Communicating with Community Health Workers and advocates as stakeholders in research: Mobilization and Engagement

Brendaly Rodriguez1,3, Olveen Carrasquillo2

1Internal Medicine, 2General medicine, University of Miami, 3BR Consulting & Associates, LLC

The meaningful engagement of communities, patients and other stakeholders is key to patient centered outcomes research. Stakeholder involvement at all stages of PCOR ensures that the work responds to relevant and important issues. One important stakeholder group in PCOR research, are Community Health Workers (CHWs). Often called by other names including lay health workers, promotoras, peer navigators, and patient navigators, CHWs serve as connectors between healthcare consumers and providers to promote health among groups that have traditionally lacked access to adequate care. CHWs share personal, cultural, linguistic, and other characteristics with the patients and have a deep understanding of the communities they serve. An additional strength of CHWs for PCOR is that in addition to having similar socio-cultural as the patients they serve, they often either share similar medical conditions as their patients or serve as caregivers for family members and friends having those conditions. Although there still remain gaps in knowledge on the most optimal approaches for CHWs to reduce disparities, already there is considerable amount of evidence in support of CHWs to address the needs of diverse and disadvantaged populations across a variety of health conditions. As such many PCOR projects now employ CHWs as part of their research teams. While there is increasing evidence in support of CHWs, many gaps remain in how to optimally deploy CHWs to reduce health disparities. Over the past decade it has being increasingly recognized that CHWs do need formalized training and that when such training is done through appropriate means and channels, the end results is a well-equipped and qualified CHW workforce. To date, the University of Miami worked with PCORI to meet this need by developing a structured research Toolkit training (7-credit hrs) with input and deployment by our partners CHWs via a statewide process. Several Lessons Learned from Process will be presented in the Learning Lab via Case Scenarios with critical challenges, decision points and solutions for practitioners and for researchers to engage CHWs as stakeholders:

• Need to understand Definition(s) of engagement
• Stakeholder communities that include state and local counties DOHs, academic and research centers, social service orgs, FQHCs, private health insurance co., faith-based orgs)
• Politics, influence, current relationships established
• Gatekeepers: who are they? What role they play in the engagement process?
• Barriers/facilitators to the mobilization process
• Strengths and unexpected/ancillary benefits
• Next steps

Schedule: Using slides, handouts, comment cards, small group/whole group discussions.

5 mins Welcome, Introduction of Facilitators and Agenda Review
10 mins Introductions of attendees and Mingle Exercise
10 mins Provide synopsis of PCORI-funded Project, activities and critical decision points, challenges and solutions.
10 mins Video (3 mins) and Pairs Exercise with handouts
20 mins Case Scenarios (4): Division in 4 small groups (repeats depending on # of attendees).
15 mins Facilitated Group Discussion of those 4 Case Scenarios.
15 mins Comments card: Facilitated Group Discussion of Selected Individual Projects and Challenges (current/anticipated), and Suggestions from the group.
10 mins Take away points/lessons learned today review.