



Maryland Department of Health Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

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January 17, 2024

Health and Government Operations Committee

Mission and Vision

Mission

The mission of the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (MHHD) is to address social determinants of health, reduce health disparities and advance health equity by leveraging the resources of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH); collect, compile and analyze race and ethnicity data to improve health outcomes; foster robust community public/private partnerships to advance health equity advocacy and education; guide policy, practice, and program decisions within MDH, and influence the overall strategic direction the department on behalf of the Secretary of Health.

Vision

MHHD's vision is to achieve health equity where all individuals and communities in Maryland have a fair and just opportunity to attain their optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identify or socioeconomic status

MHHD Statute

The office was established in statute in 2004 (Health-General § 20-1001-1007).

There are currently 22 areas of focus to direct MHHD activities in this section of statute.

Key activities include:

- Collection and publication of race and ethnicity data through a “health care disparities policy report card”, responding to data requests, and serve as a resource for information on effective data collection
- Advocate to improve minority health outcomes by establishing educational forums, programs (including grants to community based organizations), health awareness campaigns
- Identify and review health promotion and disease prevention strategies related to high mortality and morbidity rates among marginalized and underserved communities
- Foster public/private partnerships
- Assist Health Secretary in setting health equity priorities and advise on policies affecting the delivery of equitable health care and the creation of a strategic plan to address social determinants of health

Recent Legislation expanded MHHD's role

In addition to the requirements in the MHHD statute, legislation passed in 2021 added focus areas for MHHD's work including:

- HB 78 (2021)-- Public Health - Maryland Commission on Health Equity (The Shirley Nathan-Pulliam Equity Act 2021)
- HB 309 (2021) -- Public Health - Data - Race and Ethnicity Information
- HB 28 (2021) -- Public Health - Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities

MHHD Today – Leveraging MHHD Resources to Amplify Impact

MHHD is in a rebuilding phase

Current Data Initiatives

The National Academy for State Health Policy’s (NASHP) Learning Lab: Healthy People, Health States – Addressing Health Disparities

- MHHD leads the Maryland cohort in this multi-state technical assistance opportunity that supports states in data-driven policymaking approaches to address health disparities.

Maryland Commission on Health Equity (MCHE)

- Provides data support to MCHE Policy Committee tasked with developing a Health Equity Framework
- The MHHD Director serves as the Chair of the MCHE Data Advisory Committee (DAC) & MHHD epidemiologist sits on DAC
- 2023 report (initial draft and data analysis provided by MHHD staff) contains race/ethnic by jurisdiction rates of five social factors (potential causes), five health outcomes (effects), and health uninsurance (both cause and effect)

2.

Data Initiatives Cont.

Root Causes of Health Initiative Quality Assurance Initiative (RoCHI)

- MHHD provides data support for this program within the Public Health Services Administration
 - The RoCHI project is a co-venture of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors.
 - Purpose of the initiative is to assess the racial/ethnic equity of reach and equity of impact of various public health programs within MDH.

Grant Programs

Minority Outreach and Technical Assistance Program (MOTA)

- Improve the health outcomes of racial and ethnic minority communities through community engagement, partnerships, outreach, preventive intervention strategies, and technical assistance.

Social Determinants of Health Program (SDOH)

- Reduce health inequity among Maryland's racial and ethnic minorities by providing community-based interventions to address social determinants of health (SDOH).

Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) - COVID Program

- Provides community-based services including outreach, education, and other COVID-response-related support. (Funded by CDC)

Sickle Cell Program

- Fiscal steward of funding to support the Maryland Statewide Steering Committee on Sickle Cell Disease

Upcoming MHHD Activities

In order to better meet the requirements of MHHD laid out in statute, MHHD has focused on these areas:

- Collecting and disseminating up-to-date race and ethnicity disparities data, responding to data requests, and serving as a resource for information on effective data collection
 - This includes engagement with MHCE and their data efforts
- Engaging in a department-wide health equity inventory of MDH's current health equity portfolio for the purpose of identifying ongoing health equity initiatives, programs, policies and practices embedded throughout the agency.
- Developing and promoting internal and external practices to address structural racism and reduce the impact of the social determinants of health on communities, including understanding the most effective means of providing outreach to communities
- Strengthening community capacity by partnering with Community Health Workers and community-based organizations
- Identifying effective and feasible systems-level interventions that can help reduce health disparities

Improving Coordination on Current Activities

Aligning the work of MHHD into the priorities of MDH

- Provide funding opportunities to community partners through grants
- Support the department's legislative and policy development effort, including in the areas of population health, Medicaid engagement, behavioral health system of care
- Collaborate with and advise MDH colleagues on health equity/disparities initiatives
- Serve as a resource for cultural competency training, including implicit bias training, language access training, and programmatic technical assistance
- Expand and deepen partnerships with local health departments, healthcare and community-based organizations to identify and address health equity challenges at the grassroots level

Areas of Future Focus

MHHD is beginning to address the areas under the statute that require further development and alignment with current work

Including:

- Creation of a state plan to increase the number of racial and ethnic minority healthcare professionals in the state
 - MHHD Director is involved with various commissions on Maryland's healthcare workforce
- Partnership opportunities that include research grants to HBCUs
- Identify federal and private funds to enhance work
- Serve as central MDH office receiving federal funds specified for health disparities

Future of MHHD

Driving MDH Health Equity Objectives:

1. Develop and adopt a department shared definition of “health equity” and a health equity framework
2. Designate equity officers in MDH administrations
3. Build the agency’s capacity to understand and embed anti-racism equity practices into MDH’s operations (systems design, contracts (vendor & provider), budgets, internal and external communications, workforce development) through training and opportunities for accountability

Thank you

MDH looks forward to opportunities to work with this committee to enhance health equity in Maryland through the current and future work of MHHD