

# What Does it Mean to Be a CHW Supervisor?



## OBJECTIVES

**At the end of this unit, participants will be able to:**

- Contrast the differences between supervising CHWs and supervising other staff
- Recognize the importance of the cultural and experiential contexts that shape the supervisory relationship with CHWs
- Identify and practice the skills that are helpful in supervising CHWs



## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Before the session begins, write the labels “Rewards” and “Challenges” on flip chart sheets, or make copies of slide 4 for the small group activity.
2. Welcome participants and review the objectives of the session.
3. Review slide about supervision and facilitate discussion (slide 3).
4. Activity: Rewards and Challenges of Supervising CHWs.
  - Distribute the copies of slide 4, or the flip chart sheets.
  - Facilitate the activity as described in the slide 4 notes.
  - Ask groups to share their answers.
  - Distribute the Rewards and Challenges answer key and note any areas not previously mentioned.
5. Discuss cultural and experiential contexts and facilitate discussion (slide 5).
6. Optional activity: Break participants into small groups and ask each group to generate ideas for how supervisors can increase trust, help CHWs overcome fear of mistakes, and address the other bullet points on slide 5. Provide each group with a flip chart sheet to record ideas. Each group should choose a scribe and a reporter. After working in small groups, ask each group to report back.
7. Ask participants: What practical skills have been helpful to you as a supervisor in the clinical setting or other settings? Identify and practice the skills that are helpful in supervising CHWs. Facilitate discussion of the different roles that one may need to play when supervising CHWs.

8. Review The CHW Supervisor—the CHW’s CHW (slide 6).
9. Wrap up. Fostering trust and creating a safe space for CHWs is an important goal of the supervisor. Show the TED Talk Video, Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe. [https://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_why\\_good\\_leaders\\_make\\_you\\_feel\\_safe#t-699384](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_why_good_leaders_make_you_feel_safe#t-699384)

At the end of the video, ask participants to share one insight they learned from the video and how they might apply it in their work as supervisors.



## Method(s) of Instruction

Facilitated discussion, group activity



## Estimated time

90 minutes



## Key Concepts

Supervision roles, CHW supervision, cultural awareness, cultural humility



## Materials

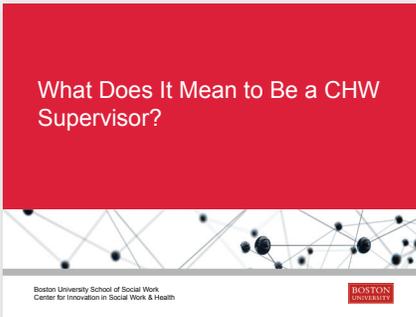
- Computer with projector and internet connection
- PowerPoint slides
- Flip chart
- Markers
- Ted Talk video: Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe. [https://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_why\\_good\\_leaders\\_make\\_you\\_feel\\_safe#t-699384](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_why_good_leaders_make_you_feel_safe#t-699384)

## Handouts

- Rewards and Challenges Answer Key

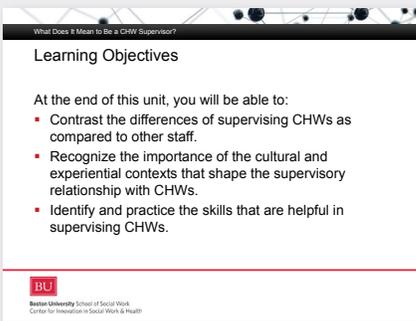
# What Does it Mean to Be a CHW Supervisor?

## SLIDE 1



## SLIDE 2

Welcome participants and review the objectives.



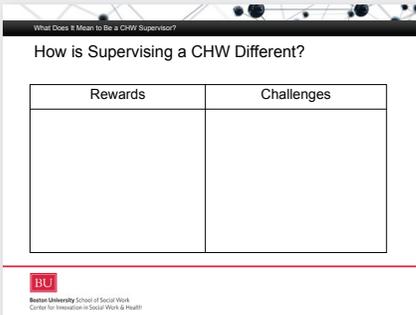
## SLIDE 3

Ask for a volunteer to read the quote.

Ask, "What does this quote mean to you? How can conflict be a source of personal and professional growth? Would someone like to share an experience that would serve as an example?"



# What Does it Mean to Be a CHW Supervisor?



## SLIDE 4

Provide handout or use a flipchart sheet with two columns labeled Rewards and Challenges

Ask participants to take a couple of minutes to reflect on the following question: What are the differences between supervising CHWs and supervising other staff?

Next: Divide participants into groups and ask them to list different rewards on their handout or flip chart sheet. Do the same for challenges. Facilitate discussion using the examples below if needed.

### Rewards

- Better patient experience
- Community representation
- Cultural competency for rest of staff
- Improved outcomes
- Committed to client and social change
- Shared life experiences with clients
- Part of the community that the agency serves/Knows the community
- Advocates for clients
- Knows resources in the community
- Bridges clinic and community

### Challenges:

- Could identify as a client rather than staff
- Boundaries are challenging
- Lack of understanding of the role of the CHW
- Can have lower level of education and training
- CHWs can work in isolation/challenge to integrate into the care team
- Clients and other staff can disparage CHW for not being "real" health workers
- High levels of attrition and burnout
- Not enough time to supervise properly
- CHW may not be used to constructive feedback
- Challenges bridging systems (clinic and other agencies)

# What Does it Mean to Be a CHW Supervisor?

What Does it Mean to Be a CHW Supervisor?

