

# Report to the Community

## April-June 2023



### COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS BRING UNDERSTANDING TO PUBLIC HEALTH

MetroHealth's Community Health Workers (CHWs) are our eyes and ears in the community. These front-line public health workers have close ties to the neighborhoods they serve, often sharing the same background, ethnicity, language, culture or other life experiences of the patients there. And they bring this understanding and insight to their work.

With the trust they build in the community, CHWs are able to facilitate patients' access to services and better ensure that those services are delivered with cultural competence. All of this advances our goal of reducing health inequities.

Eleven of MetroHealth's 14 CHWs work with the Institute for H.O.P.E.™. They screen individuals for social drivers of health (SDOH) and help them connect with resources and services through programs like Unite Ohio and Pathways HUB.

In 2022, MetroHealth received a three-year, nearly \$3 million federal grant to increase the number CHWs in Northeast Ohio. The program is part of a nationwide effort to build the pipeline of these highly valued professionals to increase access to care, improve public health emergency response and address the public health needs of underserved communities.

All MetroHealth CHWs are required to obtain certification through the Ohio Board of Nursing within a year of their hire. Tuition reimbursement is available through full scholarships. Community Health Workers Certification Programs are offered locally by Cleveland State University, Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) and Kent State University. Candidates for the CHW Certification Programs must have a high school diploma or GED and pass a substance test and background check. Program requirements include the completion of a minimum of 100 classroom hours and a minimum of 130 clinical



*On June 6, the second-annual Community Health Workers Day at Cleveland State University honored the region's CHWs. Pictured are CHWs from the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ at the event, which included networking and information sharing.*

experience hours, which may be satisfied, in part, by working as a CHW.

"Our CHWs are exceptional at recognizing when people are in need and making sure they get help," said Sarah Woernley, Nurse Manager for the Institute for H.O.P.E.™. "They're dedicated to their work because the people they are serving are their neighbors. CHWs have become a key part of our work to help improve the health of the community by addressing the social and economic factors that influence well-being, and we are grateful for their contribution."

# MICHEALA ROBY'S STORY

Many extraordinarily kind, caring people work as MetroHealth Community Health Workers (CHWs). **Micheala Roby**, a CHW in the Institute for H.O.P.E.™ School Health Program, is one of those people. Like her peers, she is outstanding at her job. In her role with the School Health Program, she connects Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) students and their families with resources available through MetroHealth and other community agencies.

Late last year, Micheala had the opportunity to help the Harris-Little family, who were experiencing homelessness. Micheala met the two children of the family after they enrolled at CMSD. A social services agency was helping the family find housing, but Micheala knew they didn't have the things they needed to set up a home. So, she went to work helping them get a new refrigerator and gas range as well as other necessities like clothing and home furnishings.

"Anything I can do to help my community and build them up, I want to do it," said Micheala, who lives in the same neighborhood as many of the students she serves at CMSD. "I have been homeless, and I know asking for help can be very hard. People can judge you. When I talk to people who are in need, that's one of the things I lead with: Don't be embarrassed. I've been there."



## LIFE-CHANGING CONNECTIONS

Community Health Workers frequently utilize the Unite Ohio platform's extensive partnerships and networks to assist patients with their health-related social needs. During the second quarter of 2023, **326 referrals** were made by 12

MetroHealth CHWs on behalf of **249 patients**. CHWs are frequent users of Unite Ohio and accounted for about 20% of all referrals made during the quarter despite representing only 5% of licensed users at MetroHealth.

The Pathways HUB, an evidence-based model for community care coordination operated by **Better Health Partnership**, is a notable example of CHW services available through the Unite Ohio platform.

During Q2 of 2023, **96 referrals** were made to the Pathways HUB by three organizations on the platform. With support and guidance from a CHW, individuals are able to complete enrollment in the Pathways HUB model to establish a medical home or secure housing, which can lead to a healthier life.

To date, more than **18,240 referrals** have been made to connect **9,864 residents** of Cuyahoga County with fresh food, digital access, utility help, transportation and other essential resources.

Learn more about Unite Ohio at [uniteus.com/networks/ohio](https://uniteus.com/networks/ohio).



## INSTITUTE FOR H.O.P.E.™ CHW PROGRAM UPDATES

- The Community Health Worker Capacity Building Collaborative (CHWCBC) is a regional effort between Northeast Ohio Health Systems and CHW training programs, Pathways HUBs, and other county and community partners. Funded by a nearly \$3 million grant from Health Resources and Services Administration, this three-year project is a collaboration between the Institute for H.O.P.E.™, The Population Health and Equity Research Institute, and the MetroHealth Community Health Centers. The CHWCBC aims to recruit, train and employ effective CHWs and other health support workers in underserved communities. Recent project work includes developing a CHW Coordinating Council to explore internal best practices for MetroHealth CHWs, planning a needs assessment survey and exploring an apprenticeship program.

- Those looking for a career change, who want to make a difference in their community, have a number of local training options to choose from. Click the links below to learn more about CHWs certificate programs offered at [Cleveland State University](#), [Cuyahoga Community College \(Tri-C\)](#) and [Kent State University](#).

## RESEARCH & EVALUATION

We're committed to evaluating our work and providing insights on our findings. In the last quarter, we had the opportunity to present at 16 regional and national conferences and webinars, and our work was featured in two publications. Recent highlights include:

- Hardy, P. (2023, May 10). [Promoting food security for successful smoking cessation: A pilot intervention study](#) [Webinar]. Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods at Case Western Reserve University Seminar Series.

- Harper, N. (2023, May 16). Partnering in the community to eliminate home asthma triggers for kids [Conference session]. American Hospital Association: Accelerating Health Equity Conference 2023, Minneapolis, MN.

- Santiago-Rodriguez, M. (2023, June 14). Implementing financial coaching to improve healthcare outcomes [Conference session]. America's Essential Hospitals VITAL2023 Conference, Chicago, IL.