

May 23, 2022



## **Request for Proposals seeking Pathways Community HUB Care Coordination Agencies For the Harris County Pathways Community HUB**

### **Introduction**

The Network of Behavioral Health Providers, Inc. (NBHP) was created in 2004 by the United Way of Greater Houston, and its mission is to improve the delivery of, and access to, high-quality behavioral health services through education, collaboration, and advocacy.

The 40+ members of NBHP include public agencies, as well as for-profit and non-profit private organizations, that provide clients with the full range of behavioral health services from prevention to crisis intervention to housing and supports regardless of age, race, religion, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

For several years, NBHP has worked across its members organizations, as well as with dozens of other primary care, behavioral health, and social service community partners, to address barriers to care and disparities caused by the lack of care coordination in our service provider systems. After leading a successful care coordination pilot program for low-income people with mental illness, NBHP joined forces with Healthy Women Houston, a care coordination pilot project for low-income pregnant women, to embark upon a new journey of community-wide care coordination.

NBHP is now ready to fully establish the evidence-based, data-driven, pay-for-performance Pathways Community HUB Institute<sup>SM</sup> (PCHI<sup>SM</sup>) Model of care coordination in Harris County. The Pathways Community HUB (PCH)—which NBHP will operate—will serve as the nerve center for community-based care coordination. The PCH will contract with a network of Care Coordination Agencies (CCAs) that hire Community Health Workers (CHWs) to find members of the target population at greatest risk; connect them to appropriate care and social service agencies; remove barriers to obtaining care; and measure the results.

The CHWs will be trained in the PCHI<sup>SM</sup> Model, which makes available 21 “Pathways” of prescribed health and social services to mitigate client risks and incorporates performance-based payments from payers for the successful closure of the Pathways.

The Harris County PCH will initially serve Medicaid-receiving and Medicaid-eligible adults who have mental illness, substance use disorder, or are pregnant and have been referred by the CHWs, payers, and other community partners. All CHWs will use the same PCH-prescribed technology platform and assessments to identify client risks, which translate into opening up Pathways. Pathways detail the steps that CHWs should take in order to resolve client risks and move them into a level of stability. When these steps are taken and a Pathway is closed, the PCH

will bill payers with whom they have negotiated contracts for the closure of the Pathways. Once the PCH receives payment, it passes on a portion of it to the Care Coordination Agency that employs the CHW who successfully completed the Pathway.

The overall goal of the Harris County PCH is to improve both client and community outcomes and reduce disparities by coordinating holistic care for these high-risk populations.

For more information on the Pathways Community HUB Institute<sup>SM</sup> Model, please visit: [Community Based Care Coordination | Pathways Community HUB Institute \(pchi-hub.org\)](http://Community Based Care Coordination | Pathways Community HUB Institute (pchi-hub.org).).

### **Opportunity**

The Harris County PCH Review Committee will select up to six organizations to become CCAs. The PCH will provide training and support for the CHWs and Supervisors employed by the CCAs.

Participating CHWs must be certified by the State of Texas and must be employed to work on Pathways for a minimum of 20 hours/week (full-time CHWs are preferred). CHWs must participate in up to four to eight weeks of training provided by the Harris County PCH initially, as well as ongoing training as required.

Supervisors will be expected to dedicate at least 25% of their time to supervising the CHWs and will be required to engage in trainings as well.

### **Outcome-Based Payment Model**

Recognizing that the Pathways Community HUB Institute<sup>SM</sup> Model uses an outcomes-based payment methodology, the PCH will support CCAs making the transition to this new payment system. CCAs that are selected will be eligible for partial funding that will support the salary, benefits, and operating costs of employing CHWs who have been trained, approved, and are implementing the Pathways Community HUB Institute<sup>SM</sup> Model.

The goal is to prepare agencies to move towards outcomes-based payments when Pathways are completed. The Harris County PCH currently is working to develop additional outcomes-based contracts with health care payers to build ongoing sustainability for this work.

The transition to outcomes-based payments will begin after the CHWs have been fully trained and the PCH has successfully launched and begun serving clients. CCAs will begin to move towards outcomes-based payments after 3 months of PCH operation, where a percentage of the payment will be tied to successful closure of Pathways, with the remaining funding supporting salaries. The Harris County PCH expects to have the capacity to support funding for partial salaries and benefits and outcomes-based payments to contracted CCAs as follows:

- **For the first 3 months** after the PCH is launched, CCAs will be eligible to receive up to 100% of salary and benefits paid to each FTE CHW supported by the PCH, up to \$4,166.67 per month (this is equivalent to annualized salary and benefits of \$50,000). During this time, the PCH will provide reports to the CCAs that will allow them to see

the potential reimbursement that could have been received during that time period if the outcomes-based model was fully in place.

