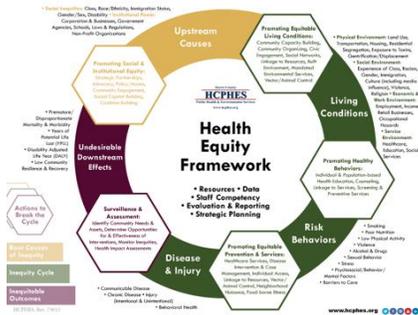


## 5 Steps to Health Equity Organizational Transformation



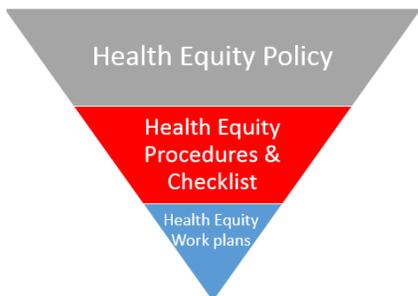
**Step 1: Establish foundational elements.** Our deliberate re-focusing from health disparities to health equity began by including health equity in the Guiding Principles and Strategic Directions of our most recent Strategic Plan. This firmly established health equity as a long-term departmental goal. Next, we adopted a Health Equity Framework, a visual theoretical model of how inequities occur in Harris County and how local public health actions break the inequity cycle (see image, left). We also developed a written Health Equity Strategy, a four-part plan for infusing a health equity lens into practice via policies, programs, staff development, and data. *Take-aways:*

- Include health equity as an explicit goal in your agency Strategic Plan
- Adopt a theoretical model of health equity for your community
- Develop an internal plan for health equity transformation that includes policies, programming, staff development, and data



**Step 2: Engage and develop staff.** For many health departments, upstream equity concepts are still new. Building ownership of this new direction and the knowledge to apply it among staff was our next key step, and we used multiple staff engagement avenues to achieve it: we conducted a staff assessment to understand our starting point, convened multiple staff Project Teams to help design our policies and procedures, formed a Health Equity Learning Collaborative of agency leaders, and created a “Health Equity 101” course for all-staff (see image, left). *Take-aways:*

- Assess your staff for their baseline understanding of and readiness to adopt health equity goals
- Use your existing staff engagement and communications methods to include staff in the design of your health equity infrastructure
- Make basic health equity training a requirement for all staff



**Step 3: Develop policies and procedures.** Institutionalizing a health equity approach requires clearly communicated expectations as well as practical guidance. We call this our *Health Equity Infrastructure* (see image, left) and it includes: a written Health Equity Policy (outlining high-level expectations), Health Equity Procedures (step-by-step instructions and a checklist), and Health Equity Workplans (outlining planned retrofits for each Division, Office, and major program so they apply a health lens to day-to-day public health practice). A policy for addressing health inequities is also a requirement of Public Health Accreditation (Measure 11.1.4). *Take-aways:*

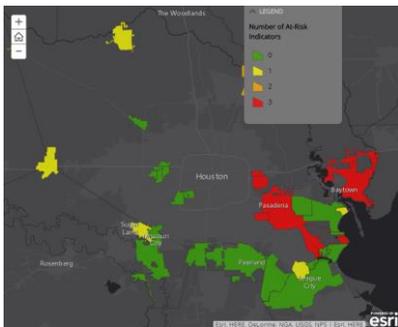
- Adopt your health equity guidance such as policies and procedures
- Provide practical tools to staff for help in identifying health equity improvements to programs, policies, interventions, and services

## 5 Steps to Health Equity Organizational Transformation, con't



**Step 4: Ignite place-based work.** As we began applying a health equity lens to practice, we also launched new equity-explicit cross-sector initiatives in the community. One of these is the *Harris County BUILD Health Partnership* (see image, left) that seeks to reverse food insecurity in the health-vulnerable area of north Pasadena, Texas by using local food access as a lever for local economic revitalization. Residents serve as compensated advisors, or Community Trustees, to the project. We also formed a Built Environment Unit that uses Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to identify equity impacts of policy, and we intensified efforts with healthcare providers to address structural determinants, with early care and education to help close the achievement gap in its first stages, and with community development to help re-invest in historically disenfranchised neighborhoods. *Take-aways:*

- Develop partnerships in new sectors already focused on upstream issues such as economic policy, achievement gap, living and working conditions, and neighborhood reinvestment
- Ensure that community members have meaningful decision-making roles in your community health improvement efforts



**Step 5: Use data as a tool.** Local health departments are uniquely positioned to use data as a descriptive, monitoring, and predictive tool for health equity. We developed a Health Equity Dashboard to track our health equity footprint over time. The Dashboard includes both internal (agency-specific) and external (community-wide) measures. The Dashboard is also linked to other key agency plans including our Workforce Development Plan and Performance and Quality Improvement (PQI) Plan, and its external measures are being used to map local health risks (see image, left) and determine emergency response. We are now convening a Health Equity Advisory Committee that will use the Dashboard and other data sources to monitor the internal and external results of our health equity journey. *Take-aways:*

- Adopt your Health Equity Dashboard (or index) that includes both internal (agency) and external (community) level metrics
- Integrate health equity measures into other key agency plans such as your Workforce Development Plan and PQI Plan
- Adopt an ongoing governance body to monitor and advise



*For more information, contact:*

**Jennifer M. Hadayia, MPA** | Health Equity Coordinator  
Office of Policy & Planning | Harris County Public Health  
(O) 713-439-6269 | (E) [jhadayia@hcphe.org](mailto:jhadayia@hcphe.org) | (W) [www.hcphtx.gov](http://www.hcphtx.gov)  
Harris County BUILD Health Partnership: <http://healthylivingmatters.net/build>

*Suggested citation:* Shah, U., Hadayia, J., Chennisi, C., Five Steps to Health Equity Organizational Transformation, Harris County Public Health, presented at NACCHO Annual 2016, July 21, 2016.