The Bureau of Health Equity Learning Event Series

Caribbean American Health



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of Public Health

Partnership for Healthy Communities
A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

CACCNE
CARIBBEAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE NORTHEAST

MEET THE SPEAKER

Lexi Whilby

Lexi Whilby is a Senior Account Executive at a language services company and a dedicated community leader. Outside of her professional role, she volunteers as the President of the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce of the Northeast (CACCNE), where she leads initiatives that support Caribbean businesses and strengthen community partnerships. The Chamber's membership includes health care executives, providers, and professionals who collaborate to expand access to resources, promote health equity, and improve outcomes for underserved communities.



Overview

01 Delaware's Caribbean and Haitian Communities

02 Hypertension, Pregnancy and Caribbean Women

03 Barriers, Gaps, and Accessibility

04 Resources and Actionable Next Steps



Understanding the Community We Serve

12,000+

Delaware residents report West Indian ancestry

5,500+

Haitian residents represented in Delaware's ancestry data

3.54%

of Delaware's non-English languages are Haitian Creole

Delaware's Caribbean community is diverse, with Haitian, Jamaican, Trinidadian, and Tobagonian, Guyanese, Barbadian, and other Caribbean communities represented across the state.

U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey; Delaware Office of New Americans, 2024.

High Blood Pressure: A Critical Health Concern for Women

45.7%

of U.S. women have high blood pressure or take blood-pressure medication

22.8%

of women with high blood pressure have it under control

~60%

Black women are more likely to have high blood pressure than white women

For Black women — including women within Delaware's Caribbean and Haitian communities — awareness, prevention, regular screening, and blood-pressure management are important components of heart health.

U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey; Delaware Office of New Americans, 2024.

What is High Blood Pressure?

Hypertension

- The force of blood against artery walls remains too high over time.
- Often has no obvious symptoms.
- Uncontrolled hypertension raises the risk of heart disease, stroke and other complications.
- Regular screening is essential for early identification.

Delaware Snapshot

- 36.2% of adults reported diagnosed hypertension (2021)
  - 34.9% of women
  - 42.5% of non-Hispanic Black adults
- Prevalence rises as income decreases.



Discussion Question: What prevents women in our communities from knowing their numbers and acting on them early?

Delaware Division of Public Health. (n.d.). Hypertension BRFS data update. Delaware Health and Social Services.

Why Focus on Caribbean Women?

Caribbean women are not one homogeneous population.

- Country and island of origin
- Race and ethnicity
- Language and immigration experience
- Income and insurance status
- Education and health literacy

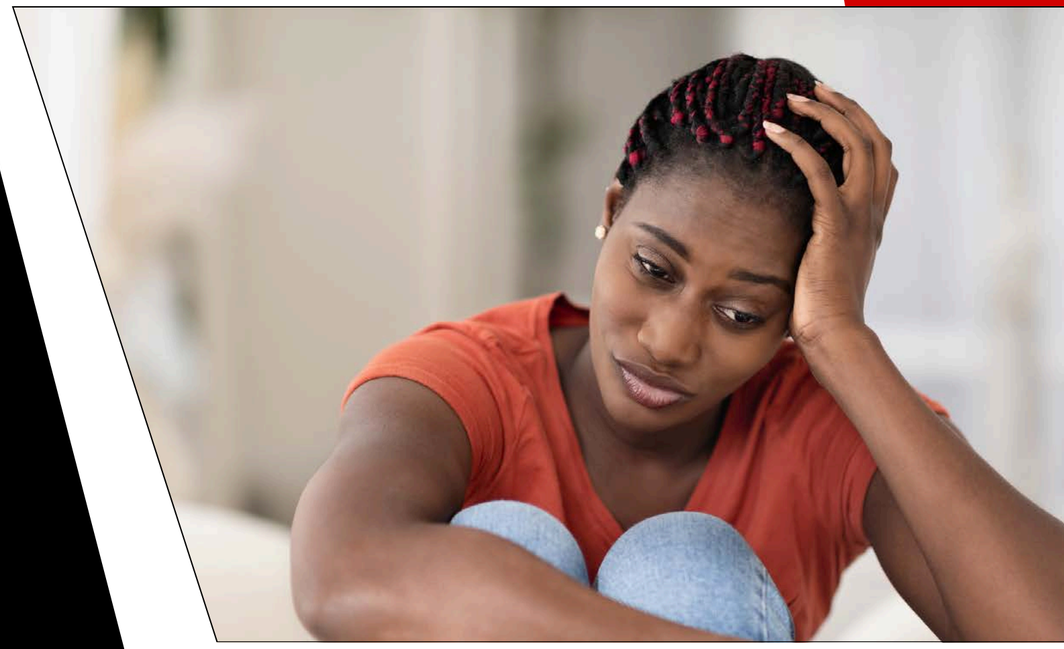
- Cultural beliefs surrounding food, pregnancy and illness
- Trust in health care institutions
- Access to culturally responsive providers
- Different social and economic conditions

