

Office of Health Equity and Minority Health Strategic Plan, 2021 - 2024



*Establishing and
Maintaining a Culture
of Health Equity*



The Alabama Department of Public Health, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognizes that health equity is achieved when every person has the opportunity to “attain his or her full health potential” and no one is “disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances.” Health inequities are reflected in differences in length of life; quality of life; rates of disease, disability, and death; severity of disease; and access to treatment.

The re-envisioned Office of Minority Health is the newly established Office of Health Equity and Minority Health (OHEMH), located in the Office of Governmental Affairs and Community Relations. The OHEMH, with stakeholder input, has developed a 3-year blueprint for elevating health equity as a priority in Alabama. The OHEMH 2021-2024 Strategic Plan mirrors the mission and vision of the Agency through an equity lens. Utilizing reliable data to identify communities at highest risk of health disparities and inequities, the ADPH OHEMH and partners seek to deliver intentional strategies that will build health equity into daily practices. The OHEMH Strategic Plan has both an internal and external focus.

OHEMH STRATEGIC GOALS

The following outlines the internal and external goals of the OHEMH:

- Goal 1.** Establish common language that ADPH staff can use when communicating health equity strategies, applying an equity lens in daily work activities, and operationalizing health equity-specific public health best practices throughout the Agency.
- Goal 2.** Work with federal partners and OIDA (Office of Informatics and Data Analytics) to improve race and ethnicity data collection. This will allow the OHEMH to use data more effectively to plan, monitor, and measure the impact of ADPH health equity activities.
- Goal 3.** Utilize external partnerships established through the CDC Health Disparity Grant Sub-grantees to build stakeholder capacity, advise on equity-focused work, and establish common language when recommending health equity strategies. This cooperative will not only address pandemic related health disparities, but also better equip communities to handle future public health emergencies.
- Goal 4.** Report annually on progress toward addressing health disparities, building awareness of health equity, and increasing training around health literacy for the improvement of the health outcomes across Alabama.

Internal Focus

ADPH's OHEMH, utilizing an internal focus, will develop strategies to communicate, provide context and rationale, and foster a culture of health equity throughout ADPH. The OHEMH will act as a hub within ADPH to coordinate health equity activities and policies across programs, public health districts, and county health departments.

External Focus

The OHEMH's external focus will include managing, guiding, coordinating, and evaluating the sub-grantees of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \$40,452,096 grant award to ADPH. The three-year cooperative agreement is titled, *National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved, including Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations and Rural Communities*, and was awarded in June 2021. The grant seeks to build, leverage, and expand infrastructure support for COVID-19 prevention and control among populations that are at higher risk and are underserved statewide.

This infusion of federal dollars allows the Agency and the OHEMH to diversify and leverage these funds to fulfill external goals through partnerships with a cross-section of the stakeholder community. These community partners, through subgrant awards, will provide equitable access to COVID-19 testing and vaccinations; support COVID-19 testing and vaccination media campaigns (*Alabama Unites Against COVID*); create healthier neighborhoods impacted by the pandemic through the deployment of Community Health Worker models; establish new Offices of Health Equity; purchase cross-disability emergency supply kits for people with disabilities and functional and access needs statewide; and provide Conversational American Sign Language (ASL) and health literacy training to local healthcare providers, ADPH staff, and communities. These foci will further equip socially vulnerable communities to address the pandemic-related issues resulting from COVID-19 while improving capacity to deal with future public health emergencies through a health equity lens.

The sub-grantees include:

1. University of Alabama Center for Economic Development (UACED) Equitable Neighborhoods Initiative (ENI)
2. Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) ADPH Limitless Community Health Initiative
3. Alabama Area Health Education Center (AHEC) COVID-19 Testing & Outreach Initiative
4. City of Montgomery/Partners in Health Community Health Workers Program
5. Mobile County Health Department office of Health Equity
6. Jefferson County Department of Health office of Health Equity
7. Black Belt Community Foundation/H.O.P. E Ambassadors
8. University of Alabama at Birmingham Health Literacy Initiative

<p>Objective 1 Identify Alabama Department of Public Health programs with Health Equity Goals.</p>
<p>Action Item Utilize Internal Survey to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify programs with Health Equity activities/grant components • Determine how the activities/grant components relate to the office • Develop strategy to build divisional collaborative opportunities in Agency
<p>Objective 2 Establish common language that ADPH staff and partners can use when communicating health equity strategies, apply an equity lens in daily work activities, and when operationalizing health equity-specific public health best practices throughout the agency.</p>
<p>Action Items Utilize CDC Customized Health Equity Assessment Tool to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine familiarity with the term “health equity” • Determine familiarity with the term “social determinants of health” • Determine how programs currently advance health equity in practice
<p>Objective 3 Provide ongoing health equity training for internal staff and external partners</p>
<p>Action Item Training topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health literacy • Healthcare Provider bias • Conversational American Sign Language for public health emergencies • Boundary Spanning Leadership for Alabama Department of Public Health employees
<p>Objective 4 Develop Health Equity Advisory Committee between divisions to build organizational capacity to engage in health equity-focused work in all ADPH programs.</p>
<p>Action Item</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in bi-monthly meetings
<p>Objective 5 Work with federal partners and Office of Informatics and Data Analytics (OIDA) to improve race and ethnicity data collection. This would allow the OHEMH to use data more effectively to plan, monitor, and measure the impact of ADPH health equity activities</p>
<p>Action Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify barriers to health within priority health areas as determined by data and community assessments

Objective 6 Expand efforts of data collection and update as needed to maintain a health equity focus on policies and programs.

Action Items Create a public facing dashboard to identify where the greatest burden of disease affects vulnerable populations.

- Consistently engage with new Office of Informatics and Data Analytics and epidemiology staff to ensure the most up to date and appropriate data is provided.
- Operationalize data by translating to narrative form for internal staff and external partners.
- Ensure accurate, timely and accessible data that can drive targeted actions addressing regions and communities that are marginalized and are at risk of adverse health outcomes.

Objective 7 Establish Statewide Health Equity/Community Engagement Advisory Group comprised of the local community stakeholders participating in the CDC Health Disparity Grant programs.

Objective 8 Conduct Advisory Group Health Equity Assessment

Action Items Utilizing CDC's "Paving the Road" assessment tool:

- Determine familiarity with the term "health equity"
- Determine familiarity with the term "social determinants of health"
- Determine what stakeholders believe are activities that advance health equity in practice

Objective 9 Improve ADPH Organizational Systems by considering the identified barriers to health when reviewing and updating policies and standards in practices and protocols.

Action Items

- Consider ways to eliminate variations in care, and inefficiencies that lead to poorer health outcomes
- Implement strategies to ensure that care is safe, efficient, effective, timely, patient-centered, and equitable

Objective 10 Develop ADPH Office of Health Equity and Minority Health Annual Report

Action Items

- "Tell the story" accurately and comprehensively
- Highlight success stories and lessons learned
- Work with internal and external partners to ensure accurate data and information are captured in the annual report
- Ensure wide distribution of the annual report to all stakeholders - both internal and external

