

At-A-Glance: Public Health and Social Justice

Shared Outcomes in Equity: How Working Cross-Sector with Public Health can Promote Social Justice

Health is, in fact, a human right. Many sectors, including housing, transportation, community development, and education, are grappling with pervasive inequities in their respective fields that have been shaped by structural oppression (Hofrichter, 2017). Likewise, we are beginning to understand the major role that inequities play in shaping our health. For example, compelling research indicates that rates of violence correlate with social injustices, and therefore health inequities, throughout populations (Hofrichter, 2017).

Many of these health inequities are shaped by the social determinants of health (SDOH), including factors such as neighborhood and built environments, health care access and quality, social/community contexts, education access and quality, and economic stability (HP2030, 2020). Researchers believe social determinants drive more than 80 percent of health outcomes (Manatt, 2019). Consequently, the places where we live, learn, work, play and pray can have a critical impact on our public health, which makes our recognition of these linkages an imperative.

Strategies



When confronting this crisis, all practitioners must understand that social justice shapes public health (Beauchamp, 1976). Scholars assert that under social justice all persons are entitled equally to key ends such as health protection (Beauchamp, 1976). As recommended in Delaware's State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP), a "Health in All Policies (HiAP)" approach protects social justice by assimilating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas (Delaware SHIP Report, 2020). A HiAP includes 5 key action-oriented elements: (1) promote health, equity, & sustainability, (2) support intersectoral collaboration, (3) benefit multiple partners, (4) engage stakeholders, and (5) create structural or procedural change (Rudolph et al., 2013). In order to prevent social injustices, we must target the SDOH by collaborating across sectors to promote healthy, equitable and just policies using a HiAP approach.

The HiAP approach is fundamentally about good governance, which includes the ability to collaborate across sectors (ChangeLabSolutions, 2020). Public and private agencies and community-based groups can create meaningful partnerships with public health departments, as they build community power to cultivate the conditions that allow communities to thrive (Harris, 2020). The Delaware SHIP has copious examples of stakeholders cultivating partnerships across several sectors (Delaware SHIP Report, 2020). Examining policies that have the potential to decrease social injustices can increase the effectiveness of all partnerships as well.

The HiAP approach to public health is evidently rewarding for both public health and non-public health sectors. A HiAP approach is feasible, vitally important, and will improve our community's understanding of social justice and public health while facilitating our ability to achieve optimal health for all Delawareans (Delaware SHIP Report, 2020).



Call to action

Adopting the HiAP approach is required now more than ever. Stakeholder groups can learn more and get involved by reaching out to the [Bureau of Health Equity at the Delaware Division of Public Health](#), connecting with local experts at the [University of Delaware's Master of Public Health program and Biden School of Public Policy](#), working with the [Delaware affiliate for the American Public Health Association](#), or contacting [Delaware SHIP](#) to identify potential stakeholder groups for cross-sector collaboration. Stakeholders can also learn more about successful HiAP efforts in Delaware such as the [Delaware Plan4Health](#). By utilizing the aforementioned recommendations, we may join together as one community in order to take action against social injustice.

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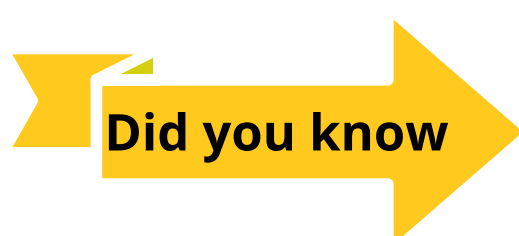
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Did you know

Major public health achievements during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a result of collaborations with social reform movements. Public health partnerships with labor, women's rights organizations, child labor activists, housing advocates, and other social reformers helped improve health consequences of living and working conditions.

Source: National Association of County & City Health Officials. Expanding the Boundaries: Health Equity and Public Health Practice. 2014.

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Prepared by Jennifer Conklin with the Center for the Study and Prevention of Gender-Based Violence at the University of Delaware for the Delaware State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) process managed by the Partnership for Health Communities at the University of Delaware in collaboration with the Division of Public Health, Delaware Department of Health and Social Services

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