Equity means recognizing those differences instead of expecting one health care approach to work for everyone.

High Blood Pressure Is More Than an Individual Choice

A woman's blood pressure does not exist separately from her environment.

- Discrimination and structural inequities
- Economic opportunity
- Neighborhood conditions
- Food access
- Health care access
- Chronic stress
- Health outcomes



High Blood Pressure Is More Than an Individual Choice

Current Barriers:



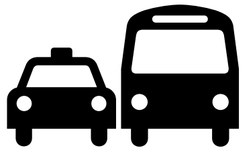
Cost



Insurance



Childcare



Transporation



Work Schedules



Language



Provider access



Trust



Immigration Concerns

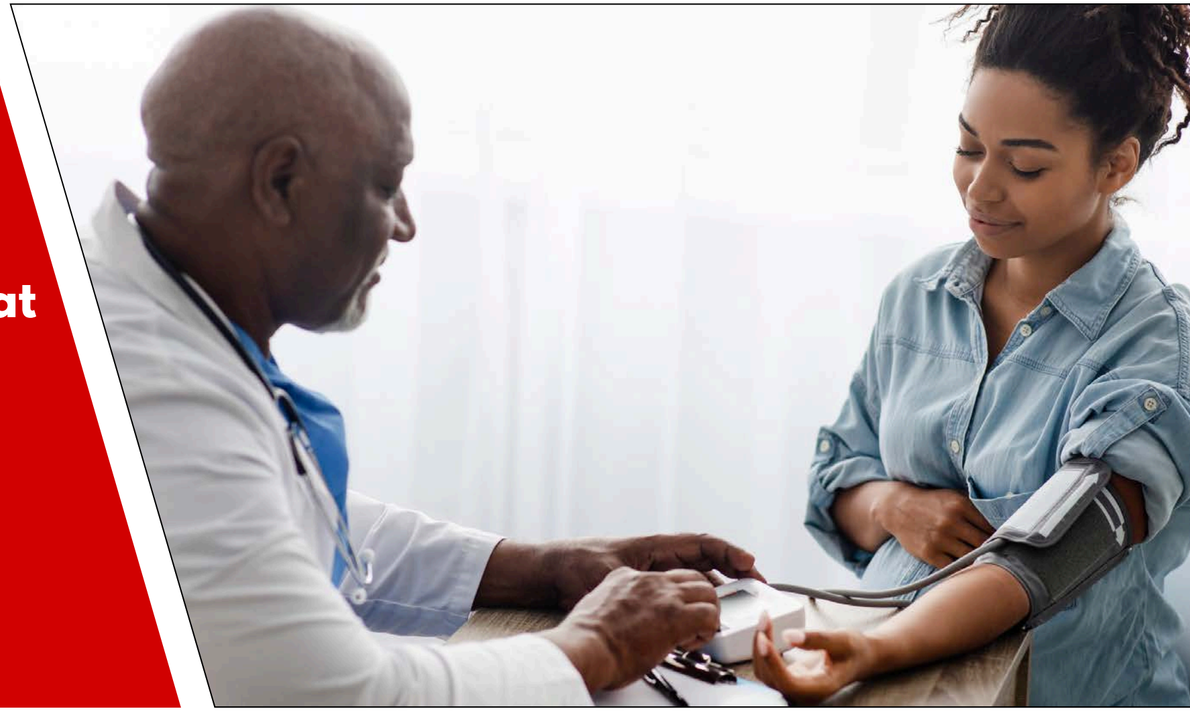


Health Literacy

Question: Are we treating hypertension or addressing the conditions contributing to hypertension?

