

April 16, 2021

While there is some light at the end of the tunnel with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is still much work to do to eliminate the health disparities and inequities it brought to the forefront, especially for people of color. As many have said, while we have a vaccine for COVID-19, there is no vaccine for racism in our society.

This update summarizes recent developments as well as IHA's continuing plans to advance health equity.

IHA Health Equity Action Day – Friday, June 18, 2021 – SAVE THE DATE:

IHA is urging every hospital to participate in its inaugural Illinois Health Equity Action Day on Friday June 18, 2021. Scheduled to coincide with Juneteenth – the date commemorating the end of slavery in the US – the purpose of this Health Equity Action Day is for every hospital in Illinois to take affirmative and concrete action on this day to advance health equity. Activities being planned for Health Equity Action Day include:

- A virtual education program in the morning to celebrate the work that has already occurred and discuss the journey ahead as we work together to advance health equity.
- The statewide kick-off of the new “Racial Equity in Healthcare Progress Report” – an assessment tool for hospitals to measure their progress on health equity metrics as we embark on a new chapter of collaboration among hospital leaders to advance health equity.
- Tools and resources for organizations and individuals to utilize as they strive to bring about change in their community, organization and personal relationships.

Racial Equity in Healthcare Progress Report:

The Racial Equity in Healthcare Progress Report (Progress Report) serves as a long-term accountability tool to document progress toward achieving racial health equity. The Progress Report is a tool to promote collective improvement, not to drive competition. This baseline self-assessment is an opportunity to measure progress, understand provider and community assets in racial equity work, and outline areas of improvement for individual providers and the larger provider ecosystem. Together, providers in Illinois have the opportunity to dismantle systemic racism in a way that no individual provider could. This tool aims to highlight the important progress that providers have already made and the work ahead.

To date, more than 25 healthcare providers across the state have completed the Progress Report during two separate pilot phases. On Health Equity Action Day we look forward to launching an updated version of the Progress Report to organizations across the state. Our aim is to position the Progress Report as the gold standard racial equity assessment across healthcare settings in Illinois, and eventually the nation. We urge every Illinois hospital to complete the Progress Report over the course of the Summer and to engage in the educational opportunities which will be coming later in the year as we translate the Progress Report into action.

CDC Statement – Racism Is a Serious Public Health Threat:

On April 8, 2021, Rochelle P. Walensky MD, MPH, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and administrator of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), declared racism a serious public health threat<sup>[1]</sup>. Adding action to words, she highlighted several new efforts CDC is leading to accelerate its work to address racism as a fundamental driver of racial and ethnic health inequities in the United States. She also unveiled a new website, “Racism and Health”, that will serve as a hub for the agency's efforts and a catalyst for greater education and dialogue around these critical

issues.

IHA Board of Trustees Accepts Recommendations of IHA Committee on Health Disparities: On March 26, 2021, the IHA Board of Trustees accepted the [\*Report of the IHA Committee on Health Disparities \(COHD\)\*](#) (password required). The Board expressed its deep appreciation for the thoughtful work of the twenty members of the COHD, especially its co-chairs – George Miller, President and CEO, The Loretto Hospital and Jose R. Sanchez, President and CEO, Humboldt Park Health.

The COHD's Report recommends the strategies and priorities for IHA to pursue in 2021 to reduce health disparities and advance health equity. It includes IHA's 2021 health equity advocacy priorities (e.g., hospital transformation, expanding telehealth and expanding health coverage) as well as projects that IHA will pursue to support hospitals as they advance health equity (e.g., having Illinois hospitals participate in the Racial Equity in Healthcare Progress Report). These recommendations are the culmination of several COHD meetings since September 2020, during which the COHD identified and discussed key challenges hospitals face in addressing health disparities; engaged in a discussion on diversity, equity and inclusion, facilitated by an outside consultant; and evaluated and recommended tools and interventions for hospitals to use as they strive to advance health equity.

IHA Launches Vaccine Hesitancy Campaign:

In April IHA launched a statewide vaccine hesitancy campaign—“[\*There's Unity in Immunity.\*](#)” Designed for all IHA members, this campaign seeks to:

- Encourage vaccination to help achieve herd immunity by the summer;
- Address vaccine hesitancy, especially in communities hardest hit by COVID-19;
- Build confidence in the vaccines by dispelling fears and misinformation; and
- Share messages from vaccinated individuals to communicate the value and benefits of COVID-19 vaccines.

Our statewide public awareness campaign includes a member toolkit with customizable digital assets, fact sheets, flyers, press releases, videos, and other key resources for member hospitals to use in their local markets. It also includes paid digital advertising in vulnerable communities throughout our state.

We encourage all hospitals and health systems to participate in “[\*There's Unity in Immunity.\*](#)” Together, we can make a difference by helping individuals overcome vaccine hesitancy.

IHA Resources on Health Equity:

IHA's [\*Health Disparities Resource Hub\*](#) provides hospitals with strategies to reduce health disparities and improve health equity. This new online resource has been updated with information from several organizations, including the American Hospital Association's Institute for Diversity and Health Equity, the American Medical Association, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health. Additionally, the Resource Hub showcases the efforts of several hospitals and health systems to reduce disparities and improve equity through programs and outreach initiatives. To share your organization's activities to advance health equity, please [contact IHA](#).

As a hospital community committed to healing and providing care to all patients, these steps highlight a few of our joint efforts toward real action to achieve racial justice, equality and inclusion, and to end health disparities. Our work with communities, government partners and other stakeholders will continue throughout 2021 and beyond.

For further Information, please [contact IHA](#).

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[1] See also, “[\*It is Undeniable: Racism is a Public Health Crisis\*](#)”, Statement by the Healthcare Anchor Network, consisting of 40 health systems in 45 states and Washington, DC, September 27, 2020.

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