

Goodhue County Health & Human Services: Building Authentic Relationships

Building robust and sustainable systems to address health equity requires careful planning—after plans are in place, what comes next? In order to fully realize its organizational and strategic commitment to health equity, Goodhue County Health & Human Services (GCHHS) staff worked to build and support authentic relationships—with both external partners and internal staff and programs.

Internal strategies:

- Incorporate collaboration guidelines into GCHHS' health equity policy
- Lead focused conversations on health equity at each unit meeting
- Tackle implicit bias at all staff training
- Learn together how to use a health equity lens, as an organization

External strategies:

- Meet one-on-one with community members and partners to explore mutual interests without a preset agenda
- Try new approaches to engage community members experiencing inequity, from working with service providers, to a pop-up tent, to carrying groceries for food shelf clients

GCHHS staff continue to build on their authentic engagement work and work to deepen their understanding of health equity. In the future, Goodhue will include authentic engagement strategies in its community health improvement plan; include health equity in department policies, orientation, and training; and create a standing health equity committee.

“Without authentic engagement, we are just trying to guess what our community needs and what would help improve things.”



KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Prioritize the time and energy required for authentic engagement.
- Find motivation in positive, strong, long-term relationships.
- Meet, establish trust, and gather information. Avoid top-down implementation of evidence-based practice.

