



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

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Local Community Health Worker Helping Parents Be Successful Featured in Statewide Campaign

As a first-generation Wisconsinite whose parents came from Mexico, Olga Meza knows firsthand the challenges some parents and caregivers who are immigrants face when learning to navigate health and education systems in the U.S. That’s why, three years ago, she jumped at the opportunity to become a Wood County community health worker (CHW). Today, Meza and her fellow Wood County CHWs are part of a core team of professionals who are focused on helping parents become more confident in supporting their children’s health.

While many parents can find health systems complex and overwhelming to navigate, Meza explains that the families she serves often face an even steeper battle in figuring it all out.

“I love being able to use my language and experiences as a proud child of immigrant parents every day to help our Hispanic families,” said Meza. “I get to educate at a different level so that parents can successfully access resources that help them be healthy and raise thriving kids.”

From helping with prenatal visits, navigating and scheduling medical appointments, and offering parenting classes, to addressing insurance issues and serving as interpreters – plus everything in between – Meza and her team are there.

Meza is one of several CHWs across the state to be featured in new videos from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) that provide education about the various ways CHWs help their clients and the health care system achieve better outcomes. The videos and other media to create awareness about CHWs launch in March and run through August of 2024.

Throughout Wisconsin, CHWs connect people to health and social services that meet their individual needs. Often CHWs bring personal experience, alongside expertise and training, to their work by living in the community and/or sharing an ethnicity, language, cultural and life experiences, and/or socio-economic background with those they serve.

CHWs are employed across the state at community-based organizations, local and Tribal health departments, schools, and health clinics. Several Wisconsin health systems and health insurance organizations also work with community partners to support CHW services.

At Wood County, Meza knows that her work and the work of the CHW team is helping all parents and kids feel more connected to and engaged with their community.

“Our diverse community health workers in Wood County truly do work together as a team to achieve the ultimate goal: to have healthier parents which leads to healthier communities which will lead to healthier kids. And kids are our future,” said Meza.

Organizations interested in building CHW programs can find resources and learn more about CHWs and their role in the community on the DHS website at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dph/community-health-workers.htm.