

Advancing Health Equity in Health Care

The Health Care Equity Audit (HCEA) Tool

What is the HCEA Tool?

The HCEA Tool is a 4 stage process (see diagram) that assists health care providers and/or decision makers in systematically exploring and identifying potential health inequities that produce unfair health differences in their community. Beyond identifying potential health inequities, evidence-based practices are implemented, evaluated and reflected on until gaps in health are addressed. Further action is often undertaken to address the inequities and incorporated into policy, plans and practice (NHS, 2004).

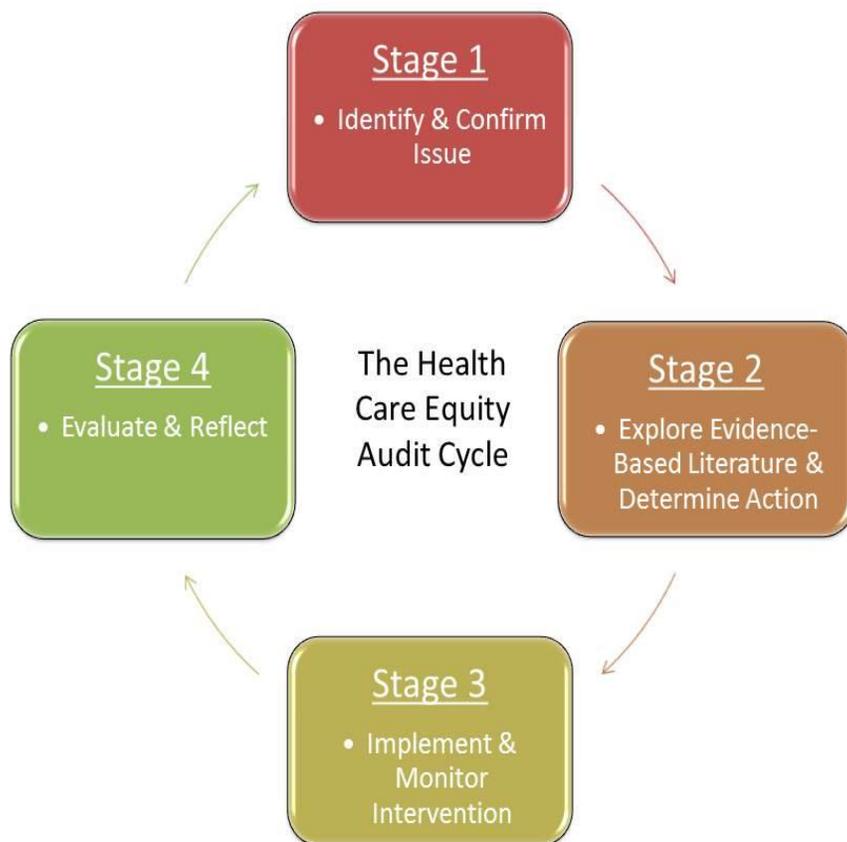
It is not always necessary to go through the entire cycle or complete each stage in order. Any stage can be explored.

Stage 1: Identify & Confirm Issue

Identify the problem (i.e. the perceived inequity and the associated factors) and confirm the presence of a health inequity (i.e. using suggested data sources coupled with qualitative feedback). Data sources differ based on area of care but, if possible, consider examining the data by demographic variables such as age, sex, ethnicity, socio-economic status or other socially determined circumstances. Health care inequities can occur when population groups in equal need are not provided equal service.

Health equity is the principle of and commitment to fairness in health by reducing health inequalities. It 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.

- Adapted from Whitehead & Dahlgren (2006)



Stage 2: Explore Evidence-Based Literature & Determine Action

Build an action plan by choosing interventions through literature searches and identifying actionable steps (e.g., resource allocation, social and language supports, safety considerations, skill building opportunities for staff, etc.). Review [Health Equity Considerations](#).

Stage 3: Implement & Monitor Intervention

Track whether an action plan is working (e.g., examine sustainability of service, whether patients' needs are being met, are patients and families feedback being considered, etc.).

Stage 4: Evaluate and Reflect

Consider, has the gap in health equity narrowed between different population groups? Are patients and families satisfied with service? What mistakes can be rectified? Are root causes of the problems experienced by patients in need being addressed? Continue the cycle. Re-enter any stage as appropriate.

For more information, please see [The Health Care Equity Audit Guide](#).