Pregnancy Changes the Conversation

- **Chronic hypertension: High blood pressure that predates pregnancy or is present early in pregnancy.**
- **Gestational hypertension: High blood pressure that develops during pregnancy and requires monitoring.**
- **Preeclampsia: A pregnancy-related hypertensive disorder requiring timely recognition and care.**



Equity Question: Can every pregnant woman recognize a potential problem, communicate with her provider, access appropriate prenatal care and receive timely follow-up?

Pregnancy Doesn’t End the Risk

Preconception → Pregnancy → Delivery → Postpartum → Long-term cardiovascular health

- Blood-pressure monitoring and follow-up
- Clear discharge instructions
- Medication education
- Connection to primary care
- Mental-health support
- Nutrition and social support
- Information in the language understood best



Question: Who makes sure a woman doesn’t disappear from the health care system after delivery?

Language Access Is Health Access



“Your blood pressure is dangerously elevated.”

Imagine receiving medication, preeclampsia or postpartum instructions in a language in which you are not fully comfortable.

Understanding → Trust → Consent → Medication use → Follow-up → Outcomes

Delaware programs already offer some Haitian Creole materials.

- **The equity question is whether access is consistent across the entire health care experience.**



Beyond Translation: Cultural Understanding

Translation alone ≠ culturally responsive care.

- **Qualified interpreters:** Haitian Creole language access
- **Plain language:** Clear, actionable health information
- **Visual education:** Make blood-pressure concepts easier to understand
- **Community health workers:** Bridge health care and community
- **Trusted partners:** Haitian organizations, faith and community groups
- **Provider training:** Culturally responsive communication

Question: Should language access be treated as an optional accommodation or a patient-safety issue?

Health Literacy + Mental Wellness + Hypertension

A woman may be managing all of these at the same time:

Stress + Family responsibilities + Financial pressure + Pregnancy + Immigration adjustment + Work + Mental wellness + Chronic illness

- Understanding blood pressure numbers
- Monitoring blood pressure at home
- Reading food labels
- Reducing sodium
- Taking medications correctly
- Scheduling follow-up appointments
- Recognizing warning signs

Low health literacy should not be interpreted as lack of interest.
Systems should make healthy decisions understandable and achievable.



Who Has a Role in the Solution?

