



PR#136-24

PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Health & Wellness Launches 2024 Community Health Workers Manual

Belize City, August 26, 2024.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness, with support from UNICEF Belize, has taken a significant step to strengthen Belize's primary health care system. Today, at the Old Belize Conference Room, officials gathered to launch the Community Health Worker's (CHW) Manual and Job Aide tool.

The updated CHW Manual is the product of extensive collaboration between the Ministry of Health and Wellness and international partners like UNICEF, underscoring their commitment to advancing community health. The ministry extends its gratitude to the various units whose dedication led to the manual's successful completion.

In today's evolving health environment, Community Health Workers (CHWs) must be proficient in both technical and communication skills. While the 2013 Competency-based Training Curriculum laid the foundation for CHWs, this revised manual offers a more comprehensive approach, including new topics such as mental and adolescent health. It introduces teaching strategies to enhance skill-building and health promotion services. Feedback from CHWs played a crucial role in shaping the manual, job aid, and visual resources.

Globally, UNICEF acknowledges the vital role of community health programs in delivering critical services to hard-to-reach children and mothers. CHWs are pivotal in improving access to primary health care for underserved populations, contributing significantly to Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since 1982, UNICEF has been a steadfast supporter of Belize's Community Health Workers program.

Alison Parker, UNICEF Representative to Belize, reaffirmed their commitment, stating, "CHWs serve as a crucial link between the formal

health system and the community, addressing unmet health needs and enhancing health-system resilience. It is essential that they receive adequate training and support to provide optimal care. UNICEF will continue to invest in a trained, professional, and resilient community health program reaching all children.”

Hon. Kevin Bernard, Minister of Health and Wellness, highlighted in his keynote address, “CHWs have earned global recognition for their dedication. Their crucial role in achieving universal health coverage reminds us to optimize their performance and increase program effectiveness.”

Ongoing investment in community health worker programs is vital, focusing on supervision structures and continuous training. Equally important is fostering trusting relationships between CHWs and community members, as well as with health system professionals. These relationships are key to optimal performance and creating a supportive environment for CHWs.

Ends