

The experience of the “Mais Saúde com Agente” program: training community health workers for a new Brazil

Over the past 40 years, the training of community health workers has received limited recognition within Brazil's political agenda, which has resulted in a set of isolated and fragmented training and qualification initiatives. These efforts have fallen short of promoting the professionalization of these workers as health professionals¹.

With the inauguration of the Lula III administration, the Brazilian Ministry of Health repositioned the training of community health workers as a strategic priority for strengthening the Unified Health System (SUS) and enhancing its resilience. This shift was implemented through the reconfiguration of the *Saúde com Agente* Program, which was renamed *Mais Saúde com Agente* (More Health with Community Health Agents). This change went beyond a mere modification of nomenclature, representing an expansion of the program's interinstitutional framework through the incorporation of new partners, such as the Technical Schools of the Unified Health System (*Escolas Técnicas do SUS*). Within this process, emphasis was placed on the recognition and qualification of the program's preceptorship, as well as on the inclusion of new disciplines and curricular content addressing mental health, agroecology, the history of community health workers, the health of rural, forest, and riverine populations, oral health, and climate change. Additionally, the curriculum incorporated critical discussions grounded in analyses of gender, racial, and ethnic inequities.

In 2024, a new group of the *Mais Saúde com Agente* program began, highlighting the program's scale and scope. More than 140,000 students were enrolled on a hybrid training course with a total of 1,275 hours completed over a 12-month period. The curriculum followed a structured learning pathway comprising shared core disciplines for community health workers and endemic disease control agents, as well as profession-specific modules organized by professional segments. The program placed strong emphasis on the integration between Primary Health Care (PHC) and Health Surveillance (HS). With its two editions, the program has trained close to 300,000 health agents and mobilized health care networks in almost all Brazilian municipalities.

To mark the completion of the training programs, graduation ceremonies were held between December 2025 and February 2026 across all 27 states of Brazil, mobilizing approximately 12,000 health agents and SUS managers. In March 2026, a National Exhibition of Experiences was also staged, with a primary focus on practices of Integrated Territorialization between PHC and HS. This initiative introduced an important innovation in fostering scientific knowledge production by requiring that the experiences submitted list Community Health Workers and Endemic Disease Control Agents as the principal authors. This requirement challenges the established logic in the field of health research, in which these workers are frequently treated as objects of study—systematically analyzed and disseminated in scientific literature—rather than recognized as authors of their own knowledge and practices.

The *Mais Saúde com Agente* Program demonstrated both the necessity and the transformative potential of investing in the ongoing education of all workers who sustain and operationalize the SUS.

It underscores the urgency of appreciating the value of technical health professionals, acknowledging community-based health work, and celebrating the education and qualification of Health Agents throughout Brazil!

Erika Rodrigues de Almeida <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2034-5079>¹, Romário Correia dos Santos <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4973-123X>¹, Luis Carlos Nunes Vieira de Vieira <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8595-5294>¹, Juliana Ferreira Lima Marques <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8065-2823>¹, Suellen Ferreira Alves <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4405-7594>¹, Lanusa Ferreira <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1949-7154>¹, Rejane Teles Bastos <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9910-0993>¹, Fabiano Ribeiro dos Santos <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7202-6056>¹, Felipe Proença de Oliveira <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5900-0174>¹

¹ *Secretaria de Gestão do Trabalho e da Educação na Saúde, Ministério da Saúde. Brasília DF Brasil.*

References

1. Santos RC, Ribeiro LF, Amado CF, Mello LMBD, Santos L. Work process of community health workers in the context of digital health: a non-participant observation study. *Saude Soc* 2025; 34(2):e240099in.