Community Members

- Know your numbers
- Share trusted information
- Get screened

Community and Faith Organizations

- Host screenings
- Educate
- Build trust

Health Care Providers

- Screen early
- Listen
- Interpret
- Address social needs

Hospitals and Health Systems

- Standardize language access
- Track disparities

Community Health Workers

- Navigate services
- Reinforce education

Schools and Universities

- Educate
- Research
- Train

Government and Policymakers

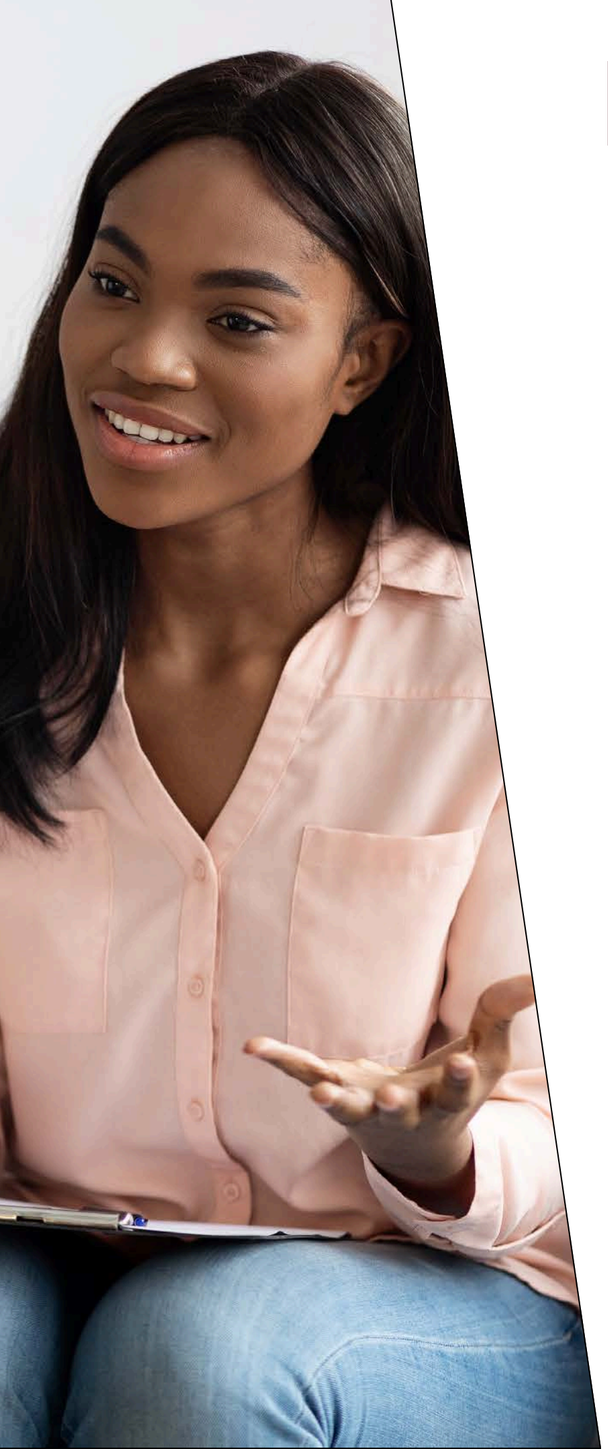
- Fund prevention
- Improve access
- Measure outcomes

Health equity is a shared responsibility — not one organization's project.



What's Already Available in Delaware?

- **Healthy Women, Healthy Babies**
  - Prenatal and high-risk pregnancy support and postpartum services
  - dethrives.com/programs/healthy-women-healthy-babies
- **Delaware Health and Social Services: Bureau of Health Equity**
  - Comprised of the Office of Minority Health and the Office of Women's Health
  - Statewide disparities and social-determinants work
  - dhss.delaware.gov/dph/homepage/about/sections/health-equity/
- **Healthy Delaware**
  - Chronic disease self-management resources
  - www.healthydelaware.org
- **Delaware's Health Care Connection**
  - Primary and specialty care connections and high-risk case management
  - https://www.beebehealthcare.org/patients-visitors/financial-assistance/delawares-health-care-connection
- **Delaware Health and Social Services: Community Health Centers**
  - Care for insured, underinsured and uninsured Delawareans
  - dhss.delaware.gov/dph/homepage/about/sections/community-health/chsservicecenters/



Delaware Organizations

- **Tabitha Medical Care**
  - Provides integrated primary care and behavioral health services to individuals and families
  - https://www.tabithamedicalcare.com

- **Agency Counseling & Wellness, LLC**
  - Provides culturally responsive virtual mental health counseling, including individual therapy, therapy for introverts and Caribbean communities, consulting, and immigration assessments
  - https://www.agcywell.com/

- **Premiere Glow Medical Spa**
  - Offers personalized wellness services, such as IV hydration and medical weight management
  - https://www.premiereglowde.com/meettheteam

- **Black Mothers in Power**
  - Supports Black mothers and families through maternal health education, doula resources, community programs, postpartum support, and advocacy to reduce birth disparities
  - https://www.blackmothersinpower.org/

- **Firm Foundation Health and Wellness Center**
  - Provides holistic, integrated primary and mental health care, including chronic disease management, counseling, preventive services, medical exams, and minor procedures
  - https://firmfoundation-health.com/index.html

- **Holistic Harmony Inc.**
  - Provides whole-person mental health and wellness support through counseling, addiction treatment, primary care, medication management, coaching, yoga, meditation, and other holistic services
  - https://www.hhincc.com/

- **MyCare Medical Associates**
  - Provides comprehensive primary and behavioral health care, including preventive and chronic disease management, obesity/weight management, mental health services, opioid use disorder treatment, and telehealth
  - https://www.mycaremedclinic.com/

Where are the Gaps? »»

- Enough Haitian Creole-speaking professionals and interpreters
- Hypertension materials consistently available in Haitian Creole
- Caribbean women reached before hypertension becomes an emergency
- Pregnancy care seamlessly connected to postpartum and primary care
- Community organizations adequately funded for prevention work
- Detailed demographic and language-preference data collected
- Smaller Caribbean populations hidden by broad data categories
- Trusted Caribbean organizations involved in program design



Question: What gap do you see from where you sit?