### Cultural and Experiential Contexts

Stumbling blocks to understanding	Culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, education, social class, physical/mental ability, learning style, personality, appearance, spiritual beliefs
Culturally aware and insight-oriented supervisors are able to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase trust and cooperation</li> <li>• Help overcome CHW's fear of mistakes</li> <li>• Encourage risk taking in sharing information</li> <li>• Help overcome fear of competition or conflict</li> <li>• Promote inclusion and equity</li> <li>• Increase respect and mutual understanding</li> </ul>

**BU**  
Boston University School of Social Work  
Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health

## SLIDE 5

In continuing with our discussion about the differences of supervising CHWs compared to other staff, and the rewards and challenges of supervising CHWs, let's think about the factors that contribute to these differences.

Recognize the importance of the cultural and experiential contexts that shape the supervisory relationship with CHWs.

Facilitate discussion on the implications of culture and life experience.

Having a diverse workforce that reflects the makeup of an organization's client base is an important aspect of care. However, as supervisors, we may not have the same background or life experiences as other team members. Let's look at the "stumbling blocks to understanding."

Ask, "Can someone provide an example of a difference in culture and how that might affect a work situation?" (Example—some cultures value the team over the individual)

Ask if someone would pick another item from the list and provide an example of how it affects understanding. Depending on time, repeat this process to facilitate dialogue.

Look at the next block in the table on culturally aware and insight-oriented supervisors. How can having knowledge of different cultures, ethnicity, gender, etc. represented in our staff help us, as supervisors, increase trust and cooperation between us and a CHW and between a CHW and the rest of the staff? Consider writing down ideas on a flip chart page under the heading "trust and cooperation." Repeat this process with each statement.

Optional activity: Divide participants into groups to discuss each bullet point and write down ideas, then share back with the large group.

What Does it Mean to Be a CHW Supervisor?

### The CHW Supervisor: The CHW's CHW

Role	Skill
1 Leader	Team-building skills; mastering politics of identity, power and privilege, historical discrimination
2 Director	Managing mix of workers; using life experience and clinical knowledge appropriately
3 Educator/Teacher	Teaching skills
4 Facilitator	Conflict prevention, problem solving skills
5 Mentor/Coach	Coaching skills — developing professional skills
6 Evaluator	Assessment skills
7 Advocate	Supportive skills —> advocating on behalf of the CHW; and encouraging CHW to be an advocate —> planning councils
8 Collaborator	Foster relationship building and maintaining relationships in the community

**BU**  
Boston University School of Social Work  
Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health

## SLIDE 6

Ask for a volunteer to reach each role and accompanying skill.

Ask participants, "Given our conversations so far, why are these skills important as we supervise CHWs?"

Key Talking Point: A supervisor/manager must wear multiple hats. Here is a list of some common roles that supervisors carry out and examples of skills that are needed to carry out these different roles. Which of these skills do you possess now that have helped you, or will help you as a supervisor of CHWs? What skills would you like to further develop?

Remember—just as clients look to CHWs for positive support, guidance, knowledge and hope, so do CHWs look to you.

## SLIDE 7

[https://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_why\\_good\\_leaders\\_make\\_you\\_feel\\_safe#t-699384](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_why_good_leaders_make_you_feel_safe#t-699384)

(12 minutes)

What Does it Mean to Be a CHW Supervisor?

### TED Talk

Simon Sinek: Why good leaders make you feel safe

[TED Talk](#)



**BU**  
Boston University School of Social Work  
Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health



# Acknowledgements

This curriculum draws from and is adapted from the expertise and experiences of the authors. We are also grateful to the supervisors who participated in the training from the following Ryan White program funded sites: 1917 Clinic, University of Birmingham, Alabama; East Carolina University Adult Specialty Care Clinic; Franklin Primary Health Center; McGregor Clinic; Southern Nevada Health District; CrescentCare; Newark Beth Israel Hospital-Family Treatment Center; the JACQUES Initiative; Legacy Community Health; and the Southwest Louisiana AIDS Council. You all taught us as much about how to be a successful supervisor, as we taught you.

### Authors

Serena Rajabiun

LaTrischa Miles

Alicia Downes

Precious Jackson

Rosalia Guerrero

Simone Phillips

Jodi Davich

Maurice Evans

Beth Poteet

Maria Rojo Campos

This project is/was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) number U69HA30462 "Improving Access to Care: Using Community Health Workers to Improve Linkage and Retention in HIV Care" (\$2,000,000 for federal funding). This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

### Suggested Citation:

Boston University Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health. (2019). A Training Curricula for Using Community Health Workers to Improve Linkage and Retention in HIV Care. Retrieved from: <http://ciswh.org/chw/>

**BOSTON  
UNIVERSITY**

**Boston University** School of Social Work  
Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health