

Advancing Health Equity in Health Care

An Introduction to the Health Care Equity Audit Guide

What is Health Care Equity?

Health equity is the principle of and commitment to incorporating fairness into health by reducing health inequalities.¹ Health equity implies that all people can reach their full health potential and should not be disadvantaged from attaining it because of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, social class, where they live, socioeconomic status or other socially determined circumstances.²

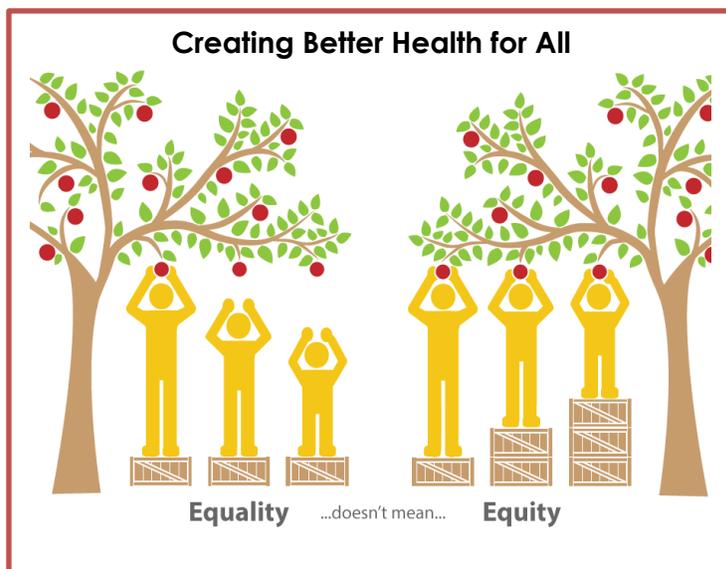
The goal of an equitable health care system is to support improved health outcomes for **all** while decreasing gaps between different population groups. Health equity should be a priority for all areas of the health care system.

Although equity in health is influenced by factors that are much broader than the health care system (i.e. the social determinants of health), the system does make a difference and does have a role in addressing inequities.

What is the Health Care Equity Audit Guide?

The Health Care Equity Audit Guide was developed as a tool to assist health care providers and decision makers in examining how fairly health care system resources are distributed relative to the needs of different groups. The Guide describes the 4 stages of the audit cycle and provides worksheets and templates that can inform evidence-based practice and actions.

Through using the Guide, end-users are able to systematically identify health inequalities in the health care system (stage 1), develop actions to address health inequities (stage 2), implement evidence-based interventions and/or strategies (stage 3) and evaluate the impact of actions on reducing inequities (stage 4).



"Equitable care does not mean treating every patient exactly the same. Instead, equitable care ensures optimal outcomes for all patients regardless of their background or circumstances."

Source: The Roadmap to Reduce Disparities, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2014)

What will it help me do?

The Health Care Equity Audit Guide can be used at various stages of program and policy development and planning to:

- guide the development of new programs or actions;
- explore an equity issue that has been raised by clients, staff, or senior leadership;
- review existing policies, programs, services or plans;
- complement existing planning and quality improvement efforts;
- identify gaps and barriers in services and care;
- improve understanding of health care equity;
- to identify potential concerns; and
- measure the equity within an existing program or service.

How do I get started?

For more information refer to the [Advancing Health Equity in Health Care](#) series. More detailed description of the HCEA can also be found in the [Health Care Equity Audit Guide](#). Select specific stages to explore, based on your available capacity, priorities and commitments. The Public Health Observatory is available for consultation, data analysis, and can answer any questions you may have during this process.