

Envisioning a Climate Change and Health Micro-Credential for Community Health Workers



Mission:

To promote and sustain the integration of community health workers (CHWs) into health and human services organizations throughout Michigan through coordinated changes in policy and workforce development.

As a grant-funded partner in the Climate Change Health and Equity (CCHE) network, the Michigan Community Health Worker Alliance (MiCHWA) has been working to train community health workers (CHW) on climate change and its impacts on health because CHWs serve the vulnerable populations that are at greatest risk of suffering adverse effects as a result of climate change. Their efforts align with the overall [CCHE Theory of Change](#) as part of Strategy 2.

Through their CCHE-funded activities, outlined in more detail below, MiCHWA has developed two training modules and is developing a third module to create a complete Microcredential for CHWs on climate change and the impacts on health, equity, and justice for vulnerable populations. Over the long term, MiCHWA expected that this work would mitigate the current impacts of climate change in local communities and prevent impacts from worsening due to a lack of awareness and advocacy about climate change issues. MiCHWA's efforts ultimately supported better health outcomes for vulnerable populations within Michigan and across the country. For an overview of MiCHWA's CCHE-related work, see their 2022 CCHE theory of change ([slide 13](#)), described in more detail below. Key partners in MiCHWA's CCHE-funded work are listed at the end of the document.

Policies, Activities, and Initiatives Advanced During the CCHE Initiative

Educated and trained CHWs on various critical topics, including climate change, health, and equity. MiCHWA successfully built a stakeholder-supported, asynchronous virtual course for CHWs to learn more about climate change impacts in their communities. Through the development of the Climate Change and Health Impacts training module, MiCHWA and the partners gained a stronger understanding of how to connect communities with resources to build climate resilience. CHWs demonstrated a better understanding of who was most vulnerable to climate change and health impacts, what types of health issues to look out for in different communities, and how to connect clients and communities with resources to help them navigate climate change mitigation and adaptation. The inclusion of CHW Ambassadors from climate-impacted communities and regions was essential to

Select Resources and Media

- [MiCHWA Newsletter highlighting presentations at APHA and MiCHWA Conference](#)
- [Envisioning a climate change and health micro-credential for community health workers](#)
- [Merging climate change and health equity in CHW education: A participatory approach](#)

driving this work, from inception and development of materials, to refinement of the curriculum, to ensure uptake and further advocacy regarding climate change impacts at a local-, regional-, and state-levels.

Refined the course and platform so that it could be scaled to other states. The project team initiated the process of removing Michigan-specific data from course slides, researched nationwide climate maps with regional details to insert into course slides, and created a template for other states to customize with their data. MiCHWA has already received inquiries from other states to further develop and share these trainings so that CHWs could learn how the health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations are affected by climate change; it is an emerging topic across the country.

Created a second course that focuses on Health Equity and included the CHW toolkit. The Climate Change and Health Equity training was developed to outline intersectional characteristics and circumstances that cumulatively increased vulnerability to climate change. This training module also addressed the roles and methods CHWs could utilize in improving health equity in the face of climate change.

Developed a Climate Change and Environmental Microcredential digital badge certification program for CHW specialization. MiCHWA and their partners finalized climate change training modules for the Climate Change and Environmental Microcredential. The third module of the Climate Change and Health Justice training included 36 hours of coursework. This training module focused on Climate Change communication and advocacy.

Insights from CCHE Initiative

- **Awareness of the climate change impacts on health for vulnerable populations is still at a formative stage.** Even within the health care community, climate change and the effect on health and wellbeing often go unaddressed. Prevention measures and mitigation efforts have not been fully developed. CHWs are in a unique role in educating patients and communities on this issue, aligning resources, and “closing the loop”, to ensure patients receive needed information and services.
- **Climate change is an increasingly urgent health topic across the country.** National-level conversations around the roles CHWs can play in climate health mitigation is a current and growing topic of discussion. There are few training resources currently available nationally and a strong call for training that can be tailored to different states and their specific circumstances around climate change and impacts on health.

Looking Ahead

MiCHWA is excited to be a part of the discussions and solutions on improving the health of vulnerable populations affected by climate change. MiCHWA looks forward to having the Climate Change and Environmental Health Microcredential certification available to CHWs in Michigan and to sharing this training with other states across the country.

Key Partners

Organization	Type
Detroit Health Department	Government Partner
Fair Forest Consulting	Environmental Partner
Henry Ford Health Systems	Health Partner
Integrated Services of Kalamazoo	Health Partner
Inter-tribal Council of Michigan	Community Partner
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services	Government Partner

Organization	Type
Michigan Medicine at the University of Michigan	Academic Partner
Michigan Public Health Institute	Institutional Partner
Michigan State University Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments	Academic Partner
SUNY Environmental College of Forestry	Academic Partner
University of Michigan - Flint	Academic Partner