

Lessons Learned: Implementation of the MassHealth Competency-Based Program on Healthcare Management

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Building **sustainable community health**, together



Presentation Outline

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Program Background



Funding source: MassHealth DSRIP



Audience: Frontline workers in ACOs & CBPs, such as CHA



Administration: Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp)



Curriculum delivery: SNHU



Structure: 16-week terms, total of 30 competencies



Timeline: 2 rounds of applications, Jan 2020 & Oct 2020

Evaluation methods

■ Qualitative data sources:

- 7 key informant interviews (leadership from CHA, SNHU, & CommCorp)
- 5 non-CHA participant interviews
- 8 CHA participant interviews
- 8 CHA supervisor interviews
- Focus group with SNHU advisors

■ Quantitative data sources:

- Demographic/employment data from participants who participated in the program and the overall CHA workforce

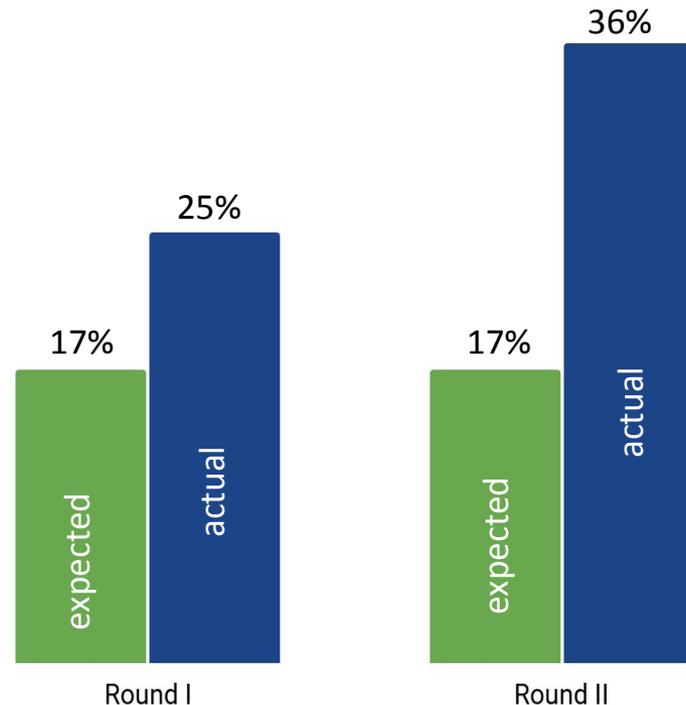
■ Timeline of evaluation:

- June 2021-Feb 2022

Recruitment

CHA had a particularly high enrollment rate, as compared to other ACOs

- In round 1, CHA represented 25% of total participants
 - They were the only site able to fill all slots
- In round 2, CHA represented about 36% of total participants
 - This was over twice the expected enrollment of 17% per site



Due to this high enrollment rate, MassHealth reached out to **learn more about the uptake of the program at CHA**

