

**MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH
INNOVATION SUMMIT**

MAY 2024

Co-Designing for Health Equity

**A SUMMARY DOCUMENT
TO ADVANCE HEALTH EQUITY**



ABOUT

HEALTH EQUITY INNOVATION SUMMIT

Earlier this year, the American Hospital Association (AHA) convened hospital and health system leaders at the 2024 Maternal and Child Health Innovation Summit to co-design health equity solutions leveraging the AHA's Health Equity Roadmap as the guiding framework.

This solutions brief highlights the collective insights of a wide range of participants and the solutions that surfaced during the discussions. It is designed for hospitals and health systems to take the necessary steps to create the system changes needed to eliminate health disparities and advance health equity.

Disclaimer: The specific ideas captured within this solutions brief are reflective of the perspectives of the participants who attended the Health Equity Summit and do not necessarily reflect the official viewpoints or positions of the AHA and the Institute for Diversity and Health Equity (IFDHE).

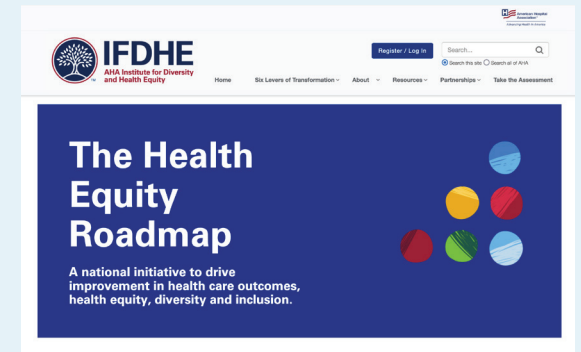
A COMPANION TO THE HEALTH EQUITY ROADMAP

The Health Equity Roadmap is an innovative framework to help hospitals and health systems chart their own paths toward transformation — thus becoming more equitable and inclusive organizations. The AHA's vision is of a just society of healthy communities, where all individuals reach their highest potential for health. Through its Institute for Diversity and Health Equity, the AHA seeks to eliminate structural barriers that compromise diversity, equity and inclusion in hospitals and health care systems.

IFDHE operationalizes AHA's vision through transformative action, focusing on the production and dissemination of evidence-based interventions, provision of design-thinking opportunities, and the development of tools and resources for the field.


The Health Equity Transformation Model — the Health Equity Roadmap's theoretical underpinning — provides six "Levers of Transformation," key performance indicators and a self-assessment tool for tracking progress.

[EQUITY.AHA.ORG](https://equity.aha.org)



Visit equity.aha.org to learn more about the Health Equity Roadmap.

THE SIX LEVERS OF TRANSFORMATION

-  Culturally Appropriate Patient Care
-  Equitable and Inclusive Organizational Policies
-  Collection and Use of Data to Drive Action
-  Diverse Representation in Leadership and Governance
-  Community Collaboration for Solutions
-  Systemic and Shared Accountability

2024 MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH INNOVATION SUMMIT

ST. LOUIS

On May 22, IFDHE hosted a Maternal and Child Health Innovation Summit in St. Louis. In attendance were AHA members, community-based organizations, and other national health care organizations from Missouri, North Carolina, Georgia, Rhode Island and more. Participants convened to construct strategies for recognizing and addressing disparities in maternal and child health outcomes.

The one-day event brought together C-suite hospital leaders, clinicians (including pediatricians, midwives and nurses), social workers, doulas, community-based organizations, universities, birthing centers, consulting firms and a philanthropic entity.

Participants represented various hospitals and health systems and national organizations, including St. Louis Children's Hospital, BJC Healthcare, Christian Hospitals, Kent Hospital, Mercy Hospital, Missouri Hospital Association, Premier, Inc. and more.



FIRESIDE CHAT

A fireside chat moderated by Joy A. Lewis, AHA senior vice president of health equity strategies and IFDHE executive director, examined the positioning of social innovation as an organizational strategy to eliminate barriers to health equity and improve maternal and child health outcomes.

Fireside chat speakers included:

- **Amy Hunter**, vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion at Caleres and principal, Lotus Roots Consulting
- **Michele McKee**, vice president of finance, strategic planning and women and infant services at St. Louis Children's Hospital, BJC Healthcare
- **Adrienne Blakemore**, certified doula at Jamaa Birth Village

The panel emphasized that innovation occurs when leaders examine existing data to inform solutions; are intentional about change; lead with humility and empathy; invest in quality and performance improvement opportunities; and seek people who represent the community served. "When we have a collective, shared understanding and vision together, things move much further and faster," emphasized Amy Hunter.

