

RURAL CHW CONFERENCE

WORTHINGTON • MINNESOTA

Hands On, Hearts In.

MINNESOTA RURAL CHW CONFERENCE

'26

WORTHINGTON, MINNESOTA

OCTOBER 8 - 9, 2026

WORTHINGTON MINNESOTA



ABOUT

Located in southwest Minnesota, Worthington is a welcoming rural community known for its strong sense of connection, cultural richness, and scenic natural surroundings. Situated along the shores of Lake Okabena, the city offers abundant opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, from walking and biking trails to water recreation and other lakeside activities.

What makes Worthington especially unique is its people. Residents from many cultures and backgrounds have shaped a vibrant community where diversity is reflected in local businesses, restaurants, schools, and community events. This blend of cultures creates an atmosphere that is both globally connected and distinctly Minnesotan.









As the county seat of Nobles County, Worthington has experienced significant demographic change since the 1980s, becoming one of Minnesota's most racially and culturally diverse rural communities. The local school district reports that 37 different languages are spoken in the homes of students and local reports state that up to 65 languages are spoken in the community. For the last 32 years, there has been an International Festival hosted "to promote the acceptance of our individual differences and foster positive relationships among cultures". The community's commitment to inclusion, community engagement, and cross-cultural connections makes it an ideal location for the Minnesota Rural Community Health Worker Conference. Attendees will find a community that embodies many of the values at the heart of community health work: belonging, resilience, collaboration, and respect for diverse lived experiences.

DAY 1 SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8TH

10AM

Check-in / Exhibitors

11AM

Plenary

12PM

Lunch + Activity

1:15PM

Break / Transition

1:30PM

Breakout Session A

2:15PM

Break / Transition

2:30PM

Breakout Session B

3:15PM

Break / Transition

3:30PM

Plenary

5:30PM

Off Site Social Gathering



VIEW ALL PRESENTER BIOS

DAY 1 DETAILED SCHEDULE

Thursday, October 8th

10:00am - 11:00am	Check In | Exhibitors		
11:00am - 12:00pm	Opening Plenary in The Commons **Minnesota CHW Alliance Demonstration Grants: Inspiring Results from Three Rural CHW Model Programs in Minnesota**		
12:00pm - 1:15pm	Lunch + Activity		
1:15pm - 1:30pm	Break / Transition		
1:30pm - 2:15pm	Breakout Session A		
	Changing the Sexual and Reproductive Health Landscape as CHWs *Room 211*	**The Art and Science of Vaccine Conversations** *Room 214*	**CHWs and Age Friendly Care** *Room 216*
2:15pm - 2:30pm	Break / Transition		
2:30pm - 3:15pm	Breakout Session B	Breakout Session B	Breakout Session B
	Co-designing CHW Training and Workforce Development Models: Identifying Employer and Learner Needs for Frontline Workforce Integration *Room 211*	**Problem Management Plus (PM+): Practical Tools for Managing Client Stress and Adversity** *Room 214*	**Using an Active Postvention Model to Build LOSS (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors) Teams in Rural Minnesota Communities** *Room 216*
3:15pm - 3:30pm	Break / Transition		
3:30pm - 4:30pm	Afternoon Plenary in The Commons **Shifting the Power: Transforming Statewide and Rural Research Through CHW Leadership**		
5:30pm - 7:30pm	Off Site Gathering - The Historic Dayton House		



OPENING PLENARY SESSION

11:00AM - 12:00PM



ANNE GANEY, MPH
Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance



TASHA MARTEL, CHW
Red Lake Nation



MOHAMED IBRAHIM, MBBS, CHW
WellShare International

Demonstration Grants: Inspiring Results from Three Rural CHW Model Programs in Minnesota

THE COMMONS

This workshop features the learning from Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance Demonstration Grants. It features three rural CHW projects with different models and locations in the state. A CHW presenter from each project will showcase their best practices model, explain what makes their model effective and share their outcomes and results.



LUNCH + ACTIVITY

12:00PM - 1:15PM

Networking Kick Start with Anne Ganey

Posters, Bumper Stickers and Memes

THE COMMONS

This is a speed networking and creativity workshop. Participants move from facilitated table to table to discuss and illustrate specific CHW and rural related topics through drawings, bumper stickers and memes that they create with materials at the table. It is meant to be quick to keep people engaged and to encourage discussion/networking and learning amongst participants. CHW topics include CHW SOP, models, locations, and more. Rural topics include rural health systems, CHW roles in rural areas, resources, and more.



