CHW program, targeting young teens and other newly pregnant people, navigate complicated systems, to ensure healthy pregnancy outcomes. CHW certification was achieved with the MN West partnership. To ensure sustainability beyond the grant, CHW Solutions' partnership and expertise helped with design process, documentation and billing practices for success. The UDA portion of this grant work reduced a gap in our rural dental clinics while providing income and education for students interested in the dental field.



Megan Nieto, CHW
CHW Solutions

Additional Presenters:

Terri Janson
Roxanne Hayenga
Wanda Jarchow

Breakout Session 1: 3:00pm-3:45pm

Diamond Point Room



Tabitha Hanson, MPH
MN Dept. of Health

Becoming a Vaccine Advocate

Building trusted vaccine messengers is more important than ever due to gaps in childhood immunization rates, widespread misinformation about vaccines and persistent disparities in our communities. This presentation is designed to encourage community health workers by providing tools they can use when talking with families and individuals about immunizations. The goal of this session is to leverage partners who already have trusted relationships with parents and families to feel more comfortable navigating conversations about immunizations when they arise.

As a way to equip trusted messengers, Minnesota Department of Health staff will present information about vaccine advocacy modeled off of Voices for Vaccines' Trusted Messenger training which is grounded in motivational interviewing. Participants will learn to creatively address vaccine misinformation which has led to vaccine hesitancy.

The session will provide a basic overview of vaccines and how they work, emphasizing safety and monitoring; an overview of vaccine hesitancy; the 4-As model for approaching vaccine conversations; example scenarios; and time for discussion.

Reliable resources will be provided as well as tools and tips for answering common vaccine questions and concerns. Participants will receive a helpful handout that can be used for easy reference as they go out and begin advocacy work.



Breakout Session 2: 4:00pm-4:45pm

Mississippi Room



John Fick, BA, MA, JD
Sanford Health & Northwest
Community Health Hub

Health Outcome Disparities: What Northwestern Minnesota is Doing About Them

Our topic of the Northwest Minnesota Community Health Hub contributes to the conference by educating conference attendees of the methods used to create the Hub as well as allowing for a discussion regarding the Hub and the positive changes it can make in the Bemidji community in regards to social determinants of health and allowing for people to get access to resources and services they need.

This presentation will allow community health professionals to learn about the Hub and the resources it entails.



Sofiya Podberetskaya BA
Sanford Health & Northwest
Community Health Hub

Sunken Island Room



Denita Ngwu, CHW
SoLaHmo

Skills for Success: A New Research Curriculum for CHWs to Enhance Work Opportunities

This interactive presentation will engage CHWs in discussions around the expertise they bring to the research field, roles they can play, and opportunities for personal and professional growth while working on research projects. Participants will review highlights of the online research curriculum for CHWs, that was co-designed using a Community-Engaged Research approach (CEnR) by a multi-disciplinary group including: four seasoned CHWs, SoLaHmo Partnership for Health and Wellness Program (CUHCC), Minnesota Community Health Workers Alliance, and the Clinical Translational Science Institute's community engagement core, CEARC.

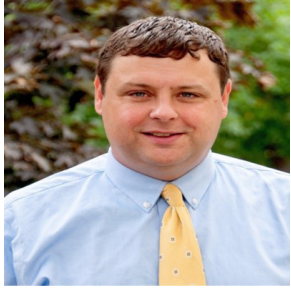
In addition, participants will gain key principles needed to support translation of every-day operations into prospective research studies. Lastly, the session will explain how to access the curriculum and how participating in research can enhance CHW research job opportunities.



Anita Tamang, CHW
SoLaHmo

Breakout Session 2: 4:00pm-4:45pm

Diamond Point Room



Matt Flory
American Cancer Society

Supporting Cancer Patients After Diagnosis: Is there a role for Community Health Workers?

The effectiveness of Community Health Workers in promoting cancer screening is well documented and well known, but numerous studies suggest there may be a role for CHWs in supporting cancer patients after a diagnosis by helping to address barriers.

