

Why Health Equity?

The foundation's current strategic plan defines as a strategy:

“Advance health equity with the goal to support broad community resident representation in health-related initiatives and increase diversity and equity capacity of the health care and social service workforce.”

What is health equity & how is it different from health disparities?

Health equity is the ethical and human rights principle that motivates us to eliminate health disparities. It ensures that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.

Health disparities are worse health in excluded and marginalized groups and one way to measure progress towards health equity.

This is not a new focus for the foundation. What has changed?

The foundation's commitment to the issue remains strong. There is a deepened focus on changing the root causes of health inequities and holding ourselves and our grantees accountable to using a health equity framework as opposed to a cultural competency framework.

Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures.

Health Equity Frame goes a step further to take steps to improve access to the conditions and resources that strongly influence health.

What is an example of the health equity focus in action?

Issue: During the 2009–10 influenza season, non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics had lower vaccination rates than whites (CDC Fact Sheet).

Health Disparity Focus: Translate educational material into Spanish; use community health workers to educate; targeted media campaign

Health Equity Focus: All of the above AND vaccination clinics where black and Hispanic residents work, live and socialize; focus groups asking about barriers and then directly addressing those barriers

What is the foundation doing to promote health equity?

- 1) Supporting health equity and inclusion transformation in MetroWest organizations;
- 2) Training the region's health and social service workforce to meet diversity, equity and inclusion needs;
- 3) Increasing the diversity pipeline of future leaders in the health and social sectors.

What are the specific programming and funding opportunities?

Convening: The Racial and Ethnic Disparities Workgroup brings together leaders in community agencies monthly to share ideas, challenges and lessons learned.

Training & Technical Assistance: Workshops are open to all MetroWest agency staff and volunteers- topics include: interpersonal racism; health equity in MetroWest; and changing demographics of MetroWest. In addition, the foundation continuously updates its online library of resources and tools that agencies can use to address issues of health equity.

Funding: Grant support to agencies seeking to promote equity within their organizations with a focus on recruitment and retention of staff of color and staff who speak multiple languages, as well as building awareness and leadership.

Policy and Advocacy: Equity Matters blog is published six times a year highlighting equity issues and work. Data on specific issues related to equity is published for the region. Advocacy around specific equity related issues is conducted as they emerge. Past examples include support to facilitate an accurate 2020 Census count; support to challenge and mitigate the impact of the Public Charge rule on immigrants in the region; and support for communities most affected by the health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

How do I get involved?

There are many ways to engage with the foundation around our health equity work including:

- Attend the Racial and Ethnic Disparities Workgroup: Meetings are on the third Monday of the month-contact Rebecca Gallo (rgallo@mwhealth.org) for more information.
- Attend a workshop: Announcements for upcoming workshops will be posted on our website when available.
- Sign-up to receive the Equity Matters blog on our website (www.mwhealth.org).
- Apply for a health equity grant: Requests for proposals are issued in the fall and spring each year.
- Contact us with ideas, thoughts or questions at 508-879-7625 or rgallo@mwhealth.org.