

TRADITIONAL HEALTH WORKER

REGIONAL WORKFORCE SUMMIT



Our Summit



The purpose of the Traditional Health Worker Regional Workforce Summit is to share and highlight best practices for development of the Traditional Health Worker workforce and career pipeline.

Summit Highlights

Central Oregon Community College Redmond Campus



8:30 am **Registration, Coffee, Breakfast**

9:15 am **Welcome Message**

9:30 am **Break Out Session One**

11:15 am **Networking Tables**

12:00 pm **Lunch**

1:30 pm **Break Out Session Two**

3:15 pm **Group Self-Care Sessions**

PRESENTERS

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Natalyn Begay

Natalyn Begay is a Tribal Traditional Health Worker Program Analyst at the Oregon Health Authority and a dedicated public health professional with over 15 years of experience serving Tribal and Urban Native communities. She brings expertise in grant writing, program development, community organizing, advocacy, civic engagement, and program evaluation. Natalyn is passionate about revitalizing cultural practices to support holistic health and well-being. She also focuses on advancing health access and equity for Native peoples through policy advocacy. She holds a Master of Public Health with a concentration in American Indian Public Health, grounding her work in both cultural knowledge and public health science.



Iris Bicksler

Iris Bicksler became a Full Spectrum Doula in 1996 and earned her Bachelor of Arts in Women's Studies from the University of Oregon in 2000. She is also a trained Community Health Worker and Peer Support Specialist. Her 25-year career rooted in health equity and includes being the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Doulas Supporting Teens, served as a CHW in a school-based health center, and managed on-site Peer services in affordable housing. From 2019 to 2024, she was the Senior Traditional Health Worker Liaison at PacificSource Health Plans, where she led doula workforce development and contract strategy. Currently, Iris is a THW Consultant with MSH Consulting NW, supporting a billing hub that partners with school districts and community-based organizations to bill third-party for CHW and Peer services. She also serves as Board President of the Oregon Doula Association and is a member of the THW Commission's Payment Model Subcommittee. A lifelong Oregonian, Iris lives in Eugene with her husband and rescue dog, Charlie Brown, and has two grown children.



Martha Rivera

With over 13 years of continuous training and experience supporting families during their pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding journey, her mission is to provide professional and compassionate support to all her clients regardless of their birthing and parenting styles. Martha is the owner and a Certified Labor Doula/Traditional Health Worker - Doula of Rogue Valley Doulas. Through this company, she is creating a professional platform in southern Oregon for Doulas to build successful careers and to advocate for sustainable practices while building bridges with the medical community. Martha is a board member for the [Oregon Doula Association](#) and a consultant for Doulas Latinas International. Locally, she is a member of the Southern Oregon Lactation Association and the Southern Oregon Perinatal Task Force. Martha is a mother to two girls who keep her and her husband busy! As a family, they enjoy going to the beach, spontaneous drives, and watching movies.



Amy Martin

Amy Martin is the Regional Outreach Coordinator for Deschutes, Crook, Jefferson, and Wheeler Counties with the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace's Outreach and Community Engagement (OCHE) program. She supports a diverse network of community partners who provide culturally responsive outreach, health coverage assistance, and connections to essential social services. Amy works to reduce barriers to care and ensure equitable access to health resources for underserved communities across Central Oregon.

Heather Lynch



Heather Lynch (she/her/hers) has been practicing, mentoring and guiding Motivational Interviewing skills practice with a wide variety of humans in service working with other humans on growth and change, since 2006. A member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) [MINT](#) since 2014, she has over 30 years of experience in the field of human services and practices MI as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. Heather has mentored many MI practitioners and trainers, created curriculum and supported projects related to using MI with groups of adults and youth with disabilities, created and conducted MI training and in many timeframes and formats from introduction to advanced, including Train New Trainer events, around the world. Heather's specific areas of interest in MI include the use of MI with youth and individuals with unique and complex cognitive and communication needs. She believes in the power of hope and deeply enjoys imagining and activating human potential



Shaun Cook

Shaun Cook is a Program Analyst 3 with the Traditional Health Worker Program at the Oregon Health Authority. Passionate about social justice, Shaun focuses on addressing the social determinants of health to advance health equity and eliminate disparities in healthcare, housing, and incarceration. His work supports the development and sustainability of Oregon's Traditional Health Worker workforce—trusted community members who provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care. Shaun is committed to creating systems that prioritize equity, elevate community voices, and foster improved health outcomes for all Oregonians, particularly those from historically underserved and marginalized communities.



Carlene Perry

Carlene Perry is the Pathways Program Coordinator at Central Oregon Community College where she provides leadership for the implementation of activities, policies and processes related to Career Pathways, Credit for Prior Learning, and Integrated Education & Training development. Prior to COCC, she had a 20-year career in education and engineering with the United States Air Force.



Sarah Baron

Sarah Baron is the Career Technical Education Director of the Community Health Certificate and a Public Health Assistant Professor at Central Oregon Community College. With over 20 years of experience in community and public health, she has served as a teacher, health educator, outreach worker, Peer Support Specialist, and community partner. She holds a BA and MPH from Tulane University and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Fresno State. Committed to workforce development, she serves on the THWCommission and chairs the Training Evaluations Metrics and Program Scoring TEMPS Committee, which reviews and approves THW trainings (such as Community Health Worker, Peer Support Specialist, Doula, Family Support).



