

# Community Health Worker Evaluation Survey 2015



Department of State Health Services

May 2016

## Table of Contents

2016 Advisory Committee .....	ii
Executive Summary .....	1
Survey Findings.....	3
How Experienced are Texas CHWs? .....	3
Do Texas CHWs Value Certification? .....	4
Why Do Texas CHWs Keep Their Certification? .....	7
Do Employers Require CHW Certification? .....	8
Do CHWs Plan to Renew their CHW Certification? .....	9
Comments .....	10
Advocacy/Awareness/Professionalism .....	10
Employment .....	11
Training and Renewal .....	12
Challenges .....	13
Conclusions and Considerations.....	13
Appendix A: CHW/Promotor(a) Evaluation Survey .....	15

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Promotor(a) or CHW Training and Certification Advisory Committee identified a need to explore CHWs' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of certification. To assist, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) developed an online survey in English and Spanish from the Advisory Committee's final survey questions. Throughout this report, respondents who completed the survey in Spanish are referred to as "Spanish speakers" and respondents who completed the survey in English are referred to as "English speakers." Also, "promotores" and "community health workers" are used interchangeably and are both considered CHWs.

### Survey Findings

Many survey respondents, especially Spanish speakers, have considerable experience as a CHW. Approximately 21 percent of English speakers have more than ten years of experience as compared with 35 percent of Spanish speakers. A majority of respondents have two to four years of experience.

More than 90 percent of respondents (91 percent – English speakers; 98 percent Spanish speakers) indicated that they felt their certification is meaningful or valuable. Most respondents indicated that certification was valuable as it increases self-confidence, makes a difference in the community, and encourages respect and acknowledgement by other professionals. Respondents noted that a lack of job opportunities was a primary reason why certification may not be considered valuable.

About 35 percent of English speakers indicated that their employers required CHW certification, compared with 52 percent of Spanish speakers.

A very high percentage of respondents indicated that they planned to renew their CHW certification (92 percent speakers and 100 percent of Spanish speakers.)

Survey responses appear to have been very limited from CHWs who did not renew their certifications as more than 600 certifications expired in 2015.

### Conclusion

The 2015 CHW Evaluation Survey provided valuable information for the Advisory Committee and DSHS as they continue to explore ways to improve the Program, CHW renewal, and overall survey return rates.

### Survey Implementation

#### *Implemented*

May – December 2015

#### *Surveys Disseminated*

> 1,200 English surveys  
261 Spanish surveys

#### *Target Respondents*

Individuals whose CHW certification renewal was due in 2015

#### *Completed Surveys*

English - 215  
Return rate = 18 percent

Spanish - 53  
Return rate = 20 percent

## Introduction

DSHS oversees the statewide certification and training program for community health workers (CHWs), also known as promotores, under Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 48. DSHS also collects and reports data through the Annual Report of the Promotor(a) or CHW Training and Certification Advisory Committee, including training information and the number and demographics of certified CHWs and instructors.

## Background and Development

The Promotor(a) or CHW Training and Certification Advisory Committee identified a need to explore CHWs' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of certification. The Advisory Committee formed an Evaluation Workgroup to identify key survey areas, to draft and refine survey questions and format, and to pilot the survey in 2013 and 2014.

## Implementation and Dissemination

DSHS developed an online survey in English and Spanish from the Advisory Committee's final survey questions. DSHS disseminated the survey May – December 2015 to CHWs whose certification renewal was due in 2015. DSHS disseminated surveys in English or Spanish based on CHWs' preferred language for correspondence. Most CHWs request correspondence in English. Throughout this report, respondents who completed the survey in Spanish are referred to as "Spanish speakers" and respondents who completed the survey in English are referred to as "English speakers." Also, "promotores" and "community health workers" are used interchangeably and are both considered CHWs.

CHWs received a letter via email that included an overview of the survey's background, development and purpose, a link to the survey, and program contact information for questions. CHWs without a valid email address on record were mailed a copy of the letter and survey and a postage-paid return envelope. DSHS sent reminder emails or mailed packets in July and early November 2015 to encourage CHWs to complete the survey.



## Number of Completed Surveys/Return Rate

DSHS received 215 completed English surveys (205 surveys online and 10 by mail) and 53 completed Spanish surveys (45 surveys online and 8 by mail).

An additional 63 individuals started the English survey online but did not complete it and 13 individuals started the Spanish survey online but did not complete it. This resulted in an incompleteness rate of 24 percent and 20 percent, respectively. Data indicated that individuals completed the online English survey in an average of eight minutes, while individuals completing the Spanish survey did so in an average of 16 minutes.

