



# Health Equity in Practice

**Presented by Anye Carson, MPH**

*Providing health coverage to Indiana families since 1994*

# Objectives

- Explain what health equity is and how to talk about it.
- Discuss how to address health equity from a provider perspective and the impact on the overall practice.
- Recognize MDwise efforts to address health equity.
- Identify potential consequences of not addressing health equity in the practice setting.



# Key Concepts

- Health equity is the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. Achieving this requires ongoing societal efforts to:
  - Address historical and contemporary injustices
  - Overcome economic, social and other obstacles to health and health care
  - Eliminate preventable health disparities
- Health equity impacts health care by:
  - Reducing health disparities
  - Building trust and patient satisfaction
  - Preventing avoidable complications which result in cost-savings

Health Equity ≠ Health Equality

# Additional Ways to Discuss Health Equity

## Defining Health Equity for Different Audiences

### **A 30-second definition for general audiences:**

Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.

**A 15-second definition for technical audiences:** For the purposes of measurement, health equity means reducing and ultimately eliminating disparities in health and its determinants that adversely affect excluded or marginalized groups.

**A 20-second definition for audiences who ask about the difference between equity and disparities:** Health equity is the ethical and human rights principle that motivates us to eliminate health disparities; health disparities—worse health in excluded or marginalized groups—are how we measure progress toward health equity.

**An 8-second version for general audiences (health equity as a goal or outcome):** Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.

**Another 8-second version for general audiences (health equity as a process):** Health equity means removing economic and social obstacles to health such as poverty and discrimination.

# Social Determinants of Health

- Social determinants of health (SDoH) are life aspects that impact quality of life. Examples of aspects include:
  - Housing
  - Transportation
  - Education
  - Income level
  - Pollution
  - Literacy skills
  - Access to food
- SDoH impacts health care by influencing:
  - Health outcomes
  - Health behavior
  - Health care access

