

# Missouri Credentialing Board Community Health Worker Code of Ethics

## Introduction

This document is the foundation for standards which will enable the credentialed professional to measure the propriety of his or her conduct in dealing with clients, other professionals and other members of the community. All professionals credentialed by MCB are expected to thoroughly familiarize themselves with their Code of Ethics. The Board is committed to investigate and sanction those who fail to abide by its standards.

A Community Health Worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of and/or has an unusually close understanding of the community she or he serves. This trusting relationship enables the CHW 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 CHW 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.

## Purpose of this Code

The Community Health Worker Code of Ethics is based on and supported by the core values adopted by the American Association of Community Health Workers. The Code of Ethics outlined in this document provides a framework for Community Health Workers, supervisors, and employers of Community Health Workers to discuss ethical issues facing the profession. Employers are encouraged to consider this Code when creating Community Health Worker programs. The responsibility of all Community Health Workers is to strive for excellence by providing quality service and the most accurate information available to individuals, families, and communities.

The Code of Ethics is based upon commonly understood principles that apply to all professionals within the health and social service fields (e.g. promotion of social justice, positive health, and dignity). The Code, however, does not address all ethical issues facing Community Health Workers and the absence of a rule does not imply that there is no ethical obligation present. As professionals, Community Health Workers are encouraged to reflect on the ethical obligations that they have to the communities that they serve, and to share these reflections with others.

***Note: All of the principles and ethical standards have been identified with a dual range of seriousness (except for a few that have only one option available). The intention of this guide is to assist the investigators and the Ethics Committee in applying an 'indication' of seriousness to the hearing panels so that a more standardized method of sanction can be used when applied. All agree that there may be "extenuating circumstances" that differentiate seriousness for violations, i.e., some violations may be a result of oversight or carelessness, when others are clearly intentional and without remorse. With any "SUBSTANTIATED VIOLATION", it is now an expectation that there will be an attached level of seriousness being suggested by the Investigators and the Committee. Those levels are;  
S = Serious; VS = Very Serious; ES = Extremely Serious***

## ***Article 1. Responsibilities in the Delivery of Care***

Community Health Workers build trust and community capacity by improving the health and social welfare of the clients they serve. When a conflict arises among individuals, groups, agencies, or institutions, Community Health Workers should consider all issues and give priority to those that promote the wellness and quality of living for the individual/client. The following provisions promote the professional integrity of Community Health Workers.

### **1.1 Honesty**

Community Health Workers are professionals that strive to ensure the best health outcomes for the communities they serve. They communicate the potential benefits and consequences of available services, including the programs they are employed under. (ES)

### **1.2 Confidentiality**

Community Health Workers respect the confidentiality, privacy, and trust of individuals, families, and communities that they serve. They understand and abide by employer policies, as well as state and federal confidentiality laws that are relevant to their work. (ES)

### **1.3 Scope of Ability and Training**

Community Health Workers are truthful about qualifications, competencies and limitations on the services they may provide, and should not misrepresent qualifications or competencies to individuals, families, communities, or employers. (VS)

### **1.4 Quality of Care**

Community Health Workers strive to provide high quality service to individuals, families, and communities. They do this through continued education, training, and an obligation to ensure the information they provide is up to date and accurate. (S)

### **1.5 Referral to Appropriate Services**

Community Health Workers acknowledge when client issues are outside of their scope of practice and refer clients to the appropriate health, wellness, or social support services when necessary. (S)

### **1.6 Legal Obligations**

Community Health Workers have an obligation to report actual or potential harm to individuals within the communities they serve to the appropriate authorities. Additionally, Community Health Workers have a responsibility to follow requirements set by states, the federal government, and/or their employing organizations. This obligation includes reporting to the MCB any violation of an MCB Code of Ethical Practice and Professional Conduct whether the violation was a self-violation or a violation by another credentialed professional. Responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may supersede the loyalty owed to individual community members. (ES)

## ***Article 2. Promotion of Equitable Relationships***

Community Health Workers focus their efforts on the well-being of the whole community. They value and respect the expertise and knowledge that each community member possesses. In turn, Community Health Workers strive to create equitable partnerships with communities to address all issues of health and well-being.

