

Changing the Sexual and Reproductive Health Landscape as CHWs

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Land Acknowledgement

The State of Minnesota is home to 11 federally recognized Indian Tribes with elected Tribal government officials. The State of Minnesota acknowledges and supports the unique political status of Tribal Nations across Minnesota and their absolute right to existence, self-governance, and self-determination. This unique relationship with federally recognized Indian Tribes is cemented by the Constitution of the United States, treaties, statutes, case law, and agreements. The State of Minnesota and Tribal governments across Minnesota significantly benefit from working together, learning from one another, and partnering where possible.

The Minnesota Department of Health recognizes, values, and celebrates the vibrant and unique relationships between the 11 Tribal Nations and the State of Minnesota. Partnerships formed through government-to-government relationships with these Tribes will effectively address health disparities and lead to better health outcomes for all of Minnesota.

In our work, we demonstrate our commitment to Tribal-State relations in the following ways: by engaging in continuous learning and attending American Indian community events.

SMOC Community Health Services: Growing Access, Improving Community Health

COMMUNITY SMOC HEALTH SERVICES

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

- SMOC Family Planning began in **1971**
- **2021-2024** SMOC invested in developing a skilled Community Health Worker (CHW) workforce.
- **June 2025**, SMOC hired its first full-time healthcare provider.
- **December 2025**, SMOC expanded beyond reproductive health and STI services to include **preventive health screenings** and fully implemented its **CHW program**.
- **March 2026**, we launched Express Labs STI testing services, and launched our Health Fair events that offer preventive health and STI screenings
- **September 2026**: SMOC transitioned its Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) credentialing designation from **Family Planning Agency** to **Community Health Clinic**
- **September 2026:** opened our first School-Based Health Center (SBHC)

Sexual and Reproductive Health Services program

- Almost 50 years old!
- Grantees across the state
- Goal is to increase access
- Five clinical and education service components
- Next RFP in 2027



MN Sexual Health Hotline

- Free education line
- Call, text, chat
- sexualhealthmn.org
- 1-800-783-2287



Learning Objectives

After this presentation, you will be able to:

- Explain why CHWs are well-suited to support sexual and reproductive health in their communities.
- Describe how core CHW skills can be applied to common sexual and reproductive health scenarios.
- Apply at least three communication strategies in your work.

What are barriers to sexual and reproductive healthcare access?



Sexual and Reproductive Health in Greater Minnesota

Pregnancy Prevention and Spacing in MN



2025 STI Data

- Overall decrease in 2025
- Chlamydia
  - Young people
  - Greater Minnesota
- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis
  - Congenital syphilis
- Mpox
- HIV
  - 253 cases in 2025



Supporting sexual and reproductive health as a CHW

Things to Know

- Content and resource knowledge
- Understanding of policy, legal, and social factors
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills



Services Should Be

- Medically accurate
- Person-centered
- Relevant, inclusive, and affirming
- Trauma- and healing-informed
- Nonjudgemental and free of personal biases
- Positive and reduce stigma

Focus on: Contraceptive Counseling

- Education needs to be beyond just the facts
- Supporting decision-making
- Family Planning Health Worker Training and Certification
  - Strengthens Knowledge of Sexual & Reproductive Health
  - Builds Confidence in Discussing Sensitive Topics



Focus on: Responding to Questions

Types of questions:

- Factual
- Am I normal?
- Permission-seeking
- Shock
- Personal
- Values-based



Responding to Values-based Questions

Affirm the asker, validate the question

Identify the question as being about values

Answer the factual part of the question

Explore the range of beliefs.
"For some _____, for others_____, for you _____"

Refer the person to a resource or trusted person in their life



Your Turn!

Keep in mind

Know yourself and your values

Keep learning

Look for teachable moments

This is community work



Closing

Turn to a neighbor and share a response to one of the following:



- One thing you'll keep thinking about



- One thing you are feeling



- One step you're going to take

Thank You!

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Resource list will be included with slides