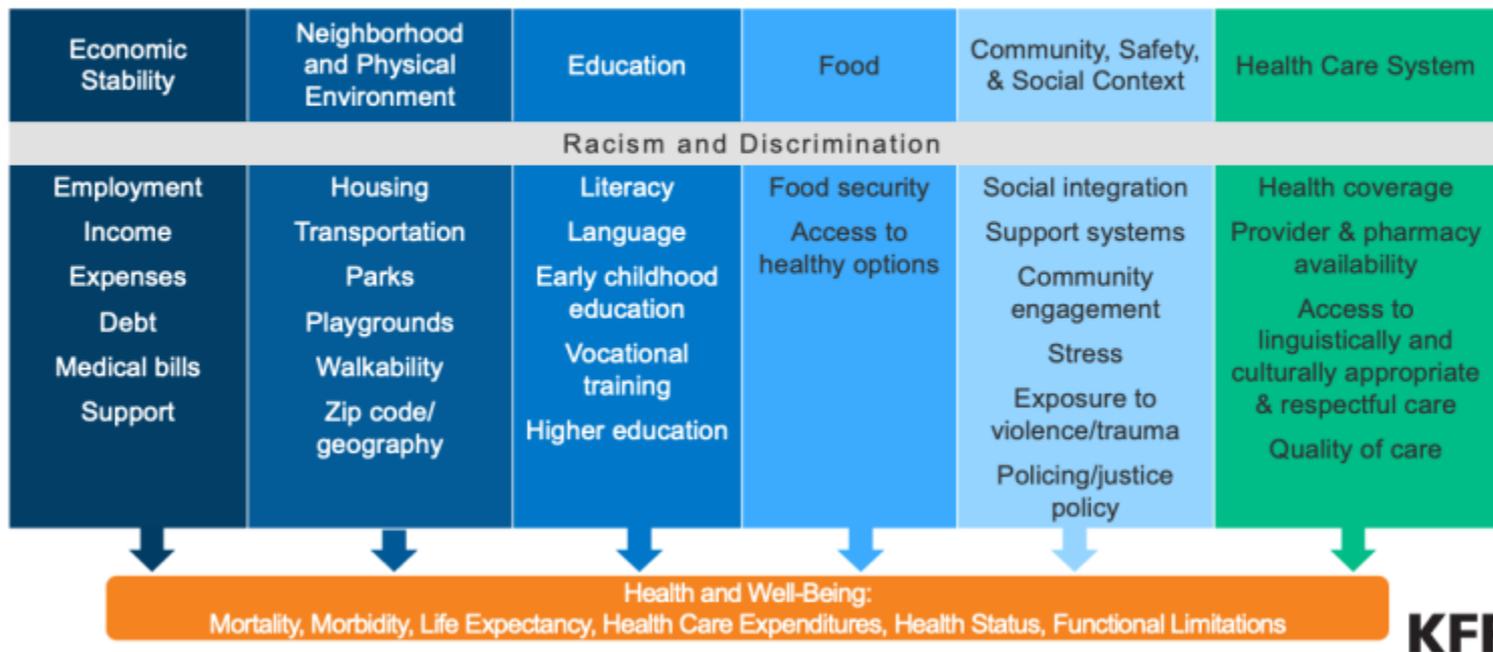


# Health Disparities

- Health disparities are preventable differences in health outcomes, such as disease, injury and violence, in groups disadvantaged by social determinants of health

Figure 1

## Health Disparities are Driven by Social and Economic Inequities



**KFF**

# Addressing Health Equity From a Provider Perspective

- Health care teams can address health equity by:
  - Understanding implicit bias and culturally competent care
  - Recognizing the importance of patient-centered approaches
  - Communicating efficiently with patients with diverse language needs
  - Engaging with community to enhance health equity

# Understanding Implicit Bias and Culturally Competent Care

- Implicit bias refers to the attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes or prejudices that individuals hold at an unconscious level that can influence their judgments and actions toward others. These automatic, involuntary biases often develop over time through societal and cultural influences, media and personal experiences.
- Cultural competence helps to ensure understanding, appreciation and respect of cultural differences and similarities within, among and between groups.
- Understanding and addressing these concepts means:
  - Training your staff
  - Recruiting, promoting and retaining a diverse workforce
  - Incorporating cultural competence in your processes and practices
    - Examples: Language resources, inclusive materials, accessible office

# Recognizing the Importance of Patient-Centered Approaches

- This approach places the patient at the forefront of the decision-making process and tailors medical treatment and services to meet their individual needs, preferences and values.
- Following this approach means health care teams incorporate patient-centered communication, shared decision-making, and personalized care plan.



# Shared – Decision Making Activity

**Shared decisionmaking** occurs when a health care provider and a patient work together to make a health care decision that is best for the patient. The optimal decision takes into account evidence-based information about available options, the provider's knowledge and experience, and the patient's values and preferences.

The SHARE Approach presents a five-step process for shared decisionmaking that includes exploring and comparing the benefits, harms, and risks of each option through meaningful dialogue about what matters most to the patient.

## The SHARE Approach

### Essential Steps of Shared Decisionmaking

**Step 1:** Seek your patient's participation.

**Step 2:** Help your patient explore and compare treatment options.

**Step 3:** Assess your patient's values and preferences.

**Step 4:** Reach a decision with your patient.

**Step 5:** Evaluate your patient's decision.

- Barriers to shared decision making include limited appointment time, lack of cultural considerations, ineffective communication and more.
- Let's consider how the SHARED Approach can be a tool we communicate to address maternal disparities Black families face in Indiana. A Black woman, 34yo, third trimester is a patient in your office wanting to discuss her birthing plan.

# Shared – Decision Making Activity Script

**Provider:** Good afternoon! How have you been feeling lately during your third trimester?

**Patient:** Hi, I'm honestly not doing too well. I've been having these really bad headaches, feeling nauseous, and my hands and feet are so swollen. I'm also having trouble breathing at times.

**Provider:** I'm sorry to hear that you're experiencing these symptoms. It's important to address them and make sure both you and your baby are okay. Let's discuss your symptoms in more detail. When did the headaches start, and can you describe their intensity and location?

**Patient:** The headaches started about a week ago, and they've been pretty intense, mostly in the front of my head.

**Provider:** Thank you for sharing that. Intense headaches can be concerning, especially during pregnancy. We'll definitely look into that. The swelling in your hands and feet, has it been getting progressively worse, or has it been constant?

**Patient:** It's been getting worse over the past few days. My feet are so swollen that it's hard to even put on shoes.

**Provider:** I see. Swelling, particularly when it affects both the hands and feet, can sometimes be related to fluid retention or other issues. Now, regarding the trouble breathing and nausea, can you tell me more about when these symptoms occur and how severe they are?

**Patient:** The trouble breathing comes and goes, but it's been happening more frequently in the last couple of days. It's like I can't catch my breath sometimes. The nausea is pretty constant; I've been having difficulty keeping food down.