Most respondents completed the online survey using a computer (English – 79 percent, Spanish – 76 percent). Approximately 16 – 17 percent of respondents used a Smartphone to complete the survey. Others used a tablet to complete the survey (English – 5 percent, Spanish – 8 percent).

## SURVEY RETURN RATES

ENGLISH – 18%

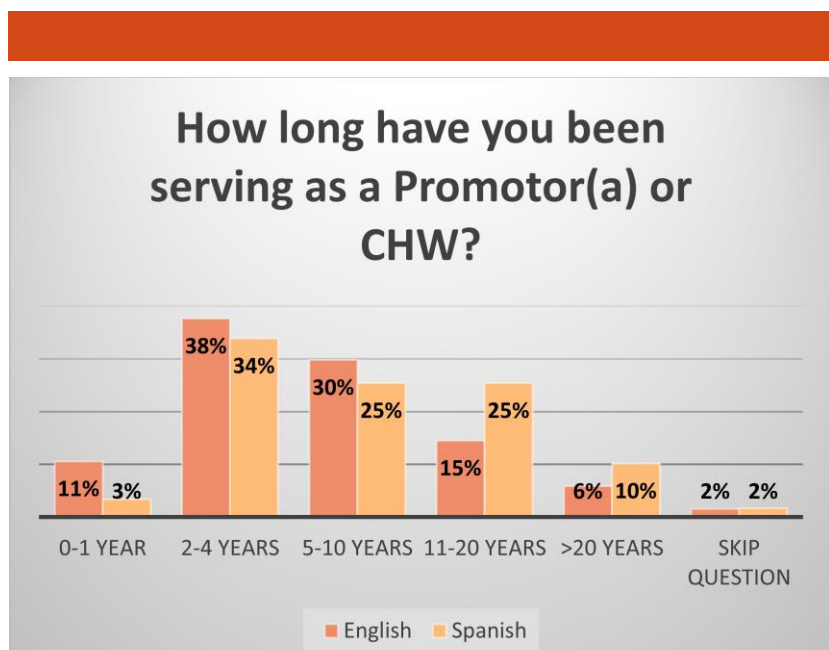
SPANISH – 20%

## Survey Findings

### How Experienced are Texas CHWs?

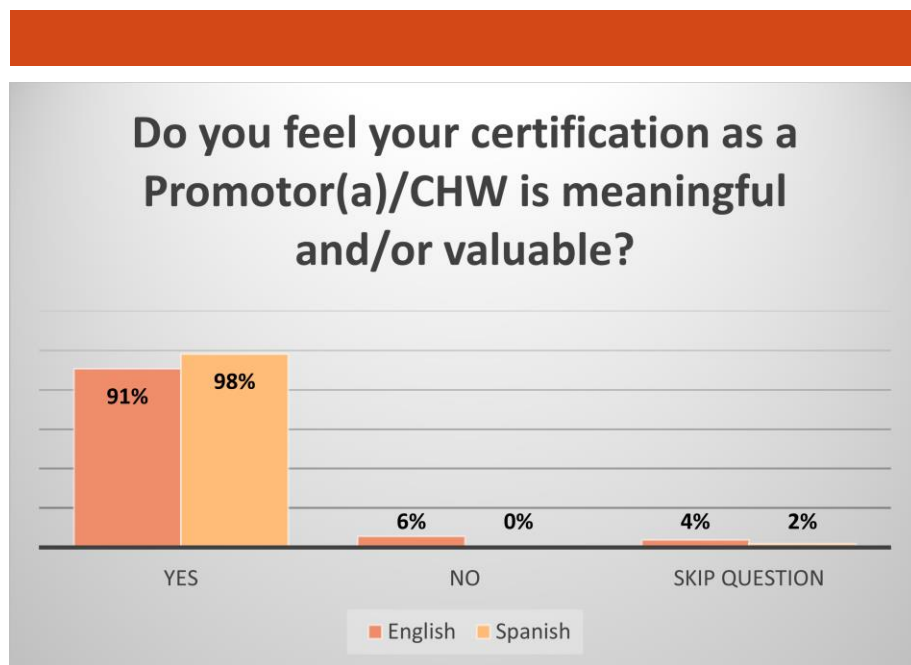
The survey included questions related to the respondent’s experience as a CHW and experience in serving as a certified CHW.

Many survey respondents, especially Spanish speakers, have considerable experience as a CHW. Approximately 21 percent of English speakers have more than ten years of experience as compared with 35 percent of Spanish speakers. About 9 percent of English speakers indicated they have been certified for more than 10 years, as compared to 22 percent of Spanish speakers. Most respondents have two to four years of experience and have been certified for that same length of time.

