

NHPCO Project ECHO *Equity Where It Matters*

Key Takeaways: Equity Where It Matters: A Summary of Health Equity in Hospice and Palliative Care December 14, 2023

Key points:

- Health equity is attained when every individual has individualized and person-centered tools, resources, and opportunities to achieve optimal health.
- *Indicators of meaningful community partnerships:*
 - Diversity and inclusivity
 - Partnerships and opportunities
 - Acknowledgment, visibility, and recognition
 - Sustained relationships
 - Mutual value
 - Trust
 - Shared power
 - Structural supports for community engagement
- We all play a role in expanding access and improving the quality of care for historically marginalized communities.
- Every interaction has the ability to make or break the perceived experience of patients and families.
- Culturally sensitive communication is integral to the patient's experience.
- Each patient is unique and deserves to be honored in a way that best supports their cultural needs and values.
- Creating an inclusive environment in the workplace elevates our ability to provide excellent patient care.
- Utilize available resources to empower our leaders, staff, and patients.

Actionable Steps:

- When focusing on organizational action plans, consider the following:
- Establish transparency and clear communication pathways. To what extent can a person's support system be included in the end-of-life experience?
- Build a "Community Resources" document to include organizations that can provide additional resources to address the SDoH of patients, to include a holistic range of organizations such as transportation assistance organizations, food banks, low-cost mental health services, etc.
- People of the same backgrounds do not always identify in similar ways or carry the same beliefs. When initiating dialogues about an individual's identity, ALWAYS lead with questions to demonstrate compassion, sensitivity, humility, and genuine interest.
- Ask about and normalize chosen family structures and dynamics.
- Create a practical Cultural Sensitivity Training for Providers which includes tangible steps for providers to take to center the role of cultural consciousness when discussing hospice to patients.



- Use interpreters to discuss sensitive topics such as EOL care and to accurately describe palliative care and hospice care. Prepare interpreters ahead of time that the conversation may be emotionally charged.
- Use listening sessions to learn and acknowledge the needs of your employees.
- Develop Grief Groups, emphasizing the diverse and inclusive definition “grief” can take.

Participant Perspective

- SDOH (Social Determinants of Health) go hand-in-hand with DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging). The [PRAPARE assessment](#) is a tool to assess social determinants of health, and a good starting point that will get you the things you need to know to begin health equity work.
- Organizations should engage their entire teams – DEIB work should not be confined to executives.

Conversation Starters:

1. What equity-focused initiatives or strategies could be implemented to better understand and meet the diverse needs of patients, families, and staff?
2. How can your organization proactively address SDOH to ensure that patients and their families, regardless of their backgrounds, have equal access to the best possible care?
3. What ways can your organization enhance engagement with community organizations and leaders to better understand the unique health challenges faced by communities who have been historically marginalized, and work collaboratively to develop solutions that promote equitable care?

References:

- NHPCO DEI Through the Hospice Lens Report - <https://www.nhpc.org/resources/access-and-inclusion/hospice-through-the-dei-lens/>
- NHPCO Access and Inclusion - <https://www.nhpc.org/resources/access-and-inclusion/>
- *Hospice Through the DEI Lens: A Research Study Identifying Barriers to Hospice Care in Underserved Communities*, National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.
- NHPCO Diversity Tools and Resources <https://www.nhpc.org/education/tools-and-resources/diversity>
- Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/clas>
- CMS Framework for Health Equity <https://www.cms.gov/about-cms/agency-information/omh/health-equity-programs/cms-framework-for-health-equity>