DAY 1, BREAKOUT SESSION A

1:30PM - 2:15PM



ELLEN SALIARES, MPH
Minnesota Department of Health



SHARI DEAN, RN BSN PHN
Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council

Changing the Sexual and Reproductive Health Landscape as CHWs

ROOM 211

Community Health Workers know a single conversation or referral can change lives — and that's just as true for sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Navigating this personal, often stigmatized area is challenging, but there are skills and strategies that can help. In this workshop, attendees will practice applying core CHW skills to SRH work and learn key strategies through hands-on exercises and real examples from the work of CHWs with Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council's Health Services. Attendees will leave with skills to keep practicing and resources for continuing education.



SARAH SPAH, MSN, RN, PHN
Minnesota Department of Health



LIZZ WENZEL
Minnesota Department of Health

The Art and Science of Vaccine Conversations

ROOM 214

The Minnesota Department of Health will offer a vaccine advocacy training that covers the 4-As, a strategy based in motivational interviewing. The goal of this training is to support community health workers who already have trusted relationships with communities to feel more comfortable navigating conversations about immunizations when they arise and, in turn, build vaccine confidence in their communities.

Participants will learn strategies for addressing vaccine misinformation, navigating sensitive conversations with empathy, and promoting the importance of vaccines confidently and respectfully. Interactive examples used in this training reflect common reasons for vaccine hesitancy in rural communities. This engaging training is ideal for anyone who works with communities and could encounter a conversation about vaccines. Additionally, we will highlight reliable resources that CHWs can use to educate themselves and communities about vaccines.

This training will build a deeper bench of vaccine advocates throughout our state to support communities in navigating the growing mistrust of institutions and pervasive mis- and disinformation about vaccines among social networks. While the focus of this training will be on vaccines, CHWs will practice and leave with a communication skillset that can be applied to other health topics impacting rural communities.

DAY 1, BREAKOUT SESSION A

1:30PM - 2:15PM



WENDY POTRATZ, PHD, MCHES
Northwest Technical College



ANGIE STEVENS, MCHES
Northwest Technical College

CHWs and Age Friendly Care

ROOM 216

Discover how Community Health Workers can play a vital role in advancing age-friendly care. This session introduces the 4Ms framework—What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility—and highlights practical, evidence-based strategies CHWs can use to support older adults through person-centered, holistic care approaches.



DAY 1, BREAKOUT SESSION B

2:30PM - 3:15PM



KRISTEN GODFREY WALTERS, MPH
Minnesota Department of Health



SHANDY POTES MANGRA, CHW, MPH
Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance

Co-designing CHW Training and Workforce Development Models: Identifying Employer and Learner Needs for Frontline Workforce Integration

ROOM 211

Minnesota's Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) is strengthening the rural CHW workforce through efforts to expand workforce training and support successful frontline workforce integration. The Minnesota CHW Alliance (MNCHWA) is leading the development of a sustainable CHW training and workforce readiness model tailored to the unique needs of rural Minnesota, while the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is supporting rural health care and tribal health organizations implementing sustainable frontline workforce models.

Presenters will share how they are partnering to strengthen the rural CHW workforce through human-centered design, career pathways, employer readiness, and evidence-based implementation models. This interactive workshop will include facilitated discussion where CHWs, employers, educators, and community partners will identify workforce challenges, learner needs, opportunities for improvement, and promising practices for strengthening rural CHW workforce training and support. Participant input will be used to design an implementation ready CHW training model, develop employer and workforce readiness strategies, and establish an evaluation framework to guide future implementation.

The session will also highlight how rural hospitals, clinics, Tribal Nations, and community-based organizations are integrating CHWs into care teams using evidence-based implementation models through RHTP. The session will explore strategies for defining CHW roles, preparing supervisors, selecting implementation models, documenting outcomes, developing financing strategies, and creating sustainable career pathways. Through discussion, participants will identify opportunities and challenges within their own organizations and leave with tools to support successful implementation and sustainability.

Minnesota has a unique opportunity to strengthen and expand the rural CHW workforce over the next five years. The long-term goal is to build a scalable, sustainable workforce development model and evidence-based model implementation framework that strengthens the rural CHW workforce and meets the unique challenges and assets of healthcare access in rural Minnesota and beyond.



