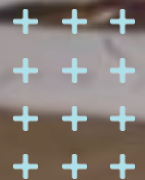




Employer health equity strategies

A quick-read guide on approaches to promote health equity in the workplace.





Make a commitment to health equity

Health equity is social justice for health

Health equity exists when everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy life and achieve their full health potential, regardless of background or circumstance.

A person's health status is defined by more than clinical care – the communities in which we live, learn, work and play have a significant impact on our well-being and quality of life. Health equity is achieved by reducing barriers to the highest level of care for everyone.



Recognize barriers to health

A person's health is determined by genetics, medical care, behavior, and our social and physical environments. Non-medical factors are called the social determinants of health and they can impact health directly, as well as indirectly, by shaping behavior. This includes aspects such as:

- + Employment and work conditions
- + Income and debt
- + Race and ethnicity
- + Gender
- + Sexual orientation
- + Disability status
- + Housing stability
- + Health, financial and benefits-literacy
- + Access to and quality of health care
- + Family and social support
- + Higher education and/or job training programs
- + Law and justice systems
- + Community engagement
- + Access to healthy foods
- + Neighborhood safety
- + Exposure to environmental hazards
- + Reliable transportation
- + Dependable child care
- + Access to paths, parks and playgrounds

Build a stronger workforce

The United States spends more on health care but has worse health outcomes than comparable countries around the world. There is growing recognition that clinical care is only part of the solution. Efforts to address social determinants and move toward health equity are gaining traction as a means to improve population health outcomes. Social determinants have a significant impact on morbidity, mortality, well-being and quality of life.

- + Low socioeconomic status is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and other chronic conditions.¹
- + Women and men with a bachelor's degree live longer than those without a high school diploma – 8.6 and 9.3 years, respectively.²
- + Uninsured or underinsured individuals are more likely to delay medical care resulting in higher hospitalization rates, longer hospital stays and worse health outcomes.³
- + African Americans have the highest cancer mortality rate compared to other racial and ethnic groups.⁴
- + Children from low-income families (below the federal poverty line) are more likely to be exposed to environmental risk factors like pollution, lead, and crime – and have increased risk of poor health outcomes as adults.⁵
- + African Americans have 2.3 times the infant mortality rate and twice the sudden infant death syndrome mortality rate as non-Hispanic whites.⁴

Health equity can improve the long-term strength and reliability of your workforce

Social determinants of health can impact employer business and profitability through increased health care spending, absenteeism, presenteeism and turnover. Addressing health disparities and social factors can benefit employee well-being, morale, productivity, and reduce health care costs. As stated by the American Heart Association, “Advancing policies and practices that promote health equity, diversity and inclusion are paramount in bolstering corporate growth and performance.” Fortunately there are steps organizations can take to remove barriers and help everyone achieve optimal health.

1. [Promoting Health Equity](#) – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
2. [Higher education and income levels keys to better health](#) – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
3. [Health Insurance Coverage and Health](#) – New England Journal of Medicine
4. [Cancer and African Americans](#) – U.S. Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health
5. [Children in Poverty](#) – Children's Bureau



5 strategies to support health equity in the workplace

There is a bidirectional relationship between the workplace and well-being. Many aspects of the workplace affect employee well-being including compensation and benefits, career advancement opportunities, job demands, and workplace conditions. Conversely, social factors influence the type of employment people pursue and maintain. Addressing social determinants of health and disparities will help ensure that everyone has access to the resources and support they need, resulting in a collectively healthier workforce.



1 Embed health equity into your organizational culture

Demonstrate your commitment to addressing health disparities by incorporating health equity into your organizational strategy. Make sure organizational leaders are on board – they play an important role in promoting, guiding, and supporting efforts.

- + Adopt a mission and vision that supports health equity, well-being, and civic engagement.
- + Ensure leadership is representative of your workforce and the community.
- + Support diversity and inclusion in recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices.
- + Provide implicit bias training to hiring managers and organizational leaders.
- + Survey employees to understand their needs and priorities.
- + Offer diversity, equity and inclusion training for leaders and employees to create a psychologically safe work environment.
- + Provide opportunities for employees to participate in decision making for the organization. Create space for employees to contribute their thoughts and ideas.

2 Design an environment that allows employees to be their best self at work

Your employees spend much of their day at work. Incorporate environmental supports that protect and enhance their well-being.

