

Improving Health Equity by Building Health Center Capacity to Address the Social Determinants of Health

Project Abstract

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the [National Association of Community Health Centers \(NACHC\)](#) has partnered with the [Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations \(AAPCHO\)](#) to improve health equity by advancing health center capacity to address the social determinants of health (SDOH) through cross-sector alignment and collaboration.

By leveraging the [Protocol for Responding to and Assessing Patients' Assets, Risks, and Experiences \(PRAPARE\)](#), both partners can foster strategic alignment between health centers and their health and human service counterparts, including community-based organizations, public health departments, and other social service providers.



In the wake of COVID-19, identifying socioeconomic needs and aligning social services is more important than ever. The communities health centers serve are disproportionately affected by the pandemic's adverse health, economic, and social impacts. Developing or enhancing cross-sector partnerships can enable strained health and social services systems to meet the changing and increased demands for their services, and to prevent the deterioration of health equity.

Project Aims

This project seeks to:

- Engage with national, state, and local partners in support of building capacity and mechanisms for cross-sector alignment around the SDOH that is responsive to the gaps in health equity.
- Assess how health center-social sector collaborations and capacity for addressing SDOH have been impacted by COVID-19 and explore how the health and social safety nets can respond to new and emerging SDOH needs.
- Build health center capacity to sustainably align and partner with social sector partners.
- Develop protocols and tools for standardized SDOH interventions data coding in order to better document the types and intensity of services needed to address SDOH and to facilitate data exchange between partners.
- Elevate and disseminate strong examples of health center collaborations with social sector partners.
- Develop and disseminate scalable training resources that build health center capacity for long-term, equitable partnerships with social sector partners.

Project Impact

NACHC and AAPCHO will foster local community partnerships that can use data-driven strategies to prioritize population health needs, manage complex patients, and have a shared course of action to improve health equity. Strong relationships that are formed and nurtured locally can inform the development of such relationships in other localities, and partnerships formed nationally or at the state level can drive local collaborations. Over the long term, these activities will build local health systems' capacity to identify and collectively tackle gaps in health equity, drive innovation on how health centers can deliver value to the health system, build the evidence base on impactful social risk interventions and what it takes to care for complex patients, and, ultimately, lead to improved health for millions of people nationwide.

For more information, contact Sarah Halpin, Program Associate, at shalpin@nachc.org or prapare@nachc.org.

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