

Housing, home, and health

NARRATIVES AND HEALTH EQUITY: EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION

A home creates a place where a person can thrive, in the context of a loving family and a welcoming community. For example, housing stability is essential for the well-being of children, the physical condition of homes and the condition of neighborhoods have a direct impact on health, and stable housing helps create social cohesion. The emerging narrative on housing, home, and health helps convey important information about the many ways a place to call home connects to health.

Who deserves a place to call home?

1. “Home” is a basic need of every person and every family.
2. Everyone deserves a place to call home, a place to be safe and welcomed, to grow, and to thrive. Everyone deserves a safe, stable home in which to care for one another and provide a place for healing and health.
3. “Place” includes not just “a roof over our heads” but our entire community—to belong includes belonging in a community.
 - a. Healthy communities are places that are welcoming, safe, appealing, and have places to call home for every family.
 - b. When communities thrive, the individual and families in the community are healthier.
 - c. For health equity to be possible, all people and populations need to have access to safe and stable homes in welcoming and thriving communities.

Why are homes important for the health of people?

4. A home creates a sense of place. Without a sense of place and belonging, it is impossible to be healthy and to thrive as a human person. Homes are where healing can take place. Having a safe, stable home is foundational if each person is to be healthy, to have a healthy start, and to live with respect, dignity and health.
5. Having a home helps children grow up healthy. Children need a safe, healthy and stable home in a nourishing community that is socially connected and welcoming, environmentally healthy, and provides educational, economic and recreational opportunity. The stability, safety and quality of a home is essential for the health and well-being of children, youth, adults, and elders, creating the foundation for health across the lifespan.
 - a. Current health disparities are the consequence of multiple overlapping conditions, from employment to income to education and more. The ability to afford a safe, stable home as a place for healing and health reflects many of the same factors that shape health, including historical trauma, discrimination, and exclusion.
 - b. Efforts to assure homes for all should prioritize historically marginalized populations. Naming barriers to housing (racial discrimination, prejudice toward former felons, etc.) is essential to creating equitable opportunities to find a home.

Why are homes important for the health of communities?

6. A healthy community intentionally assures access to transportation, housing, jobs, and education, and places to play, worship, engage with nature, and socialize.
 - a. Inequities in health and housing are not inevitable, and can be successfully addressed in communities working to create welcoming, inclusive and healthy places for all.
7. Social connections, inclusion, and belonging link people together to create health and a healthy, thriving community. The physical structures of homes are like nodes on a network—but it is the connections that make it possible for people to engage in a network, form a community, and have a healthy life.
 - a. Homes are essential for creating community because without a place to call home, people struggle to connect to the community in consistent and meaningful ways.
8. Population differences are a source of strength and resilience for communities. People of varying backgrounds, cultures, races and ethnicities, ages, genders, and more bring different assets and ideas to communities, increasing the community's potential to grow and thrive.
 - a. A multiplicity of housing types and a wide range of community voices engaged in planning and decision-making processes make communities better places to live.
 - b. Assuring safe and healthy neighborhood conditions for all improves the quality of life for everyone in the community.
 - c. A wide range of housing options increases the capacity of a community to embrace population differences and harness the strengths that variety brings. One size, one type of housing does not fit all. Multiple housing types increase the opportunity for all people to find a place to call home.

Who is responsible for assuring everyone has a home?

9. Housing and homes, like health, can only be created through the combined efforts of everyone and all parts of society.
10. Public policies and market forces, comprised of human decisions, shape the nature of housing and communities. The historical and contemporary forces that shape the housing market and that determine who has access to a home and who does not must be uncovered and better understood.
11. The economic viability of a community hinges on its capacity to provide safe and stable homes for all who live, work and play there.
12. Communities must provide access to opportunities that promote health and well-being, including homes for all, good schools, transit, and readily accessible social gathering spaces such as parks and playgrounds.
13. In addition to homes, communities have a responsibility to create a variety of social spaces—places to gather and socialize—that promote interaction, inclusion and communication between and among people of all kinds.

For narrative frames on other topics, visit:

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