**Provider:** Thank you for sharing that. Shortness of breath and persistent nausea are also concerning symptoms. Given your current condition, we need to thoroughly evaluate what might be causing these symptoms. I'd like to perform a physical examination and some tests to get a better understanding of your condition. We may need to check your blood pressure, run some blood tests, and possibly perform an ultrasound to assess the well-being of your baby.

**Patient:** That sounds really scary, but I trust your judgment. I just want to make sure my baby is okay.

**Provider:** I completely understand your concern for your baby's well-being, and our top priority is ensuring both you and your baby are safe and healthy. If any interventions or treatments are necessary, we'll discuss them with you and involve you in the decision-making process. It's crucial to address these symptoms promptly to prevent any potential complications.

**Patient:** Thank you for your understanding and for taking this seriously. I'm just really worried about what's happening.

**Provider:** I completely understand, and it's important that you expressed your concerns. We're here to support you and provide the best possible care. Let's start with the examination and tests so we can get a better picture of what's going on. After that, we'll discuss the results and create a plan to ensure the well-being of both you and your baby. If you have any questions or concerns at any point, please don't hesitate to let us know.

**Patient:** Thank you for your care and attention. I really appreciate it.

**Provider:** You're very welcome. Your well-being and your baby's well-being are our top priorities, and we're here to provide you with the best care possible. We'll get started with the evaluation right away to ensure everything is on track. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything or have further questions.

# Shared – Decision Making Activity Discussion

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# Communicate Efficiently With Patients With Diverse Language Needs

- The role of language in discussing health equity
- Tips to facilitate clear and meaningful communication:
  - Encourage language services
  - Use pictures and demonstrations
  - Follow up in writing

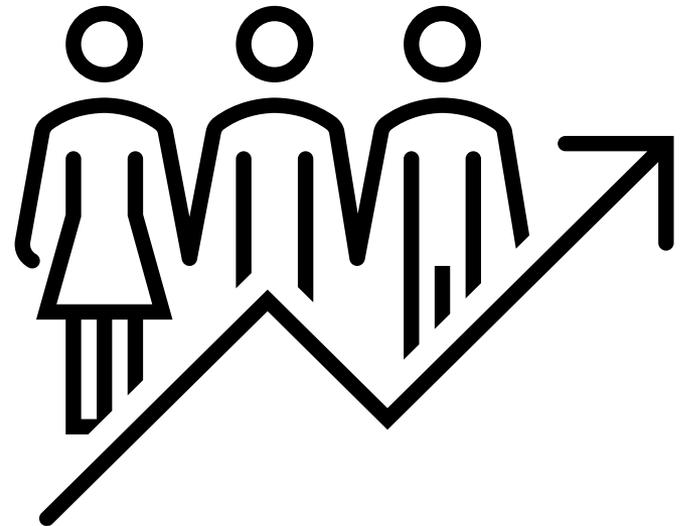


# Engaging With Community To Enhance Health Equity

- Provider and community collaboration allows for a holistic understanding of the unique health needs and challenges faced by different populations. By working together, health care providers and community organizations can design strategies to address disparities, increase access to resources and create a more inclusive and equitable health care system.
- Examples:
  - A community health center in an underserved area implements a mobile health care unit to provide medical services directly to residents facing transportation barriers.
  - A hospital implements a culturally-tailored diabetes education program for minority patients, focusing on diet, medication adherence and self-management.

# The Impact of Health Equity on the Overall Practice

- Improves patient outcomes
- Enhances patient satisfaction
- Builds a positive reputation



# MDwise Efforts to Address Health Equity

MDwise is committed to the following:

- Providing culturally competent and trauma-informed services to all members, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their cultural or ethnic background or limited English proficiency, comprehends their condition(s), recommended treatment(s) and treatment effects, including potential side effects.
- Ensuring all services are provided effectively and with the utmost respect for the worth and dignity of each member, regardless of their cultural, racial, ethnic or national origin backgrounds, geographies, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities or religions.

# Addressing Health Equity – 2022 Summary

## Key accomplishments during 2022:

- Achieved NCQA Multicultural Health Distinction
- Provided quality language services
- Created an annual Health Equity 101 Training
- Expanded our MDwise Diversity & Inclusion Committee impact
- Created the MDwise Health Equity Council
- Hired a Health Equity Director
- Shared our diversity, equity and inclusion vision on the website

# MDwise Health Equity Workplan

To ensure this commitment, MDwise will implement an annual work plan that includes these key efforts:

- **Regular Training:** All MDwise staff will receive regular training on implicit bias, cultural competency, and CLAS standards. This training will enhance their awareness of cultural differences, promote understanding of diverse cultural norms and practices, and enable them to deliver care in a manner that is respectful, sensitive, and responsive to each member's unique cultural context.
- **Language Services:** MDwise will provide quality language services to bridge communication gaps with members who have language needs. Effective communication in members' preferred languages will enhance their understanding of their condition and treatment options, empowering them to make informed decisions about their health care.
- **Culturally-Tailored Materials:** MDwise will develop culturally-tailored educational materials that consider diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs and health literacy levels. These materials will be made available to all members to ensure that important health information is accessible and understandable to everyone.