A number of community based organizations like the American Cancer Society offer free support and can sometimes help patients with transportation and lodging if they seek care far from home. Participants in this breakout will learn more about opportunities for patient education and navigation during treatment as well as the free programs and services available through the American cancer society.



Breakout Session 3: 5:00pm-5:45pm

Mississippi Room



Wanda Jarchow
Luv1LuvAll

Making An Impact in Oral Healthcare in Rural Minnesota

In early 2017, the Blandin Foundation selected Luverne, Minnesota, as the site for the LPEP (Leaders Partnering to End Poverty) program. Through this initiative, the lack of accessible dental care for residents of Rock County was identified as a significant concern.

Within the 18 counties comprising the Southwest Minnesota region, 7 were identified as having limited or no access to dental care, including Rock County. Rock County, with a population of 9,687, has only one dentist. This dentist's practice is limited to four days a week, does not provide x-rays for children aged 5 and under or those with small jaws, and does not accept state dental insurance. Individuals and families needing services and qualifying for state dental insurance must travel 2-3 hours to find dentists who accept their insurance or are accepting new patients, which places a significant burden on already struggling families.

Luverne's #Luv1LuvAll LPEP program fostered collaborations to address the oral health challenges in Rock County. This presentation will share the efforts made to improve oral health access, including successful strategies and areas where progress was limited, with the goal of inspiring others to make a positive impact in their own communities.

Sunken Island Room



Georgie Kinsman, MPH
MN Dept. of Health

Learning from Community: Breaking Down Barriers to Chronic Disease Management for People with Disabilities

People with disabilities face significantly higher rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, and cardiovascular disease. In Minnesota, adults with disabilities are over six times more likely to report frequent poor health than those without disabilities. In response, the Minnesota Department of Health's Diabetes and Arthritis Unit set out to engage directly with people with disabilities—particularly those living outside the 7-county metro area—to better understand the unique barriers they face in managing chronic conditions.



Kim Matteen, BA
MN Dept. of Health

This session will explore findings from community engagement, highlighting real-world challenges related to healthcare access, support systems, and social determinants of health (SDOH), such as transportation, housing, income, and caregiving needs. Community Health Workers (CHWs) play a vital role in addressing these barriers by connecting individuals to critical non-clinical resources and providing culturally responsive support.

Breakout Session 3: 5:00pm-5:45pm

Diamond Point Room



Rachel Stoll, CHW
MNCHWA

Sustainable CHW Roadmap for Minnesota: How we can build on this plan together!

We all know that CHWs make a tangible impact on the lives of both patients and providers. CHWs can provide patient navigation, advocacy, social support, and health education that can result in powerful health behavior changes. CHWs provide literal and linguistic access to health clinics, community and social services, and community and patient support. CHWs improve quality of care across cultures, income levels and education levels.



Kristen Godfrey-Walters, MPH
MN Dept. of Health

These outcomes can only be achieved if CHW positions can be sustained over time. To make a CHW program launch and succeed, organizational readiness, training, and financing are necessary components. Statewide policy, funding, and planning efforts in MN from 2023-2025 have led to new resources and technical assistance available to CHWs and employers to facilitate successful CHW programs. This includes additional training opportunities for CHWs and CHW employers and organizational readiness tools and support for supervisors and administrators to support and grow the CHW profession internally –even before hiring.

Recent policy changes in MN and the US have increased reimbursement rates and billable services that CHWs can provide through both Medicaid and Medicare, leading to new ways to fund and maintain CHW programs; some of these positive changes may be under threat.

The Minnesota CHW Alliance and MDH have completed a statewide environmental scan of CHW programs, and developed a statewide infrastructure plan, logic model, and measurement plan which will lead to further efforts to expand on successful CHW program models and address barriers to expand and sustain CHW programs across the state.

We will share the sustainability plan, measurement plan and logic model and facilitate a conversation on where CHWs and CHW employers can plug into these plans and advance CHW sustainability statewide.