### **2.1 Cultural Humility**

Community Health Workers possess expertise in the communities in which they serve. They maintain a high degree of humility and respect for the cultural diversity within each community. As advocates for their communities, Community Health Workers have an obligation to inform employers and others when policies and procedures will offend or harm communities, or are ineffective within the communities where they work. (VS)

### **2.2 Maintaining the Trust of the Community**

Community Health Workers are often members of their communities and their effectiveness in providing services derives from the trust placed in them by members of these communities. Community Health Workers do not act in ways that could jeopardize the trust placed in them by the communities they serve. (VS)

### **2.3 Respect for Human Rights**

Community Health Workers respect the human rights of those they serve, advance principles of self-determination, and promote equitable relationships with all communities. (VS)

### **2.4 Anti-Discrimination**

Community Health Workers do not discriminate against any person or group on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, social status, disability, or immigration status. (ES)

### **2.5 Client Relationships**

Community Health Workers maintain professional relationships with clients. They establish, respect and actively maintain personal boundaries between them and their clients. (VS)

### **2.6 Intimate Client Relationships**

Community Health Workers will not engage in romantic or sexual intimacies with clients utilizing services in the organization where the CHW is providing services. CHW will not engage in romantic or sexual intimacies with a client the CHW has provided services to for a period of 5 years after the client relationship has been terminated. CHW does not provide services to anyone with whom they've had romantic or sexual intimacies in the past. (ES)

### **2.7 Former Client Relationships**

A CHW shall not initiate or cultivate a personal relationship once the professional client relationship has ended with a former client for a period of five years. This may include, but is not limited to: familial, social, romantic/sexual, financial, business or other types of close personal relationships with former clients. (VS)

### ***Article 3. Interactions with other Service Providers***

Community Health Workers maintain professional partnerships with other service providers in order to serve the community effectively.

#### **3.1 Cooperation**

Community Health Workers place the well-being of those they serve above personal disagreements and work cooperatively with any other person or organization dedicated to helping provide care to those in need. (S)

#### **3.2 Conduct**

Community Health Workers promote integrity in the delivery of health and social services. They respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people and have an ethical obligation to report any inappropriate behavior (e.g. sexual harassment, racial discrimination, etc.) to the proper authority. (ES)

#### **3.3 Self-Presentation**

Community Health Workers are truthful and forthright in presenting their background and training to other service providers. (VS)

#### **3.4 Cooperation with the MCB**

CHW shall report any felony or misdemeanor conviction to the Missouri Credentialing Board within 30 days of the date of conviction. (S)

### ***Article 4. Professional Rights and Responsibilities***

The Community Health Worker profession is dedicated to excellence in the practice of promoting well-being in communities. Guided by common values, Community Health Workers have the responsibility to uphold the principles and integrity of the profession as they assist families to make decisions impacting their well-being. Community Health Workers embrace individual, family, and community strengths and build upon them to increase community capacity.

#### **4.1 Continuing Education**

Community Health Workers should remain up-to-date on any developments that substantially affect their ability to competently render services. Community Health Workers strive to expand their professional knowledge base and competencies through education and participation in professional organizations. (S)

#### **4.2 Advocacy for Change in Law and Policy**

Community Health Workers are advocates for change and work on impacting policies that promote social justice and hold systems accountable for being responsive to communities. Policies that advance public health and well-being enable Community Health Workers to provide better care for the communities they serve. (S)

#### **4.3 Enhancing Community Capacity**

Community Health Workers help individuals and communities move toward self-sufficiency in order to promote the creation of opportunities and resources that support their autonomy. (S)

**4.4 Wellness and Safety**

Community Health Workers are sensitive to their own personal well-being (physical, mental, and spiritual health) and strive to maintain a safe environment for themselves and the communities they serve. (S)

**4.5 Loyalty to the Profession**

Community Health Workers are loyal to the profession and aim to advance the efforts of other Community Health Workers worldwide. (S)

**4.6 Advocacy for the Profession**

Community Health Workers are advocates for the profession. They are members, leaders, and active participants in local, state, and national professional organizations. (S)

**4.7 Recognition of Others**

Community Health Workers give recognition to others for their professional contributions and achievements. (S)

Serious	Very Serious	Extremely Serious
Additional Education: Ethics, Counseling Techniques, specific drugs, other trainings Increased Supervision Reprimand Denial of Credential or Application Reading/Written Reports	Suspension of Credential Suspension of Application Additional Education: Ethics, Counseling Techniques, specific drugs, other trainings Referral for MH assessment Referral for Substance Use Disorder Assessment Denial of Credential/ Application Web Posting Agency Notification	Revocation for ____ time Suspension for ____ time Denial of future Credential/ Application Agency notification Web Posting Requires permission before applying for credential