

NCDHHS to Send Community Health Workers to Underserved COVID-19 Hot Spots

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The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) today issued a [Request For Proposals](#) for an initiative that will send up to 250 Community Health Workers to historically underserved areas with high COVID-19 caseloads. Starting in August, teams of trained frontline public health professionals will connect North Carolinians affected by COVID-19 with needed services and support.

“This new team of Community Health Workers is a critical workforce focused on assisting people struggling with the complex impacts of this pandemic,” said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen, M.D.

Community Health Workers will be responsible for connecting North Carolinians to medical and social support resources, including diagnostic testing, primary care, case management, nutrition assistance and mental health services. NCDHHS will contract with one or more state-based organizations to recruit, train and manage Community Health Workers deployed to areas with high COVID-19-related needs.

Community Health Workers will work in coordination with local health departments and contact tracers to identify and connect with individuals who need support. They will use tablets that allow them to leverage [NCCARE360](#), the nation’s first statewide technology platform uniting traditional health care settings and organizations that address non-medical drivers of health, such as food, housing, transportation, employment and interpersonal safety. They will also assist individuals who need access to a location to isolate or a connection to other financial resources.

“People dealing with a COVID-19 infection need a complex range of medical and social support, especially if they live in a historically underserved community,” said NCDHHS Deputy Secretary E. Benjamin Money, Jr., MPH. “By deploying teams of Community Health Workers to the places we know North Carolinians need help, we can address unmet needs while helping to slow the spread of this virus.”

The Community Health Workers initiative will run through December, with the possibility of renewal. Success criteria will include the number of clients assisted with COVID-19-related services and supports, the number of referrals made and the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate assistance. During the contractor selection process, the Department will prioritize ability to ensure cultural and linguistic diversity throughout the initiative’s governance, leadership and workforce. If Community Health Workers are unable to meet an individual’s

linguistic needs in person, they will use strategies such as interpreter services, telephonic interpretation and video remote interpreting.

The initiative will serve North Carolina communities identified as having high COVID-19 caseloads and historically marginalized populations. Serving these high-need areas is also the focus of the Department's [CHAMP](#) initiative, which will support up to 300 testing sites in targeted North Carolina communities throughout the month of July.