

Virginia Center for Health Outreach At James Madison University

Rationale for a Statewide Organization of Regional CHW Networks

During the fall of 2001 and the winter and spring of 2002, the Virginia Center for Health Outreach (VCHO) conducted a series of focus groups among CHWs from a variety of programs within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Throughout the focus group research process, CHWs repeatedly voiced the desire to have a regional CHW network that would be connected to similar networks across Virginia. In response to this feedback, the Center and local CHWs collaborated to establish a regional CHW network in each of eight distinct geographical areas of Virginia under the auspices of VCHO.

On both a regional and statewide basis, the regional CHW networks provide all of the benefits of an association of peers including the opportunity to

- share valuable information and help solve mutual problems
- learn about and make use of new/unknown resources
- work together to maximize the use of existing resources to benefit clients
- pool resources for enhanced learning opportunities

A regional CHW network organization also gives CHWs a formal presence in the state and

- provides strength of numbers (legislators pay attention to numbers)
- guarantees CHWs a place at the table when CHW issues are discussed
- gives every region equal access to and participation in statewide CHW matters
- provides instant allies when support is needed
- increases funding opportunities and leverage
- facilitates research that benefits all Virginia CHW programs