

Supporting Safety in our Community: Community Health Workers Complete Initial 60 Hours of Training



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Following the award of \$2.5 million from the Office of Justice Programs and American Rescue Plan Act, Buncombe County Justice Services is working with multiple local organizations to launch a [Community-Based Public Health Response to Violence \(CPrV\)](#) to bring healing and support where it is needed.

Over the past month, participants came together to form the first cohort of [Community Health Worker-Violence Prevention Professionals](#), and after completing 60 hours of training with CHASM (CommUnity Healing through Activism) Buncombe County is celebrating their accomplishment and the hope of bringing safety to our community.

Representing the Board of Commissioners at the recent graduation ceremony, Commissioner Amanda Edwards shared, "I'm proud to be serving Buncombe County as a Commissioner at a time where we are not only acknowledging the importance of preventing violence in our community, but we're also actually working to prevent it. These workers will be champions of a community based public health response to violence, supporting communities accessing what they need to live healthy, safe, & thriving lives."

Nearly 20 individuals from My Daddy Taught Me That, The SPARC Foundation, Youth Transformed for Life, The Racial Justice Coalition, Umoja Health Wellness and Justice Collective, Asheville Dream Center, Life Over Violence Every Day (LOVE), and Buncombe County Justice Services shared their personal stories, aha moments, and love for this community after completing the course.

"I'm here because I believe in advancing and empowering the community we live in," said Jacquelyn Hall. "This course has taught me the language I need to hold systems accountable."

The CHASM model was recommended to the Justice Resource Advisory County with input from community, as well as research done by the [Racial Justice Coalition in partnership with SPARC](#).

This approach complements the Community Health Worker model already present in our community, incorporates additional evidence-based violence prevention models from the CDC's STRYVE model, and is backed by the American Public Health Association's recent policy: [A Strategy to Address Systemic Racism and Violence as Public Health Priorities: Training and Supporting Community Health Workers to Advance Equity and Violence Prevention](#). The training model encompasses outreach, mentoring, support for our young people, and most of all identifying a risk of engaging in violence, notes Buncombe County Violence Prevention Coordinator Will Baxter. "Coming together as a group for this course really allowed us to see everyone's level of commitment to helping our communities."

Next steps

Moving forward, the Community Health Workers-Violence Prevention Professionals team will work to forge genuine relationships and build cohesion within communities, notes Baxter. Additionally, community partners will build a Multi-Sector Stakeholder Coalition to allow our residents to openly communicate and strategize ways to combine efforts to address root causes of violence and advance community safety.