

HOSPITALS and Health Equity

Health Equity, as defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is attainment of the highest level of health for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing efforts to address avoidable inequalities, as well as historical and contemporary injustices, and eliminating healthcare disparities.

Hospitals Promote Health Equity

Health equity is a component of the work CHA is doing with all Connecticut hospitals and healthcare systems to advance population health strategies through data analysis, care coordination, and health improvements across the care continuum. The work began in the fall of 2011 when CHA launched a statewide Diversity Collaborative with participating teams from all Connecticut hospitals to focus on three goals :

- Increasing the diversity of hospital governance and senior management
- Increasing cultural competence in the delivery of care
- Increasing supplier diversity

Hospital teams began a regular process of sharing strategies and best practices, participated in educational sessions, webinars, and team conference calls, and developed policies, procedures, and education for all staff to work toward the three goals.

To date, hundreds of clinicians and other healthcare professionals have been trained in delivering culturally competent care. CHA has sponsored several supplier diversity forums, which introduced hospital purchasing professionals to minority vendors, and work has been done with community partners to conduct community health needs assessments.

As the work has evolved, the focus on improving health equity has taken center stage and CHA has transitioned the original diversity initiative to the creation of a Health Equity Advisory Council. The goal of the Council is to focus on increasing the diversity of hospital governance and senior management teams to reflect the demographic characteristics of each hospital's service area. This has many benefits, including ensuring that community needs, cultural views, linguistic needs, and health equity expectations will be presented at the leadership level.

Ultimately, this work will promote the highest level of health for all citizens in Connecticut, including those whose medical conditions are directly related to the existence of social





determinants of health, which includes such things as housing, employment, food scarcity, and economic status.

Current Initiatives

CHA has formed partnerships with an array of professional organizations, such as the Hispanic Health Council, the New England Health Equity Council, the Northern and Southern Connecticut Black Nurses Association, the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, several state agencies and departments, federally qualified health centers, and local health departments. These partnerships have resulted in collaborative efforts to promote health equity and eliminate disparities. One example of the type of success that is possible is the Connecticut Asthma Initiative (CAI), developed in 2015 with continuum of care partners to improve the lives of adults and children living with asthma. Since its inception, a broad-based group of more than 200 people from 62 organizations across the continuum has created a model of collaboration to improve both asthma care and outcomes. The next goal of the CAI is to address barriers to treatment, such as environmental or socio-economic factors, that negatively impact asthma patients.

Connecticut hospitals are also participating in the American

Hospital Association #123forEquity Pledge, which is part of a national call to action to eliminate healthcare disparities. The Pledge focuses on increasing the collection and use of race, ethnicity, and language preference data, providing cultural competency training, and accelerating diversity in governance and leadership.

How Legislators Can Help

- Reinstated the Connecticut Commission on Health Equity to support the work being done to eliminate disparities in health status based on race, ethnicity, gender and linguistic ability.
- Work with healthcare advocates across the continuum to ensure the achievement of health equity is supported by innovative health policy, sensible regulations, and sustainable funding.
- Support community partnerships that advocate for population health priorities and measures, including social determinants of health, and ensuring they are included in SIM and other innovation and reform efforts.

For additional information, please contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.