Here is what was discussed throughout the day:

- Innovation can start with small, intentional steps.
- Innovation requires changing internal behavior and incentivizing that change.
- Mutual understanding and respect are key in fostering partnerships with community organizations and patients.
- There is value in acknowledging power dynamics that play a role between large hospitals/health systems and local community organizations.
- Personalize existing data and identify new data sources to gain perspective.
- Empower and embed diverse health care professionals in health care settings.
- Education and implementation of culturally appropriate care are critical in pursuing sustainable impact on maternal and child health outcomes.



HEALTH EQUITY ROADMAP LEVER DISCUSSION THEMES

At the Maternal and Child Health Innovation Summit, attendees were guided through an interactive session to accelerate health equity in maternal health, using each of the six levers in the AHA's **Health Equity Roadmap** as a framework.

Key takeaways from the discussions are summarized in the pages that follow.

LEVER

Culturally Appropriate Patient Care



Practicing cultural humility and activities that improve culturally appropriate care, such as language access and health literacy.

MAJOR THEMES:

Establish education focusing on health equity and DEI within hospitals to identify gaps among providers' understanding of culturally appropriate patient care.

- Enforce standardized training programs for health care providers to prioritize equitable care in their day-to-day work.
- Incorporate an emphasis on diversity and unconsciousness bias into educational materials for providers.
- Extend the education materials to leaders and board members to establish shared visions and goals.

Partner with medical institutions to integrate culturally appropriate care delivery.

- Develop roles for students to provide basic health education to their community, emphasizing the importance of receiving culturally appropriate patient care.
- Support scholarship programs that create a more diverse workforce pipeline of nursing and medical students.

Require hospitals to assess their equity and inclusion practices and investigate gaps in advancing culturally appropriate patient care.

- Implement routine assessments for hospital providers and staff to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Create dashboards that identify gaps in culturally appropriate patient care.
- Collaborate with community members and stakeholders to create measures that address cultural competencies.

LEVER

Equitable and Inclusive Organizational Policies



Applying a DEI lens to organizational policies and supporting an equitable and inclusive climate and culture.

MAJOR THEMES:

Prioritize incorporating patient and community voices to drive improvement in patient outcomes.

- Create more community conversations including input from patients/families served by the hospital/health system.
- Develop partnerships with organizations targeting younger generations to gain new perspectives and emerging ideas for inclusive care.
- Welcome volunteers and birth workers who provide extra support to families.

Review existing organizational policies and adapt them to maternal and child health needs to improve patient outcomes.

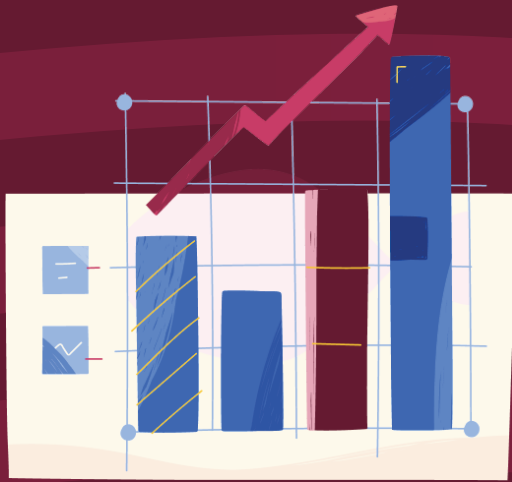
- Cultivate an organizational culture that prioritizes policy improvement with an equity lens.
- Revise organizational policies that may inhibit the diversity of the workforce.

Implement and enforce accountability measures for the health care workforce.

- Educate team members to ask the right questions and use culturally appropriate language.
- Implement mandatory racial justice training for all staff.
- Create a psychologically safe culture for employees to ask appropriate questions to grow in their cultural competency.

LEVER

Collection and Use of Data to Drive Action



Using quantitative and qualitative data to inform, design, and evaluate improvement strategies.

MAJOR THEMES:

Understand the value of comprehensive data collection and validation of maternal and child health outcomes.

- Examine various data sources beyond electronic health records (EHRs), including claims data, community health data and published literature, to better understand maternal and child health disparities.
- Standardize data collection procedures and increase frequency to enhance accuracy and timeliness.
- Emphasize the importance of data collection to all those involved in the data generation process, from administration teams to care teams.

Implement performance improvement strategies for data collection.

- Be intentional - prioritize performance improvement by implementing process measures, evaluating outcomes, and continuously refining the process, as necessary.
- Establish feedback loops using data analytics to share outcomes with data generators, such as health care providers and administrative staff.
- Communicate technical language in simple and clear terms to best reach a broader audience.

Leverage the use of data to advance health equity initiatives.

- Train health care staff in culturally appropriate care practices and provide implicit bias training to ensure accurate data collection.
- Evaluate cultural awareness of health care workers through patient feedback data.
- Identify disparities in access and outcomes through analyzing demographic data.

