



# COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER

*“MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE”*



## FACT SHEET

### MISSION

To establish and anchor outreach education as a valued practice within public health.

### HISTORY

Community Health Education Center (CHEC) is a program of the Boston Public Health Commission established in 1993. A regional office serving the Merrimack Valley and the North Shore has been funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health since 1997 (which now operates under the Lowell Community Health Center). Annually these two offices train approximately 700 Outreach Educators/Community Health Workers and their supervisors.

### OVERVIEW

The Community Health Education Center (CHEC) provides training and support to over 2500 Outreach Educators in metropolitan Boston and throughout northeastern Massachusetts. CHEC provides a comprehensive approach to addressing the professional development needs of Outreach Educators/CHWs through its program components: education and training, professional development and networking, and culturally effective health education resources. CHEC programs support and enhance the work of Outreach Educators/CHWs in promoting the health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations.

### CONSTITUENCY

We value our partnership with our constituents and work with CHEC regional advisory boards, who are Outreach Educators, themselves. Diversity and multiculturalism existing among communities of Greater Boston, South Shore, North Shore, and Merrimack Valley (including Greater Lawrence, Greater Lowell, Haverhill, Beverly, Gloucester, Medford, and Malden) are represented among CHEC's constituency as well as our staff and advisory boards. Often themselves residents of the multicultural communities they serve, they provide community health education, make referrals, accompany clients and support them to access services that respond to their individual needs.

### PHILOSOPHY

Outreach education begins with Outreach Educators/CHWs themselves and the wealth of experience and knowledge they bring. CHEC's participatory model is fundamental to our methodology. We partner with Outreach Educators/CHWs in the planning and development of our program, ensuring both quality and relevance. Training, workshops, seminars, and luncheons are uniquely designed using participatory learning methods that build on Outreach Educators' diverse experiences, knowledge and strengths. We promote education in an environment where outreach educators become agents of their own learning.

### PARTNERS

Regional Outreach Educator/CHW Advisory Boards, community-based organizations, community health centers, hospitals, colleges, universities, and consultants.

### SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- 1994** -CHEC Sponsors the State's First Outreach Educator Day
- 1994** -APHA Best Printed Material Award
- 1998** -Annual Outstanding Outreach Educator Award
- 2000** -HRSA Cultural Competence Award of Excellence

### SERVICES

- Career Advancement
- Cross Training
- Material /Resources Development
- Networking
- Professional Development



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### PROGRAMS

We provide the following programs and activities:

- Education and Training: The Comprehensive Outreach Education Certificate Program is a fifteen-session training that provides an introduction to a public health framework for understanding health issues affecting multicultural neighborhoods. Consistent with our comprehensive approach, we offer over 25 education and training programs in the areas of core skills and competencies of outreach education, health topic modules, in-depth topical seminars, and health education methodology workshops.
- Career Advancement: CHEC's partnerships with local colleges include the establishment of career ladders for outreach educators. College partners award three college credits upon completion of the Certificate Program. CHEC provides career advancement workshops, college information sessions, and for growth within the field of outreach education or in other health-related careers.
- Developing culturally competent health education materials: through participatory planning with outreach educators, CHEC has won a reputation for excellence in the development of culturally competent health education materials. In 1994, CHEC's bilingual pamphlet "Are you afraid of your man?" won on the American Public Health Association's "best printed material award." From an extensive resource library and production center, CHEC assists public health programs learn techniques and skills associated with developing effective high quality health promotion materials.
- Anchoring the Field: establishing and strengthening the professional identity of outreach educators is central to CHEC's mission. Through regional monthly networking luncheons, CHEC brings together Outreach Educators/CHWs serving diverse communities and specialized in various health issues to exchange resources and strategies resulting in coordinated client services and cross referrals. CHEC also supports Outreach Educator/CHW efforts to establish themselves as a valuable sector of the public health and health care workforces. CHEC increases visibility and strengthens leadership via Regional Advisory Boards and the annual outreach educator award ceremony.