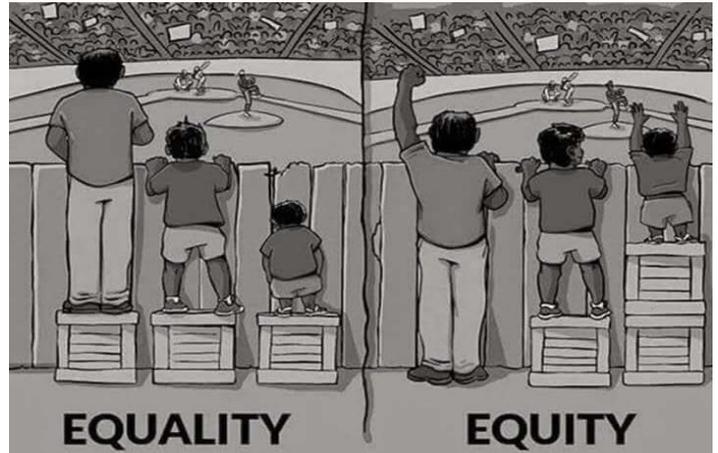


Health Disparities



What are Health Disparities???

Health disparities occur when we see **differences in health outcomes related to demographic factors** such as race or ethnicity, gender, age, sexual identity, veteran status, disability, socioeconomic status, and geographic location (Healthy People, 2014). These factors also are referred to as social determinants of health.

What are the Social Determinants of Health?

Social determinants include **poverty, lack of education, racism, and discrimination**, as well as **environmental and community conditions** (lack of resources for physical activity or healthy eating), **health care access**, and **behaviors** (poor diet, substance use, and physical inactivity). Many social determinants of health are shaped by political, social and economic forces. In order to achieve health equity, we address determinants at three levels: (CSDH, 2007)

1. **Socioeconomic and Political Context:** The education system, political institutions, labor market, and cultural norms and values.
2. **Structural Determinants of Health:** Physical resources that are or are not available; in relation to context, they create stratification within communities and enable the exclusion of marginalized individuals from power, prestige, and access to resources.
3. **Intermediary Determinants of Health:** Material and psychosocial circumstances, behavioral and biological factors, and health systems that reveal contextual and structural injustices.

Why are Health Disparities Important to Consider?

1. Health equity
2. Grant requirements (specifically PFS)
3. Ensure prevention strategies are benefiting all populations
4. Ensure prevention strategies are relevant to unique communities

Challenges for coalitions in addressing health disparities include limited knowledge about health disparities, difficulty fully engaging community stakeholders, barriers to measuring disparities, and identifying strategies to reduce health disparities.

In order to assess whether health disparities exist, coalitions need access to:

1. **Community health outcome data level data** disaggregated by group characteristics (race, socioeconomic status, gender).
2. **Community context data** including the social and political structures that maintain the inequality that results in health disparities.

Strategies for Addressing Health Disparities:

1. Collaborate with all sectors to allow facilitate access to health, law enforcement, and other outcome data.
2. Stress the importance of relevant, culturally appropriate prevention approaches.
3. Promote cultural competence among program staff.
4. Include members of the target population in all stages of prevention.
5. Use a population-based definition of community (let the community define itself).
6. Employ culturally competent evaluators.
7. Tailor strategies to the community (translate posters or billboards, play ads on different radio stations).

Additional Resources on Health Disparities:

- Cultural Competency:
<https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/applying-strategic-prevention/cultural-competence>
- Online Free Course for Public Health Workers about Social Justice
<http://www.rootsofhealthinequity.org>
- Social Determinants of Health Ted Talk
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qykD-2AXKIU>

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