Recruitment

Insight into high CHA enrollment

Factor I: Investment in the program from CHA leadership

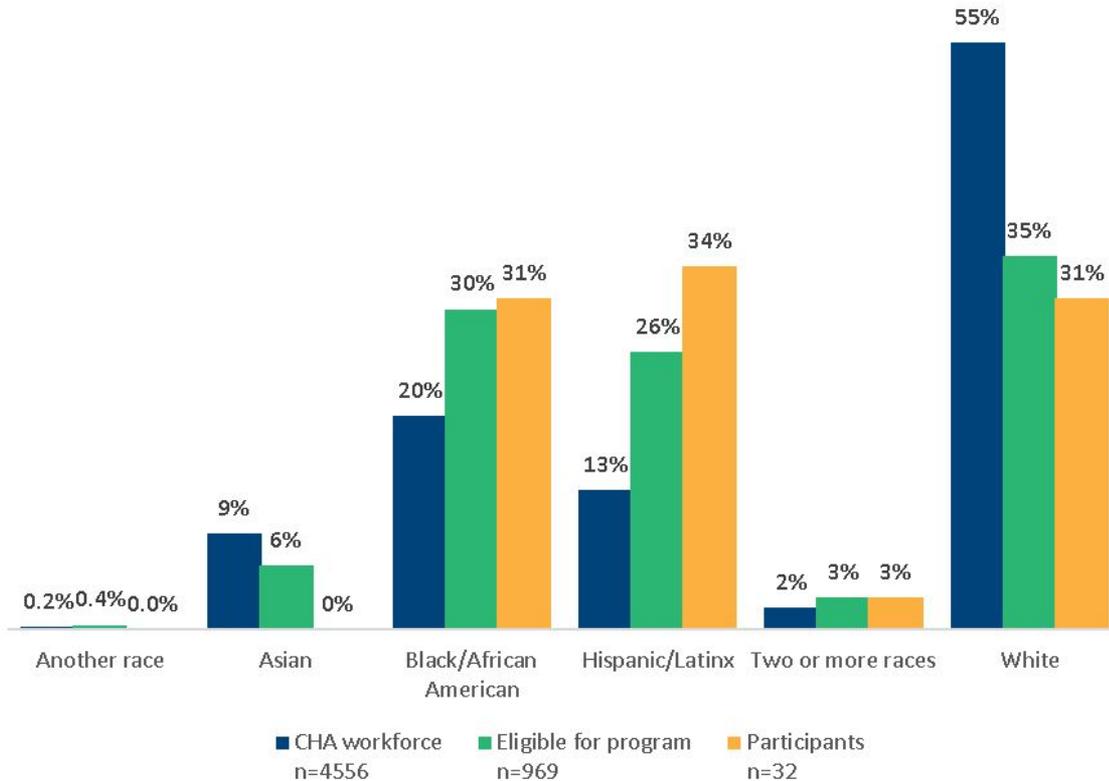
“We really put our money where our mouth is, as **we’re a mission-driven safety net hospital, we provide educational opportunities for everybody. Everybody matters. And we take that mission very seriously, even in-house.”**

Factor II: Communication about program

“My supervisor was very supportive. She was happy that I had decided to take the next step up.”

Participant Characteristics: Demographics

CHA employees eligible for the program were **more likely to identify as Black or Hispanic/Latinx** than the CHA workforce as a whole



Participants were also **more likely to be female (91%)** vs. the CHA workforce (76%)

Program Experiences: Positive Elements

Online Platform

“Being virtual, I think that it’s a great thing. I love it. **I mean, I don’t think I would be able to do this if it wasn’t virtual.**”

Cost

“If offered something that you may qualify for, and basically, **if you’re offered a free education, you take it, right?**”

Competencies of most interest/value

“I liked learning about **cultural competency, and what culture means to different people.** It could be ethnic culture, it could be environmental culture.”

Application Process

“It was explained pretty well. I think everything was pretty well mapped out... It wasn’t too hard. I didn’t have too many questions.”

Flexibility

“**You don’t have to do the competencies in order,** which I loved because there were certain times certain things spoke to me faster, so certain classes, I was able to achieve quicker.”

Relevance to work

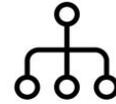
“There’s so many components of it that relate to **how to develop teams, how to create job longevity, how to create retention opportunities.** I think there’s so much valuable information that becomes applicable.”

Program Experiences: Support



Support from other participants

Only 30% of participants mentioned collaborating in a meaningful way with another participant



Support from organizational leadership

Some participants (both CHA & non-CHA) reported low support from their organization leadership, in terms of active involvement



Participants reported they received support from supervisors, though the level of support varied



Supervisors inquired about their progress and experience, and encouraged and congratulated them on completing competencies

“One thing that CHA has with their leadership teams on site and as well as the bigwigs, is that when they come around, **they listen to their employees, and they listen to everything that they have to say.** And that’s very, very good because it makes you feel like you matter.”