LEVER

Diverse Representation in Executive Leadership and Governance



Creating pathways that lead to diversifying leadership ranks to reflect the populations and communities served.

MAJOR THEMES:

Educate leaders and board on inequities facing the community.

- Take board members into the community to learn about patient needs and living conditions.
- Share patient stories with leaders and board members to highlight disparities in care.
- Assess leadership's commitment to the organization's equity goals.

Create a career pipeline development program to guide community members towards board positions and policy positions that can help impact patient care.

- Partner with local educational institutions to teach students community health practices.
- Educate community members on the meaning and responsibility of a board position.
- Develop board positions specifically for mothers and youth leaders.

Incentivize leaders and boards to improve community engagement.

- Create rewards or compensation structures for leaders who are accountable for community engagement measures.
- Develop measures to assess leaders' performance in identified health equity and DEI initiatives.
- Partner with community stakeholders and hospital staff to develop community engagement measures and goals.

LEVER

Community Collaborations for Solutions



Advancing health equity and fostering healthy communities by investing in strong hospital-community partnerships.

MAJOR THEMES:

Listen to what the community and stakeholders need from their health care systems.

- Ensure data transparency and resources are shared with community members and stakeholders.
- Coordinate hospital leaders and staff to engage in community spaces.
- Create outreach methods to gauge community feedback.

Add community-based partners to care teams.

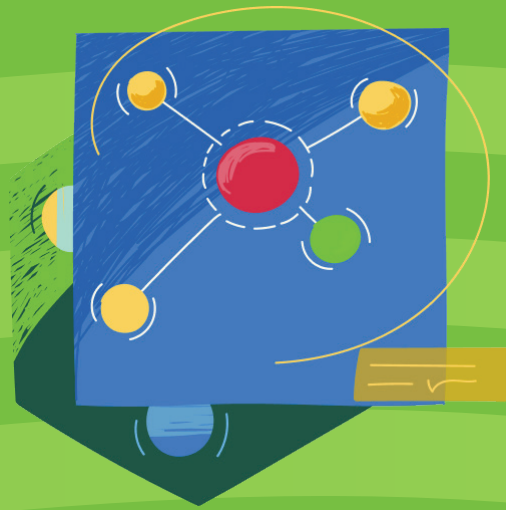
- Ensure certified health workers can analyze conditions appropriately.
- Incorporate community members into the care team.
- Create opportunities for community members to engage with hospitals and health systems.

Bridge the knowledge gap between legislators and birth workers.

- Utilize community partnerships to develop systems of communication between policymakers and clinicians.
- Share data and resources on social factors that influence health in the community.
- Align on diverse ways to support the community's needs.

LEVER

Systemic and Shared Accountability



Creating infrastructure to maintain accountability to sustain DEI work across departments and service lines.

MAJOR THEMES:

Leadership accountability to educate, inform and foster a collaborative environment.

- Prioritize health care workers and patient voices to inform organizational policy decisions.
- Offer various resources on maternal and child health education, including trainings, group convenings and continuous feedback and reflection opportunities.
- Establish language guidelines to ensure culturally appropriate care.

Evaluate existing organizational policies to develop effective strategies to improve clinical outcomes.

- Review existing organizational policies in various departments that may be applicable to maternal and child health.
- Standardize assessments to determine effectiveness of practices and ensure continuous improvement.

Consider adopting existing quality improvement strategies such as AIM Patient Safety Bundles and participating in perinatal quality improvement collaboratives. Implement outcome measures to hold health care workers accountable.

- Standardize patient experience survey measurements.
- Analyze readmission, complication and emergency procedure rates.
- Coordinate referral structures to provide patients with integrated care.

MEMBER TESTIMONIALS

“I learned that as a community, if we partner together, some of our outcomes can be better and we can improve maternal and infant health by incorporating doulas and other organizations. At our table, we talked about incorporating larger organizations such as Amazon and Uber to potentially help with needs that our patients may have.”

Brittney Vaughn, R.N.

Nurse Navigator, CARE Clinic, Washington University School of Medicine

“This has been incredible. I have learned so much and switched tables three times because I wanted to learn about different topics discussed. Our organization works with over 200 hospitals, and each hospital has some similarities in terms of the needs with employing health equity strategies. Everything that I learned so far can be utilized and shown to my immediate team and disseminated to the hospitals. Also, I learned about how we can use the AHA as a resource and some of the tools that are available on the website.”

Lauren Nunally

Manager, Premier Inc.