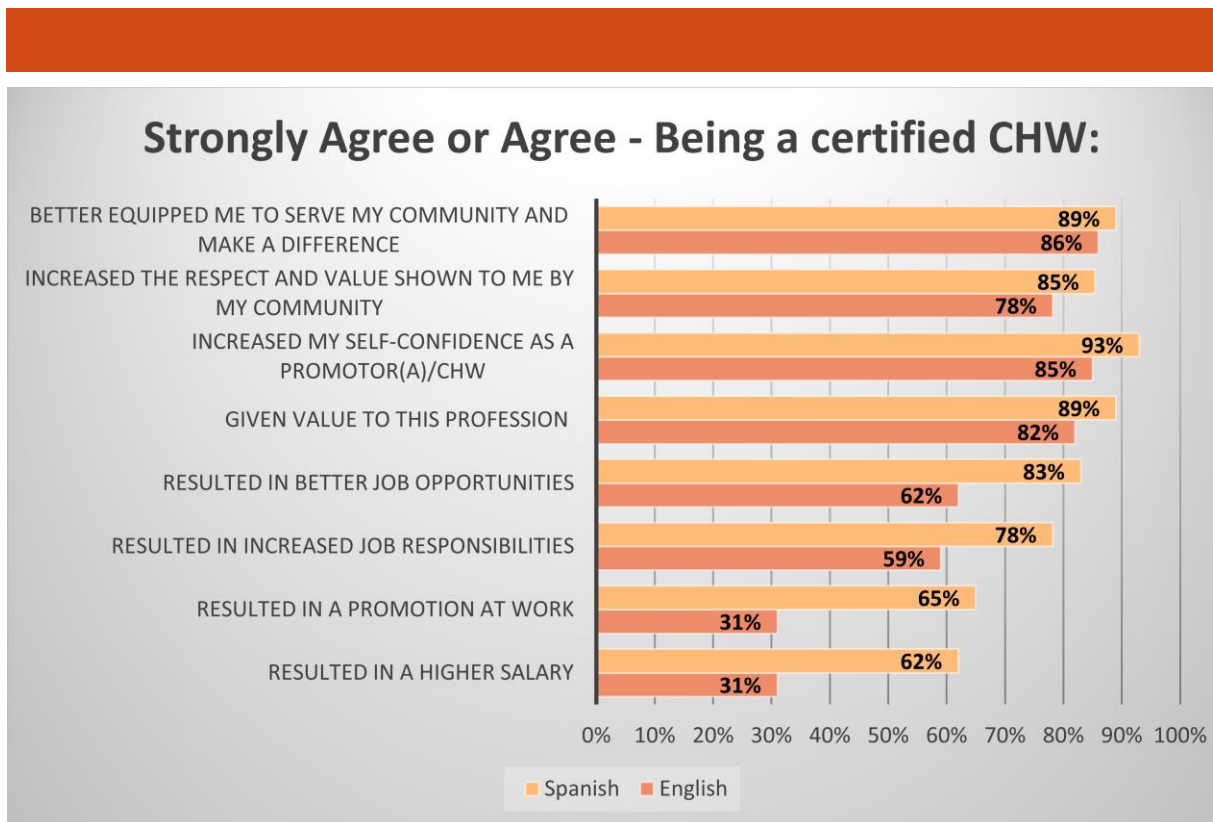


## Do Texas CHWs Value Certification?

The survey asked respondents if they feel that their certification as Promotor(a) or CHW is meaningful or valuable. More than 90 percent of respondents (91 percent - English survey; 98 percent - Spanish survey) indicated that they felt their certification is meaningful or valuable.



The survey included questions about why a Promotor(a)/CHW might feel, think, or believe certification is meaningful and/or valuable.



