

**UNMC, College of Public Health**  
**Applied Practice Experience (APEX) Opportunities**

**Partner organization name:** Center for Reducing Health Disparities,  
UNMC, College of Public Health

**Partner organization website:** <https://www.unmc.edu/publichealth/crhd/>

**Partner organization brief description:**

The Center for Reducing Health Disparities (CRHD) at the UNMC College of Public Health carries a mission of promoting equity and social justice in health and health care by leading collaborative efforts to generate and disseminate evidence-based, policy-relevant solutions.

In 2022, the CRHD led the efforts in securing a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration to allow us to recruit 240 community health workers (CHW) across Nebraska over the next three years to take part in a newly developed training and certification program, CHWConnect@UNMC. Our program seeks to address health disparities and related social determinants of health by rigorously training CHWs and promoting their integration into local healthcare delivery systems for the provision of holistic, patient-centered care.

Enrolled trainees typically go through two stages in our training program. The first stage consists of 10 weeks of didactic learning on selected core competencies through an online course delivered through NU Advance. The second stage involves mentored, on-the-job training at designated training sites, including registered apprenticeship programs, for 8-12 months. Training sites include select federally qualified health centers, tribal community health centers, non-profit hospitals, public health departments, governmental, non-profit, and community-, school-, and faith-based organizations in Nebraska. At the end of the on-the-job training, each trainee is expected to give a poster presentation highlighting experience and accomplishments during the whole training period.

The main competencies covered in the training include healthcare ethics, social determinants of health, emergency preparedness, health education for chronic disease prevention and management, patient advocacy and care coordination, mental health first aid, financial literacy promotion, health insurance basics, community engagement, health needs assessment, and culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

**Partner organization's point of contact name and email:**

Jessica Ern, MPH, [jessica.ern@unmc.edu](mailto:jessica.ern@unmc.edu)

**Description of partner organization's priority opportunities (APEX activities):**

- Assist in the implementation of an evaluation of CHW trainees, mentors (including but not limited to, clinicians, clinical administrative staff, health department directors, and program directors), and training sites/facilities.
  - Examples of training sites include OneWorld Community Health Centers, NOAH Clinic, several public health departments, Nebraska Medicine, Bryan Health, CHI Health, Methodist Hospital, Twelve Clans Unity Hospital, Asian Community and Cultural Center, Nebraska Enhanced Pharmacies, Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition, the Salvation Army, Ponca Tribe of Nebraska Health Services, New

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Era Baptist State Convention of Nebraska, and the East African Development Association of Nebraska.

- Continue the evaluation of training sites, including process and outcome evaluation of the training sites.
  
- Qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis from the evaluation.
  - Conduct semi-structured interviews as needed.
  - Gather surveys, manage, and clean data as needed.
  - Use of online data analysis tools to analyze qualitative and quantitative data.
  - Manage and analyze secondary data as needed to complete evaluation.
  
- Interpret and assist in the dissemination of evaluation results to key stakeholders.
  - Assist in the development of quarterly reports needed for the funding agency.
  - Assist in the development of the written results for mass release in the community, including written, social media, and internet platforms.
  
- Assist in tasks requested by training sites to complete a successful evaluation of CHW trainee incorporation into the workflow.
  
- Assist in the development of an evaluation of the core competencies addressed in the online, didactic portion of the program.
  - Develop and disseminate online survey to didactic participants regarding the first ten weeks of the training program.
  
- Develop and host a ‘transitions training’ for the subsequent semester APEX student to provide updates and ensure a smooth transition for continued evaluation work.

**Timeframe of proposed activities:**

Ongoing;

The evaluation activities began in Summer 2023 and will continue through the length of the training program duration. This is an ongoing project that requires phased evaluations.

Therefore, there will be an expectation of up to 5-10 hours of transition support at the end or immediately following completion of the student’s APEX. This portion will require a transition period with current APEX students to learn the current status of the evaluation plan. Currently in Fall 2023, there are two students in partnership with supporting these priorities.

**Benefit of proposed activities to partner organization:**

One key component of this training program is to work with community and clinical partners to evaluate the impact of CHW trainees in facilitating care access, addressing social determinants of health, and improving patient clinical outcomes at designated training sites. The inclusion of MPH students will assist with the CRHD and Grant team to complete a successful evaluation of the training program, which will inform quality improvement and sustainability planning.

**Benefit of proposed activities to the student:**

This evaluation program will provide hands-on experience for students who are interested in learning more about community engagement, program evaluation, grant and program

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implementation, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, and interpretation of this analysis in a supportive and collaborative environment.

**Skill sets of students requested:**

Activities will be tailored to the student's interest and skill set. Preference will be given to students who have the following skills: basic data analysis; critical thinking skills; self-management; attention to detail; excellent written and verbal skills; knowledge of best practices for literature reviews and survey design and delivery.

**Additional Information:**

At this time, virtual engagement is preferred.

There is potential for this Applied Learning Experience to lead to a subsequent Capstone Experience based on project needs and student performance.