OWTI Overview

The Outreach Worker Training Institute (OWTI) of the Central Massachusetts Area Health Education Center, Inc. (CM AHEC) is a career-focused, college supported educational pipeline for public health professionals known as Community Health Workers (CHWs) as well as the supervisors of CHWs in health and social services. The OWTI addresses the community's need for C HWs' professional preparedness by offering certificate courses tailored to public health workers who are CHWs employed in health and social service agencies.

OWTI is a program of Central Massachusetts Area Health Education Center, Inc., a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization founded in 1982 whose mission is dedicated to enhancing access to quality health care, promoting workforce development, and eliminating health disparities. CM AHEC served as the lead agency representing Massachusetts in the *National Community Health Worker Workforce Development Study, 2005* sponsored by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services studying the value of CHWs in reducing health disparities within communities. The agency had actively participated in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's (MDPH) initiative to develop a statewide structure for CHWs' training, professional advancement, and credentialing opportunities.

The OWTI is based on 1998 nationally developed standards by The National Community Health Advisor Study, *Weaving the Future* (a Policy Research Project of the University of Arizona directed by E. Lee Rosenthal, MPH, and funded by The Annie E. Casey Foundation), as well as on community assessments from both local and statewide levels.

OWTI courses foster and develop public and community health professionals and equip them

with the practical tool to access health information, conduct health education and promotion, assist with disease prevention, make referrals, coordinate services, and navigate health system for patients and communities.

The OWTI's overarching philosophy is grounded on a belief in the inherent value of CHWs; they are integral to every aspect of the OWTI including program and curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation. OWTI draws upon successful program graduates to involve them for class co-instruction in the OWTI's following years' courses.

Vital and particularly effective for teaching the CHW courses, the OWTI implements a team-instructing approach as its prime instructional methodology. OWTI places an emphasis on student-centered instructional routine. The team-instructing methodology powered by practicing and experienced CHWs ensures participatory learning environment for open discussion, in depth examination and shared learning.

Commonly, the OWTI offers two types of certificate courses for CHWs: generalist and specialized courses. Generalist courses are designed for CHWs working in various community outreach fields including health education, enrollment and advocacy. Specialized courses are designed for the CHWs acting as Patient Navigators (PNs) attending to the needs of patients with a specific health-disease related issue ranging from oncology to various chronic disease management needs.

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