



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Austin Travis County Public Health Commission

Recommendation Number: 20250108-005: Austin Travis County Health Reimagined

Brief Description of the Topic:

This recommendation seeks to develop and implement a corporate-sponsored supportive services program for Community Health Workers (CHWs) in the Austin-Travis County area. The program aims to mirror successful models implemented during COVID-19, such as discounts and benefits provided to healthcare workers, and expand CHW support to enhance scalability, sustainability, and overall impact on community health in the Austin Travis County area.

BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

WHEREAS Community Health Workers (CHWs) play an essential role in reducing health disparities and improving such things as access to healthcare for underserved populations by providing direct support resources to those in their representative community, often acting as trusted liaisons and single point of contact between communities and systems (e.g. social services, healthcare, transportation, education); and

WHEREAS CHWs in the Austin-Travis County jurisdiction currently face challenges related to low compensation, lack of access to supportive services (e.g., transportation, childcare, uniform stipends), and limited professional development opportunities, all of which impact their ability to perform their duties effectively; and

WHEREAS during the COVID-19 pandemic, corporate-sponsored programs such as the T-Mobile discount for first responders and the AT&T discount for healthcare workers provided critical support to healthcare personnel, setting a precedent for partnerships between the private sector and the healthcare workforce; and

WHEREAS expanding corporate-sponsored support for CHWs in Austin-Travis County can increase CHW retention, job satisfaction, and their capacity to deliver quality healthcare services to vulnerable populations; and

WHEREAS the integration of supportive services, such as transportation reimbursements, childcare assistance, housing assistance, and discounted services, would reduce the financial burden on CHWs and enable them to focus on improving health outcomes for the populations they serve; and

WHEREAS strengthening the CHW workforce will lead to improved health outcomes of the CHWs and the communities they serve, particularly in areas with high rates of emergency department readmissions and chronic illnesses, as well as potential cost savings for the

healthcare system by reducing hospitalizations and emergency care visits. Ultimately, increasing the life expectancy and quality of life of our residents.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin Travis County Public Health Commission recommends that the Austin City Council:


1. **Recognize Community Health Workers (CHWs) in the same category as first responders and teachers** when developing and implementing local programs that provide housing assistance, transportation discounts, car purchasing programs, and membership benefits.
 - **NOTE:** This recognition should be reflected in city-sponsored initiatives, while also encouraging community-wide adoption by businesses, nonprofits, and other entities to ensure CHWs receive equitable support in alignment with their critical role in public health.
 - Illustrative initiatives include: Homes for Texas Heroes Program offered by the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation, free bus rides for people experiencing homelessness who have an active profile in the Homeless Management Information System offered by CapMetro.
2. **Adopt a corporate-sponsored supportive services policy** for CHWs in Austin-Travis County, mirroring programs implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the T-Mobile and AT&T discounts for healthcare workers, and expanding them to provide:
 - **Transportation reimbursement** to reduce the burden of travel for CHWs working in underserved areas (e.g. via free bus rides offered by CapMetro, or partnership with ridesharing companies such as Uber, Lyft or Waymo).
 - **Childcare support** to assist CHWs in managing their professional and family responsibilities (e.g. via partnership with YMCAs and other organizations offering childcare).
 - **Uniform stipends** to ensure that CHWs can present themselves professionally without incurring personal costs.
 - **Discounted services** (e.g., telecommunications, health insurance, groceries) in partnership with local businesses, targeting both current and future CHWs.
3. **Engage the local business community** to develop partnerships that offer these supportive services to CHWs, encouraging private sector involvement in advancing public health goals and supporting essential healthcare personnel.
4. **Track the quality of life (QoL) of CHWs** by collecting qualitative (QUAL) and quantitative (QUANT) data on the well-being of CHWs employed in Austin-Travis County, with semi-annual reports that assess the impact of these supportive services on CHW retention, job satisfaction, and community health outcomes.
 - **Short-term outcome to be established and implemented within 6 months of adoption.**
5. **Increase the CHW-to-population ratio** by focusing on health systems with high emergency department readmissions and chronic illnesses, ensuring that CHWs are fully integrated into preventive care strategies and provided with necessary support to perform their duties effectively.
 - **Mid-term outcome to be established and implemented within the first year of adoption.**

6. **Expand the CHW workforce in Austin-Travis County**, encouraging health systems to adopt a model similar to [Nationwide Children’s Hospital’s housing program](#), which supports employees with affordable housing options and community development initiatives, geared towards tackling social determinants of health.
 - o **Long-term outcome to be established and planned within two years of adoption.**

Date of Approval: Wednesday, January 8th. 2025

Record of the vote: The motion to approve the recommendation was approved on Commissioner Chris Crookham’s motion, Vice Chair Enrique Lin Shiao’s second on a 8-0 vote.

Attest: _____



Signed by: Natalie Poindexter, Chair