“My manager, when I started the program, we would meet...every week. **And she would say, “Hey, how’s it going? It’s cool that you’re doing it.”** A couple times she’d maybe ask, “What kind of projects are you working on?”

Program Experiences: Support



Support from SNHU:

- Participants reported that their advisors were helpful and available
- Advisors were able to be flexible to their needs

“My advisor, [XXX] is awesome. I can call her for anything, and... **she checks in on me all the time.** So, no complaints about the advisor.”



Support from reviewers:

- 30% participants reported reviewers were supportive

“Mary-Ann [of CommCorp] is a godsend. Mary-Ann should have wings, honest to goodness.”



Support from CommCorp:

- CommCorp provided one-on-one support along with group trainings/seminars to participants.

Program Experiences: Individual Impacts

Educational Advancement

- Participants reported interest in continuing with their education to attain associates or bachelors' degrees

“It’s making me continue, and **looking forward once the program is completed to continue with my education** and get what I really want. And what I really want to do is get either a Bachelor’s, Associate’s, or a Master’s in Management. And **I think this is one step that is pushing me to go ahead and do it.**”

Career Advancement

- Participation in this program impacted future career opportunities, and helped them move towards eligibility for promotion at CHA

“Once I finish this program, I’m getting a Certificate in Healthcare Management, and that’s half of an Associate’s degree, so **once I get an Associate’s degree, I could technically be a Practice Manager.**”

Program Experiences: Institutional Impacts

Knowledge and Skill Usage

Participants used skills from CBE program in their jobs, including communication and leadership skills

“It’s helped me with **communicating better with my team**, communicating better with my supervisor.”

“It’s been very, very helpful to what I do for work at the moment. I think I have **gained a lot more skills.**”

Perspective about Employer

- Participants reported program made them feel positively towards CHA as a place to work
- They appreciated the opportunity for development for frontline workers

“When an organization offers something like CHA did, it kind of gives you a pat on the back like, ‘Hey, you know what? **We really do care about your advancement.**’”

Program Experiences: Institutional Impacts

Managers also spoke about the connection between offering educational opportunities to employees and retention of staff.

“So [educational opportunities] could be part of the benefits **because more people would want to come work for an organization that’s going to help them go to school...** If new folks coming in, they’re going to be like, ‘Hey, I want to stay here because if I work here, they’re paying for my school.’”

-CHA Manager

Program Experiences: COVID pandemic

Barriers due to COVID

- Navigating changes in protocol, demand and stress
- Exhaustion
- Complicated family circumstances

“Oh, it was horrible, I couldn’t focus. Just because, you know **when COVID hit, it hit everything. It hit like at home, it hit at work...** You know, being a support for my kids and trying to support them from work, and that was crazy.”

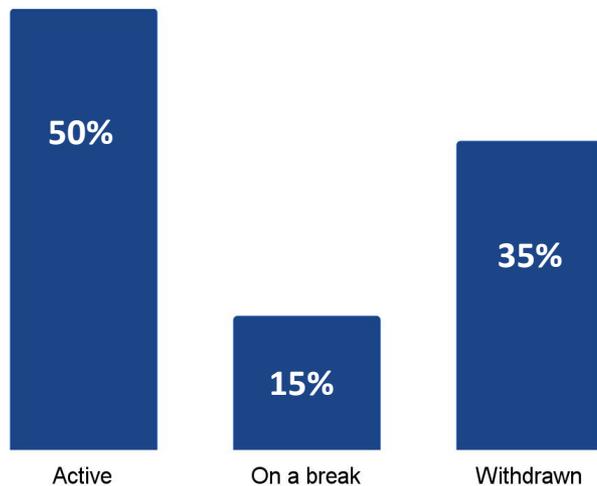
Opportunities due to COVID

- Reduced time spent commuting
- Increased flexibility for those working remotely

“**I actually think COVID is what made me decide to do it.** I started working from home last March. So, by the time September-October rolled around, there was no plan of putting me back in the field, which means **the time on commute kind of made me go, ‘You know what? I could balance this.’**”

Challenges: Retention

Retention in the CBE program (as of Fall 2021)



Reasons for withdrawal

Similar to challenges experienced by all participants, including:

- COVID pandemic
- Balancing home/work/school responsibilities
- Challenges with CB learning format

“One of the challenges obviously, is being a mom of two kids, that’s a big one, coming home after working eight hours...two hours to study, that’s a big challenge you know.”

