



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

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Community Health Worker Supporting Hmong Mental Health Featured in Statewide Campaign

For more than a decade, CherPao Vang worked at a nonprofit organization, where he served as an interpreter for the Hmong community. While he enjoyed this work, Vang found himself wanting to help his community on a deeper and more rewarding level. This passion and drive to help others led him to become a community health worker (CHW).

Vang is one of several CHWs across the state to be featured in new videos from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) that provide education about the various ways CHWs help their clients and the health care system achieve better outcomes. The videos and other media to create awareness about CHWs launch in March and run through August of 2024.

Throughout Wisconsin, CHWs connect people to health and social services that meet their individual needs. Often CHWs bring personal experience, alongside expertise and training, to their work by living in the community and/or sharing an ethnicity, language, cultural and life experiences, and/or socio-economic background with those they serve.

CHWs are employed across the state at community-based organizations, local and Tribal health departments, schools, and health clinics. Several Wisconsin health systems and health insurance organizations also work with community partners to support CHW services.

As a member of the Hmong community, Vang is using his role at Sheboygan County Health and Human Services to help community members navigate any health needs. He is especially focused on what he says is the biggest issue – supporting mental health needs.

Like parents across Wisconsin, parents in the Hmong community face stress, anxiety, and concern about their children, finances, and housing. However, they also face the added barrier of navigating health and community systems that are complex. As a CHW, Vang is able to help people and families by getting to know them, then connecting them to organizations or resources that provide support for the issue(s) they are facing.

“As a CHW you are not [just an] interpreter, you are not someone that will do something for the organization or the health provider, but you advocate on behalf of a client that needs the help,” said Vang. “And that’s what my role is, to help navigate the health system or any social service or need they have. You can actually talk to people, get to know people in a deeper sense of personal issues and build the trust of their clients and get them to trust you, what you can do to help them.”

Vang shares that seeing his clients happy and without any worry or sadness is the most rewarding aspect of being a CHW.

“I feel very happy because I can help people. They're happy, so I'm happy,” said Vang.

Organizations interested in building CHW programs can find resources and learn more about CHWs and their role in the community on the DHS website at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dph/community-health-workers.htm.