Community Health Worker (CHW) Benefit FAQ

Question: What is the Community Health Worker (CHW) Benefit?
Answer: The Community Health Worker (CHW) Benefit is a Medi-Cal preventive health service that helps members improve their health through health education, health navigation, screening and assessments, individual support and advocacy, violence prevention services, and asthma preventive services. CHWs help members navigate the health care system, address social needs, and connect with community resources.

Question: Who is eligible to receive CHW services?
Answer: Members may qualify if they meet one or more of the following:

- One or more chronic physical or behavioral health conditions
- Social or environmental determinants affecting health (such as housing or food insecurity)
- High health care utilization or risk of hospitalization (e,g., recent ED visits or inpatient stays)
- Needs for care coordination, health-system navigation, or patient engagement

Eligibility is based on the member's health and social needs, rather than a single diagnosis alone.

Question: Does the supervising provider need to hold a clinical credential (RN, LVN, physician, etc.)?
Answer: No. The supervising provider is not required to personally hold a clinical credential. Supervising providers may include licensed providers, hospitals, outpatient clinics, local health jurisdictions, or community-based organizations (CBOs). The supervising provider is responsible for oversight, verifying CHW qualifications, and submitting claims.

Question: Is a specific screening tool, such as the ACEs questionnaire, required before providing CHW services?
Answer: No. Specific screening tools are not required. Providers should ensure that the member's need for CHW services is appropriately documented in the medical record and that documentation supports medical necessity if services are audited.

Question: Is there billing guidance for members who have both Medicare and Medi-Cal (Medi-Medi)?
Answer: Bill Medicare first. After Medicare adjudicates the claim (paid or denied), providers may bill Medi-Cal per coordination-of-benefits rules. Contact the Alliance for member-specific billing guidance.

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Question: Can CHW services be billed while a member is enrolled in Enhanced Care Management (ECM)?
Answer: No. Members actively receiving ECM services are not eligible to receive separately billed CHW services. CHW service codes may not be billed while a member is enrolled in ECM.

Question: What happens when a member transitions from ECM to CHW services?
Answer: The Alliance described CHW services as a lower-intensity support that may be appropriate after a member no longer requires the intensive, whole-person care coordination provided through ECM. CHWs can serve as a step-down support focused on prevention, health navigation, engagement, and addressing health-related social needs as members' needs change.

Question: Is a Plan of Care required for CHW services?
Answer: Not initially. The first 12 units of CHW services may be provided under the DHCS statewide standing recommendation. After the initial six hours, authorization and a Plan of Care are required. The Plan of Care must be developed by the licensed provider and CHW, reviewed every six months, and may not exceed one year.

Question: How many CHW service units can be billed in one day?
Answer: The maximum frequency is four units, or two hours of CHW services, per member per day.

Question: Does a non-credit CHW certificate satisfy California's credentialing requirements?
Answer: Under the work-experience pathway, individuals with 2,000 qualifying hours may use a non-credit CHW certificate (for example, Cabrillo College's non-credit CHW certificate); the Alliance can verify eligibility during credentialing."

Question: Are Cabrillo College's CHW classes offered online?
Answer: Partially. The two core CHW courses are offered in a hybrid format, with in-person instruction at the Watsonville Center and online components. Personal Health and elective courses are available online, in Aptos, and in Watsonville. Cabrillo is also offering the two core courses in Castroville through the North Monterey County Unified School District Family Resource Center.

Question: How much does the Cabrillo College CHW Certificate Program cost?
Answer: The estimated cost for California residents is approximately $451 per semester, or about $902 for the complete two-semester certificate program. Fee waivers are available through Financial Aid for eligible students.

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Question: Can providers use Office Ally templates to bill both CHW and ECM services?
Yes, you can use Office Ally. A clearinghouse platform for electronic claim submissions chosen by the provider

Question: Since ECM is paid on a month-to-month basis, are there considerations when transitioning members from ECM to CHW services during the same month?
If a member has an ECM service in the same month, we will not pay CHW services.

Question: Does the Alliance have a standardized CHW Plan of Care template?
Answer: At this time, the Alliance does not have a standardized Plan of Care template. The Alliance identified this as a future action item. Cabrillo College also offered to share an example template that organizations may consider adapting.