Challenges and recommendations: Structure

Challenges

- Self-directed format
- Not enough deadlines

“... But throughout that way, there’s no one emailing you, calling you...whether you’re late or not...So that can slip your mind if you don’t plan for it.”

Recommendations

- Provide list of all competencies with suggested pathway(s) through at the beginning of the program
- Mandatory orientation on Zoom for all participants
- Have more due dates for competency submissions through the out semester

“The advisor should have provided this and said, “Here’s the list of all competencies you need to complete before you graduate from the degree. This is maybe our recommended path that you should take, but you can pick out for each term the ones you want to do.”

Challenges and recommendations: Format and topics

Expand format options for content

- Live or videotaped lectures that accompany each competency
- Video and audio-based books or materials
- Opportunity for live interaction with a professor or context expert

“So, each module should have an explanation, video, Zoom chat, or something. [...] Even if it’s a lecture component that’s videotaped and you can access it whenever you want would be very helpful, because if you get confused, you can refer to that.”

Topics

- Several participants commented that they felt that some of the topics were not related to health care, but related to retail/business.

“Some of them, like in the beginning, had nothing to do with healthcare. So in the beginning, I did them. And I got them mastered. But it didn’t grab my attention, because it wasn’t healthcare-directed.”

Challenges and Recommendations: Materials and review process

Course materials

- Criticism of the textbook and out-date readings
- Amount of reading was too much and hard to navigate

“And it would be **really great to have a primer [...] to be able to understand the best way to navigate those resources...** Because you’d hit these little arrows and that would take you to someplace else, and that would take you to someplace else, and then all of a sudden, it was sort of like the World Wide Web, like you’d get farther and farther away from where you needed to be for that competency.”

Review process for competencies

- Lack of clarity/alignment between the rubric vs the desired product
- Inconsistency between reviewers
- Not enough detail in the feedback provided by reviewers

“I got discouraged because I was getting back a project that wasn’t getting mastered, and **the frustrating part was having a different reviewer every time,** and you know, just reviewers have different points of views, and it was just like confusing at times.”

“I wish the **reviewers all gave detailed feedback if you didn’t master it.** And not just copy the directions that we already read, that clearly, we didn’t understand.”

