



Health Equity Talking Points

WHO WE ARE?

- The Tampa Bay Healthcare Collaborative (TBHC or Collaborative) envisions a community that values health and health services for everyone.
- TBHC is a non-profit organization that works to foster relationships, build organizational capacity and promote access to health and healthcare services.
- The Collaborative is a membership of nearly 150 organizations concerned and impacted by the gaps and limitations of the current healthcare system.
- TBHC members include free clinics, county health departments, advocacy organizations, hospitals, behavioral health organizations and human service organizations working to assist those who cannot effectively access services themselves.
- The Health Equity Committee serves as a resource for health-related organizations by promoting programs and resources that address health inequities among racial, ethnic and underserved populations.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- We know that a healthier America is a stronger America. Yet too many Americans don't have the opportunity to lead a healthy life. As a result they suffer substantially more health problems than others. Some Americans can expect to live 20 years less than others because of where they live, their race, their education or income.
- Although the overall health of Americans has improved, differences in health for racial, ethnic and underserved communities have been persistent and pervasive for years. Where we live, learn, work and play has an enormous impact on our ability to make healthy decisions.
- Reducing these differences in health—known as health disparities—is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do. Poor health influences a student's ability to pay attention in class, a parent's ability to care for their children and a worker's ability to perform well at his job. It also hurts our country's ability to reach its potential and be competitive in the global market.
- Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater social and/or economic obstacles to health and/or a clean environment based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

- Everyone benefits when health disparities are reduced and we achieve health equity for all: health costs are greatly diminished; healthy children can grow into productive adults; and healthy adults boost workforce capacity and capability.
- The face of America is changing; more than half of Americans under age five are of color. By 2044, the majority of Americans will be people of color. As the population grows more diverse and people of color become the majority, equity—just and fair inclusion—has become an urgent economic imperative. (*Source: National Equity Atlas*)
- Eliminating health disparities is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do. One study put the combined cost of health inequalities and premature death at a staggering \$1.24 trillion between 2003 and 2006. National data indicate that by 2018, the total cost of health disparities will be approximately \$337 billion dollars, with \$117 billion incurred by private insurers. (*Source: National Business Group on Health*)
- Poor health impacts a student's ability to pay attention in class and a worker's ability to perform well at his job. It hurts our country's ability to reach its potential and be competitive in the global marketplace.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Achieving health equity requires creating fair opportunities for health and eliminating gaps in health outcomes between different social groups. It also requires that public health professionals look for solutions outside of the health care system, such as in the transportation or housing sectors, to improve the opportunities for health in communities.
- Address social and environmental factors that influence health such as housing, education, workplaces, recreational opportunities and transportation.
- Recognize and work to understand cultural differences. Health care services that are respectful of and responsive to the health beliefs and practices of diverse patients, and that build trust can help bring about positive health outcomes.
- Help increase the number of racially and ethnically diverse health professionals. Health providers who reflect and share similar experiences with the populations they serve can help improve the delivery of culturally competent care.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

- Supporting local, regional and statewide efforts to promote and advance health equity
- Addressing racism, discrimination and bias as key contributing factors of health disparities
- Promoting racial equity and social justice as essential components for achieving health equity
- Increasing understanding of health equity among members and partners
- Advocating for public policies and systems level change to address social determinants of health
- Working to change conditions that shape opportunity to attain good health and adopt healthy behaviors
- Encouraging the completion of cultural and linguistic competency assessment tools
- Raising awareness about the impact of environmental issues, such as climate change and sea level rise and emergency preparedness for vulnerable populations
- Making resources available to better understand health disparities and their root causes through the DVD Loan Share Program
- Focusing on oral health disparities, understanding barriers to accessing care, identifying gaps and leading systems change efforts through the Achieving Oral Health Equity initiative
- Providing training and resources to increase the cultural and linguistic competency of local organizations through the Cultural and Linguistic Competency Initiative