

July 13, 2022

MASSACHUSETTS
HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION



Health Equity Framework Implementation Update

July 13, 2022

The HPC's Commitment to Health Equity



Eliminating health inequities is integral to achieving the HPC's mission.

*The HPC's mission is to advance a more transparent, accountable, and **equitable** health care system through its independent policy leadership and innovative investment programs. The HPC's overall goal is better health and better care – at a lower cost – **for all residents** across the Commonwealth*

The HPC's statute states that the agency should seek to address health care disparities through its work:

*The commission shall establish goals that are intended to **reduce health care disparities** in racial, ethnic and disabled communities and in doing so shall seek to incorporate the recommendations of the health disparities council and the office of health equity.*

To reflect the HPC's commitment to advance health equity and promote social and economic justice throughout its work, the HPC has proposed an action plan **to ensure that health equity is a core component of the HPC's work today and going forward.**

Progress Towards Embedding Health Equity into HPC Internal Processes



Launched an “**Equity in Every Project**” tool to identify specific opportunities to address health equity in external-facing care delivery transformation workstreams.



Formed a dedicated **health equity implementation workstream** with an accountable leader to support equity-focused initiatives, and hold regular meetings to measure progress.



Created a **health equity metric** for all ongoing and planned projects to ensure that a majority have a health equity component.



Regularly **review and incorporate literature** on the impacts of health care market changes on access and affordability for certain patient groups, especially when data resources are limited.



Stay up-to-date on equity themes and best practices by **reviewing health equity-focused articles** and other resources, and compiling them into a designated library for internal use.

The HPC employs its four core strategies to advance health equity.



WATCHDOG

Monitor and intervene when necessary to assure market performance

CONVENE

Bring together stakeholder community to influence their actions on a topic or problem



RESEARCH AND REPORT

Investigate, analyze, and report trends and insights

PARTNER

Engage with individuals, groups, and organizations to achieve mutual goals

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Implementation Activities: Research and Report



- Infrastructure building around health equity, including **developing and testing multiple algorithms** to identify people with disabilities in claims data sets and **examining race/ethnicity data** through CHIA's hospital inpatient database.
- Updating **Annual Cost Trends Report** to focus on equity:
 - Examining changes in ambulatory care by community income and geography
 - Expanded affordability section
 - Added an equity-focused health disparities dashboard
- **Publish reports** with equity focus:
 - Entries in the HPC's DataPoints series analyzing inequities in pregnancy-related care and oral health care, increasing health care unaffordability, and access to urgent care/retail clinics
 - Chartpack on Certified Nurse Midwives and Maternity Care
 - Legislative reports on the state of the health care workforce; telehealth; and health disparities in the Commonwealth

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Implementation Activities: Partner



- Implementation of **Birth Equity and Support through the Inclusion of Doula Expertise (BESIDE) Investment Program** and **Moving Massachusetts Upstream (MassUP) Investment Program**, both focusing on health equity.
- Issued and implemented a new set of **certification standards for Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs)** focused on “Learning, Equity, and Patient-centeredness” (LEAP).
- Extended collaboration with **Department of Public Health** and **Perinatal-Neonatal Quality Improvement Network of Massachusetts (PNQIN)**:
 - Apply State Opioid Response funding to projects aimed at identifying inequities in access to care for substance use disorder
 - Engage patients/families with lived experience in hospitals’ perinatal quality improvement efforts
- Participation in EOHHS’s **Health Equity Technical Advisory Group** to advise on how to capture relevant metrics in data and improve the ability to understand health equity.

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Implementation Activities: Convene



- Continue to utilize the **Annual Cost Trends Hearings** as an opportunity to bring increased focus and attention to health equity.
- Update and maintain **health equity webpage** with equity-focused work and implementation strategies.
- Update and maintain ***Health Equity Practice and Style Guide***, an internal reference tool that includes general guidance, specific recommendations, and useful resources.
- Center health equity as a theme in the ***HPC's Transforming Care* email newsletter.**
- Develop principles and practices for **embedding equity into stakeholder engagement work.**

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Implementation Activities: Watchdog



- Incorporate patient characteristics (e.g., race, income) into the **review of proposed market changes**, including the HPC's comment on Mass General Brigham's proposed expansions and HPC analysis of the acquisition of Harrington Hospital by UMass Memorial Health Care.
- Examine various **health-system factors that can drive disparities in health outcomes** for different populations, to be included in forthcoming legislative report on health disparities.
- The **Office of Patient Protection** continues to monitor **trends in consumer issues** through a health equity lens and aims to address each inquiry, waiver, and external review in a fair and consistent manner.

Looking Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

As part of its commitment to advance health equity and promote social and economic justice throughout its work, the HPC recognizes the need to continually examine how this work is being done and where improvements can be made.

1

QUALITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA

A core persisting challenge is the **lack of consistent, reliable collection of patient-level data** on race, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity, namely within the All Payer Claims Database (APCD). The HPC recognizes the need for a **broad, multi-stakeholder approach** to resolving this problem at the state level, and the HPC's unique role in advancing these conversations.

2

DEFINING A STRATEGIC APPROACH

As the HPC continues to think and learn broadly about how to advance health equity goals, there is also advantage in **defining a set of specific health equity priority areas or targets** to bring a more concentrated focus to health equity, which could translate into more tangible results over time.

3

LEVERAGING HPC TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Exploring and leveraging the **tools that the HPC specifically possesses** in order to affect change and identifying **where the HPC can support the work of other organizations** already engaging in meaningful and impactful work.