

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER ADVANCED CERTIFICATE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT



STORYTELLING SUMMIT SUMMARY



On behalf of **Collaborative Advocacy and Partnered Education (CAPE)**, the **Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine at University Health Network (UHN)**, and the **Michener Institute of Education**, we thank you for your participation and interest in the Community Health Worker (CHW) Education Initiative. Your participation in this initiative has provided us with truly valuable insights and direction as we embark on this journey of education co-design with CHWs across Ontario.

We have produced this summary to document and share the initiative's progress, preliminary findings, and next steps with you. We hope that this summary contextualizes the valuable work that you have done in collaboration with us and provides clarity into the future goals and activities of the CHW education co-design initiative.

Introduction

This initiative aims to co-create with CHWs an Advanced Certificate Program for CHWs in Ontario. CHWs are mainly unregulated healthcare providers who support the communities they work with and for by providing crucial connections to healthcare and social services. Many CHWs have a deep insight and knowledge of the needs of their community, as they are also members of the communities in which they work with and for.

Our initiative is inspired by a recent environmental scan conducted by **The Institute for Education Research (TIER)** in collaboration with the Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine at UHN, which uncovered significant gaps in educational and training opportunities for CHWs in Ontario. The results of this environmental scan also revealed a lack of educational frameworks available for CHWs working at the interface of hospital and community-based systems. In an attempt to address these critical gaps in CHW education and training, we developed this unique education co-design initiative for this vital and significant profession.

From January to April of 2024, we engaged in Initial Meetings, Storytelling Sessions, and a Storytelling Summit with CHWs and other members of the community health system in Ontario to understand and learn about their positive experiences working as part of this profession (or with CHWs) and their hopes and vision(s) for the future of CHW education in Ontario. We provide a snapshot of some of the major takeaways from the CHW education co-design process below, which have been used to generate themes, recommendations, and design elements to guide the implementation and development of the Advanced Certificate Program for CHWs in Ontario.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Tenets from the theoretical framework, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), were used to inform this co-design initiative. AI posits that to improve a system, all individuals within the system must reflect on what is currently working, and what the best parts of an organization are. Members of the community are encouraged to reflect on what the best possible version of this system could be, and in doing so, AI can lead to changes which bring a system closest to the idyllic that those who are a part of the organization express to be a best possible future.

Rounding out the AI approach, CAPE also practices ongoing critical reflection, to ensure that in the process of co-creation, we continually ask whose voices are missing, how might we include them, what potential unintended harms might we be creating and how might we mitigate them.

The interview guides shared during the Initial Meetings, Storytelling Sessions and Storytelling Summit were grounded in AI, as we asked participants to reflect on times when they felt they had done an exceptional job, what they most value about themselves as a CHW, their unique skills and core factors that contribute to their success, and their wishes for the future. At our most recent event, the Storytelling Summit held on April 22nd, we went a step further in the AI process and prompted attendees to envision what the Advanced Certificate Program would look like if it was running and exceeding all expectations. In reflecting on this, attendees selected descriptors and design elements that would serve as the basis for the design of the Advanced Certificate Program. In addition, consideration of the voices in the room that were not present and/or missing occurred at the end of the Summit, providing insight into where there may be gaps in perspective, key insights and support



Figure 1: Graphic Depiction of the discussion held at the Community Health Worker Storytelling Summit

Preliminary Findings

Themes captured thus far

A total of 51 stories were shared during the Initial Meetings and Storytelling Sessions. Together with the core team from the Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine, as well as members of their Lived Experience Advisory Board, the common themes around CHW strengths and the highest hopes from these stories were synthesized in meaning-making sessions. After selecting common themes, the group selected 18 core stories that best depicted the main ideas from the 51 stories; these stories were then shared with the Summit attendees. Summit attendees were asked to read these stories, reflect on their own peak experiences, and determine common themes around CHW strengths and highest hopes. We also concluded by inviting participants to write down any other perspectives we need to include. In engaging in these activities, a comprehensive list of the CHWs at their best and highest hopes for the profession was determined, and can be found in the figures below and on the following page.

Figure 2: CHW at their Best



Figure 3: CHW Highest Hopes



Lessons learned

In the activities preceding the Storytelling Summit, it became apparent that CHWs and their experiences were incredibly diverse. This was a crucial insight which emphasized the importance of ensuring that our outreach encompassed CHWs in different sectors, roles and locations throughout Ontario to reach a representative provincial scope.

Numerous insights also came out of the Storytelling Summit. Although the meaning-making sessions had taken place prior to the Storytelling Summit to identify key themes to select core stories, it was crucial that the Summit attendees also had an opportunity to identify the key themes that resonated with them. The Summit attendees included CHWs, critical voices in the community health system, and representatives from CAPE, the Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine at UHN, and the Michener Institute of Education, all of whom had unique perspectives in the context of this project. The exploration of design elements and descriptors for the Advanced Certificate Program at the Summit served as the first time that the program has been envisioned to

this extent in this process. These identified design elements and descriptors depicted the unique positionality of CHWs in the healthcare system and emphasized the need for a program that is specifically tailored to support their work. Finally, considering the missing voices and/or groups raised the question of who else should be involved in the co-design process to effectively support CHWs in continuing to have peak experiences and achieving the highest hopes for the CHW profession.

Next Steps

The next steps for the CHW initiative include continuing to gather perspectives from Summit attendees and missing voices on what they believe is critical for the program moving forward. Please feel free to share any feedback or insights you may have about the CHW co-design process at any time. This feedback will be crucial in refining the program design to best meet the needs and expectations of CHWs and other participants in the co-design process.

To ensure the CHW network, project participants and partners are kept up to date, we will continue to share project updates with important information related to the program's development, opportunities to get involved, and next steps. Through these efforts, the project team aims to ensure that the CHW Advanced Certificate Program is co-designed in a manner that truly reflects the voices and needs of CHWs and their clients.

Additionally, we are excited to announce we will be hosting an in-person Rapid Prototyping Summit on Monday, June 24, 2024, where missing voices from the first summit will be invited to join attendees from our first Storytelling Summit to co-create prototypes of the design elements. This process will allow for a tangible representation of the program's components and enable further development based on the feedback.

References

1. Stavros, J.M, Godwin, L.N, Cooperrider, D.L. Appreciative Inquiry: Organization Development and the Strengths Revolution. In: Rothwell, W., Stavros, J., Sullivan, R. (eds.) Practicing Organizational Development: Leading Transformation and Change. 4th ed. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons; 2016. p96-116.

