

The Senate Committee on Health and Human Services offered the following substitute to HB 215:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to health, so as to
2 provide for the certification of community health workers; to provide for definitions; to
3 provide for the establishment of the Georgia Community Health Worker Certification
4 Committee; to provide for membership, powers, and duties of the committee; to provide for
5 related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other
6 purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to health, is amended by revising
10 Chapter 31, which is reserved, as follows:

11 "CHAPTER 31

12 31-31-1.

13 As used in this chapter, the term:

14 (1) 'Accreditation' means the process by which the department grants recognition and use
15 of a credential to an eligible entity demonstrating satisfaction of the requirements for
16 certification programs as provided for in Code Section 31-31-4.

17 (2) 'Certification' means the process by which the department grants recognition and use
18 of a credential to an eligible individual demonstrating mastery of community health
19 worker core competencies as provided in this chapter.

20 (3) 'Certification program' means an education and training program for the certification
21 of community health workers that meets accreditation requirements established by the
22 CHWC Committee as provided for in Code Section 31-31-4.

23 (4) 'Certified community health worker' means an individual to whom the CHWC
24 Committee has issued a certificate of competency to serve as a certified community
25 health worker as provided for in Code Section 31-31-5.

26 (5) 'CHWC Committee' or 'committee' means the Georgia Community Health Worker
27 Certification Committee established by Code Section 31-31-2.

28 (6) 'Community health worker' means a frontline health worker who is a trusted member
29 of a community or has a demonstrated knowledge or unusually close understanding of
30 the community and individuals served and:

31 (A) Provides culturally appropriate health education, information, and outreach in
32 community based settings such as homes, schools, clinics, shelters, local businesses,
33 and community centers;

34 (B) Bridges or culturally mediates between individuals, communities, and health and
35 human services, including actively building individual and community capacity;

36 (C) Assures that community members access the services they need;

37 (D) Provides direct services, such as informal counseling, social support, care
38 coordination, and health screenings;

39 (E) Advocates for individual and community needs; and

40 (F) Provides any additional services as may be identified by the CHWC Committee
41 that may emerge in the development of community health worker practice.

42 (7) 'Core competency' means the knowledge and skills a certified community health
43 worker is expected to demonstrate in order to carry out the mission and goals of the
44 profession. Such term includes but is not limited to communication skills; interpersonal
45 and relationship-building skills; service coordination and navigation skills;
46 capacity-building skills; advocacy skills; education and facilitation skills; individual and
47 community assessment skills; community outreach and engagement skills; professional
48 skills and conduct; evaluation and research skills; and knowledge base. Reserved.

49 31-31-2.

50 (a) There is established the Georgia Community Health Worker Certification (CHWC)
51 Committee. The Commissioner shall appoint the 11 voting members of the CHWC
52 Committee as follows:

53 (1) One licensed physician with a specialization in chronic disease prevention and
54 treatment;

55 (2) One licensed physician with a specialization in maternal and child health;

56 (3) One licensed social worker;

57 (4) Two community health worker employers, with special consideration given to care
58 management organizations;

59 (5) Two persons representing certification program providers;

60 (6) One person who represents the general public and is familiar with community health
61 worker services;

62 (7) One person with experience and training in public health policy, with special
63 consideration given to the Georgia Community Health Worker Advocacy Coalition; and

64 (8) Two practicing community health workers, with special consideration given to
65 persons active in the Georgia Community Health Worker Network.

66 (b) The Commissioner shall appoint two agency representatives to serve as nonvoting
67 members of the CHWC Committee.

68 (c) Except for members appointed under subsection (b) of this Code section, those
69 members of the CHWC Committee who are initially appointed to the committee to
70 represent community health workers shall be persons who are eligible for certification as
71 community health workers and shall obtain such certification within a time frame specified
72 in rules adopted by the committee.

73 (d) No member shall serve on the CHWC Committee for more than two consecutive full
74 terms. A member appointed for less than a full term may serve two consecutive full terms,
75 and a former member shall be eligible again for appointment after a lapse of one or more
76 years.

77 (e) Members of the CHWC Committee may be removed from office under the same
78 conditions for removal from office of members of professional licensing boards provided
79 in Code Section 43-1-17.

80 (f) Members shall serve without compensation, but they may be reimbursed by the
81 department, subject to fund availability, in the same manner as state officials and
82 employees for travel and other expenses actually incurred by them in carrying out their
83 duties as members of the CHWC Committee.

84 31-31-3.

85 (a) The CHWC Committee shall meet at least quarterly and may meet at such other times
86 at the call of the chairperson or by a majority of the members as necessary to transact its
87 business. Such meetings may be conducted in-person, by telephone, by virtual means, or
88 any combination thereof.

89 (b) The CHWC Committee shall elect a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary from
90 among its membership. Such officers shall serve for terms of two years.

- 91 (c) A majority of the members of the CHWC Committee shall constitute a quorum and
92 shall have the authority to act upon any matter properly brought before the committee. The
93 committee shall follow all policies and procedures of Chapter 14 of Title 50, relating to
94 open and public meetings.
- 95 (d) The department shall provide reasonably necessary administrative support for CHWC
96 Committee activities.
- 97 (e) The CHWC Committee shall have the following powers and duties:
- 98 (1) To set standards and requirements for the accreditation of certification programs and
99 to provide a means for programs providing education and training to community health
100 workers prior to July 1, 2024, to become accredited certification programs;
- 101 (2) To set standards and requirements for the certification of community health workers
102 and to provide a means for individuals employed or engaged as community health
103 workers prior to July 1, 2024, to become certified community health workers;
- 104 (3) To set standards and a means to assess community health worker competency for
105 certification;
- 106 (4) To provide for an expedited means for a community health worker duly certified in
107 another jurisdiction to become a certified community health worker in this state;
- 108 (5) To establish tiered levels of practice as a certified community health worker and the
109 requirements for each established level, including a level that qualifies a certified
110 community health worker to act as an educator or trainer in an accredited certification
111 program;
- 112 (6) To establish grounds for complaints related to the practice of certified community
113 health workers and to establish and implement procedures for the review, investigation,
114 and resolution of such complaints;
- 115 (7) To establish the disciplinary procedures and actions available to the department in
116 connection with complaint resolution; such actions may include a fine, reprimand,

117 probation, censure, suspension, revocation, denial of a certificate issued, or a combination
118 of the foregoing; and

119 (8) To perform such other functions and duties in order to protect public health, safety
120 and welfare as may be required to carry out this chapter.

121 31-31-4.

122 (a) All certification programs shall be accredited by the CHWC Committee with oversight
123 from the department. No entity shall hold itself out as providing training and education for
124 certified community health workers in this state unless its curriculum and training program
125 has been accredited by the CHWC Committee.

126 (b) The department shall post on its website the accreditation requirements and the
127 application form for a certification program.

128 (c) To obtain accreditation for a certification program, an applicant shall submit an
129 application to the CHWC Committee demonstrating satisfaction of accreditation
130 requirements for a certification program and pay to the department a fee set by the
131 department."

132 **SECTION 2.**

133 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law
134 without such approval.

135 **SECTION 3.**

136 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.