- **For months 3-6** post-PCH launch, CCAs will be eligible to receive up to 50% of salary and benefits paid to each FTE CHW supported by the PCH, up to \$2083.33 per month, with the remainder being outcomes-based payments tied to the successful closure of Pathways.
- **For months 6-9** post-PCH launch, CCAs will be eligible to receive up to 25% of salary and benefits paid to each FTE CHW supported by the PCH, up to \$1,041.66 per month, with the remainder being outcomes-based payments tied to the successful closure of Pathways.
- **For months 9-12** post-PCH launch, CCAs will be expected to move to a full outcomes-based payment model, though this will depend upon a variety of factors. If funding permits, CCAs may be eligible to receive up to 25% of salary and benefits paid to each FTE CHW supported by the PCH, up to \$1,041.66 per month, with the remainder being outcomes-based payments tied to the successful closure of Pathways.
- **In Year 1**, the PCH will provide additional funding on top of CHW support to contracted CCAs to support supervisor oversight (provided by a nurse practitioner, or masters level professional). It is anticipated that **25% of a supervisor's time** will be needed to oversee 2 CHWs. Contracted CCAs will receive up to \$10,000 to support a portion of the Supervisor's salary.

The Harris County PCH recognizes that the ability of CCAs to adapt to the outcomes-based payment model is partially dependent upon the volume of referrals the CCAs receive that allow them to successfully close Pathways. **If the PCH referral volume is not what is anticipated, both the PCH and CCAs can revisit the time periods and methodology outlined above to determine whether or not they should be revised, funding permitted.**

### **Eligible Organizations**

Organizations are eligible to submit applications to become CCAs if:

- They currently employ or intend to employ, certified Community Health Workers, with a minimum of two CHWs designated to participate in the Harris County PCH.
- They provide, or are willing to provide, home- and community-based outreach and care coordination services to residents of Harris County who have mental illness, substance use disorder, or are pregnant with behavioral health risk factors (as the PCH infrastructure grows, the target population will be expanded).
- The organization has experience working in underserved communities.

**Organizations that already have a dedicated funding source to cover the salary and benefits of CHWs and are willing to contract solely for outcomes-based payments may be favored in the selection process.** The Harris County PCH reserves the right to decide the number of awards, type of awards, amount of support, or to make no awards at all.

### **Application Deadline**

Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 20, 2022. Care Coordination Agencies selected by the Harris County PCH CCA Review Committee will be notified by June 30, 2022.

Selected agencies will then have 30 days to designate/hire CHWs and enter into a contractual agreement with the Harris County PCH.

### **Description of CHW Role in the Pathways Community HUB**

1. Engage in all relevant trainings, including PCHI<sup>SM</sup> Model trainings, behavioral health, trauma-informed care, intimate partner violence trainings, technology, and others
2. Work in accordance with all Pathways Community HUB Institute<sup>SM</sup> Model guidelines, including but not limited to: use of standardized intake and risk assessments, assignment and administration of Pathways, use of approved educational materials, timely documentation, use of the provided hardware and technology to report progress and outcomes, and attendance of trainings and meetings hosted by the Harris County PCH.
3. Conduct outreach and identify eligible high-risk individuals to enroll in the Harris County PCH.
4. Establish a trusting relationship with the prioritized populations and referred clients.
5. Mitigate client risks by using prescribed Pathways to connect them with needed health, behavioral health, and social services, as appropriate.
6. Translate information from service systems to participants in a culturally appropriate manner and communicate participants' cultural preferences and needs with service systems.
7. Assist in development of strategies to address or eliminate barriers to care.
8. Work collaboratively with supervisor to ensure that all participant needs are identified and addressed.

### **Care Coordination Agency - Application Questions**

**Please answer the following questions in a separate document (no more than five pages).**

1. Provide agency name, mission, main contact person, title, street address, phone and email.
2. What geographic regions/zip codes does your organization serve? If you have CHWs on your staff, which geographic regions do they serve?
3. What populations does your organization serve? If you have CHWs on your staff, which populations do they serve?
4. Indicate the primary reason your organization is interested in participating in the Harris County Pathways Community HUB model.
5. Does your organization partner with other community agencies? If so, list these agencies and provide examples of collaborative efforts taking place.
6. How would participating in the Harris County Pathways Community HUB help meet the mission of your agency?
7. How many CHWs would you intend to dedicate to this project, and would they be part-time (20 hours per week) or full-time (40 hours per week)?
8. Will you be hiring new CHWs, or will current employees be assigned to this project?
9. If you will be hiring new CHWs, how long will it take to recruit and hire them?
10. If you have current CHWs that you will assign to this project, please indicate the current funding source for your CHWs, and if your organization will need support for CHW salary and benefits or solely outcomes-based payments.

11. If you have CHWs on staff or plan to hire CHWs, please share a job description and/or the essential skills that you require for this position (including trainings beyond the CHW certification).
12. Who will supervise the CHWs, and what are their related qualifications/licensures?
13. There is no guarantee that the stipend and outcome payments will cover the total salaries and benefits of the CHWs. Thus, how does your organization plan to supplement CHW salary funding, if necessary?
14. Please provide any additional comments or supplemental documentation you feel is pertinent to the CCA selection process.

\*The Pathways Community HUB reserves the right to request additional documentation, clarification, or due diligence regarding the applicants or application questions, as necessary.

Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 20, 2022 and should be e-mailed to:

Andrea Usanga  
Executive Director  
The Network of Behavioral Health Providers  
Email: [ausanga@nbhp.org](mailto:ausanga@nbhp.org)

**Subject:** CCA RFP Response for Harris County Pathways Community HUB