- + Maintain clean and safe working conditions that includes safe, well-lit stairwells, and parking lots.
- + Offer a predictable work schedule and mitigate expectations to work during off hours to support work-life balance.
- + Offer ergonomic assessments and ensure employees have the equipment and supplies they need to perform their best.
- + Create a quiet and private space for employees to use telehealth services.
- + Provide bike racks, on-site fitness centers and showers or access to walking trails to promote physical activity.
- + Offer healthy snack and meal options for employees to access nutritious foods.
- + Designate a quiet space for yoga or meditation and allow for regular breaks throughout the work day.



3

Be creative with benefits and programs that promote holistic well-being and health equity

Your employees are diverse – in age, ethnic background, gender identity, and more – which means their needs and interests vary greatly as well. Support employees through various stages of life by offering a wide array of programs and benefits that support physical, mental, financial, and social well-being.

- + Provide comprehensive, affordable and inclusive medical, dental, and vision benefits to all employees and their families.
- + Help employees understand how to maximize their benefits and remind them of services to help them save money and time such as telehealth, care management, mail order prescriptions, and treatment cost estimators.
- + Host onsite vaccination clinics, fitness and/or cooking classes, and wellness challenges.
- + Offer a retirement plan, tuition assistance, financial seminars, and childcare assistance.
- + Promote personal and professional development, and offer career advancement opportunities.
- + Promote use of your employee assistance program or consider expanding your offerings.
- + Promote health, financial and benefits-literacy by communicating about benefits year-round and providing access to experts who can answer questions.
- + Use digital and print communications to educate employees about the resources that are available. Create an easily accessible place that contains information on all well-being resources.

4

Adopt policies that address health disparities and use a health equity lens when making organizational policy decisions

Consider health equity when adopting and implementing policies and remove those that perpetuate inequities.

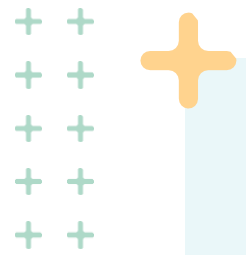
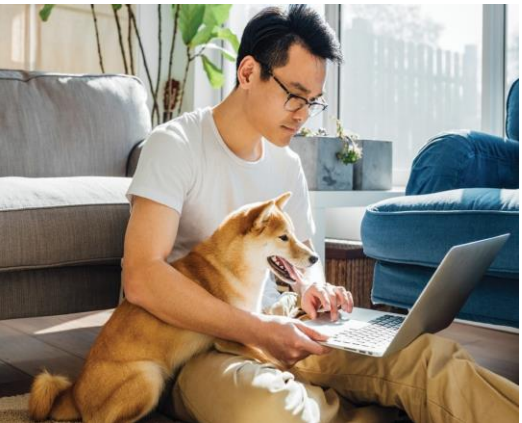
- + Review recruitment, hiring, and retention policies and remove any that may disadvantage certain groups.
- + Provide paid time off for vacation, sick days, and mental well-being.
- + Offer adequate paid family and medical leave.
- + Conduct regular pay equity audits and ensure all employees are paid a living wage.
- + Allow employees to work flexible hours or telecommute.
- + Provide access to advance pay or create an emergency fund.
- + Adopt healthy vending and meeting guidelines.
- + Use inclusive and unbiased language in all communications.

5

Practice corporate social responsibility

Make a difference in the neighborhoods where your employees work and live. Understand how your organization fits into your community and look for opportunities to promote health equity through philanthropy, advocacy, and programming.

- + Collaborate with other organizations committed to addressing health disparities.
- + Assess the vendors your organization works with and ensure they are also taking action to address health equity.
- + Host events to meet community needs like a food drive, blood drive, or holiday giving tree.
- + Advocate for public policies that promote health equity like affordable housing, high-quality education, accessible health care, and robust public transportation.
- + Host an internship program or sponsor a scholarship for local students.
- + Encourage volunteering and allow paid time off for events during the workday.



Check out our [employer well-being resources and toolkits](#) to learn more about implementing relevant strategies for your workforce.





Continue the conversation



Use our recommended resources to better learn and understand how to advance health equity in your organization.

- + Health Equity Statement and Progress Update | [Providence](#)
- + Driving Health Equity in the Workplace | [American Heart Association](#)
- + Social Determinants: Acting to Achieve Well-being for All | [Business Group on Health](#)
- + Turning Health Risk Into Value: Are Your Health and Well-being Approaches Inclusive? | [Mercer](#)
- + Social Determinants of Health, an Employer Priority | [Health Enhancement Research Organization \(HERO\)](#)





When you're healthy, you can feel inspired to do great things for your community and the world at large. We believe healthcare is a human right — everyone has a right to quality healthcare. We're dedicated to the health and care of every member of our community, no matter where they live or who they work for.

Because everyone's well-being matters.

Want support for your employee well-being program? Contact your Health Management Consultant, or email our team at workplacewellness@providence.com

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