

July 12, 2023

MASSACHUSETTS
HEALTH POLICY COMMISSION



HPC Health Equity Annual Update

July 12, 2023



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.*

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.

Progress Towards Embedding Health Equity into HPC Internal Processes



Integrate health equity principles into operations and workstreams to ensure that an **“equity in everything”** approach is applied to all current and future projects.



Actively seek opportunities to **align, partner, and support** other state agencies, the health care system, and other organizations toward **common health equity goals**.



Explicitly build equity into the **design of measurement and evaluation plans** for investment programs, e.g., equity-focused patient experience data collection.



Hold regular **journal and book clubs** to stay up-to-date on equity themes and best practices and increase team fluency of health equity concepts.



Continually review and update the **HPC Health Equity Practice and Style Guide** to promote intentional and consistent use of language and terminology across all agency work products.

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



- Integrating the best available **data on race and ethnicity** (or proxy data when quality race/ethnicity data is not available) into all research and data analyses.
- Continuing to highlight issues of equity in the **Annual Health Care Cost Trends Report:**
 - Affordability section focused on small-firm employees
 - Chartpack incorporating data on community income and race and ethnicity
 - Dashboard measuring performance on health equity, including metrics of affordability, access, and disparities by income and race/ethnicity
- **Release publications** with a focus on health equity:
 - DataPoints issues on [Oral Health Access and Equity in the Commonwealth](#) and [Persistent Cost-sharing for Contraception](#)
 - Report on [Telehealth Use in the Commonwealth](#)
 - Chartpack on [Health Care Workforce Trends and Challenges in the Era of COVID-19](#)

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Implementation Activities: Partner



- Deepened focus on maternal health equity through participation in **DPH's Maternal Health Task Force** and an interagency **doula workgroup**.
- Advanced **certification standards for Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs)** focused on “Learning, Equity, and Patient-centeredness” (LEAP) for 2024 by requiring ACOs report on three key areas: data collection and use, patient engagement, and strategy.
- Continued implementation of **innovative, health equity-focused investment programs** that integrate racial equity principles (BESIDE, C4SEN, and MassUP programs).
- Extended partnership with DPH to administer funding from the **State's Opioid Response** in support of projects aimed at **addressing inequities in access to medication for opioid use disorder** for birthing people with OUD.
- Continued participation in EOHHS's **Health Equity Technical Advisory Group** to advise on specific standards for providers and plans to collect patient demographic data.

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Implementation Activities: Convene

- Appointed new members to the **HPC Advisory Council** for the 2023 – 2024 term, prioritizing broadening and diversifying membership of this body to encompass more perspectives and experiences within the health care system.
- Convene HPC investment program awardees to **elevate equity topics**, e.g., a **Patient Experience Committee** of Black doulas and Black birthing people to advise on key themes and evaluation design of the BESIDE program.
- Host **ad hoc special events and support other organizations and agencies** with events and webinars, e.g., the HPC's Building a Robust Health Care Workforce event and the Health Equity Compact's inaugural Equity Trends Summit.
- Continue to highlight issues related to health equity at public meetings, including utilizing the **Annual Health Care Cost Trends Hearings** as an opportunity to bring increased attention and transparency to health equity.

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Implementation Activities: Watchdog

- Include recognition and assessment of an entity's baseline position in the market and historic trends **during the annual performance improvement plan (PIP) process**. Consider whether spending increases reflect necessary investments to enhance services for underserved populations.
- Examine various **health-system factors that can drive disparities in health outcomes** for different populations, to be included in forthcoming report to the Legislature on health disparities.
- Incorporate patient characteristics (e.g., race, income) and impacts on access and equity into the **review of proposed market changes**.
- The **Office of Patient Protection** monitors **trends in consumer issues**, looking out for disparities between different patient populations and escalating any concerning trends to the Division of Insurance.

Looking Ahead



1 WORK IN THE PIPELINE

The HPC has several equity-focused projects that will be released in the next year. These include:

- A report on **Supply, Access, and Affordability: How Health System Factors Perpetuate Disparities** (expected fall 2023);
- The **5-year retrospective Cost and Market Impact Review on the Beth Israel Lahey Merger** (expected in 2024); and
- A new project exploring spending and outcomes for **pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum care** with a particular focus on lower-income populations and populations of color (in planning phase).

2 CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY

The HPC will continue to provide updates on how **health equity principles are integrated into operations and workstreams**. This includes keeping current the [HPC's website](#) with information on projects and resources, holding public discussions during HPC Board and Advisory Council meetings and hearings, and keeping the public and stakeholders engaged through communications like the [Transforming Care newsletter](#).

3 COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

The HPC actively seeks opportunities to **align, partner, and support** other state agencies, the health care system, and other organizations toward **common health equity goals**.

The Health Equity Compact's Equity Trends Summit: June 13, 2023



The Health Equity Compact comprises over **70 leaders of color** across a diverse set of Massachusetts organizations – including hospitals, health centers, payers, academic institutions and public health – who have come together to advance health equity in Massachusetts.

The Compact's bill, ***An Act to Advance Health Equity*** (H.1250 and S.799), is currently under consideration by the Massachusetts legislature.

- The inaugural summit highlighted **disparities in health, health care, and patient outcomes** in Massachusetts, including a new report released in partnership with the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation: [*The Time is Now: The \\$5.9 Billion Case for Massachusetts Health Equity Reform*](#).
- Panels convened leaders from the **health care industry, businesses, state agencies, legislators, and other sectors** to discuss and make public commitments on how they will address health equity in the Commonwealth.
- Key Themes and Takeaways:
 - Creating a collaborative, coordinated approach to advance health equity for all residents of the Commonwealth is a **shared responsibility**.
 - The importance of **engaging directly with communities, including non-traditional health care partners**, to identify disparities, address social determinants of health, and improve care delivery.
 - The importance of **improving data collection standards** to better reflect racial, socioeconomic, and other disparities in health outcomes between communities.