Move Health Care Into Trusted Spaces

- Instead of always asking the community to come to health care…

Bring Health Care to the Community!



- **Where?**
  - Churches
  - Caribbean organizations
  - Haitian organizations
  - Festivals
  - Schools
  - Beauty salons
  - Community centers
- **What this can look like:** Free Blood Pressure Check → Education → Referral → Follow-up
- **A blood-pressure screening alone isn't enough.**
  - Screen → Explain → Connect → Follow Up

What Collaboration Could Look Like

State Agencies
- Data
- Resources
- Coordination

Community Organizations
- Trust
- Cultural knowledge
- Outreach

Health Care Systems
- Clinical expertise
- Referrals

Women with Lived Experiences
- Program design
- Accountability

Community Health Workers
- Navigation
- Education
- Follow-up

Universities
- Research
- Evaluation
- Workforce

Insurers and Businesses
- Funding
- Prevention incentives

Share knowledge. Share training. Share data. Share funding.

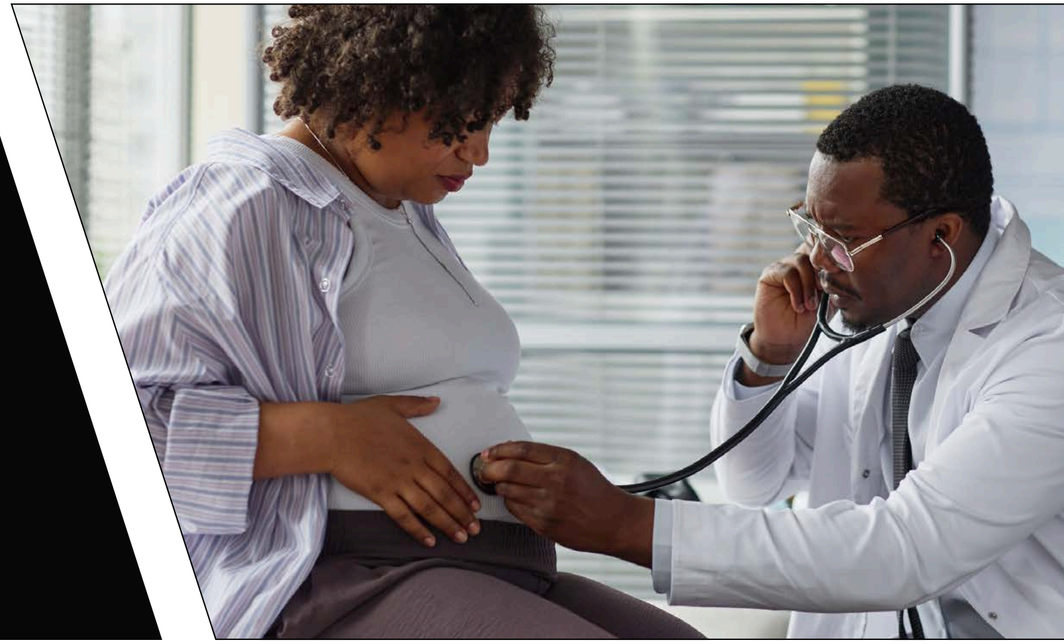
From Conversation to Action

1. Expand blood pressure screenings in trusted Caribbean spaces.
2. Create culturally appropriate English and Haitian Creole hypertension/pregnancy education.
3. Strengthen referral pathways from community screenings to providers.
4. Train and support Caribbean and Haitian community health workers.
5. Improve postpartum hypertension follow-up.
6. Develop shared funding across health systems, government and community organizations.
7. Include Caribbean women themselves in designing solutions.

Equity begins when the people most affected help design the solution.

Closing Discussion

What would it take for every Caribbean woman in Delaware to have an equal opportunity for a healthy heart, a healthy pregnancy and a healthy future?



Know your numbers. Know you community. Remove the barriers.

Thank you for joining!
Time for Q & A

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