DAY 1, BREAKOUT SESSION B

2:30PM - 3:15PM



RICK GERTSE, MA, LCP
ArcaMind Global Institute for Mental Health Solutions



ANNIE SCHWARTZ, MA
ArcaMind Global Institute for Mental Health Solutions

Problem Management Plus (PM+): Practical Tools for Managing Client Stress and Adversity

ROOM 214

Problem Management Plus (PM+) is an evidence-based mental health intervention developed by the World Health Organization that helps individuals experiencing psychological distress build resilience. PM+ is delivered by trained community members, known as PM+ Helpers, who use 5 structured sessions, under the supervision of licensed mental health professionals, creating a stepped-care model that expands access to support.

By training non-clinicians, such as CHWs, PM+ addresses critical workforce shortages and improves equitable access to culturally responsive mental health care, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Rather than relying solely on clinical services, PM+ takes a public health approach by providing early intervention that prevents crises. It also provides CHWs with a critical tool to assist individuals they are already working with deal with adversity.

Although successfully implemented in more than 20 countries, PM+ is relatively new to the U.S. Over the past two years, ArcaMind has implemented a pilot of PM+ in Northern MN. An independent evaluation demonstrated significant reductions in anxiety and depression among participants.

This session will share practical lessons from implementing a PM+ in Minnesota and leave participants with practical strategies for strengthening resilience and improving community mental health.



MELANIE DAAS, BSW
Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)



KATIE ZERULL, CCPS, CMCA, AMS
Bloomington Police Department

Using an Active Postvention Model to Build LOSS (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors) Teams in Rural Minnesota Communities

ROOM 216

After a suicide, surviving family members and friends are at increased risk for isolation, delayed grief, and suicidal ideation. The Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Team model was developed by Dr. Campbell to provide immediate, compassionate support to the newly bereaved through a trained team of suicide loss survivors and mental health professionals.

In this session, participants will explore how the nationally recognized LOSS model can be adapted to rural communities, where strong relationships and community connections can be both a strength and a challenge. Through guided discussion and activities, attendees will learn the benefits of creating a local LOSS Team, identify community assets, potential partners, and other considerations that come into play when building a LOSS team.

Whether you are a community health worker, mental health professional, or community advocate – this session will provide tools and strategies to start building a coordinated postvention response that meets loss survivors in their moment of need.

AFTERNOON PLENARY SESSION

3:30PM - 4:30PM



CHELSEY KIRKLAND, PHD, MPH, CHW

University of Minnesota



DENITA NGWU

Community Health/ Family Coach, and Community Advocate

Jeremiah Program



Shifting the Power: Transforming Statewide and Rural Research Through CHW Leadership

THE COMMONS

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are increasingly involved in research, yet they are often confined to operational tasks like recruitment and data collection rather than leadership positions in study design, analysis, and dissemination. Excluding CHWs from strategic roles minimizes their expertise and compromises research quality—particularly in rural areas with histories of extractive research.

To bridge this gap, the University of Minnesota's CEARCH team partnered with the Minnesota CHW Alliance, SoLaHmo Partnership for Health and Wellness, the Minnesota Department of Health CHW Initiatives Unit, and local CHWs to co-create "CHWs 101: Introduction to Research."

To date, 200 CHWs and allies have completed the course. Evaluation indicates that participants were highly satisfied, built research capacity, have more confidence in research, and many plan to pursue future research roles.

This session will begin with an overview of the course and evaluation outcomes, followed by a panel discussion featuring course co-creators, trained CHWs, and research Principal Investigators. Panelists will examine why CHWs are integral to research, discuss integration challenges and successes, offer actionable engagement strategies, and explore key implications for rural health research.

OFF-SITE SOCIAL GATHERING

Join us for an evening to relax, have fun, and enjoy the company of new and familiar faces!

📍 **The Historic Dayton House**
1311 4th Ave, Worthington, MN 56187

🕐 **5:30pm - 7:30pm**

🍿 **Complimentary Snacks**

🍹 **Cash Bar** 💵

The Historic Dayton House stands at 1311 Fourth Avenue as a visible representation of Worthington's early days and as a symbol of civic leadership and business success. It is unique both in the time of its grand appearance in a small prairie town in the late 1800s and in its ownership for well over a century. Three families related through business, blood, and marriage—the Daytons, the Smallwoods, and the Cashels—owned and lived in the house over time. Each contributed in unique ways to the community and its surrounds.



