



Use of Return on Investment Analysis on Community Health Worker Programs

Community Health Workers (CHWs) represent a link between members of the community and existing healthcare resources.¹ They have had notable success reaching rural and other hard-to-reach communities in the United States with person-centered services.²⁻⁴ Despite mounting evidence of the positive impacts these programs can have, national data is lacking in relation to their financial outcomes. One possible method to further evaluate and understand these programs' economic impact is a return on investment (ROI) analysis, which calculates the total benefit derived from each dollar invested in a program. While this type of analysis is rarely performed on CHW interventions, it illustrates their value to a variety of stakeholders.⁵ Determining the true "return" is a question that must be answered, and a concrete and repeatable methodology is necessary for comparison between programs. Key considerations in this process include the target population, the specific outcomes that will be isolated and collected, the methods for estimating the value of evident benefits, and adjustments for variations based on changes in time and community patterns. Once valid estimates of program benefits are collected, this ROI can be divided by the total program cost, or investment. Several CHW-led programs targeting high-spending Medicaid users, high-risk low-income mothers, diabetic patients, and the uninsured have shown evidence of ROIs of greater than \$1; however, more research will help these analyses spread to other types of health interventions.

Notable examples

ROI calculation of a long-term CHW program in Kentucky (2021)¹⁹ Access to health and social services through a CHW program showed a return of \$11.34 for every \$1 invested over 18 years.

CHW intervention demonstrates cost savings for Medicaid users (2020)²⁰ The intervention group of the randomized control trial had fewer and lower-cost emergency department admissions following a CHW intervention and a return of \$2.47 for every dollar invested.

Medicaid-funded intensive patient support yielded a positive return on investment (2017)²¹ A 6-month CHW-led intensive patient support program for Medicaid managed-care recipients yielded a return of \$4 for every \$1 invested.

CHAP for at-risk, low-income pregnant women (2015)⁸ Used birth outcomes to show a return of \$3.36-5.59.

The Family Navigator Return on Investment Study (2013)¹⁰ Calculated \$4.20 in reduced medical expenses and \$4.34 on social return from improved outcomes related to a mental health Family Navigator program.

Medicaid Recipients in the Arkansas Community Connector Program (2011)⁶ Case management of high-risk Medicaid enrollees showed a return of \$2.92.

Community Health Workers and Return on Investment (MHP Salud)¹⁸ Through ROI analyses on a variety of health centers to determine potential ranges and best practices for financial evaluation, calculated returns range from \$0.01-2.43 in healthcare savings, and as high as \$47.60 for benefits received.