

CHWS CAN CHANGE THE SYSTEM: REVISING ORGANIZATIONAL NORMS

OLD NORMS

Norm #1: Employees should work their set schedules at all times.

Norm #2: Staff are expected to do their work in the office unless at a work-sanctioned event.

Norm #3: When providing services, employees should aim for sustainable solutions rather than short-term fixes.

Norm #4: Employees must maintain strict professional boundaries with clients.

REVISED NORMS

Revised norm #1: CHWs and their employers should collaborate to determine the needs of the community and how to balance organizational needs (meetings, check-in, documentation) with community needs (flexible scheduling, meeting outside traditional work hours).

Revised norm #2: Access to office space and scheduled office time can be essential for CHW success, particularly for CHWs who are not typically conducting active outreach (e.g. CHWs working in program design and development or consulting). Employers should consider the nature of the work being conducted before requiring in-office hours.

Revised norm #3: CHWs recognize that navigating systems in order to obtain needed resources and services can take time and leave individuals who are vulnerable without access to immediate, urgent needs.

Obtaining short-term fixes such as a motel voucher or groceries for the next week is a key part of CHW success, as it sustains clients in the short-term, builds trust, and provides clients with resources to encourage self-care and self-advocacy.

Revised norm #4: CHWs are uniquely equipped to overcome the barriers to healthcare access, but this ability is contingent upon their ability to build relationships. These relationships are inherently part of their work. Employers should leverage existing resources and work with CHWs to define and enforce professional boundaries.