

At-A-Glance: Public Health and Social Justice

Cross-Sector Collaboration for Healthy, Equitable Policy

In Wilmington, Delaware, residents with a higher poverty rate and less education have a life expectancy of 12.9 years less than their counterpart (McDonough, 2018). Life expectancy should not differ so drastically for different communities who live in the same city. Such communities have been subject to social inequities that are perpetuated by harmful policies or the lack of preventative policies to create an equitable environment. This inequity directly affects the well-being of a large number of people (Knight & Codes-Johnson, 2019). Discrimination exists in the basic pillars of their lives such as education, housing, employment, and transportation, and communities made vulnerable by these conditions also experience greater amounts of violence (HP2030, 2020). Poverty and discrimination (i.e racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia) require the same urgency as our response to injury and disease, as both powerfully affect the health of communities and constitute public health issues.

Strategies



"Health in All Policies" (HiAP) is an approach that promotes collaboration across sectors in order to improve the health of all people (Hall et al., 2018; Beauchamp, 1976). A HiAP approach is also a useful framework for advancing health equity, or social justice in health. HiAP works to form new opportunities to prevent ongoing inequities and encourages communication between government, policy-maker, the community, and businesses to improve public health (Hall et al., 2018; Beauchamp, 1976). Understanding root cause is essential to a HiAP approach in order to improve population health. HiAP's aim is to ensure the decision-maker is fully informed of the positive and negative health consequences of a policy. This approach brings stakeholders and government partners from different disciplines together to inform that decision-making process.



Call to action

Research suggests that, over time, public health practitioners utilizing a HiAP approach as part of a general lens on health can effectively transition their approach to include health equity (Hall & Jacobson, 2018). This transition calls for partners to be selective and strategic. Toward this end, SHIP stakeholders may be best served by building or strengthening relationships in advance with groups and organizations well-versed on health equity and social justice issues, who can help frame benefits of social justice for both health and non-health sectors. SHIP stakeholders can identify potential partners by seeking out civil rights and social justice organizations, some of whom are highlighted as SHIP stakeholders in the [Delaware SHIP 2020 Annual Report](#). Additionally, the [Bureau of Health Equity at the Delaware Division of Public Health](#) offers a list of helpful resources and partnerships. Finally, groups can use tools, such as the, “Health Equity and Social Justice in Public Health: A Dialogue-based Assessment” to gauge their readiness and build further capacity to address social justice and health equity (Bloss et al., 2018).



Did you know

Health inequities are unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society.

Source: Whitehead M. (1992). *The concepts and principles of equity in health*. *International Journal of Health Services*; 76(3), 429-445.

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