

## Health Equity Policy Options

Communities of color and immigrant populations suffer higher rates of illness and early death than other Americans. These racial and ethnic health disparities result from the interplay of many factors, including societal racism that leads to poorer housing, education and nutrition; barriers to quality health care such as lack of health insurance, high out-of-pocket costs and inadequate facilities; and outright discrimination.

Achieving health equity will require a sustained effort using many different policy and organizing strategies. While the work often seems overwhelming, small steps build over time and create significant momentum toward health equity. This document provides advocates with ideas for engaging in this crucial work by outlining a range of interim goals and strategies, including some new opportunities resulting from national health care reform.

The policy options include defensive and offensive strategies aimed at legislative, administrative and community targets at the national, state and local levels. Note that some goals may be achieved quickly while others may take years of work.

Community Catalyst is preparing materials to support advocates and communities working on health equity, including how-to memos for the strategies listed. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and the National Immigration Law Center are also supporting advocates working in many of these areas. Together with other national, state and local partners, we will develop additional ways to advance health equity.

GOALS	STRATEGIES
<b>Affordability of Insurance</b>	Refine and administer standards
	Expand subsidies
	Reduce out-of-pocket costs
<b>Civil Rights Protection</b>	Prohibit discrimination in health and health care
	Increase funds for civil rights enforcement in health care
<b>Coordination Within States</b>	Establish and fund state agencies for health equity
	Develop and fund state equity blueprints
	Conduct state and local health assessments
<b>Cultural and Linguistic Competency</b>	Mandate standards for all providers
	Develop statewide interpreter banks and multilingual hotlines
	Set standards for professional licensure
	Adopt state Medicaid option to pay providers for language services
	Press Medicare to reimburse providers for language services
<b>Data Collection and Reporting on Disparities</b>	Increase money for language access in public programs
	Define/refine standards
	Fund collection, analysis, dissemination
<b>Diverse Workforce</b>	Mandate broader reporting
	Ensure national health care reform goals target diversity
	Seek more federal and state funds for grants, loans and training
	Direct some grants to public health workers
	Increase outreach in minority communities and to minority youths

<b>Enhanced Outreach and Enrollment</b>	<b>Promote best practices</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support community health workers</li> <li>▪ Ensure linguistic and cultural competence</li> <li>▪ Remove barriers</li> </ul>
	<b>Secure funding, including for community-based organizations</b>
	<b>Launch creative outreach campaigns</b>
<b>Healthy Communities</b>	<b>Strengthen community- and school-based prevention programs</b>
	<b>Advocate for increased state and local public health funding</b>
	<b>Promote availability of healthy food in all neighborhoods</b>
	<b>Improve transportation options</b>
	<b>Reduce environmental hazards</b>
<b>High Quality Care</b>	<b>Set benchmarks for disparities reduction in federal initiatives</b>
	<b>Devise state quality initiatives to reduce disparities</b>
	<b>Provide incentives for progress</b>
	<b>Develop multifaceted and culturally tailored interventions</b>
	<b>Strengthen primary care medical homes and promote care coordination</b>
<b>Immigrant Access</b>	<b>Remove waiting periods in Medicaid, CHIP and Medicare</b>
	<b>Adopt state options to cover legally present immigrants</b>
	<b>Preserve emergency Medicaid and community health center funding for undocumented immigrants, and develop state and county coverage plans for undocumented children</b>
	<b>Engage health access groups in immigration reform</b>
	<b>Block or overturn overly strict verification requirements</b>
	<b>Fight deportation of undocumented immigrants needing long-term care</b>
<b>Patient Empowerment / Disease Prevention</b>	<b>Promote health literacy</b>
	<b>Promote community-based patient education</b>
	<b>Advocate for health care system navigation services</b>
	<b>Promote integrating community health workers into health teams</b>
	<b>Ensure diverse membership on committees and regulatory boards</b>
<b>Robust Hospital Community Benefits</b>	<b>Define and strengthen community benefits requirements for financial protection &amp; health equity</b>
	<b>Monitor hospital compliance</b>
	<b>Identify and disseminate best practices, including population health initiatives</b>
	<b>Participate in community needs assessments</b>
<b>Strong Indian Health Service</b>	<b>Increase funding</b>
	<b>Improve off-reservation services</b>
<b>Strong Safety Net</b>	<b>Protect Medicaid funding</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Defend state funding</li> <li>▪ Advocate for enhanced federal matching funds (FMAP)</li> </ul>
	<b>Protect and target federal funding for safety-net hospitals</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Track use of free care</li> <li>▪ Target funds to most needy</li> <li>▪ Fight cuts in Disproportionate Share Funding (DSH)</li> <li>▪ Seek broader federal requirements on hospitals</li> </ul>
	<b>Expand providers / networks</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage health centers to form Medicaid managed care plans</li> <li>▪ Promote health center expansion</li> <li>▪ Advocate for higher reimbursement for primary care providers</li> </ul>
	<b>Improve Medicaid quality</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Track disparities through data</li> <li>▪ Press Medicaid to adapt new strategies in contracting</li> </ul>