Discussion Panel: CHWs' Role in Supporting Aging Populations and Elders

6:30pm - 8:00pm



Melissa Lyon, ED. D.
Central MN Council on Aging



Melissa Hoeft, MSW
Dancing Sky Area
Agency on Aging



Kelsie Larson, RDN, MPH
Memory Keepers Medical
Discovery Team



Kirsten Cruikshank, MSW
Memory Keepers Medical
Discovery Team

- **Part 1:** Challenging Ageism: Practical Strategies for CHWs
- **Part 2:** Minnesota Aging Pathways
- **Part 3:** Insights from a Community-Based Participatory Model in Rural and Indigenous Communities on AD/ADRD in Northern Minnesota
- **Part 4:** Q & A Panel Discussion

CHW's Role in Supporting Aging Populations in Elders in Rural Settings:

This conference session brings together three dynamic presentations focused on enhancing the role of Community Health Workers (CHWs) in aging and rural health contexts. Melissa Lyon, Ed.D., will start off with information on challenging ageism, offering CHWs practical strategies to recognize and counter ageist biases in communication and care.

Melissa Hoeft, MSW, will present resources tailored to rural healthcare workers, emphasizing support for patients navigating Medicare and related programs, particularly during transitions in care or following new diagnoses. Kelsie Larson, RDN, MPH, and Kirsten Cruikshank, MSW, will share insights from community-based participatory research in Indigenous and rural communities, highlighting collaborative approaches to addressing Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (AD/ADRD).

The session will conclude with a panel discussion facilitated by Connie Norman, CHW, focused on fostering dialogue on community engagement, relationship-building, and the intersection of research and practice.



Friday, November 7th

DAY 2 SCHEDULE

7:30AM

MORNING YOGA | VENDORS |
POSTERS

8:30AM

LIGHT BREAKFAST & NETWORKING

9:00AM

BREAKOUT SESSION 4

10:00AM

CLOSING PLENARY
SANDY HENNUM & NAOMI CARLSON
*"ON THE FRONTLINES AND IN
CONTROL: MASTERING SELF-
LEADERSHIP AS A CHW"*

11:00AM

LUNCH & NETWORKING

AFTER 12:00PM

END OF DAY 2

VIEW ALL PRESENTER BIOS



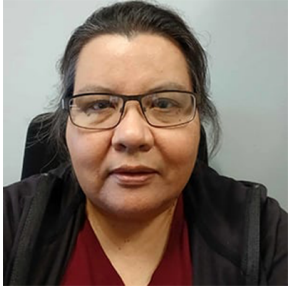
DAY 2 DETAILED SCHEDULE

Friday November 7th			
7:30am- 8:15am	Morning Yoga (bring a mat!) Diamond Point Room Networking Vendors Poster Presentations		
8:30am – 9:00am	Light breakfast Networking Vendors		
	<i>Mississippi Room</i>	<i>Sunken Island Room</i>	<i>Diamond Point Room</i>
	CHW's Role in Mental Health Outreach Martha Allen, CHW White Earth Mental Health	Advancing Health Equity for All Minnesotans: Building Community Through the Minnesota Health Equity Networks Ben Cahill, CHW and Dai Vue Minnesota Health Equity Networks	Introduction to Motivational Interviewing Karen Edens, BA, MPH Edens Group, Inc.
10:00am- 10:45am	Closing Plenary On the Frontlines and In Control: Mastering Self-Leadership as a CHW Sandy Hennum, BS & Naomi Carlson Headwaters Regional Development		
11:00am- Noon	Lunch Networking		



Breakout Session 4: 9:00am-9:45am

Mississippi Room



Martha Allen, CHW
White Earth
Mental Health

CHW's Role in Mental Health Outreach

Mental health is often overlooked when it comes to overall health. Community health workers can help with early identification of mental health concerns, reduce stigma associated with mental health and connect clients with services. Mental health impacts every part of our lives, regardless of age. Let's talk about it!