DAY 2 SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9TH

7:30AM
Zumba

8:00AM
Breakfast / Exhibitors

9:00AM
Break / Transition

9:15AM
Breakout Session C

10:15AM
Break / Transition

10:30AM
Breakout Session D

11:15AM
Lunch / Exhibitors

12:00PM
Plenary

1:00PM
Close



VIEW ALL PRESENTER BIOS

DAY 2 DETAILED SCHEDULE

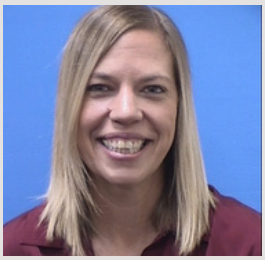
Friday, October 9th

7:30am - 8:15am	Zumba with Luz!		
8:00am - 9:00am	Breakfast / Exhibitors		
9:00 - 9:15am	Break / Transition		
9:15am - 10:00am	Breakout Session C		
	Building the Bridge to Preventative Care: The Critical Role of Community Health Workers in Minnesota's Child and Teen Checkups (C&TC) Program	**What Do Rural CHWs Need Right Now? A Listening Session for the Future**	
	Room 115	*Room 202*	
10:15am - 10:30am	Break / Transition		
10:30am - 11:15am	Breakout Session D		
	Transforming Veteran Care Through Cross-System Navigation and Population Health Integration	**Beyond the Numbers: Practical Community Health Worker Strategies That Transform Rural Care**	
	Room 115	*Room 202*	
11:15am - 12:00pm	Lunch line / Exhibitors		
12:00pm - 1:00pm	Plenary during lunch in The Commons **Measuring Success: An Update on the Minnesota Statewide Sustainable Plan and How You Can Get Involved**		
1:00pm	Close		

DAY 2, BREAKOUT SESSION C 9:15AM - 10:00AM



AMY ZEITZ
Minnesota Department of Human Services



JESSICA SCHMIT
Nobles County Community Services



JENIFER CASTELLANOS MORALES, CHW
Nobles County Community Services

Building the Bridge to Preventative Care: The Critical Role of Community Health Workers in Minnesota's Child and Teen Checkups (C&TC) Program

ROOM 115

Minnesota's Child and Teen Checkups (C&TC) program provides comprehensive preventive health services for children and youth covered by Medicaid from birth through age 20. More than 650,000 children in Minnesota are eligible for C&TC services, yet completion rates decline as children age creating missed opportunities to identify health concerns early and connect families with needed resources. C&TC plays a vital role in advancing health equity by ensuring children receive preventive screenings, developmental assessments, behavioral health screening, immunizations, and referrals to needed services.

This session will explore the purpose and impact of C&TC, identify key partners, and examine barriers that contribute to lower preventive care utilization among children and adolescents enrolled in Medicaid. Participants will learn how CHWs are uniquely positioned to address the barriers through trusted relationship building, culturally responsive outreach, health education and connection to community resources.

Through practice examples and discussion, attendees will gain strategies for how to improve preventive care access, advocate for services and connect to resources needed to support healthier outcomes for children, youth and families across Minnesota's rural communities. By attending this session, the CHW workforce will gain a better understanding of the C&TC program and how their work can influence family and provider participation.



DAY 2, BREAKOUT SESSION C 9:15AM - 10:00AM



SHANDY POTES MANGA, CHW, MPH
Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance



RACHEL STOLL, CHW
Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance

What Do Rural CHWs Need Right Now? A Listening Session for the Future

ROOM 202

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are often asked to adapt, innovate, and do more with limited resources, training, organizational support, and funding. While these challenges are widely recognized, how often do we truly ask CHWs what they need to be successful—and listen?

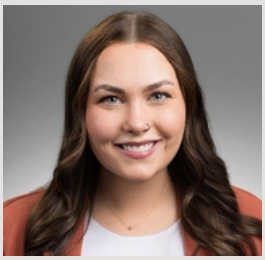
This interactive listening session is designed to do just that. Rather than a traditional presentation, participants will engage in facilitated small-group discussions and interactive activities to share what's working, what's challenging, and what supports, training, and resources would have the greatest impact on their work. Together, we'll explore barriers, identify opportunities, and capture practical ideas to strengthen the CHW workforce.

The insights gathered will help inform future programs, training, technical assistance, and system improvements led by MNCHWA and its partners. Participants will contribute directly to shaping the future of CHW workforce development by ensuring that decisions are grounded in the experiences and perspectives of CHWs themselves.





