

# Integrating Community Health Workers on Clinical Care Teams

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# Introduction

Sisters in Birth, a nonprofit, charitable community-based organization has utilized community health workers since 2015 to improve general health and birth outcomes, in urban and rural counties.

A community health worker (CHW) is defined as a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of a community or who has a thorough understanding of the community being served. This relationship allows CHWs to engage populations at risk on a more personal and familiar level than experienced between patients and clinicians.



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# CHW Functions in Healthcare

- deliver screenings and health education to a target population
- help patients with complex health conditions navigate healthcare systems.
- work alongside medical professionals to address health issues.
- provide outreach and enrollment to a target population.
- educate patients and encourage them to get COVID-19 immunization.
- provide comprehensive support to pregnant patients, administer 17P in home, reduce negative birth outcomes and increasing breastfeeding rates.
- Take vital signs
- Body mass index calculations and education

# CHW Functions in Healthcare

When collaborating with medical professionals, CHWs may offer a number of different services including:

- First aid care education
- Medication counseling and adherence
- Chronic disease prevention and self-management: health coaching, facilitation of exercise groups, nutritional coaching
- Disease screenings

# CHW and Disease Screenings

**The Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) recommends interventions that engage community health workers for the following.**

## **Cancer Screenings:**

Breast cancer: increases breast cancer screening (by mammography).

Cervical cancer: increases cervical cancer screening (by Pap test).

Colorectal cancer: increases colorectal cancer screening (by colonoscopy )

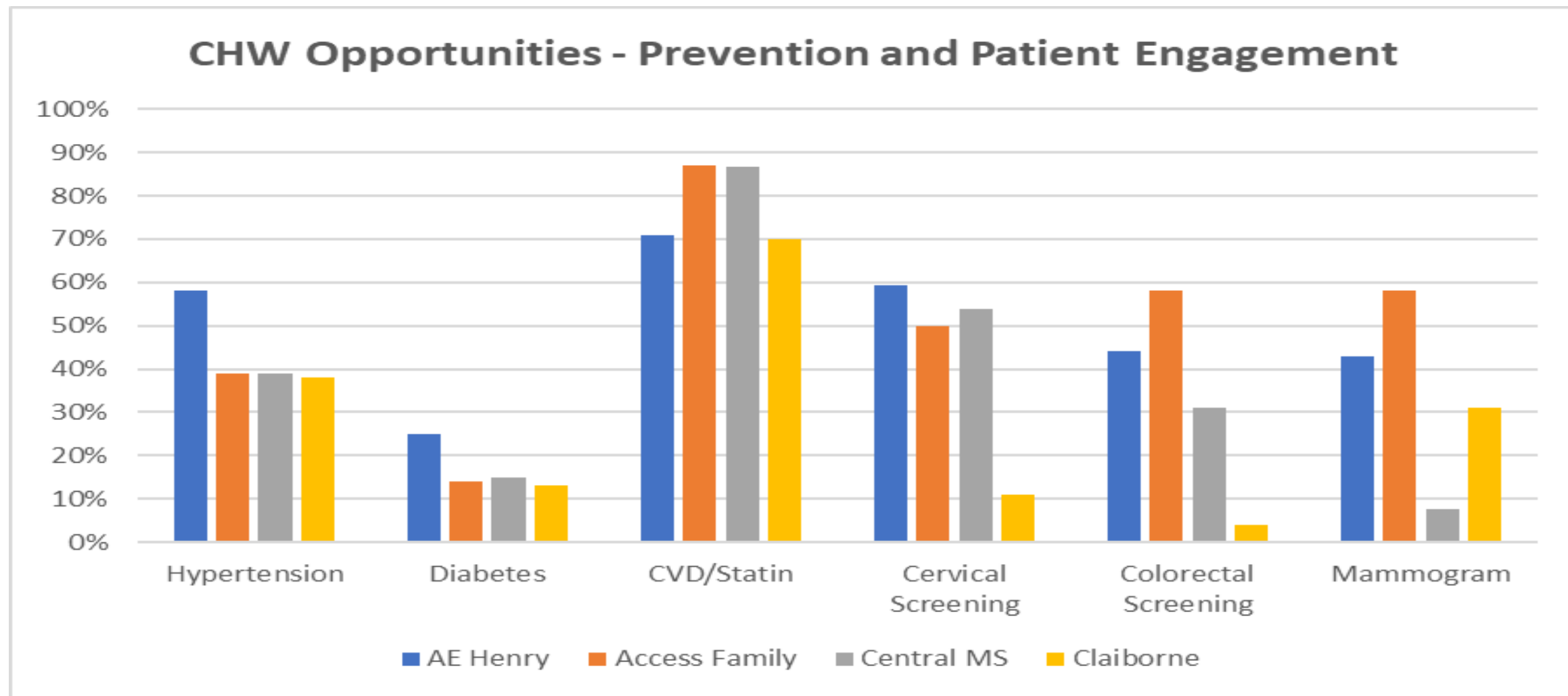
Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention: increases improvement in blood pressure and cholesterol when community health workers are engaged in a team-based care model.

