

What's the project?

The MDH Center for Public Health Practice (PHP) launched a health equity learning community of six local health jurisdictions (LHJs) in July 2017. MDH facilitated virtual and in-person learning sessions and supported local action through monthly coaching with each team.

Foundational content included material on health equity practices; implicit bias; structural racism; using a health equity lens; and authentic community engagement. In-person meetings provided opportunity for training, peer sharing, and discussion.

Why is it important?

Public health departments have a long history of working on the consequences of health inequities—but to address the root causes of these inequities, public health organizations need to change the way they do business.

Transforming public health practice takes time, tools, and opportunity to try new things. MDH initiated this project to help LHJs move from theory to practice.

How did you accomplish it? Who were your partners?

The Center for Public Health Practice supported this effort with a team approach. PHP partnered with six LHJs, including:

- Dakota County
- Goodhue County
- Partnership4Health
- Pine County
- Rice County
- Washington County

PHP also relied on consultation with internal and external partners, including the Center for Health Equity, the Office of Statewide Health Improvement Initiatives, Ramsey County, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota.

Lessons Learned

The emphasis in this project was learning. MDH learned that the pull of the status quo is strong, and coaching was an effective strategy.

LHJs learned:

- Just start somewhere; don't wait for the perfect idea
- Use tools to guide action
- Health equity work is continuous; it is a *practice*, not a project

Results and Next Steps

Locally, each team acted to more authentically engage communities and/or modify organizational policies and practices toward equity. They:

- Developed a health equity policy
- Tested new engagement strategies
- Reviewed programs with a health equity review lens
- Embedded equity in a new advisory board
- Facilitated staff training and discussion

PHP's next steps include:

- A second learning community
- Advancing a plan for statewide practice change
- Continuing to support the online resource library for advancing equity

Team Members

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Roundtable discussions at an in-person meeting of the Health Equity Learning Community