



About Rural Health & Community Champions

The National Rural Health Resource Center (The Center) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining and improving health care in rural communities. The National Rural Health Resource Center provides technical assistance, information, tools and resources for the improvement of rural health care. It serves as a national rural health knowledge center and strives to build state and local capacity. As the nation's leading technical assistance and knowledge center in rural health, The Center focuses on five core areas:

- 1) Transition to Value and Population Health; 2) Collaboration and Partnership; 3) Performance Improvement; 4) Health Information Technology; 5) Workforce

- The Delta Region Community Health Systems Development (DRCHSD) Program defines a Community Champion (CC) as an individual that can be a catalyst for culture change. A Champion is instrumental in creating a cultural shift in their community towards healthier living and is essential to assisting the selected health care organization in preparing an infrastructure for population health. The CC acts as the liaison for The Center's DRCHSD Program, the healthcare organization, and the community.

The Purpose

The purpose of the DRCHSD Program is to assist leaders and providers in identifying and addressing health care needs of the community to strengthen the local health care system. The Community Champion contributes to this work through community care coordination. Working with partners to identify community organizations and community partners that can address socio-economic challenges, enhance the coordination of services and care, and help position and strengthen their local health care delivery system for population health.

Problem Addressed

It is vital for our Community Champions to be able to lead meaningful conversations and effective gatherings that can direct and facilitate improvements in the health of the community. The community buy-in is essential for the impact and sustainability of this work.

Solution

The Center staff has used ToP Facilitation Methods for almost a decade and have seen great results with garnering community participation and engagement. This led to Rural Health incorporating the ToP facilitation methods within the DRCHSD Program.

From the perspective of the Champion's, they are thankful for the training and apply it in their work and personal lives because they see the value added. Community Champions are able to fully engage community joint partners by using the facilitation methods that enable them to hear all voices, collaborate



with community partners to determine the activities that address needs, create realistic timelines, and accomplish them. They continue to grow in confidence in their job and achieving their objectives.

Henry County Medical Center Community Champion- “The organization provided by the team was unbelievable. I was guided through the process one baby-step at a time and soon we had 20+ community partners in a zoom meeting on board and ready to tackle what was ahead. With the help of those community partners, hospital administration, and phenomenal support from our Marketing Director, we made big things happen. #SilenceTheShameTN was launched.”

DePaul Community Health Center Community Champion- “It has been an honor to be included in such an awesome learning experience for the past 3 years. I do not take this for granted! We have been afforded teachings that will last a lifetime and beyond. So, thank you for the work that you do to highlight the necessity of bringing ways to make health care better into the rural areas. I love you guys because this is more than just a job for you - it is your calling! Keep up the wonderful work you are doing. Your reward will be great!”

Outcome

The Community Partners Continue to stay engaged because they feel heard and can help improve the health of their community. They are also starting to learn how to lead their own meetings more effectively by attending ours.

Dave Severin- IL State Representative- “I wanted to thank everyone for leading a great and organized event. I stayed engaged the whole time. I don’t want to get into politics, but this was the perfect opportunity to be productive and address the nuts and bolts of the community’s health needs. By the group working together in this way, there will be health improvement impacts. We can show other communities in Southern IL how to do this work and make impacts. This has been very productive and I’m impressed.”

At Rural Health, we measure our Community Care Coordination collaboration using a Wilder Collaboration Factors Tool (WCFT) with event participants (health care organization leadership, community champion, and community partners). The WCFT measures strengths and opportunities among the collaborative so we can tailor our TA approach, as well as to monitor the level of collaboration within the community for ongoing development and/or sustainability. Collectively, the benefits to the organization and the impact demonstrated through WCFT results are presented in a manner to support decision-making to sustain the Champion position and the collaboration after graduating from our program. Averaged baseline results for two key WCFT measures summarizing Cohorts 2017 – 2019 status include “History of collaboration or cooperation in the community” (3.75 / 5.0) and “Members see collaboration as being in their self-interest” (4.48). Where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree. We find value in understanding where these communities start as far as collaboration and that they see value in continuing to work together.

