

Grocery Stores, Churches, Funerals and More: Meeting the Hmong Community Where They Are

CCR

To support Sheboygan County's response to COVID-19 in the Hmong community, Community Health Worker (CHW) CherPao Vang was deployed through Community Health Workers for COVID Response and Resilience Communities (CCR 2109 funding to better meet people where they are and promote COVID-19 vaccinations. CherPao and the Sheboygan County Health Department's work is an essential example of how CHWs are responding to the impacts of COVID-19 and supporting resilient communities.

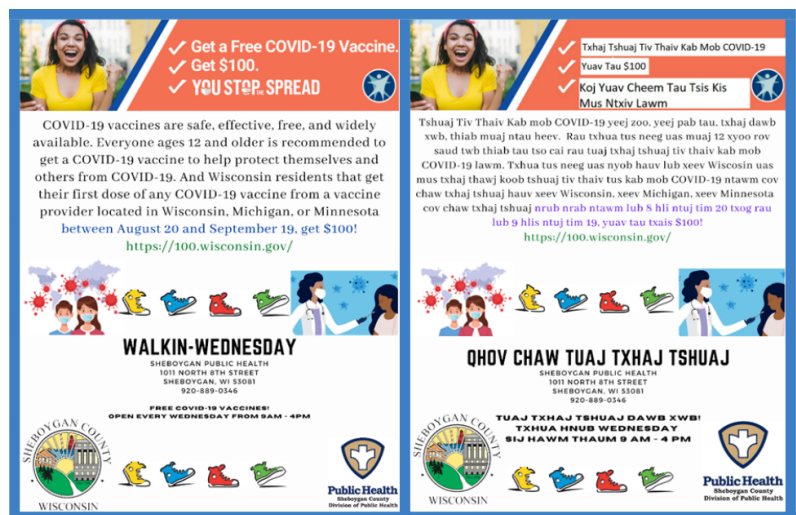
CHW Work Supported through CDC Funding

In 2021, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) received funding through the CCR 2109 grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Using CCR 2109 funding, DHS worked to enhance and expand Community Health Workers (CHWs) roles in COVID-19 response and recovery. Additionally, DHS is working to build community resilience across the state through CHW work. To better accomplish this goal, DHS partnered with 13 organizations that are working across 11 Wisconsin counties to support the training, deployment, and engagement of CHWs. These partners, including the Sheboygan County Health Department, were given CCR 2109 funds to better serve their communities through CHW work.

Sheboygan County and CherPao's Work

Sheboygan County serves the third largest Hmong community in Wisconsin, representing roughly 5.9% of the Sheboygan County population.¹ CherPao Vang has lived in Sheboygan County for over 37 years, and recently became one of two bilingual Community Health Workers (CHWs) at the health department. As a Sheboygan resident and Hmong community member, CherPao noticed two main barriers to vaccinations in the Hmong community: lack of awareness and lack of Hmong-translated resources. Since last year, he has used 2109 CCR funding to reduce these barriers to receiving health care information and services.

With funding from the CCR 2109 grant, CherPao supports Hmong residents in accessing vaccines and other health services. To increase awareness and reduce language barriers, he created Hmong-translated educational materials and business cards. CherPao also used funding to support extra time to connect with the community. He engaged Hmong community members directly. He met them where they were, rather than waiting for them to find him. He went to places people commonly congregated, including churches, social events, and grocery stores. He talked about vaccines, emphasizing the science and their safety. After conversing, he left Hmong members with support materials, including flyers (pictured to the right) and his business card. He made sure the support materials were in their shared native language and included contact information and calls to action.



CherPao's Impact

CherPao's strategic outreach supported the Hmong community in multiple ways. First, vaccination rates in the Hmong community increased. During the start of the CCR 2109 grant, about 47% of Asian American residents were fully vaccinated in Sheboygan County. Through CherPao and the Sheboygan County Health Department's efforts, the vaccination rate for Asian American residents increased to 68% within one year.²

Second, CherPao's work helped Sheboygan's Hmong community members connect to services and care beyond COVID-19. For example, he met with a 45-year-old Hmong gentleman about getting the COVID-19 vaccine. He left a flier about a vaccination pop-up clinic and his business card. Later, the man experienced chest pain and called CherPao to ask about what he should do. CherPao encouraged him to go to the Emergency Room. The community member was diagnosed with a heart condition that required immediate bypass surgery. This connection to a CHW likely saved the gentleman's life.

Even within one year, CherPao's connections in Sheboygan go beyond immediate COVID-19 response and recovery to boosting community resilience. After witnessing the positive impact of CherPao's efforts within the Hmong community, the Sheboygan County Health Department initiated an effort to add a CHW position to their public health strategy. CherPao has also played an integral role in forming Sheboygan United, which is a newly founded group that connects community members to resources. These strategies will allow continual promotion and integration of CHWs into the existing workforce in Sheboygan County.

Next Steps

With the public health effort reinforced, CherPao is motivated to continue to meet Hmong community members where they are, connect with them organically, and build trust. Over the next few months, Sheboygan United hopes to increase the presence of the group through resource fairs within the community. CherPao encourages other CHWs and public health workers to reach people where they are and be willing to share information, connection, experience, and resources.

Sheboygan County is one example of how CCR 2109 efforts in Wisconsin have advanced over the past year. CherPao's successes demonstrate that CHWs are essential part of Wisconsin's response and recovery. Additionally, the connections that CHWs like CherPao make go beyond the immediate COVID-19 response and work to promote resilient communities.

Sources

1. America Counts Staff. (2021, August 25). Wisconsin Population Increased 3.6% Since 2010. *U.S. Census Bureau*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/wisconsin-population-change-between-census-decade.html>
2. Wisconsin Department of Health Services. (2022, July 27). COVID-19: Vaccine Data. Retrieved from <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/vaccine-data.htm>

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