# Integrating CHWs on the Healthcare Team

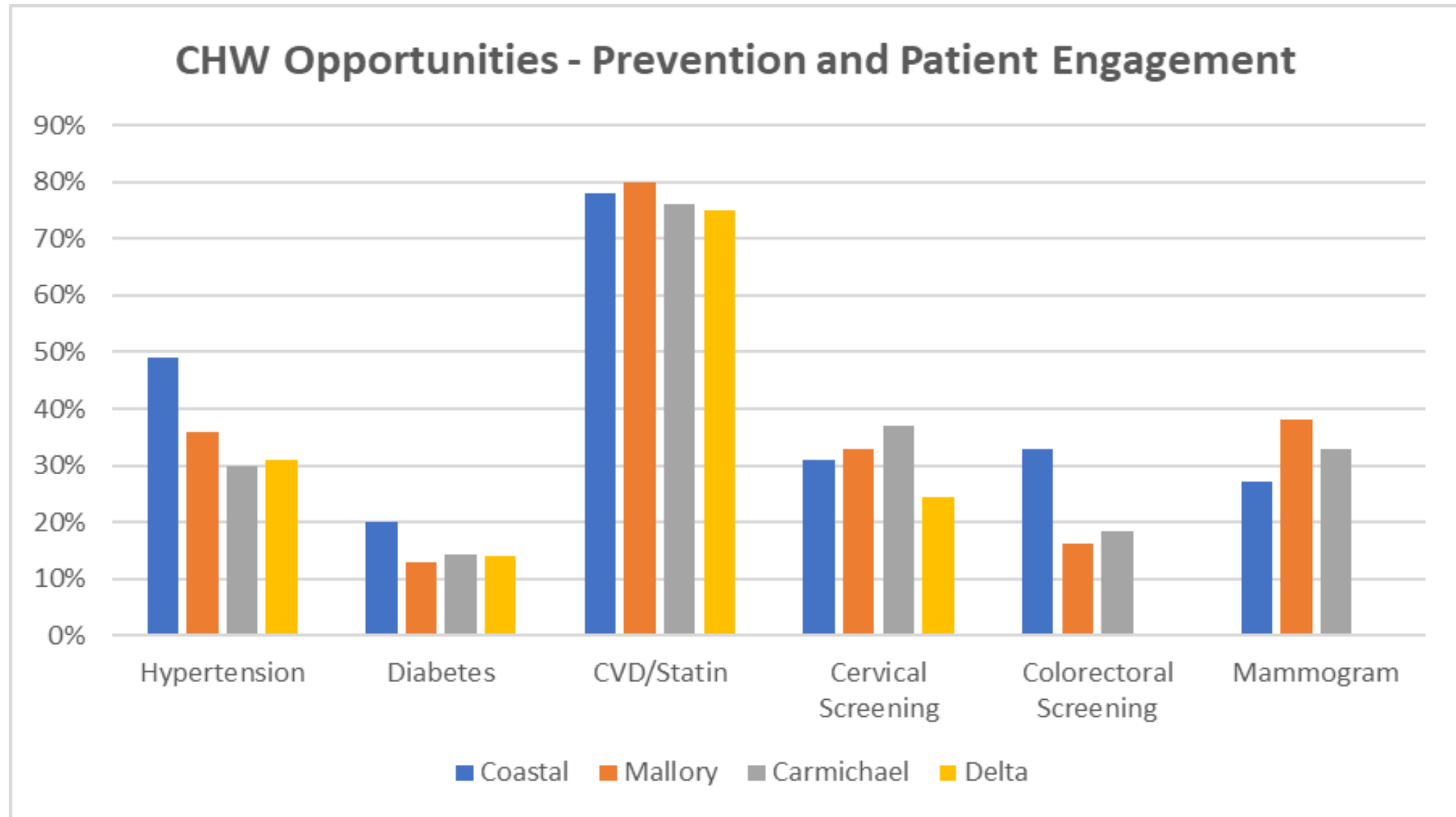
**Diabetes Prevention:** improvement of blood glucose level control and weight-related outcomes among people at increased risk for type 2 diabetes.

**Diabetes Management:** improvement of blood glucose level and lipid control and reducing health care use among patients who have type 2 diabetes.

# CHW – Clinical Opportunities



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# CHW and Birth Outcomes

From 2015 – 2020, Sisters in Birth employed CHW to provide nonmedical, preventive based services to 68 pregnant Medicaid members including:

- Health education
- Patient advocacy
- Labor and Delivery Support
- Breastfeeding education/counseling

## Results:

- 90% delivered a FT baby
- Average gestational age: 39 weeks
- 80% initiated breastfeeding
- Medical Costs Savings: Average cost of one PT baby is \$49,402
- 61 FT babies produced a savings of \$3,013,522 to the MCOs.

# Barriers to Integrating CHWs in Healthcare System

- CHWs typically are employed on a PT, temporary basis by public agencies
- CHWs employment is dependent on short-term grants.
- No payer in Mississippi covers community health services delivered by community health workers.
- Only healthcare services delivered by a licensed healthcare provider will be reimbursed by payers.
- CHW preventive based work is associated with significant medical savings.
- Medicaid, MCOs, and BCBS of MS refuse to reimburse for any nonmedical, community health services delivered by CHWs.

# Recommendation:

- MS Rural Health Association members should advocate for the passage of state legislation that require Medicaid and its MCOs to cover CHW evidenced based services: health education, home visitation, and doula supported births.
- MS Rural Health Association members should create opportunities to integrate onto their clinical team to engage overweight and pregnant patients.



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