

# Facilitator Guide: Diagnose Root Causes



## Applying a Root Cause Analysis with an Equity Lens

### Session Description

Time: 90 minutes for the root cause analysis exercise  
30 minutes for introductions, discussion, and reflection

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A Root Cause Analysis (RCA) is often used in quality improvement efforts to understand why undesirable outcomes occur. When done properly, an RCA can help uncover the underlying reasons for those consequences, allowing your team to tailor quality improvement efforts to minimize undesired results.

In this session, participants will work through a root cause analysis exercise through an “equity lens.” An equity lens is a filter that helps identify the issues that contribute to inequities or unjust differences in the quality of care and outcomes. This exercise will be used to identify opportunities to reduce and eliminate health and healthcare inequities.

### Session Goal

By the end of this session, team members will have identified multiple potential root causes of health and healthcare inequities.

### Session Objectives

**Objective 1:** Participants can expect to engage in discussions that will support them in better understanding how and why social drivers of health affect health and healthcare inequities.

**Objective 2:** Participants will explore the essential role of partnering with patients and members in successful root cause analyses, gaining insights into the invaluable knowledge and experience these partnerships offer in overcoming barriers to optimal health outcomes.

**Objective 3:** Participants can expect to gain knowledge of how to best prepare and execute an effective root cause analysis with an equity lens to diagnose existing health and healthcare inequities.

**Objective 4:** Participants should expect their root cause analysis will identify multiple potential root causes of health and healthcare inequities. However, participants will prepare to work through prioritization of the identified root causes.

## Materials/Supplies/Space Needed:

The team will use the supplied Fishbone Diagram template to complete the RCA together.

This exercise can be completed either in person, virtually, or in a hybrid setting. However your team decides to move forward, the AHE team strongly recommends that this exercise be completed with all members of your team present and that all members of the team be able to actively participate.

Teams should plan to meet in a way that allows each team member to synchronously see and contribute to the diagram.

## Pre-Session Preparation Work:

- RCA slide deck presentation
- Please read the Key Inequities handout prior to this exercise.
  - [Pre-Read: Diagnose Root Causes w/ an Equity Lens.09.11.23](#)
- Teams should generate a “problem statement” to guide the work done during this Session
- AHE TA Facilitator should prepare the fishbone diagram in advance on the desired Platform (e.g., jamboard, mural, etc.).

## Session Activities:

The facilitator should provide a detailed description of the session (including timing breakdown)

AHE TA Facilitator should incorporate a 5-10 min break at the halfway point of the overall session (approximately 1 hour into the session)

5 min	AHE TA Facilitator Introduction and culture share
5 min	AHE TA Facilitator will cover the Session Objectives listed above, and introduce team members to the platform through which the exercise will be delivered
5 min	AHE TA Facilitator will introduce the Fishbone Diagram
90 min	Fishbone Diagram Exercise
5 min	Each team member will individually identify 6 main causes in response to the prepared problem statement
5 min	Group similar responses together - led by AHE TA Facilitator
5 min	Each team member will vote for a top 4 main causes
10 min	Discuss results and agree on 6 main causes
15 min	(2 min per “main cause”) Each team member will brainstorm one root cause (the “why”) for each “main cause”
50 min	Review the root causes listed under each “main cause” (spending about 8-10 minutes per each main cause). Discuss/apply 5 whys to each of the root causes to identify additional, more precise root causes.
10 min	Reflection and discussion of diagram results
5 min	Wrap-up/closing/next steps