

The Importance of Community Health Workers, Promotoras, and Representatives

↓ TOLD BY REAL CHW/P/RS ↓



Leticia Galicia

Oxnard, CA (Ventura County)

What I do: As a community health worker, I provide home violence prevention and intervention services to the immigrant and indigenous Mixteco communities in Ventura County. I also provide translation and mental health services to the community.

Why I do it: I'm an indigenous Mixteco woman whose native tongue is Spanish. I am an English learner and I've been in the same or similar situation as those who I help today. It's hard not knowing where to go, what to do, and what resources are available. I want to be someone who helps my community by giving back the knowledge I learned.

This job is very taxing and demanding. It's hard and a lot of work, but it's rewarding knowing that I am helping people receive the care they deserve.

Felipe Flores

San Francisco Bay Area

What I do: I am the Director of Community Health Workers at the San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium, and I like to think of myself as a CHW for CHWs. I provide professional and career coaching and make sure CHWs get access to the care and resources they need. At the Community Clinic, we hire, train, and support CHWs. We have a privately funded program that 75% of funds go directly to paying for CHW salaries and the remaining 25% go towards training and supplementary resources. We've partnered with San Francisco City College to have all of our hired CHWs attend the college to earn their CHW certification at no cost to the CHW.

Why I do it: I got my start as a volunteer HIV test counselor at a time when everyone was talking about queer BIPOC men, but no one ever looked like us. I connected and motivated communities to access health care resources and would actively invite folks to engage with the resources available to them. In the early days of my career, I worked at a sexual health clinic and I noticed that people felt more open and comfortable receiving care when the person providing the care was someone who looked like them or looked like they could be their cousin. I had a friend come into the clinic and his results were positive. I stayed late to review the results and administer his treatment. Because of our connection, he felt more comfortable with me providing the treatment than a stranger.

In my role now, I'm given the opportunity to prepare the next group of frontline workers and train them to provide the same level of care.





Alicia Crooks

Los Angeles, CA

What I do: I provide care navigation, I've provided case management support, helping people understand their health and also other aspects that can affect their health like housing, supporting them with getting access to mental health providers, supporting them with understanding their medication and timeliness of taking medication, supporting them with doctor's visits.

I have worked with previously incarcerated clients and managing their mental health issues such as PTSD or severe psychosis, people who are unhoused or recently unhoused.

Why I do it: When we're talking about Black people and how high the health disparities are in the community, I think that we inherently have been let down by medical institutions and government institutions, so it's natural and innate to say, "I don't know about that doctor's opinion."

In addition to looking like the clients that I've provided direct support to in the past, they trusted me because I came in with just my honest space of just providing good care to them.

I think the authenticity of the conversation we can have with community members, because of my own lived experience, it feels more genuine. When you're talking to a Community Health Worker, we don't have a hierarchy in our position, we're more like an advocate, a community support person, a person from the community who maybe knows a little bit more about how to navigate this system and they know how to explain things in laymen's terms to you. So when you look like somebody and you come in with a person-centered approach in conversing with someone and you look like them, at the end of the day, they're going to be more open.

Violeta Leones

Los Angeles, CA

What I do: I provide resources and get people enrolled in Medi-Cal, immigration, affordable housing, transportation with a focus on the Filipino community. Sometimes I even provide people transportation or teach them how to use the bus. Just recently I helped a senior who needs help getting a handicap card from the DMV, I got the form, let her fill it out and got it to the doctor.

Anyone who has approached me for a need, I will either help them directly or link them to the right department.

Why I do it: I've been here in the United States for 22 years. Being an immigrant from the Philippines, I'm living with a purpose helping the community.

I feel really satisfied helping vulnerable communities, mostly seniors. Sometimes they don't understand that much English, I have to translate, I really feel empowered seeing them smile and be helped.

Most Filipinos in Los Angeles County, I speak out for them as a person representing their culture. This kind of work is a way to help new and old Filipinos to know there's someone who could help them. Those things really just gives an essence of belonging as a Filipino.





LyVesha 'Queen Tay' Franklin

Monterey, CA

What I do: My job is to trailblaze. In the Black community in Monterey, nobody knows where to go for any Black-run services. Black resources, Black businesses, my job is highlighting anyone who handles Black maternal health, Black therapists, even hair stylists. My hope is for the whole Black community to be able to access Black services and Black safe spaces. Because Black people, we've been left out of so many resources and so many opportunities.

As a Community Health Worker, I have been advocating and gathering funds in order to provide doula certifications to support the Medi-Cal community.

LyVesha is also currently working to set up a birthing network of Black birth care providers called Kweens' Kounsel.

Why I do it: As a Black woman, I have had a lifetime of experience in being marginalized, traumatized and being discriminated against. I am a safe space for those who have had similar experiences. My mom suffered from the disease of drug abuse while she was a young child, and while seeking support and services our family was destroyed which led to her addiction increasing. She passed away 6 years ago from AIDS. I have 5 younger brothers who were on the school to prison pipeline. A lack of connection to services is what destroyed my family and I want to be a part of the solutions and provide those solutions and support for the most vulnerable and traumatized members of my community.