

House Bill 291

By: Representatives Taylor of the 173rd, Dempsey of the 13th, Cooper of the 45th, Mathiak of the 82nd, Hawkins of the 27th, and others

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 the approval of training programs; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective
6 date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other 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:

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14 (1) 'Certified community health worker' means an individual to whom the committee has
15 issued a certificate to serve as a certified community health worker based on standards
16 and requirements established by the committee.

17 (2) 'Committee' means the Georgia Community Health Worker Certification Committee
18 established by Code Section 31-31-2.

19 (3) 'Community health worker' means a frontline health worker who is a trusted member
20 of a community or has a demonstrated knowledge or unusually close understanding of
21 the community and individuals served and:

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

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

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

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

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

31 (F) Provides any additional services as may be identified by the committee that may
32 emerge in the development of community health worker practice.

33 (4) 'Core competencies' means the knowledge and skills a certified community health
34 worker is expected to demonstrate in order to carry out the mission and goals of the
35 profession. Such term includes, but is not limited to, communication skills; interpersonal
36 and relationship-building skills; service coordination and navigation skills;
37 capacity-building skills; advocacy skills; education and facilitation skills; individual and
38 community assessment skills; community outreach and engagement skills; professional
39 skills and conduct; evaluation and research skills; and knowledge base.

40 (5) 'Training program' means an education and training program that meets the
41 curriculum and training required for a community health worker to be eligible for
42 certification and that has been approved by the committee based on standards and
43 requirements established by the committee. Reserved.

44 31-31-2.

45 (a) There is established the Georgia Community Health Worker Certification Committee.

46 The Commissioner shall appoint the 11 voting members of the committee as follows:

47 (1) One licensed physician with a specialization in primary care or family medicine;

48 (2) One licensed physician or certified nurse midwife with a specialization in maternal
49 and child health;

50 (3) One licensed physician or nurse practitioner with a specialization in geriatrics;

51 (4) One licensed social worker;

52 (5) Two community health worker employers, with special consideration given to care
53 management organizations;

54 (6) Two persons representing training program providers;

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

57 (8) Two practicing community health workers, with special consideration given to
58 persons active in the Georgia Community Health Worker Network, provided that such
59 persons are eligible for certification as community health workers in this state and shall
60 obtain such certification within a time frame specified in rules adopted by the committee.

61 (b) The Commissioner shall appoint two agency representatives to serve as nonvoting
62 members of the committee.

63 (c) No member shall serve on the committee for more than two consecutive full terms. A
64 member appointed for less than a full term may serve two consecutive full terms, and a
65 former member shall be eligible again for appointment after a lapse of one or more years.

66 (d) Members of the committee may be removed from office under the same conditions for
67 removal from office of members of professional licensing boards provided in Code
68 Section 43-1-17.

69 (e) Members shall serve without compensation, but they may be reimbursed by the
70 department, subject to fund availability, in the same manner as state officials and
71 employees for travel and other expenses actually incurred by them in carrying out their
72 duties as members of the committee.

73 31-31-3.

74 (a) The committee shall meet at least quarterly and may meet at such other times at the call
75 of the chairperson or by a majority of the members as necessary to transact its business.
76 Such meetings may be conducted in person, by telephone, by virtual means, or any
77 combination thereof.

78 (b) The committee shall elect a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary from among
79 its membership. Such officers shall serve for terms of two years.

80 (c) A majority of the members of the committee shall constitute a quorum and shall have
81 the authority to act upon any matter properly brought before the committee. The
82 committee shall follow all policies and procedures of Chapter 14 of Title 50, relating to
83 open and public meetings.

84 (d) The department shall provide reasonably necessary administrative support for
85 committee activities.

86 (e) The committee shall have the following powers and duties:

87 (1) To set standards and requirements for approval of training programs and to provide
88 a means for programs providing education and training to community health workers
89 prior to January 1, 2026, to become approved training programs;

- 90 (2) To set standards and requirements for the certification of community health workers
91 and to provide a means for individuals employed or engaged as community health
92 workers prior to January 1, 2026, to become certified community health workers;
93 (3) To set standards and a means to assess the mastery of core competencies necessary
94 for an individual to become a certified community health worker;
95 (4) To provide for an expedited means for a community health worker duly certified in
96 another jurisdiction to become a certified community health worker in this state;
97 (5) To establish tiered levels of practice as a certified community health worker and the
98 requirements for each established level, including a level that qualifies a certified
99 community health worker to act as an educator or trainer in an approved training
100 program;
101 (6) To establish grounds for complaints related to the practice of certified community
102 health workers and to establish and implement procedures for the review, investigation,
103 and resolution of such complaints;
104 (7) To establish the disciplinary procedures and actions available to the department in
105 connection with complaint resolution; such actions may include a fine, reprimand,
106 probation, censure, suspension, revocation, denial of a certificate issued, or a combination
107 of the foregoing; and
108 (8) To perform such other functions and duties in order to protect public health, safety,
109 and welfare as may be required to carry out this chapter.

110 31-31-4.

- 111 (a) All training programs in this state shall be approved by the committee with oversight
112 from the department. No entity shall hold itself out as providing training and education for
113 certified community health workers in this state unless its training program has been
114 approved by the committee.

115 (b) The department shall post on its website the requirements and the application form for
116 a training program to become approved.

117 (c) To obtain approval for a training program, an applicant shall submit an application to
118 the committee demonstrating satisfaction of the requirements for a training program and
119 pay a fee set by the department.

120 31-31-5.

121 (a) All community health workers in this state shall be certified by the committee with
122 oversight from the department. No person shall act as a community health worker in this
123 state unless certified by the committee or otherwise authorized by the committee or
124 department.

125 (b) The department shall post on its website the requirements and the application form for
126 a community health worker to become certified.

127 (c) An applicant shall submit an application to the committee demonstrating satisfaction
128 of the requirements for a certified community health worker and pay a fee set by the
129 department."

130 **SECTION 2.**

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

133 **SECTION 3.**

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