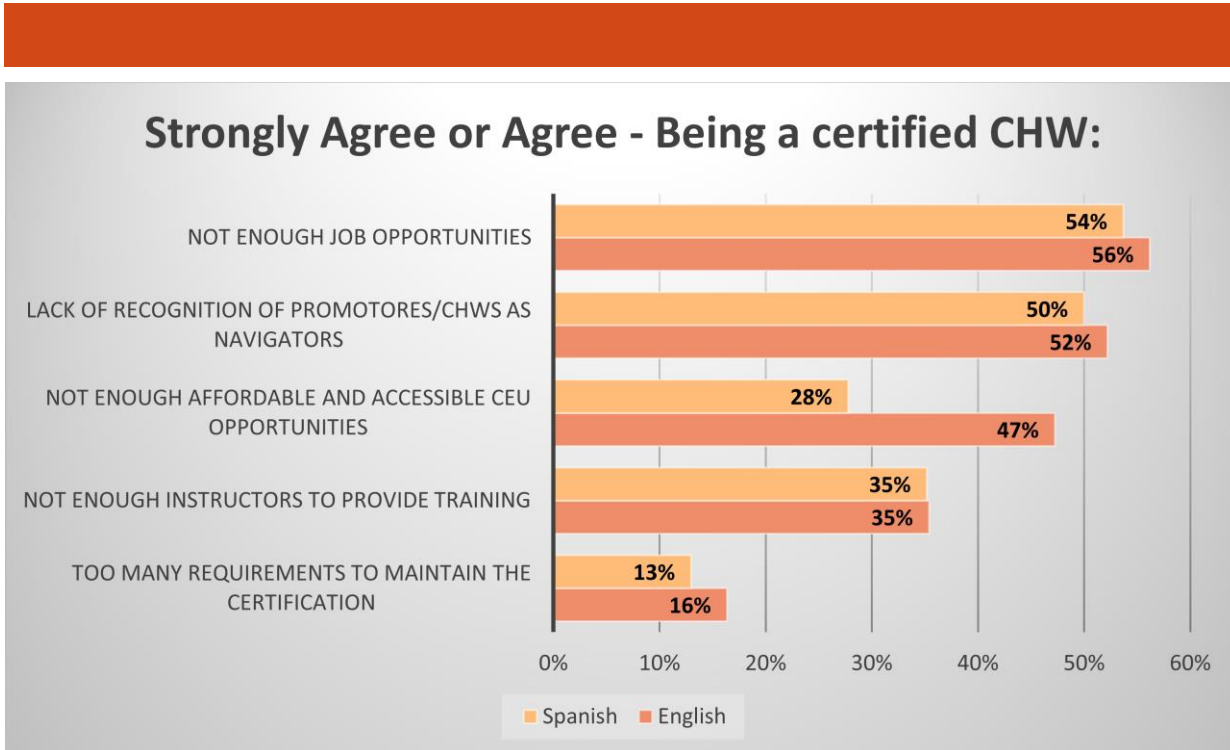
In general, a higher percentage of Spanish speakers than English speakers agreed or strongly agreed with statements about the meaning or value of their CHW certification.

The most popular statements were related to increasing self-confidence, making a difference in the community, bringing personal and professional respect and acknowledgement.

Only 31 percent of English speakers agreed or strongly agreed that their CHW certification had resulted in a work promotion or higher salary; however, 62 percent agreed or strongly agreed that CHW certification had resulted in better job opportunities. Over 80 percent of Spanish speakers agreed or strongly agreed that CHW certification had resulted in better job opportunities, but only 62 percent to 65 percent agreed or strongly agreed that CHW certification had resulted in a work promotion or higher salary.



The survey also asked why a CHW might not feel, think, or believe certification is meaningful and/or valuable.



