





Best Practices to Reduce Disparities

Finding Answers: Disparities Research for Change

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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Practice	Rationale	Possible Strategies	Outcome
Collect and stratify race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data in tandem with other equity efforts	REL data is an important part of reducing disparities, but it is not necessary to put all equity efforts on hold until REL data is available.	Use qualitative methods (e.g., surveys, interviews) to identify disparities if quantitative data isn't available. Continue to foster a culture of equity across the organization while REL data collection is in progress.	Disparities efforts are not stalled. The organization is primed to address disparities once REL-stratified data is available.
Foster a culture of equity	Success is more likely if staff recognize that disparities exist within the organization and view inequality as an injustice that must be redressed. 	Share feedback with providers and incentivize disparities reduction. Include equitable health care as a goal in mission statements. Build a work force that reflects the diversity of the patient population. Institute a Community Advisory Board and develop ties with community-based organizations.	Staff, patients, and community members share a definition of equitable care and value equity in health care delivery. 
Appoint staff and protect their time for equity programs and hold them accountable for results	Without staff time and effort, equity programs are unlikely to reach their full potential.	Include equity goals in job descriptions and performance reviews. Prepare for leadership and staff turn over by cross-training staff and documenting institutional knowledge. Identify equity champions to lead the effort. 	Staff is not overtaxed and remains committed to the program over time.
Target multiple levels and players across the care delivery system 	The causes of disparities are complex; solutions need to address multiple factors.	Avoid focusing exclusively on patients - design programs that intervene with providers, organizations, community groups, and policies, as well as patients.	Programs effectively address the multiple causes of disparities. Improvements are systematic and comprehensive.

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Identify and appeal to the equity rationale that is most important to your audience	<p>Staff members are motivated for a variety of reasons:</p> <p>Providers are often concerned with maximizing efficiency during the office visit.</p> <p>Front-line staff may be wary of impacting patient flow and room availability.</p> <p>Leadership may respond well to programs that guarantee a positive return on investment and leverage existing resources.</p>	<p>Leverage staff motivation to support a project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the care team and promote care management outside of the clinic. Minimize burden and show respect for staff time. Present data that demonstrate potential for positive financial impact. 	<p>Buy-in across the organization is secured.</p> <p>The intervention is consistently and accurately implemented by all staff.</p>
Involve members of the target population during program planning	<p>Programs that are not culturally targeted risk rejection by patients.</p> <p>Input by minority health workers is not a proxy for patient involvement.</p>	<p>Involve the target population in program design in a manner that is meaningful and inclusive.</p> <p>Engage patients, not just minority health workers.</p>	<p>Community engagement is advanced.</p> <p>Programs are adaptive and effective.</p>
Strike a balance between adherence and adaptability	<p>While adherence to protocol ensures consistency, flexibility is key when working with diverse patients.</p>	<p>Regularly collect process measures, identify opportunities for improvement, and adapt the intervention accordingly.</p> <p>Use standardized checklists to monitor adherence.</p>	<p>Programs are consistent, yet flexible.</p>
Be realistic about the time necessary to move the dial on disparities	<p>Improvements in minority health take time because of multiple challenges inside and outside the clinic.</p>	<p>Plan long-term follow-up to demonstrate statistically significant improvements in health outcomes.</p>	<p>A realistic timeline manages expectations and maintains ongoing support.</p> 