



Fortifying an Emerging Field of Care

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES CASE STUDY

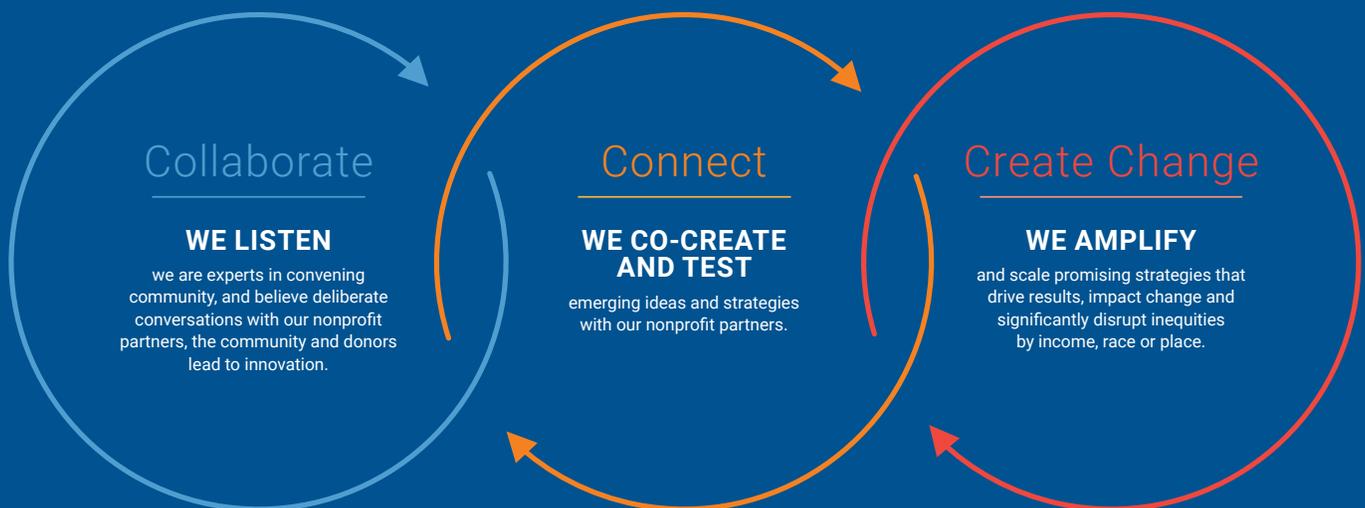


Greater Twin Cities
United Way

INVEST, TEST AND SERVE.

For people who are low-income and living with chronic conditions, navigating the health care system can be especially challenging. An emerging group of professionals known as community health workers help underserved communities take on these challenges. Funding from Medtronic enabled Greater Twin Cities United Way to invest in this new field of care and test its impact on both the people it serves and the system as a whole.

BIG CHALLENGES REQUIRE BIG IDEAS



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INNOVATING FOR IMPACT

Community health workers, or CHWs, work with patients in tandem with traditional medical systems to address the social determinants of health. They act as a bridge to services, helping people navigate health systems and resources, providing education on health issues and management options, and improving the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.



CONNECTING CARE AND COMMUNITY

Across the greater Twin Cities, chronic diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, People of Color and people of low-income. In 2013, 18.3 percent of people below age 65 living under the poverty line didn't have health insurance.

Lack of health insurance is just one barrier that can keep people in medically underserved communities from getting the care they need. It can also be difficult to travel to appointments, get information about their condition, trust providers and support staff, or advocate for themselves within a biased system.

Greater Twin Cities United Way partnered with Medtronic to understand these barriers and possible solutions. The preventative

approach of community health workers not only helps people get treatment, but empowers patients to manage their health outside of the exam room.

GOALS OF HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

With funding from Medtronic, we set to work amplifying the efforts of CHWs through the Healthy Communities initiative. Over five years, the program supported the work of this emerging profession. CHWs connected people diagnosed with chronic conditions to resources. Healthy Communities helped CHWs serve patients, optimize their work and validate the efficacy of the role.

TAKING CARE OF PATIENTS

Partnering with the Minnesota Visiting Nurses Association and Hennepin County

Medical Center (HCMC), we launched the Healthy Communities initiative in two neighborhoods that demonstrated a particularly high health need. Patients who met our diagnostic criteria were connected with a Healthy Communities CHW after they were discharged from HCMC.

A CHW reached out to each patient and offered a home visit. If the patient chose to schedule a visit, their CHW coordinated with the primary care provider to support the patient's ongoing care. The CHW advocated for the patient's care, helping them understand and adhere to their medication regimen, checking in after a medical visit, and referring them to other social services.

Health Impact

Over the course of the program, CHWs served more than 400 patients, helping them better understand and manage their health. As a result, emergency room visits among these patients decreased by 69 percent and their in-patient hospital stays dropped by 72 percent.

Healthy Communities patients developed habits that would help maintain their health, including improved diet, increased activity and better medication management. They even reported feeling happier and more independent.

MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL

Because the field of community health work is relatively new, we offered professional development opportunities for the CHWs participating in the program. Individualized and group education covered leadership skills, trauma training, diabetes and heart health research, and community resources.

With a focus on continuous improvement, we created processes that maximized the CHWs' impact on patients, fellow care providers and the health care system.

MORE THAN
400

PATIENTS SERVED

69%

DECREASE IN ER VISITS

72%

DECREASE IN IN-PATIENT
HOSPITAL STAYS

2.3x

ROI DELIVERED



System Impact

After iterating, improving and fine-tuning the Healthy Communities in-home visit approach, we found every dollar spent on CHW services delivered \$2.30 in benefits to the healthcare system. Part of this return was due to the CHW's integration into the care system. Their role in care coordination minimized duplicative services and freed up practitioners to efficiently deliver specialized care.

SUSTAINING THE WORK

A major part of the Healthy Communities initiative was advocacy. This meant forming a cross-sector task force that set out to educate health care officials across the state and country on the impact CHWs can have on the health care system.

The Healthy Communities Task Force partnered with the Minnesota Department

of Human Services to identify gaps in their systems and billing procedures, pilot a new reimbursement program and help providers and community organizations access CHW funding.

Administrative Impact

The task force was able to overcome a number of significant barriers that made it difficult to bill for CHW services. As a result, more of these services are now covered by a patient's existing health insurance. Between 2015 and 2018, billing data showed an increase in the number of CHW claims filed and paid successfully.

THE WAY FORWARD

Healthy Communities demonstrated the myriad of ways we can serve the community when we partner across sectors, invest in skilled professionals and bring people together to address complex issues.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT
PROGRAMS LIKE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES,
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THANKS TO OUR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Allina Health

CHW Solutions

HealthEast Care System

City of Minneapolis Health

Dakota County Public Health

Generations Health Care Initiatives

MVNA & Hennepin County
Medical Center

HealthEast Care System

Mayo Clinic

Medtronic Foundation

MN Community Health Worker Alliance

MN Department of Health

MS Strategies

Nobles County Public Health

Normandale College

North Memorial Medical Center

Northern Dental Access

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