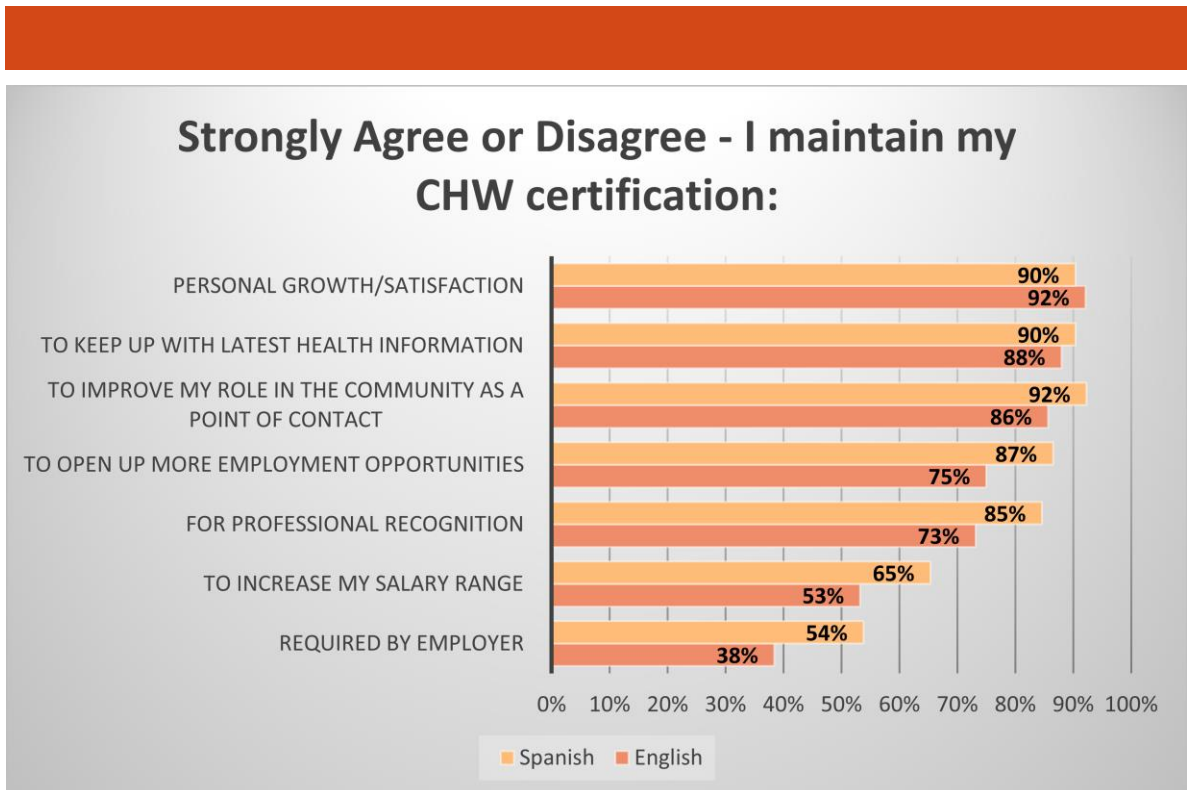
Over 50 percent of CHWs agreed or strongly agreed with statements related to not enough job opportunities and a lack of recognition as navigators.

Fewer than 20 percent of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there are too many requirements to maintain CHW certification.

### Why Do Texas CHWs Keep Their Certification?

Approximately 90 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that maintaining their CHW certification provides for personal growth and satisfaction, helps to keep up with the latest health information and improves their role in the community as a point of contact.

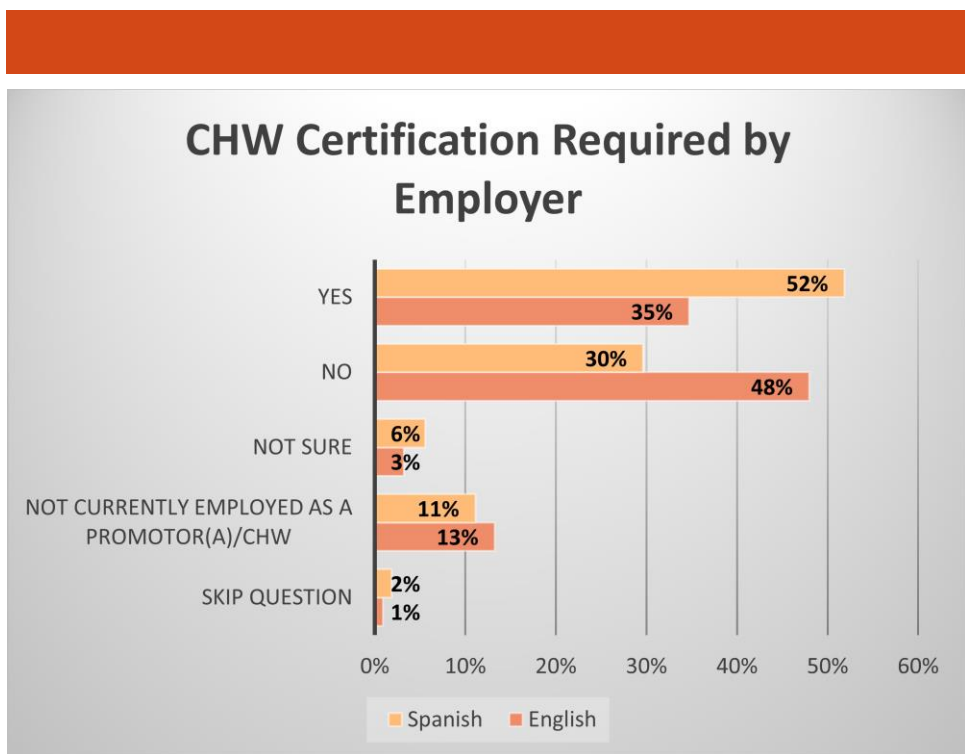
A higher percentage of Spanish speakers than English speakers indicated that reasons to maintain certification included opening up employment opportunities, professional recognition, and increased salaries.