Future Program Recommendations: Opportunities

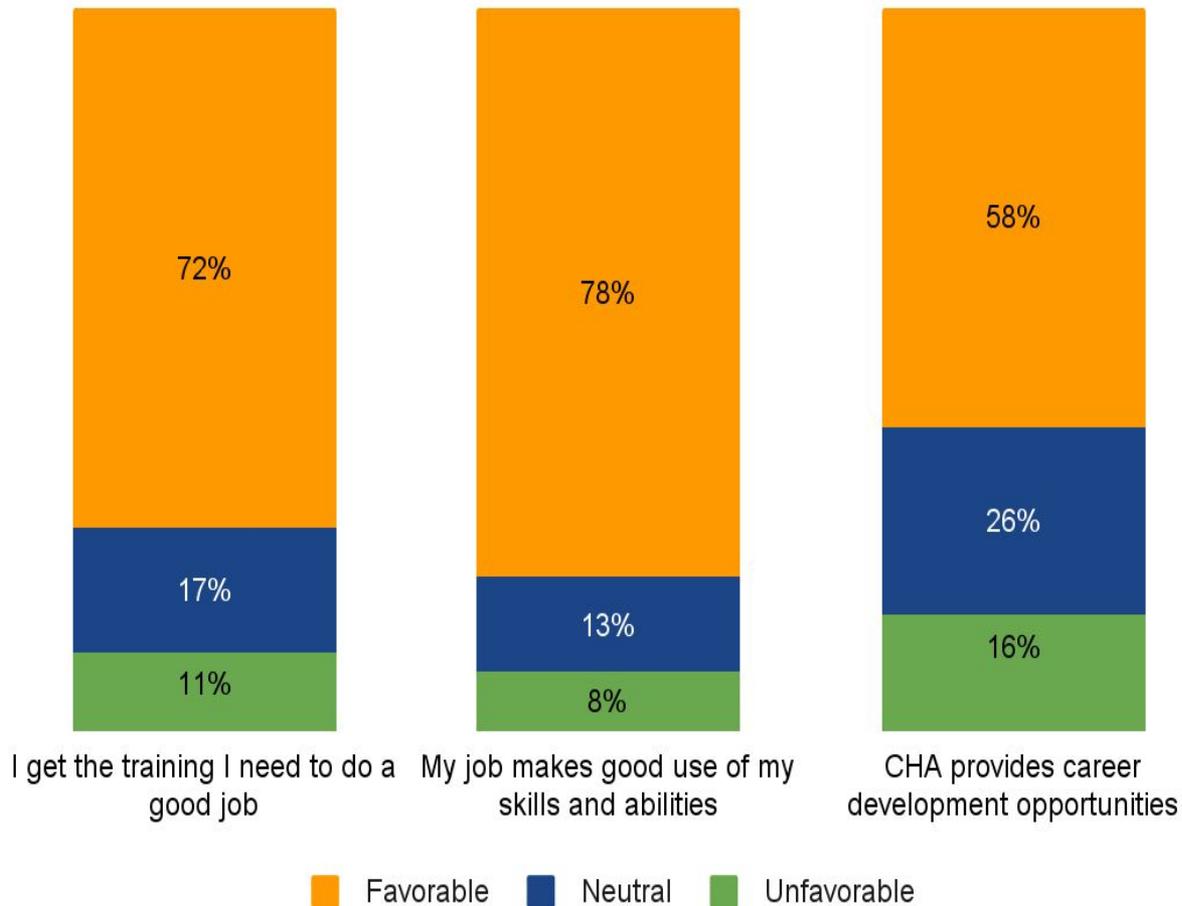
Several managers commented on the **lack of career development opportunities** for employees in lower level positions at CHA. They encouraged leadership to continue offering educational opportunities for these employees, so they can gain the skills needed to be promoted. **Leadership and communication** were the skills most commonly mentioned skills that the managers felt were needed for this group of employees.

“So, I think, to me, that what’s lacking everywhere globally in healthcare is **we don’t have a really good prep program for people who are the managers of offices. We do a lot for the clinical people, but we don’t do a lot for the managers...**” - CHA manager

“More training programs, more leadership development programs for supervisors, for middle management would be very, very helpful, especially with CHA’s goal to be more inclusive and be an equitable organization. **So investing in those employees at that level, which is very diverse, will lead us to the changes that we want to see happen, in terms of, do we have representation, are we an inclusive organization from the bottom-up.**”
- CHA Manager

Future Program Recommendations: Opportunities

CHA Press Ganey Results (N=2,543)



Future Program Recommendations: Communication

- Communication about opportunities should be **multimodal** (emails, flyers, on television screens in the cafeterias, verbally shared at meetings, and having program representatives come to campus)
- **Targeted outreach** from managers was seen as particularly helpful and important. Another suggestion was to recognize the employees currently in or who have completed the program and have them share their stories.

“Just by encouraging them to keep going on and keep trucking and recognize the individuals that get their certificates so they [...] can show throughout the organization, ‘hey, this individual was able to do it. You can too. We support and stand 100 percent behind you.’ **When staff starts seeing that more, I think it encourages everybody to get on the ball and start doing more.**” - CHA Manager

“That’s something personal, that’s something very personal, talking to them... ‘Hey guys, listen, there’s an opportunity.’ If everybody has a meeting with their employee [...] Put it out there on the table. The employee may not jump to it in the beginning, but at least you’ve planted a seed.” -CHA Manager

Future Program Recommendations: Skills

Specific areas mentioned by managers for skill development for their employees

- Basic computer skills
- Cultural competence
- Training in a second language

Several managers also recommended that employees should be involved in the decisions made about future career development opportunities.