# Additional Efforts to Address Health Equity

- **Inclusive Policies and Practices:** MDwise will review and modify policies and practices to ensure inclusivity and address any potential biases or discrimination. These changes will create an environment where every member feels valued and respected, promoting equitable access to services for all.
- **Trauma-Informed Care Approach:** MDwise will adopt a trauma-informed care approach in its service delivery. This approach recognizes the potential impact of trauma on individuals' health and well-being and ensures that care is provided in a safe, empowering and non-retraumatizing manner. This creates a supportive environment for members to express their concerns, preferences and fears regarding their condition and treatment.
- **Ongoing Feedback and Evaluation:** MDwise will actively seek feedback from members, providers and community partners regarding opportunities to ensure culturally competent care through advisory groups such as the MDwise Health Equity Council.

# Additional Efforts to Address Health Equity (continued)

- The MDwise Health Equity Council meets to ensure members have equitable access to high-quality care that is respectful and responsive to diverse cultural beliefs, languages and communication needs.
- Welcomes staff, providers and community partners.
- Current community representation includes:
  - Indiana Department of Health
  - Indiana Minority Health Coalition
  - Family Social Services Administration
  - Trans Solutions
  - Indiana Treatment Center
  - Cityblock
  - MICI-AHEC (Metropolitan Indianapolis/Central Indiana Area Health Education Center)

# MDwise Health Equity Council

- Sample root cause analysis with MDwise Health Equity Council

**Table 1. Root Cause Analysis: Increase Postpartum Visits**

**Root Cause #1:** Access to Care (transportation, childcare, timing of appointments), Education of Importance of Maternal and Postpartum Health

<b>Solution</b>	Member text reminders, Incentives and rewards for attending doctor visits, flexible scheduling
<b>Health Equity Council Proposed Solutions</b>	<p>Provider Education: For PMPs, making sure they have the latest, most up-to-date guidelines.</p> <p>Transportation: In west Indiana, patients drive up to an hour for pregnancy emergency and post partum care. At home visits may eliminate the barriers to prenatal/post partum care. Mothers often have other children, and transportation services will not allow other children to ride to appointments with them.</p> <p>Mobile clinics, for OBs to provide care in rural areas with few resources. Para-medical visits, with paraprofessionals visiting in person, with clinicians conducting the visits virtually.</p> <p>Doula Services: Could be helpful, if Medicaid will pay for their services. ECHO program just ended its first program year. Found that providers are not aware of what services Doulas can provide, so education is necessary in that area.</p>

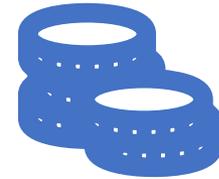
# Consequences of Not Addressing Health Equity in the Practice Setting



Health disparities



Legal implications



Economic impact

# Consequences of Not Addressing in the Practice Setting

- When health disparities worsen, this can have significant negative consequences for individuals, communities and the health care system.
- Key impacts of worsening health disparities are:
  - Poor health outcomes
  - Increased health care costs
  - Productivity loss
  - Perpetuates a cycle of inequality

# Consequences of Not Addressing in the Practice Setting

- Neglecting health equity can have potential legal repercussions for health care providers, organizations and even governmental bodies.
- Some of the potential legal consequences include:
  - Discrimination lawsuits
  - Non-compliance with federal funding requirements
  - Malpractice claims
  - Loss of accreditation

# Consequences of Not Addressing Health Equity in the Practice Setting – Maternal Health Examples



[Top video link](#)



[Bottom video link](#)

# Resources

- Training Support
  - [Harvard's Project Implicit](#)
  - [Think Cultural Health](#)
  - [IUPUI Project ECHO](#)
- Planning Support
  - [Disparities in Health and Health Care: 5 Key Questions and Answers](#)
  - [Racial bias in pain assessment and treatment recommendations](#)
  - [Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication](#)
  - [Improving Access to Care for People with Special Needs](#)
  - [Bias-Free Language Guide](#)

# Thank You!

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