### Do Employers Require CHW Certification?

Not all employers require certification. Of respondents who completed the English survey, 35 percent indicated that their employer requires that they be certified. For Spanish survey respondents, it was 52 percent.

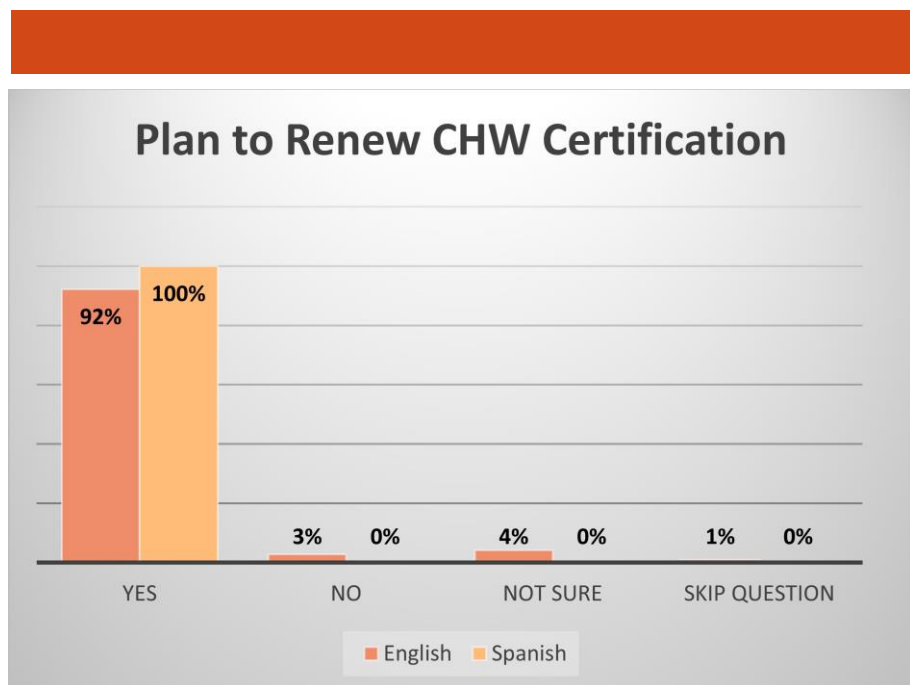
Approximately 11 - 13 percent of respondents indicated they are not currently employed as a CHW.



## Do CHWs Plan to Renew their CHW Certification?

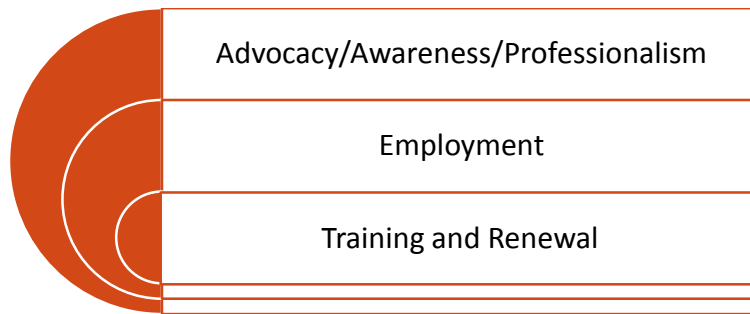
A very high percentage of respondents indicated that they planned to renew their CHW certification (92 percent English speakers and 100 percent of Spanish speakers.)

For the 8 percent of English speakers who responded “No” or “Not Sure”, or skipped the question (total 14 respondents), about half agreed or strongly agreed that certification did not lead to more employment opportunities, a work promotion, or more professional recognition.



## Comments

Survey respondents provided comments that fell into one or more of the following categories:



### Advocacy/Awareness/Professionalism

Survey respondents emphasized several factors related to advocacy, awareness and professionalism. Many expressed pride and shared positive experiences regarding what CHW certification has meant to them personally by increasing their knowledge and bringing value to their lives and communities. Many respondents noted the trusting relationship CHWs have with their communities and emphasized the benefit of the CHW workforce for these communities and employers.

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*“CHWs are a gift to the community. It really takes time for progress and trust to grow.”*

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However, several respondents noted that although understanding of the CHW profession has increased over the past several years, there is much work remaining to be done to further the awareness with other professionals, including physicians and the healthcare field and community leaders. Respondents noted concerns that CHWs are underestimated in their abilities as community educators and change agents. A small number expressed concerns that CHWs were not valued in their area or community or that some healthcare professionals do not respect the role of a CHW without a college degree.

