



Massachusetts
Taxpayers Foundation



Health Equity Highlights

June 2023 - June 2024

Since last year's Health Equity Trends Summit, there have been significant initiatives that demonstrate the momentum towards systemic change to advance health equity and racial justice across Massachusetts.



KEY THEMES OF PROGRAMS IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR

- **Strengthening Partnerships & Coordination with Payors, Providers, Stakeholders**
- **Establishing Healthcare Workforce Diversity Benchmarks**
- **Institutionalizing New Health Screening Requirements for Chronic Conditions**
- **Systematizing Health-Related Social Needs Data Collection and Reporting**

SPOTLIGHT: HEALTH EQUITY ACTION PLAN

What's the goal? The **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation's Health Equity Action Plan** aims to achieve a more racially and ethnically equitable healthcare delivery system in Massachusetts through an organized structure, process, and a set of actionable steps.

What has happened so far? In December 2023, the Foundation published a report proposing a new statewide Health Equity Action Plan to achieve racial and ethnic equity in the healthcare delivery system. The Plan includes a companion toolkit highlighting best practices of other health equity initiatives implemented in MA and across the U.S. The framework for the plan includes:

- Community level mobilization
- Accessible and affordable care that is easy to navigate
- A diverse and healthy workforce at every level of healthcare delivery organizations
- Data-informed actions to address health disparities
- Community investments that eliminate structural inequities
- An absence of racism and bias in clinical training and care delivery

What's next? The Foundation and Health Equity Compact have convened a planning committee to help advance the Health Equity Action Plan. The Foundation is launching several "fast-start" activities identified in the report, including building an inventory of promising practices in Massachusetts and conducting a survey to understand stakeholders' interests in further education.

SPOTLIGHT: HOSPITALS IMPLEMENT NEW HEALTH EQUITY STANDARDS

What's the goal? Massachusetts hospitals are aiming to reduce health inequities by enhancing demographic and health-related social needs data collection, improving equitable healthcare access and quality, and improving patient's experiences and outcomes through the incorporation of best practices for addressing health disparities.

What has happened so far? In September 2022, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services finalized the state's 5-year Medicaid 1115 demonstration waiver. It includes the [Hospital Quality and Equity Incentive Program](#), which allows hospitals to earn up to \$2.2 billion in health incentive payments over five years. These payments are partly supported by an assessment on hospitals. To earn this funding, hospitals must meet a variety of health equity metrics identified in the waiver. Hospitals began this work in earnest in 2023, supported by the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association (MHA).

In 2023, hospitals completed more than twenty deliverables outlined in the program, including:

- All Massachusetts acute care hospitals met the Joint Commission's (TJC) accreditation standards for health equity. TJC assessed MA acute care hospitals in 2023 for adherence to their six healthcare equity accreditation requirements, and Massachusetts is the first state to have all hospitals meet these guidelines.
- All participating hospitals met the waiver's requirement to complete an assessment of how they collect patient Race, Ethnicity, Language, Disability, and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (RELD/SOGI) information and established a process to share this data with CHIA.

What's next? In 2024, hospitals began screening for health-related social needs and increasing reporting of patient RELD/SOGI data collection. Hospitals are also introducing new screenings for disability accommodation needs and implementing a new training program for staff related to caring for individuals with disabilities. One of the goals of this work is for hospitals to meet the Joint Commission's Health Equity Certification standards in 2025.

OTHER STEPS FORWARD IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR INCLUDE:

- **Beth Israel Lahey Health** released their [progress report](#) for various Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives they have implemented. The health system has made notable progress on several of their primary DEI goals: focusing on improving diversity in clinical and leadership hiring, achieving at least a 25% reduction in racial disparities in diabetes blood pressure control among Asian and Black patients, and impacting economic equity by increasing spending with underrepresented business enterprises.
- With a focus on implementing the community empowerment and engagement practices outlined in the Commission's [Advancing Health Equity Framework](#) as well as increasing healthcare access in underserved neighborhoods, **Mass General Brigham** partnered with the **Boston Public Health Commission** to distribute \$1.2 million in new [Community Health Equity Empowerment Funds](#) to **10 local non-profits and community-based organizations**.

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