



# CHW IMPACT: PREDIABETES

## THE PROBLEM

Approximately 86 million people in the US have prediabetes.<sup>1</sup>

Prediabetes is a condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be classified as overt Diabetes Mellitus (DM).<sup>2</sup> Prediabetes progresses to overt DM at the rate of 5–10% annually. Individuals with prediabetes are at an increased risk of developing the same microvascular complications of diabetes, including retinopathy, neuropathy, and nephropathy when compared to those with normal glucose tolerance.<sup>1</sup> Many studies have indicated that lifestyle interventions such as an improved diet and increased physical activity can significantly reduce an individual with prediabetes' risk of developing DM and associated complications.<sup>1</sup> However, making these changes can be very difficult for members of marginalized groups who face additional social, structural, and environmental barriers.

### References

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## The Role of CHWs in Combating Prediabetes

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are public health workers with strong connections to the communities they serve. Their close bonds with community members allow them to serve as liaisons between health/social services and the community, facilitating access to services and improving service delivery to better meet community needs.<sup>3</sup> CHWs help patients navigate the healthcare system, communicate with providers, set goals, and adhere to lifestyle changes through meetings and home visits.<sup>3</sup> Their deep community understanding uniquely positions CHWs to provide relevant education to their communities regarding diabetes prevention and control. CHWs also help prevent or delay the onset of diabetes through the promotion of healthy lifestyle changes by serving as lifestyle coaches for those at high risk.<sup>3</sup>

Innovative strategies are necessary to reach the 86 million people with prediabetes in the US. Promising research has shown that incorporating CHWs into translations of the National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) lifestyle interventions can result in significant reductions in blood glucose and insulin levels, insulin resistance, weight and waist circumference for community members with prediabetes.<sup>4</sup> Improvements in BMI, waist circumference and body fat, and dietary outcomes were seen in Latinos with prediabetes or obesity.<sup>5</sup> By promoting community education on nutrition, physical activity, weight management, and by providing social support, CHWs can augment existing programs that serve to help patients with prediabetes manage their health.<sup>4</sup>

CHWs have demonstrated the potential to be effective members of care teams, promoting other aspects of patient health, such as increased diabetes knowledge, medication adherence, and self-care behavior.<sup>6</sup> In its 2009 Position Statement on Community Health Workers in Diabetes Management and Prevention, the American Association of Diabetes Educators (AADE) supported the role of CHWs in serving to bridge the gap between the health care system and people with and at risk for diabetes, particularly in underserved communities.<sup>7</sup> In 2015, the AADE further recommended that diabetes educators acknowledge and support the role of the CHW in primary and secondary diabetes prevention.<sup>8</sup> The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends engaging CHWs in diabetes prevention, including with DPP classes.<sup>9</sup>

## CHWs Addressing Diabetes in Michigan

The Diabetes Prevention and Control Program (DPCP) of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has recently been engaging CHWs to work with local health care providers to establish systems to identify patients with prediabetes and refer to DPCP and other community resources.<sup>10</sup> And the Michigan Community Health Worker Alliance (MiCHWA) continues to work to integrate CHWs into Michigan's health and human service systems so they can better support individuals with prediabetes and their communities.

*The Michigan Community Health Worker Alliance (MiCHWA) works to promote and sustain the integration of community health workers (CHWs) into health and human services organizations throughout Michigan through coordinated changes in policy and workforce development. Learn more about MiCHWA at [www.michwa.org](http://www.michwa.org).*