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**Community Health Worker 101:
How to Hire a Community Health Worker?**

What is a Community Health Worker (CHW):

According to the *American Public Health Association (APHA)*:

“A community health worker is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community served. This trusting relationship enables the worker to serve as a liaison/link/intermediary between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A community health worker also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities, such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, and advocacy.”

What to look for in a Community Health Worker:

Consider the Specific Community Needs:

Initial conversations could start with topics such as availability, role expectations, surface-level background information, and any relevant professional references.

Essential Skills to Look for When You Hire a CHW:

When hiring a CHW, keep in mind that they juggle a lot of different skills to give their patients access to the best resources and improve their health outcomes.

Core Competencies:

Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) approved CHW certification courses cover 8 core competencies:

1. Communication
2. Interpersonal
3. Service coordination
4. Capacity-building,
5. Advocacy
6. Teaching
7. Organizational skills
8. Knowledge base on specific health issues.

Hard Skills:

1. Technical skills such as tech-savviness
2. research skills
3. professional training such as peer education, health literacy, working with electronic medical records, or using medical equipment properly

Soft Skills:

Learn about candidate's soft skills with open-ended questions giving opportunity to share about past experiences. Observe how they communicate — words, body language, tone, etc.

1. **The ability to draw clear boundaries** with the community, other staff, and themselves.
2. **Emotional resilience.** Empathy and connection are key for CHWs. But it's equally important to develop a high EQ (emotional quotient or emotional intelligence) and develop coping skills to prevent burnout and other mental health issues.
3. **Cultural sensitivity and an existing cultural connection.** Are they able to communicate as peers with your community?
4. **The ability to work independently and be successful in team environments.** When you hire a Community Health Worker, you need someone who's self-directed yet has the ability to work collaboratively.
5. **The ability and willingness to learn new things.** This includes new technology or tools, challenging situations in the field, and dealing with other issues on the go.
6. **Organizational skills.** Are they able to organize and prioritize their work with minimal guidance?
7. **Clear communication.** Are they able to clearly communicate an idea or resource?