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*“Most people and employers do not even know what a CHW is or does. Most doctors are not familiar with the term CHW and do not know how valuable they can be in their practice.”*

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*“Many organizations that are hiring CHWs show little respect for the certification and little value. I believe that better management of how to present the CHW is grossly needed.”*

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Respondents also felt that certification was valuable for increasing respect for the CHW profession and increasing self-confidence and knowledge/tools to assist others in their communities. Others noted the importance of networking with other CHWs, including through a local or regional CHW association.

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*“The job I currently have is the only one that required me to maintain my certification. Prior to this I kept my certification because I work with several members in the community on a volunteer basis and it helps to validate my experience as well as keep me updated on current medical trends and information.”*

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## Employment

Many respondents expressed concerns about limited employment opportunities for CHWs as well as a lack of promotion or increased salary. Some noted that certification has not improved employment opportunities or resulted in an increase in salary or a job promotion. Several respondents indicated that some employers continue to consider CHWs as volunteers rather than potential paid employees.

Several respondents considered the CHW certification valuable despite a lack of promotion or increase in salary. A few respondents, however, commented that their time and effort in completing CHW training might have been better directed elsewhere due to the challenge in finding employment.

Some respondents stated that their employers do not require certification but prefer that their CHWs be certified. Some responses indicated that employers are not always aware of the CHW certification or that their employees are certified, especially for positions other than CHW. Others noted that they maintain CHW certification for themselves, to be more knowledgeable and empowered to share with other women and to network with and learn from other CHWs.

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*“More pay should be given for Certified CHW jobs, no less than \$15 per hour. Daily, we are on the front line serving the community, helping to solve problems and access services & resources. We are seen as the go-to person anywhere & anytime of the day or night in person, telephone, text, or email. CHW work is often looked at as easy work BUT IT IS NOT.”*

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## Training and Renewal

Some respondents expressed confusion about requirements for renewing their CHW certification and frustration that some classes did not count as DSHS-certified continuing education. One respondent suggested offering a class on the renewal/recertification process at least once a year.

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*“My employers will not always pay for training so I have to at times. Also training, workshops, or conferences are always too far to travel.”*

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Some respondents indicated that CHW continuing education is relatively easy to access and that many courses are offered at minimal or no charge. Several noted that being connected to a CHW network or association often provided access to continuing education opportunities. Other respondents noted several challenges to accessing CHW continuing education, including cost for courses and travel to attend, computer literacy (related to courses via distance learning), a lack of training opportunities outside of work hours, limited range of topics, and availability in areas where there are no local training programs. Several respondents shared suggestions for training topics, including building trust within communities of color, maternity and newborn care, and becoming a doula. Respondents also noted that it would be helpful to have continuing education topics offered each month, including a range of topics, and to have a statewide one or two day annual conference.

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*“I enjoy the variety of classes offered for certification; each year the variety gets better. I appreciate the easy renewal process of accessing classes, attending, & completing renewal paperwork; every 2 years is perfect.”*

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*“We need more affordable, accessible and if possible free CEU opportunities. Quite a few of us volunteer or earn minimum wages.”*

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## Challenges

Responses may have been limited as implementation of the 2015 survey did not begin until May 2015. Of significant concern, survey responses appear to have been very limited from CHWs who did not renew their certifications as more than 600 certifications expired in 2015. Of the 277 completed English surveys, only seven percent indicated that they did not plan to renew or were unsure if they would renew. Similarly, all completed Spanish surveys indicated that the respondent planned to renew their CHW certification.

Approximately 125 surveys (75 English and 50 Spanish) were mailed with postage-paid envelopes to CHWs without a valid email address. Only ten percent of mailed English surveys were completed and returned while about 18 percent of mailed Spanish surveys were completed and returned. However, approximately 25 of the mailed surveys were returned due to bad addresses indicating that CHWs moved without updating their contact information with DSHS. Program staff had limited capacity to follow-up with CHWs whose emails bounced back or whose mailed surveys were returned as not able to be delivered.

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*“The public needs to be more aware of the role of a CHW, especially those in healthcare and community leaders. CHW are a valuable asset, but a little known entity.”*

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## Conclusions and Considerations

The 2015 CHW Evaluation Survey gave CHWs an opportunity to share their valuable information and insight for the Promotor(a)/CHW Training and Certification Advisory Committee and DSHS to refine the program to better serve the needs of CHWs in addition to the people they serve. .

Dr. Julie St. John, CHW Training and Certification Advisory Committee member, and Beverly MacCarty, DSHS, presented preliminary results of the 2015 CHW Evaluation Survey at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting in November 2015. They also gathered recommendations from participants related to improving renewal rates and survey return rates, especially survey response from CHWs who did not renew their certification.



