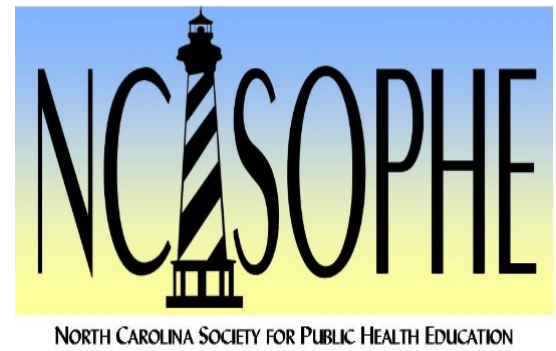


North Carolina's leaders should recognize the unique skillset that Certified Health Education Specialists (CHES) offer and advocate for the use of CMS ruling CMS-2334-F to reimburse for their work, which improves health and saves funds in reduced healthcare costs.



NC SOPHE Advocacy Priority #1

What is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES)?

A CHES is an individual that has met eligibility requirements for and has successfully passed a specialized exam demonstrating mastery of the Seven Areas of Responsibility of Health Education Specialists. MCHES, the master's level of certification, includes a set of advanced eligibility requirements. The credential is awarded by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, and requires ongoing education (SOPHE, 2015).

How can Health Education Specialists improve health and save funds in North Carolina?

- **Health education specialists, also called health educators, develop and implement strategies to improve the health of individuals and communities.** A growing body of research shows evidence of a positive Return on Investment (ROI) in health programs that rely on health educators for implementation. A 2012 study of health educators working to address diabetes demonstrated a cumulative savings of \$43 million and ROI of 478 to 764% for each dollar spent (http://sophe.org/Sophe/PDF/Medicaid_Toolkit.pdf).
- **Health educators are trained in multiple areas of public health,** including health assessment, program planning, implementation, evaluation, administration and management, health communication and best practices in health education. Given this advanced skill set, they are often called upon to supervise community health workers, a growing part of the health workforce (SOPHE, 2015).
- **For over 40 years, research has shown CHES have the necessary skills and training to work in multidisciplinary settings, including health education, care coordination and harm reduction** (APHA, 2012). CHES can play a critical role as part of diverse health care teams in order to achieve improved health outcomes and the strongest Return on Investment (Trust for America's Health, 2013).

What policies will allow North Carolina to benefit from the work of health educators?

1. The Trust for America's Health recommends that Medicaid funds be used to cover and reimburse services provided by practitioners like CHES as these professionals can competently deliver evidence-based programs in the community (TFAH, 2013).
2. Support the rule to allow for CHES to be billed for. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) ruling CMS-2334-F revised the definition of prevention services at 42 CFR 440.130(c), effective January 1, 2014. The rule allows state Medicaid programs to reimburse for preventive services provided by professionals that may fall outside of a state's clinical licensure system, as long as a physician or other licensed practitioner initially recommended the services.

*Please visit www.ncarolinasophe.org for more information on the North Carolina Society for Public Health Education