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Leading care, payment, and systems transformation

Advancing Health Equity: Leading Care, Payment, and Systems Transformation, a national program supported by the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**, is identifying and implementing strategies to reduce and eliminate disparities in health and health care by aligning payment reform and quality improvement efforts.

The program is based at the **University of Chicago** and conducted in partnership with two nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations—the **Institute for Medicaid Innovation** and the **Center for Health Care Strategies**.

Teams comprised of government leaders, insurers, and care providers from seven states are participating as members of the ***Advancing Health Equity Learning Collaborative***: Delaware, Illinois, Maine, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Washington State. Throughout the two-year project, the teams will share early insights and learnings informed by evidence and experience.

DELAWARE

Focus: Reduce healthcare disparities in preventative care for Black pediatric individuals

Participants: Delaware Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance; AmeriHealth Caritas Delaware; and Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children

ILLINOIS

Focus: Advance health equity among those experiencing homelessness and with complex health needs

Participants: HealthChoice Illinois; CountyCare Health Plan; Cook County Health; and ACCESS Community Health Network

MAINE

Focus: Advance health equity among those formerly incarcerated

Participants: MaineCare; Community Care Partnership of Maine; Aroostook Mental Health Services; Pines Health Services; and The Maine Primary Care Association

NEW JERSEY

Focus: Reduce healthcare disparities in mood disorder diagnoses among Black postpartum individuals

Participants: New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services; Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey; and RWJBarnabas Health, Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, and Jersey City Medical Center

PENNSYLVANIA

Focus: Reduce healthcare disparities in sexually transmitted infection screening and diagnosis rates among 15-20-year-old individuals of color

Participants: Pennsylvania Office of Medical Assistance Programs; Gateway Health Plan; Allegheny Health Network; and North Side Christian Health Center

TENNESSEE

Focus: Reduce healthcare disparities in maternal mortality and morbidity rates among Black postpartum individuals

Participants: TennCare; UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Tennessee; Tennessee Maternal Fetal Medicine; and Meharry Medical College

WASHINGTON

Focus: Advance health equity within three areas: (1) Member experience (2) Equitable pregnancy care (3) Equitable depression and other chronic condition management

Participants: Washington State Health Care Authority; Community Health Plan of Washington; and Community Health Network of Washington

Follow the project at **solvingdisparities.org**.

BACKGROUND

Health equity is when everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires improving access to the conditions and resources that strongly influence health. Health equity for groups who have been excluded or marginalized requires a focused commitment to eliminating health disparities, which are the differences in health outcomes.

People from communities of color and others granted less social power and privilege tend to receive lower quality care, resulting in poorer health outcomes. Research has demonstrated that this disparity persists even when access to care is equal. Individuals experiencing multiple, simultaneous systems of oppression tend to live with more and wider health inequities. Despite overall improvements in population health over time, many health disparities have persisted, and some have even widened.

Advancing health equity requires a focused commitment to eliminating preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, and opportunities to achieve optimal health experienced by racial, ethnic, and other population groups and communities. It also requires acknowledging and addressing racism and other forms of structural discrimination and oppression as a root cause of these differences.

Aligning health care payment and quality improvement activities across organizations with an intentional focus on equity can help address systemic health disparities in the United States.

The Medicaid program, because of the population it serves and its size, provides an ideal opportunity to improve health equity. Through a variety of approaches, including Medicaid payment models designed to support equity-focused care transformation, Advancing Health Equity aims to create a strong business case to sustainably reduce disparities and advance equity in the quality of patient care and health outcomes, and address critical gaps in care that put many communities at a much higher risk of illness and mortality.

The collaborative nature of this project makes it possible to engage key stakeholders including state Medicaid agencies, Medicaid managed care organizations, and clinical providers that are all critical to advancing these models and approaches. Including these partners in state-based initiatives helps ensure alignment toward a common goal and allows policy and operational transformation to occur in tandem.