Sunken Island Room



Ben Cahil
MN Dept. of Health

Advancing Health Equity for All Minnesotans: Building Community Through the Minnesota Health Equity Networks

Those in the health professions, such as community health workers, need to sustain themselves not just as professionals but also as people. The work of building professional and personal capacity from the inside out means creating opportunity for individual aspects of care, community, and connection. This workshop will lead participants through a restorative practice session that will help promote their physical and emotional wellbeing. Team members will also present information and answer questions about Networks resources, challenges, and future goals well as how the Networks work to create a community of support. Information will also be shared on some of the forms of support offered, and ways to access Networks training, technical assistance, support, and resources.



Dai Vue
MN Dept. of Health

Diamond Point Room



Karen Edens, MPH
Edensgroup, Inc

Introduction to Motivational Interviewing

Identifying the desired outcome of a client seeking your services, recognizing their agenda and acknowledging what brings them to seek services are the first steps in utilizing the skill of motivational interviewing. Based on the concept of contemplative change, motivational interviewing is a tool that enables the professional to maximize the degree of client engagement in the helping process while providing measurable outcomes that matches the client's desired expectations. As a result of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the elements and function of motivational interviewing
- Describe the major stages of the contemplative change model.
- Define the beneficial role of motivational interviewing

Closing Plenary Session

On the Frontlines and In Control: Mastering Self-Leadership as a CHW

10:00am - 10:45am



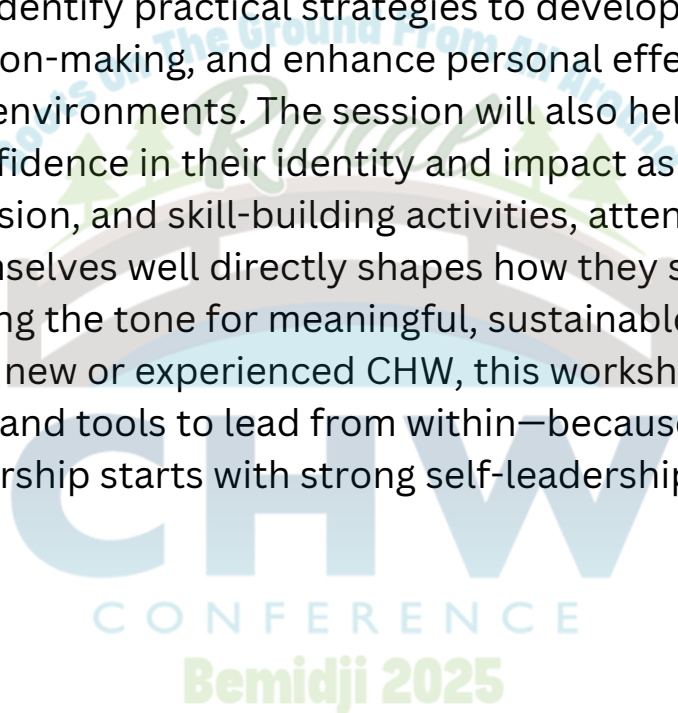
Sandy Hennum
Headwaters Regional
Development



Naomi Carlson
Headwaters Regional
Development

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are trusted frontline leaders who serve as vital bridges between health systems and the communities they support. But while CHWs are trained to care for others, they often lack structured tools to care for and lead themselves. This interactive workshop focuses on mastering self-leadership—the ability to intentionally guide one’s own thoughts, actions, and emotions—as a foundational skill for success in the field.

Participants will identify practical strategies to develop self-awareness, strengthen decision-making, and enhance personal effectiveness, even in high-pressure environments. The session will also help participants build greater confidence in their identity and impact as CHWs. Through reflection, discussion, and skill-building activities, attendees will explore how leading themselves well directly shapes how they show up in the community, setting the tone for meaningful, sustainable engagement. Whether you’re a new or experienced CHW, this workshop will equip you with the mindset and tools to lead from within—because effective community leadership starts with strong self-leadership.



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