DAY 2, BREAKOUT SESSION D 10:30AM - 11:15AM



RAEANN MURRAY, LSW
Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

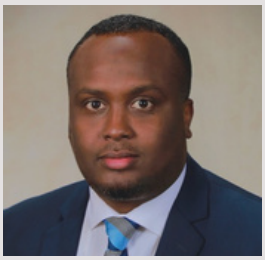


CARLA MILLER
Minnesota Department of Verterans Affairs

Transforming Veteran Care Through Cross-System Navigation and Population Health Integration

ROOM 115

Approximately 60% of Veterans receive some or all of their healthcare outside the VA healthcare system. Yet many healthcare and community-based organizations lack standardized processes to identify Veterans, understand military-related risk factors, or connect them to specialized resources and coordinated care. These gaps can contribute to fragmented care, unmet social needs, delayed behavioral health intervention, and missed opportunities to address suicide risk, particularly in rural communities. This session will highlight the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Health Navigator Program as a model for strengthening Veteran-informed care through cross-sector collaboration and population health strategies. Participants will learn how CHWs and community-based professionals can incorporate Veteran identification into everyday practice, establish referral pathways, and connect Veterans and military-connected families to healthcare, benefits, behavioral health, and community resources. Through practical workflow examples and implementation tools, attendees will explore strategies to identify Veterans, address barriers to care, and strengthen partnerships among CHWs, healthcare systems, Veteran service organizations, and community agencies. The session will emphasize rural Minnesota challenges, including limited-service availability and care coordination needs.



MOHAMED IBRAHIM, MBBS, CHW
WellShare International



EVAN CURTIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WellShare International

Beyond the Numbers: Practical Community Health Worker Strategies That Transform Rural Care

ROOM 202

Healthcare systems are highly effective at diagnosing and treating medical conditions, yet many patients continue to face barriers that cannot be solved in the clinic alone. This interactive workshop explores how Community Health Workers (CHWs) bridge the gap between the clinical referral system and the community referral system to address the social drivers of health.

Using lessons from WellShare International's Community Health Worker Demonstration Project, participants will compare traditional clinical referrals with community-based navigation that connects individuals to food, housing, transportation, insurance, language support, employment resources, and other essential services. Through real-world case examples, practical workflows, and interactive discussion, attendees will learn how CHWs assess social needs, build trust, coordinate cross-sector referrals, and follow clients through successful resolution.

The session demonstrates how integrating community referrals with clinical care improves access, strengthens partnerships, and creates more culturally responsive care for rural and underserved communities. Participants will leave with practical tools and strategies they can immediately apply to strengthen collaboration between healthcare providers, community organizations, and CHWs. This workshop reflects the conference theme, "Hands On, Hearts In," by focusing on practical CHW skills, CHW leadership, and community-centered solutions that improve health outcomes.



CLOSING PLENARY SESSION

12:00PM - 1:00PM



LAURA TUREK, MPH

Minnesota Department of Health



RACHEL STOLL, CHW

Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance

Measuring Success: An update on the Minnesota Statewide Sustainable Plan and How You Can Get Involved

THE COMMONS

In 2025, CHWs, employers, educators, healthcare organizations, and community partners from across Minnesota came together to create a statewide plan for strengthening and sustaining the CHW workforce. That work resulted in the Minnesota CHW Roadmap, logic model and Statewide Measurement Plan, which outlines practical strategies for growing, supporting, and funding CHW programs across the state. Since then, four workgroups with representatives from many different sectors and perspectives, including CHWs, have met monthly to move the plan forward. This interactive session will provide an update on progress made over the past year and explore how rural CHWs and organizations can use the roadmap in their own communities. Participants will discuss real-world challenges and opportunities related to workforce development, funding, CHW leadership, and program sustainability and how they can get involved with the workgroups and ensure rural CHW representation.

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MINNESOTA RURAL CHW CONFERENCE

We hope you enjoyed this year's conference, learned some new things, and connected with others.

We would appreciate it if you took the time to take our survey that can be found on the conference webpage. Simply scan the QR code below to participate. Thank you!

STAY IN TOUCH

Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance
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2550 University Ave. W STE 200N
Saint Paul, MN 55114

www.mnchwalliance.org
info@mnchwalliance.org



Lake Okabena located in Worthington, MN is known as a premier Midwest windsurfing destination

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