

# Summary: CDC 2109 Year 2 Projects

Community Health Worker Program at Kapi'olani Community College  
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## Background

In the fall of 2021, the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division received a three-year cooperative agreement from Centers for Disease Control (CDC) 2109. DOH used this funding to work with Kapi'olani Community College (KapCC) and other partners to train, deploy, and engage Community Health Workers (CHWs) to increase communities' capacity to respond to COVID-19 and chronic conditions.

The KapCC CHW Program trains students in the skills necessary to work as a CHW. Students enroll in the program full-time or part-time, completing five courses, including a 120-hour practicum at chosen sites. Completion of the program typically takes 2-3 semesters. Upon completion, students receive a Certificate of Competence, recognized in Hawai'i's job market, enhancing job prospects and promotion opportunities statewide. Through the CDC 2109 funding, KapCC provided students with tuition waivers, mobile hot spots, stipends, and other resources to increase enrollment in the program, offered training to help CHWs to respond to COVID-19, and deployed CHWs in communities through practicum coursework.

In year 2 of the funding, the Healthy Hawai'i Evaluation Team (HHET) conducted two evaluation projects to support KapCC and their CDC 2109 activities:

- 1) an evaluation of the practicum course
- 2) a survey of students who had dropped out of the program prior to completion

The following is a summary of the two evaluation projects.

## Project 1: Practicum Course Evaluation

KapCC CHW Program students are required to complete the practicum course and fulfill 120 hours of supervised field work within a community organization. KapCC wanted to learn more about students' experiences at their practicum in order to improve the practicum experience for future CHW Program cohorts. KapCC also wanted a survey they could use to gather feedback from subsequent cohorts for continuous quality improvement.

For this project, HHET collaborated closely with KapCC and DOH to create an online anonymous survey in Google Forms. Questions asked about students' prior experience as a CHW, the type of organization they did their practicum at, the type of tasks they performed, the skills they gained from the experience, the level of support they received from their practicum preceptor and instructor, their level of satisfaction with the experience, and their suggestions on how to improve the practicum experience.

The survey was pilot tested with the first cohort whose tuition was paid for through CDC 2109 (the January-December 2022 cohort). The survey was distributed to all 10 Cohort 1 students prior to graduation, from December 5-16, 2022. The survey was revised and then provided to KapCC for use with future cohorts.

## Highlights of Survey Results

- All but one of the 10 students in Cohort 1 responded to the survey.
- Over half of the students had less than 1 year of experience as a CHW prior to the program. Thus, the practicum was many students' first experience working as a CHW.
- The majority of students completed their practicum experience at health-related organizations (digital health or health service organization, health care facility, or health insurance).
- Students most commonly reported doing outreach and counseling or interviewing during their practicum.
- All nine students who responded rated the practicum experience as good or excellent.
- All students agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to apply the knowledge they learned in their CHW courses during their practicum experiences.
- Students reported that they gained practical experience and knowledge related to CHW's work.
- The main feedback to improve future practicum experiences were:
  1. reduce instructor turnover
  2. provide more flexibility in requirements for students, as some students struggled with balancing the practicum and other responsibilities, such as paid jobs and family duties

## Project 2: Exit Survey Evaluation

In reviewing their CHW Program completion rates, KapCC recognized that 35% of their students enrolled between August 2020 and February 2023 (before and during the CDC 2109 funding) dropped out of the program. KapCC wanted to better understand the reasons students dropped out of the program to establish if additional supports or changes to the program are needed to help students graduate. KapCC enlisted the support of HHET to develop an online survey to gather feedback from students who did not complete the program. HHET collaborated closely with KapCC and DOH to create the online survey. Questions gathered information about when students dropped out of the program, their reasons for leaving, if they were aware of and used any KapCC student support resources while enrolled in the program, their feedback on how KapCC could better support students to complete the program, if they plan to return to the program, their rating of the program overall, their prior experience as a CHW, and the type of work they are currently doing.

In May 2023, the Google Forms survey was distributed to 85 students who dropped out of the CHW Program between August 2020 and February 2023. Students who dropped out prior to the CDC 2109 funding were included in the sample because the CHW Program was largely the same before and after CDC 2109 started (e.g., students' tuition was paid for by grants). To make improvements to the CHW Program, KapCC wanted to hear from all previous cohorts regardless of the source of funding that supported their tuition waiver. Participants were mailed a stainless steel insulated coffee tumbler (valued at \$5) to thank them for their time and participation.

Data were summarized and reported back to KapCC in July 2023 and the survey was provided to KapCC for use with future students who drop out of the program.

## Highlights

- In total, 23 out of 85 former students (27%) responded to survey. However, 4 responses were excluded from the analysis, due to duplicate responses.
- The majority of respondents were enrolled in the CHW Program part-time when they dropped out.
- The largest number of respondents dropped out during the first course of the program, CHW 100: Community Health Worker Fundamentals (33% of respondents). The second most common class that respondents dropped out of was the practicum course (19% of respondents).
- Many students dropped due to personal reasons that were beyond KapCC's control, including schedule conflicts related to their full-time work and families, and family issues or personal health problems.
- Other reasons for dropping out were related to the CHW Program itself, including students' challenges in meeting the practicum requirements, factors related to instructors, students' lack of knowledge or utilization of available student support resources, and challenges with technology needed to participate in online courses.
- Feedback to improve the program included requests for in-person classes and changes in the practicum, such as additional practicum site options, more flexibility to help students complete required hours, or requirement waivers for students with prior CHW experience.
- Just over half of respondents (52%) were not aware of any of KapCC's student resources, such as laptops for borrowing, mobile hot spots, supports for students with special needs, technology supports, etc.
- While the majority of respondents were not aware that they could re-enroll in the CHW Program at any time, just over a quarter of respondents are planning to re-enroll within three years.
- Overall, many respondents had positive impressions of the program, appreciating the experience and education they gained, despite having dropped out of the program.

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