Bethany Kuschel

Bethany Kuschel is the Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator for Deschutes County Public Health, where she leads regional efforts to prevent suicide and promote mental well-being. A graduate of Oregon State University with a background in Health Policy, she works closely with the Central Oregon Suicide Prevention Alliance (COSPA), serving Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties. Bethany helps coordinate collaborative, community-based strategies and provides evidence-based trainings such as Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR). Her work is rooted in equity, inclusion, and building resilient systems of care that support individuals, families, and communities affected by suicide.

Caroline Suiter



Caroline Suiter, MPH, is a dedicated Mental Health Promotion Strategist and Postvention Lead at Deschutes County. With an MPH from the University of Arizona and a BA from the University of Oregon, her career has focused on public health and behavioral health. She was a certified alcohol and drug counselor and held leadership roles in health services, coordinating initiatives integrating behavioral health into primary care. Suiter is a driving force in suicide prevention efforts in Central Oregon, actively leading awareness events and developing strategies to reduce suicide deaths and attempts. Her work extends to postvention, providing crucial support for individuals and communities impacted by suicide. She is committed to fostering better health, better care, and lower costs through collaborative, community-based solutions.



Julia Van Doorn

Hello, my name is Julia. I am a mother, wife, teacher, and lifelong student. My journey into movement began with a drive for physical mastery, pushing the boundaries of what my body could achieve through yoga poses. Over time, my practice has evolved. Now, it's less about the perfect shape and more about cultivating inner balance and mental serenity.

I'm a certified yoga instructor for both adults and children, and I'm currently expanding my expertise with certifications in Tai Chi and Qigong, alongside pursuing my license in massage therapy.

For me, the true power of movement lies in finding equilibrium, both on and off the mat. This shift in focus, from striving for results to embracing balance, has created more space in my life for everything that matters, especially my family.

My philosophy is simple: Drink water, get good rest, and do yoga! I believe these fundamentals are key to a more harmonious and fulfilling life.

Breakout Session One

Suicide Prevention

Bethany Kuschel, Suicide Prevention Coordinator Deschutes County Public Health

Caroline Suiter- Mental Health Promotion Strategies and Postvention Lead Deschutes County Public Health

QPR + CALM Suicide Prevention Training: A supportive, 1.5-hour session where you'll learn how to talk openly about suicide, explore local facts and myths, discuss safe storage of firearms and medications, and discover ways to care for yourself while helping others. CEU credits available!

Tribal Community Collaboration

Natalyn Begay- Tribal THW Program Specialist/Equity & Inclusion Division Tribal Liaison

Join this engaging session to explore respectful, culturally grounded ways to partner with Tribal communities. Learn about Oregon's Tribal Nations, build trust through shared values, and discover how to support wellness, sovereignty, and meaningful collaboration in your work.

Motivational Interviewing

Heather Lynch- MA, CRC, OPMA, Member MINT (she/her)

Build your skills in this compassionate, person-centered approach to supporting change. Learn how to have meaningful conversations that strengthen motivation, explore ambivalence, and empower individuals to take positive steps forward—all while honoring their autonomy and values.

Doula Work

Iris Bicksler- ODA Board President and THW Consultant at MSH Consulting NW

Martha Rivera- Certified Labor Doula/Traditional Health Worker - Doula of Rogue Valley Doulas and Board Member of the ODA.

Discover the vital role of doulas in supporting birth, postpartum, and reproductive health across Oregon. Learn about culturally responsive care, local resources, and how doulas empower families through advocacy, education, and compassionate presence during life-changing moments.

Breakout Session Two

Credit for Prior Learning

Carlene Perry- Pathways Program Coordinator at Central Oregon Community College

Sarah Baron- Career Technical Education Director of the Community Health Certificate and a Public Health Assistant Professor at Central Oregon Community College

Learn how students can earn college credit for skills and knowledge gained through work, military service, or life experience. This session explores Oregon's CPL pathways, how to navigate the process, and ways to support equitable access to higher education for adult learners.

Trauma-Informed Care

Explore how to create safe, supportive environments by recognizing the impact of trauma and responding with empathy and understanding. Learn practical strategies to build trust, promote healing, and avoid re-traumatization—whether you're working in healthcare, education, social services, or community support.

OHA THW Commission

Shaun Cook- Program Analyst 3 with the Traditional Health Worker Program at the Oregon Health Authority

Learn how this statewide commission supports Oregon's diverse THW workforce—including community health workers, doulas, peer support specialists, and more. Explore how the Commission promotes culturally responsive care, strengthens community health, and advances equity through policy, advocacy, and collaboration with Tribal and local partners

OHP Assister/Marketplace

Amy Martin- Coordinator Oregon Health Authority Regional Outreach Coordinator Community Partner Outreach Program

Learn how certified assisters help Oregonians navigate health coverage options through the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) and the Health Insurance Marketplace. This session covers how to support individuals and families in applying for coverage, understanding eligibility, and accessing financial assistance—while building trust and equity in your community

Lunch Exhibitors will be posted here

About the Organizers



This summit grew from conversations in the community about creating a venue just for the THW workforce to share visions, challenges best practices and career opportunities.

Support for this conference was made possible through sponsorship from PacificSource Health Plans and support from the American Rescue Plan Deschutes County and Central Oregon Health Council.

The organizers are volunteers from various backgrounds. Below is our core planning committee:

- Sarah Baron, Assistant Professor, PSS, Central Oregon Community College
- Emily Zeller, PHN, THW Liaison with PacificSource
- Amy Knudsen, Center for Business, Industry, and Professional Development (CBIPD) Program Manager, COCC
- Keri Podell, Center for Business, Industry, and Professional Development (CBIPD) Program Manager, COCC