“I think that some of this would be great in a survey to go out, especially to the front desk staff, and to find out what they would like for healthcare-related option. You know, because you have a lot of them, they want to be nurses or [...] maybe be a technician of some sort, or you know, they may want to work in HR, but you need the education to do those things. And if other opportunities were open to them where they can get their education, even if they have to do it online[...] I do think they want to do other things.” - CHA manager

Future Program Recommendations: FREE!

Both employee participants and managers commented on how the **major draw of the SNHU certificate was that it was free for employees.** Employees at this level often can't access the tuition reimbursement dollars because they can't wait months to be reimbursed.

“If it's free, I guess that's one barrier that we can kind of scratch off. But if it's something that you have to pay out of pocket, you know, if you get some tuition reimbursement, that could be challenging. [...] I do see the **hesitancy of going forward to anything that has to be paid up front.**” - CHA Manager

“This is the first I have ever heard of a program like this. I've heard about [...] like if you're in the medical field and you go to school, sometimes they'll reimburse you. But you have to pay up front on your own. And then when you complete the program, and you get your degree -- the associate's they reimburse the tuition. But nothing where it's **completely cost-free so I don't have to pay anything up front at all. I've never heard of a program like this. So, it's a really, really good program.**”
-CHA participant

Future Program Recommendations: Supports

Provide some **protected time** for employees participating in these programs, so they have a block of hours to dedicate to school while at work

“Now I’m not saying that they should have all day to do this, but I’m saying it may be [that] there might be a way in which **CHA could look at really getting behind and supporting these students with a commitment to their progress in these projects. [...] And I think that a few hours per term per person is not probably too much to ask to show their support and to show their commitment to their successes.**” - CHA participant

“For example... the employee has a big project coming up and they’re working on it. Sometimes the **manager could give you like an hour or two during the day,** depending on the clinic size. [...] Sometimes managers can’t do that because we’re short-staffed, but if we were fully-staffed, you could pull an employee aside, like, hey, work on your project here for an hour or two in the morning. Maybe the manager can help the employee as well too.”
- CHA Manager

Future Program Recommendations: Manager Support

Manager support in career development generally and in the SNHU certificate specifically was seen as **critical to employees' success.**

“And I try to find out what their [employees'] goals are and when I do like, performance appraisals, it's not so much about the formal document, get it done, sign off on it. For me, it **creates that opportunity to have a one-on-one discussion with somebody and find out a little bit more about what are their goals.**” - CHA Manager

“We know some employees might need more support than others, but I think sometimes they need to have their supervisor, or the manager be in close contact with them to reevaluate, and also to see in what way they can help. ...So I think that **once a manager or supervisor knows you have someone participating in a program, so you are to be in close contact with that person and then trying to help that person to finish the program.**” -CHA Manager

Conclusions

 There is a **lack of educational/training opportunities** for frontline healthcare workers with low educational attainment

 This CBE program supports healthcare workforce development at CHA (and across other ACOs) that are **currently underserved by educational/professional development offerings**

 This program is provided free of cost to participants, which **addresses financial barriers for this population**

 **Future similar educational/development programs would provide significant benefits to employees at CHA and elsewhere.** This evaluation of the CBE program provides important lessons learned in terms of **addressing program challenges & strengthening future programs**

Thank you!

Questions?



Discussion Questions

- What are your **main takeaways** from the presentation today?
- How could you implement **lessons learned** from this program in your work?
- What kinds of **skills/knowledge** do you feel would be most important for frontline workers to develop in future programs?
- How can we use what we learned to **inform future educational programs**?
- How does a program like this **advance the health equity goals** of the new Medicaid waiver?