### Recommendations for survey implementation:

Maintain current survey frequency to encourage CHWs to complete a survey during the year that certificate renewal is due

Continue to engage CHW networks and associations and CHW training programs for outreach to CHWs

Reach out to employers regarding CHW continuing education as a potential factor in renewal rates

Identify nontraditional methods to verify contact information and for communication (such as use of social media or interns for follow-up calls or telephone surveys)

Attach the survey with the renewal application  
Include a link from the survey to the renewal application (and vice versa)

These and other suggestions will be explored further by the Advisory Committee and DSHS in 2016. DSHS disseminated the 2016 survey in early 2016 via emails and mailed surveys (when no valid email address is available) and will provide reminders approximately quarterly. Program staff will continue to monitor the status of survey completions on a monthly basis. DSHS also posted an internship opportunity that includes assistance with survey implementation and analysis.

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*"I see a huge value in Promotor(a)/CHW for the community. I am in management in a community clinic and now [see] the importance of a CHW. It has a huge positive impact. Just wish we had more CEU offerings and more outreach for more CHWs."*

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## Appendix A: CHW/Promotor(a) Evaluation Survey

Instructions:

In order to improve the CHW/Promotor(a) certification process in Texas, please take a few minutes to complete this short survey. Your responses will be anonymous, and your responses WILL NOT affect your recertification or status as a certified CHW/Promotor(a) in Texas. This information will help us understand how you benefit or do not benefit from being a certified CHW/Promotor(a).

Please return your survey in the postage-paid return envelope.

Please email [chw@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:chw@dshs.state.tx.us) or call 512-776-2570 if you have any questions about the survey.

### Years of experience as a Promotor(a)/CHW

1. How long have you been serving as a Promotor(a)/CHW (including all full-time, part-time, or volunteer experience)? Please select one:

- 0-1 year
- 2-4 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-20 years
- Over 20 years
- Prefer Not to Answer

2. How long have you been serving in the role of a certified Promotor(a)/CHW? Please select one:

- 0-1 year
- 2-4 years
- 5-10 years
- Over 10 years
- Prefer Not to Answer

**Certification**

3. Do you feel your certification as a Promotor(a)/CHW is meaningful and/or valuable?

- Yes
- No
- Skip question. Prefer Not to Answer

4. The following statements are about why a Promotor(a)/CHW might feel, think, or believe certification is meaningful and/or valuable. Please select your response to each statement below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer Not to Answer
a. Being a certified Promotor(a)/CHW has better equipped me to serve my community and make a difference in the community I serve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Being a certified Promotor(a)/CHW has increased the respect and value shown to me by my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Being a certified Promotor(a)/CHW has increased my self-confidence as a Promotor(a)/CHW.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Being a certified Promotor(a)/CHW gives value to this profession (other professionals acknowledge my work as a certified Promotor(a)/CHW).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Being a certified Promotor(a)/CHW has resulted in better job opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Being a certified Promotor(a)/CHW has resulted in increased job responsibilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Being a certified Promotor(a)/CHW has resulted in a promotion at work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Being a certified Promotor(a)/CHW has resulted in a higher salary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Please write any additional comments pertaining to question #4 here.

6. The following statements are about why a Promotor(a)/CHW might not feel, think, or believe certification is meaningful and/or valuable. Please select your response to each statement below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer Not to Answer
a. Too many requirements to maintain the certification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Lack of recognition of Promotores/CHWs as navigators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Not enough job opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Not enough Instructors to provide training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Not enough affordable and accessible CEU opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Please write any additional comments pertaining to question #6 here.

8. Why do you maintain your Promotor(a)/CHW certification? Select your response to each statement below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer Not to Answer
a. Required by employer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Personal growth/satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. To open up more employment opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. To increase my salary range	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. For professional recognition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. To keep up with latest health information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. To improve my role in the community as a point of contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Please write any additional comments pertaining to question #8 here.

10. Does your employer require you to be a certified Promotor(a)/CHW?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Not currently employed as a Promotor(a)/CHW
- Prefer Not to Answer.

11. Do you plan to renew your Promotor(a)/CHW certification?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Prefer Not to Answer.

12. If you checked “No” or “Not sure”, please select your response to each statement below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Prefer Not to Answer
a. Did not open up more employment opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Did not lead to promotion at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Did not lead to increase in salary range	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Did not result in professional recognition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Not enough affordable and accessible CEU opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Please write any additional comments pertaining to question #12 here.

14. Additional comments regarding Promotor(a)/CHW certification and/or recertification.

*Thank you for completing this survey!*