“The exercise that we participated in at today’s summit was beneficial and it is one that I would take back and replicate for one of my teams at BJC. It would be helpful to go through that same framework of taking the time to sit down and think through solutions, by writing Post-it Notes and working through questions. We are moving so fast with some parts of our work that sometimes we do not take the time to pause and really see how our organization can engage better and change.”

Calencia Mitchell

Manager, Community Health Improvement, BJC Healthcare

Meeting Takeaways for Health Care Leaders

1 INCENTIVIZE EQUITABLE CARE.

Explore policy solutions that incentivize outcomes-focused, equitable care. Educate, empower and equip health care professionals with the skills necessary to provide culturally appropriate and responsive maternal care.

2 PROVIDE SPACE TO UNLEARN RACISM.

Change must come from within, both individually and systemically. Invest in offering spaces and training to health care professionals to identify individual biases. Develop short-term and long-term solutions to remedy those identified behaviors and processes.

- [March of Dimes Implicit Bias Training: Awareness to Action: Dismantling Bias in Maternal and Infant Healthcare™](#)

3 DOULAS ARE PROVEN TO IMPACT MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH OUTCOMES.

Doulas are proven to impact maternal and child health outcomes. Bring awareness to their impact and seek policy and organizational solutions to create opportunities for doulas.

4 STUDY AND UTILIZE YOUR DATA.

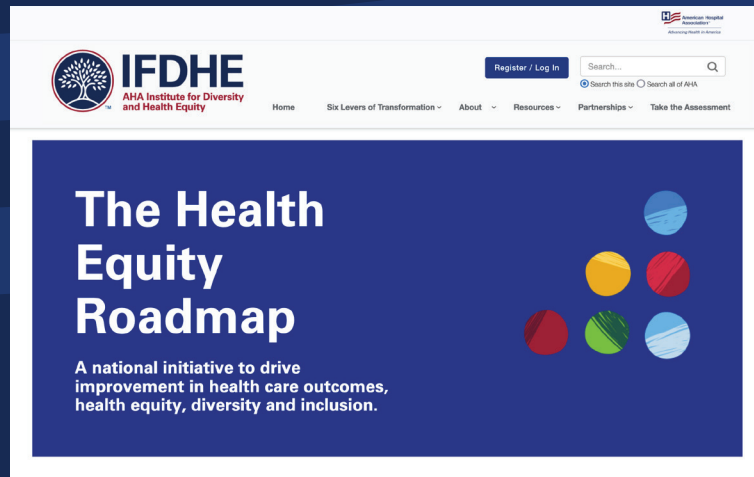
Take a deep dive and stratify data by race/ethnicity, income and language to identify gaps and disparities in maternal care. Develop solutions that best support those most in need. Start small and create momentum.

4 FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL PARTNERS.

Identify assets within the community, both traditional and non-traditional, to collaborate with and offer resources to birthing people and families. Create an environment that delivers shared missions and goals.

HEALTH EQUITY RESOURCES

Visit equity.aha.org to access our health equity resources.



HEALTH EQUITY ROADMAP

The Health Equity Roadmap is a framework to help hospitals and health systems chart their own paths toward transformation to become more equitable and inclusive organizations. Corewell Health uses the Health Equity Roadmap to create solutions and workflows to advance maternal health equity. → [Visit the Roadmap](#)

BEYOND BIRTH PODCAST SERIES

An award-winning narrative podcast series explores how hospitals can improve perinatal outcomes for their patients by addressing their medical, social and emotional needs. The series highlights initiatives from Ascension, UMass Memorial, Endeavor Health, Orlando Health and Northwestern Medicine, and features the voices of moms who engage with those programs. → [Listen to the Beyond Birth Series](#)

TOXIC: A BLACK WOMAN'S STORY

This short film explores the toxic stress Black mothers face during pregnancy. AHA members that are non-profit hospitals and health systems can purchase the film for a discount price to facilitate screenings and discussions. AHA's [companion resource](#) offers guidance for initiating conversations following the film about how structural racism and implicit bias threaten maternal health. → [Visit Toxic: A Black Woman's Story](#)

BEST PRACTICES FOR EQUITABLE MATERNAL CARE

AHA resource highlights ways health care organizations can foster equitable practices in maternal care, individually and systemically. This resource features case examples from NYC Health and Hospitals, Providence Swedish Hospital and the University of Chicago. → [Visit Resource](#)

THANK YOU

We are all on the journey to position hospitals and health systems as contributors to a just society. The Health Equity Innovation Summits, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, are designed as a collaborative space to develop solutions to implement the Health Equity Roadmap.

On behalf of the American Hospital Association, we thank you for your contribution toward advancing health equity. The **Institute for Diversity and Health Equity** is committed to providing tools and resources to advance health equity and dismantling structural barriers that create disparities.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing health equity in your communities!

