Understanding Critical Issues in Health Equity

Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative
August 4, 2009
The Current Work of EHDI Grantees

- Grantees work to eliminate health disparities between populations of color and American Indians compared to whites.
- Grantees work across racial, ethnic, and cultural groups to address the priority areas.
- Grantees represent a wide variety of organizations and groups.
- Grantees have had substantial success in working to eliminate health disparities.
The Future Work of EHDI

✦ Build on the successes of grantees
✦ Extend work to address the root causes of health disparities
✦ Expand work to achieve a broader population reach
✦ Integrate state-level activities across MDH
✦ Engage organizations and institutions across the state in working together
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What are health disparities?

🌟 What is health equity?
- Individuals’ economic and social characteristics are not related to their health

🌟 Health disparities exist when health equity has not been achieved

🌟 Minnesota Department of Health
- Improve health of all Minnesotans
- Eliminate social disparities in health
How are health disparities produced?

✦ Broader social structure creates the conditions under which health disparities persist
✦ Efforts must target the full spectrum of causes of health disparities in order to eliminate them
✦ Social policy is health policy. Economic policy is health policy.
Tony Iton’s Framework

from Transforming Public Health Practice to Achieve Health Equity

- Adapted by ACPHD from the Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative, Summer 2008
Using the Health Equity Framework

Exercise:
- Think through a health disparity that your organization works on
- Where does your work fit in the framework for health equity?
- What is the story of the health disparity you chose, starting with the outcome and moving all the way ‘upstream’?
Factors in Health Equity

**Individual Factors**
- Age
- Genetics
- Health Behaviors
- Chronic Illness

**Community Factors**
- Education
- Health Care Access
- Community Norms
- Neighborhood Conditions

**Systems Factors**
- Health Care System
- Local Public Health System
- Social Services System
- Social, Economic & Health Policies
How do we intervene to eliminate health disparities?

- Intervention in all three circles of the diagram is most effective.
- The more ‘upstream’ the factor, the broader reach the intervention will have.
  - Example: Eliminating institutional racism will affect more people than providing better medical care for patients.
  - Both upstream and downstream work are critical: upstream work is longer-term, while downstream work provides short-term results.
  - Moving upstream can be challenging.
How can we most effectively do this work to eliminate health disparities?

- Address individual, community, and systems factors that produce health disparities
- Move closer to the root causes of health disparities (i.e., left side of the framework)
- Build partnerships and collaborate with organizations and agencies that are able to intervene at different levels