

Health equity remains at the core of all the foundation's work. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect health in ways that reinforce health inequities. There are multiple issues that are driven by and impacted by systemic inequity. These include rising costs of housing and other basic needs; long waits for behavioral health services especially for providers who speak multiple languages; and inequities in rates of illness and disease.

The foundation is committed to continuing to work with a wide range of community partners to create more equitable systems in the MetroWest region.

This progress report details the health equity work of the foundation from January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022. More information on current work and publications can be found at <https://mwhealth.org/strategic-investments/health-equity>.

## GRANTMAKING

The foundation awarded grants in the spring and fall of 2022 through competitive grant rounds that addressed issues that directly impact equity. These included organizational capacity building, community engagement and public health infrastructure grants. The total directly granted for this work was **\$508,284**.

### Community & Organizational Capacity Building

- **Gaining Ground:** Healthy Recipe Translation
- **Jewish Family Service of MetroWest:** Bi-lingual Caseworker for Framingham Public Schools Welcome Center Resource Room
- **Wayside Youth and Family Support Network:** Health Equity Training Series and Strategic Planning Process

### Targeted Community Programming

- **Advocates:** Increase Access to Behavioral Healthcare for Spanish Speaking Individuals and Families
- **Chica Project:** Strengthening the Mental Health of Latinx and Other Young Women of Color in the Framingham Public Schools
- **Health Care for All:** COVID-19 Vaccination Engagement Program
- **MetroWest Nonprofit Network:** Voices of the Community
- **MetroWest Legal Services:** Afghan Refugee Legal Assistance
- **MetroWest Legal Services:** MassHealth Redetermination Project

## CONVENING

The Racial and Ethnic Disparities Workgroup (established in 2005) met monthly throughout the year. Meetings continue to be held virtually based on group preference. There are representatives from a wide range of nonprofit and municipal agencies at each meeting.

The Workgroup serves as a community of practice for professionals to discuss their work related to equity, including best practices and challenges. The Workgroup has also developed specific content, such as an Event Accessibility Checklist that will be included in foundation publications. Group members have also served as advisors to the foundation through sharing insights about how the foundation can be a helpful partner in promoting health equity in the region. Regina Marshall, Chief Operating Officer at Advocates and former foundation Board member is the Chair of the Workgroup.

## TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### *Publications and Data with an Equity Lens:*

- **COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Dashboard:** Weekly updates to data on vaccine uptake by community, age and other demographics.
- **MetroWest Housing Data Report:** In-depth data and analysis of housing availability and affordability in the region.
- **MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey:** Survey of all middle and high school youth attending public schools in the region. Administered every two years, it asks youth about a wide range of risk behaviors and health.
- **Building Inclusive Communities: Health Equity Guidebook:** Updated this year, this publication offers common language and understanding of health equity, highlights regional data and organizational examples and provides links to multiple tools and resources.

### *Workshops:*

- **Wayside Equity Center: Organizational Equity 101 Training Series:** 12-session series on organizational equity planning and implementation offered to community agencies and municipalities in the region. Monthly workshops began in September 2022 and will run until May 2023. This is the second year the workshop has been offered.
- **Wayside Equity Training Center: Intensive Equity Planning Cohort:** In response to an expressed need by those who attended Equity 101 workshops last year, Guimel DeCarvalho from Wayside is leading a small cohort of agency leaders through developing and implementing organizational equity plans.
- **Racism as a Public Health Issue:** Led by Dr. Ada Amobi from JSI, this was the third session in a series for municipal public health leaders and their partners. Dr. Amobi offered examples from across the country of health equity work within local health departments. The series began last year in response to an expressed need from local public health directors on how to take action beyond declaring that racism is a public health issue.

## **POLICY & ADVOCACY**

***Equity Matters Blog:*** The foundation has published 5 issues of *Equity Matters*, a blog focused on relevant issues of health equity in the community. Topics were as follows:

- How Gender Inequity Impacts Us All
- Climate Equity is Health Equity
- Dobbs Supreme Court Decision and Health Equity
- Politics, Healthcare and Inequity-Part 1: Women's Reproductive Rights
- Politics, Healthcare and Inequity-Part 2: Healthcare and Transgender Youth

### ***Framingham Together***

The foundation is an active participant in Framingham Together, a collective of stakeholders and community partners committed to actively engaging in rooting out the causes of racism at the individual, institutional and systemic levels of organizations and community. The collective meets monthly and is led by Reverend J. Anthony Llyod of the Greater Framingham Community Church. For more information go to [www.framinghamtogether.org](http://www.framinghamtogether.org).

## **WORKFORCE**

Working with partners to create a pipeline of talented professionals and leaders who are representative of the population of MetroWest has been a longstanding part of the foundation's mission.

### ***Scholarship Program***

The program provides scholarships for MetroWest residents pursuing degrees in nursing, social work, psychology, medicine and any other related medical/clinical field. This year the maximum scholarship amount was increased from \$2,000 per year to \$4,000 per year. Outreach is conducted through multiple channels with the goal of attracting diverse candidates from across the region. The foundation awarded 60 scholarships this year. Forty-two percent (42%) of recipients are people of color. Recipients are also fluent in at least 14 languages other than English.

### ***Internship Program***

The program provides up to \$7,500 to nonprofit and municipal agencies to directly pay graduate-level interns. Interns must be working in a clinical capacity or to directly improve community health. The goals are to increase the capacity of agencies; introduce students to MetroWest agencies and municipalities with the hope they will continue to work in the region; and to increase the diversity of interns in the region. The foundation funded 28 interns at 11 agencies this year.

The foundation is interested in feedback from the communities we serve. If you have any ideas, questions or comments, please reach out to Rebecca Gallo, Senior Program Officer at [rgallo@mwhealth.org](mailto:rgallo@mwhealth.org) or 508-879-7625.