



# Community Health Innovations of Rhode Island News

Community Health Workers Building the Foundation

chi-ri.org

## First Anniversary News – CHI-RI Receives a BlueAngel Grant

Community Health Innovations website and programs was launched January 14, 2011. The first facilitator course was completed in May 2011. In December, we were selected for a Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) BlueAngel award to create two community health worker community teams. Read about it and the march forward on career path developments!

### CHI – RI is inline with National and Local Health Policy with the help of BCBSRI

The Affordable Care Act, March 2010 - [PLAW-111publ148.pdf](#), put into motion the ability to work toward comprehensive reform of the clinical/medical care system. Section 3502 promotes the development of Community Health Teams. Here the role of CHWs is seen as a natural part of teams to support Patient-Centered Medical Homes. There are specific provisions (HR5390) in the act that promote the development of the CHWs workforce; authorizing new training and placement programs as well as community-based prevention activities. As such, the act offers the opportunity to better integrate clinical/medical care with public health efforts to improve peoples health and the health of the community.

allow us to establish these centers at CSCM (Camp Street Community Ministries) and in the Southeast Asian community of Providence. A number of community members will participate in the entry level core skills CHW course and then be hired to develop CHW community teams. Additionally, the CHI-RI train the trainer Spring '11 course participants put their skills to work. Thus the community-based health teams that we have been working to establish will create a model that is consistent with the National legislation.



Carolyn Campos facilitates the assets based CHI-RI curriculum.



CHI-RI receiving the BlueAngel award. From left to right, Carolyn Belisle of Blue Cross, & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, Dr. Leonarda Rodriguez, Dr. Dannie Ritchie, Jackie Jackson and Dr. Solange Santana

The BlueAngel Community Health grant from Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island will allow Community Health Innovations of Rhode Island (CHI-RI) to form community-based community health worker (CHW) teams that will establish a center for community directed health solutions. The grant will

The award additionally allows us to be a model for programs that moves forward on one of the components of 2011 State legislation that created a Commission of Health Advocacy and Equity, [S0481A](#). The Commission is tasked in part to “make recommendations for the coordination of state, local and private sector efforts to develop a more racially and ethnically diverse health care workforce.” It is our hope the CHI-RI CHW programs, which recruits from and services disenfranchised communities, will assist to inform the recommendation on diversification of the health workforce with CHWs. **Thank you BCBSRI!**

## **Career Pathway development for Community Health Workers**

With a CHW course based on nationally recognized core skills, the participants in our community based and centered training, will be eligible for 3 - 6 credits at CCRI (depending on the amount of field work done). We have been working for many years with CCRI to establish this possibility, and with their receipt of a federal grant to create career paths that includes the community health worker as one type of career, we should finally be able to implement the first rung. Recently their Department of Human Services has applied to create the Health and Social Service certificate and associates degree path with "Introduce to Community Health Work" slated to be a course.

The history of this work starts with the Transcultural Community Health Initiative. The multidisciplinary and cross sectional board of the initiative elected to work to build partnerships for ongoing collaboration with communities. It was the community health workers – frontline public health workers – to be the center and the foundation for continuous ongoing community participation and engagement. Community based organizations, often the first place people go to address challenges they face and to access needed resources, were to be the site for these CHWS teams and programs. However, it was recognized that this would need:

- CHW workforce recognition, formalization and sustainability
- Develop a core competencies curriculum to certify community workers
- Curriculum adaptable to different community needs – to take marching orders from the community
- Establish culturally appropriate curricula, Promising Practices
- Address issue of language barriers including basic literacy skills
- Create a pipeline, mobility (stand alone or pathway)

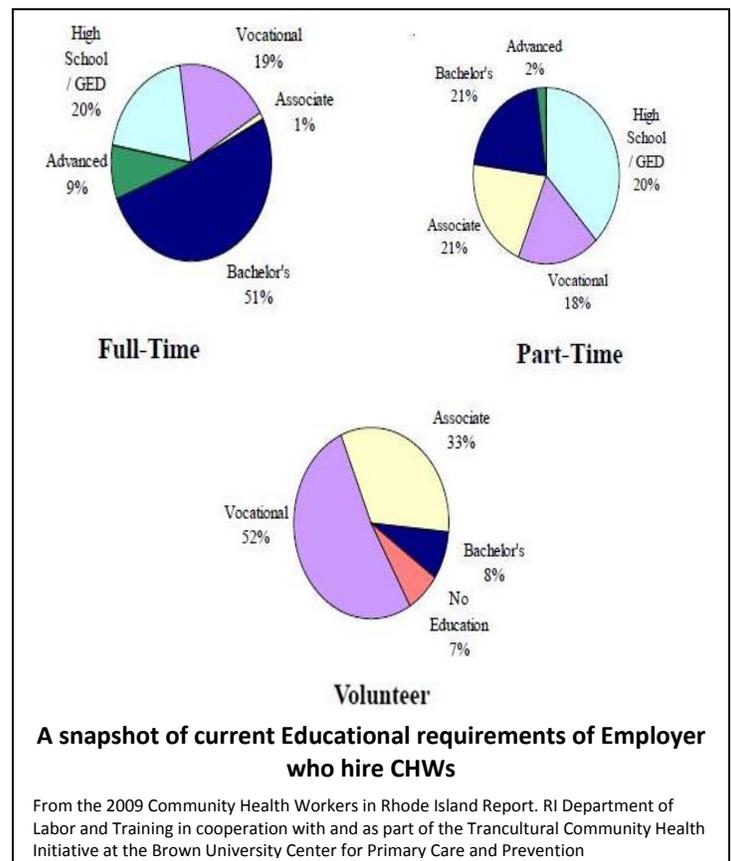
The last requirement to create stand alone and pipeline programs were, one, to recognize the untapped and

underutilized knowledge in underserved/underrepresented communities, to honor and recognize the work that many are already doing in their communities' and to bring them to decision-making and policy process. Second, the creation of a pipeline is due to the fact that many CHWs are hired for short term programs and when the program ends CHWs are often left without recognized portable experience or skills. To address this it is necessary to create a path to a career. We are on the way.

### Career Pathway Definition

*Career Pathways is a workforce development strategy used in the U.S. to support workers' transitions from education into and through the workforce. This strategy has been adopted at the federal, state and local levels in order to increase education, training and learning opportunities for America's current and emerging workforce.*

*Career pathways are an integrated collection of programs and services intended to develop students' core academic, technical and employability skills; provide them with continuous education and training; and place them in high-demand, high-opportunity jobs.<sup>1</sup>*



<sup>1</sup> en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Career\_pathways