



COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION of New York State

Community Health Centers Advance Health Equity

What is Health Equity and Why is it Important?

- Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their “full health potential” and no one is “disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances.”¹
- Health equity is indispensable to building a future in which all New Yorkers can live full and healthy lives. To achieve health equity, disparities in conditions such as poverty, housing, and discrimination must be addressed.
- Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.
- People who identify as Black or Indigenous, or who live in low-income communities or communities of color have especially experienced disproportionately poor health outcomes due to pervasive structural inequities that have led to gaping health disparities, which have been further exacerbated by COVID-19.
- Everyone benefits when health equity is achieved – communities are healthier, children grow into healthy adults, and healthy adults contribute to society and the economy.

Community Health Centers Advance Health Equity for Patients

- CHCs provide quality primary and preventive care services to all, regardless of ability to pay, insurance coverage, or immigration status. For many New Yorkers, especially those who are uninsured and undocumented, CHCs are their safety net and access point for healthcare services.
- Among CHC patients, 90% are low-income, 68% are people of color (35% Hispanic/Latinx, 26% Black, and 7% other), 13% are uninsured, and 59% are enrolled in Medicaid or Child Health Plus.
- Located in the communities they serve, CHCs are an accessible and inclusive point of healthcare, especially when transportation is a challenge.
- CHCs are a “one-stop shop” for healthcare, providing healthcare services including primary care, dental care, mental health, and substance use, making it easy for patients to access the care they need all in one place.
- Many CHCs connect patients to services to address social needs, understanding that addressing social determinants of health is key to improving health and reducing health disparities.

Community Health Centers Advance Health Equity in Communities

- CHCs are best suited to address health disparities and to achieve health equity because they are trusted by their communities. CHCs are community-run, with over 50% of Board members comprised of patients of the health center.
- CHCs hire staff from the communities they serve. Patients and staff ride the same subway lines, frequent the same grocery stores, and have children who attend school together.
- By hiring staff from their communities, CHCs are providing economic opportunities and building career ladders for community residents. Building career ladders for community residents fosters a workforce likely to stay in the community and address workforce shortages.
- Because CHCs are patient governed, they can identify community health needs and address them.
- Investing in community health centers is investing in communities. CHCs generate much needed economic activity, allowing for the creation of jobs and new businesses, in communities that need it the most.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/healthequity/index.htm>