

Why Diversity and Inclusion Matters in Public Health

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



OMHHE Mission

Advance health equity and women's health issues across the nation through CDC's science and programs, and increase CDC's capacity to leverage its diverse workforce and engage stakeholders toward this end.

CDC Organizational Chart



Primary determinants of disease

“There is no known biological reason why every population should not be as healthy as the best...The primary determinants of disease are mainly economic and social, and therefore its remedies must also be economic and social. Medicine and politics cannot and should not be kept apart.”

Geoffrey Rose. *The Strategy of Preventive Medicine*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press. 1992.

Definition: Vulnerable Populations

- Increased exposure to diseases, infections, and injuries
- Increased susceptibility to severe disease, including complications, hospitalizations, and death
- Lack of access to health care
- Increased exposure to societal marginalization and discrimination

Protecting Vulnerable Populations from Pandemic Influenza in the United States: A Strategic Imperative
Hutchins et al. Influenza Preparedness and Response. American Journal of Public Health, Supplement 2, 2009, Vol 99, No. S2

Diversity in Healthcare

“Today’s physicians, nurses, and dentists have too little resemblance to the diverse populations they serve, leaving many Americans feeling excluded by a system that seems distant and uncaring. The fact that the nation’s health professions have not kept pace with changing demographics may be an even greater cause of disparities in health access and outcomes than the persistent lack of health insurance for tens of millions of Americans.”

Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions. A Report of the Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce. The Sullivan Commission. 2004.

Public Health Workforce Gap

“The public health workforce provides the essential services needed to ensure safe communities and enable individuals to live healthy lives. Despite the importance of public health to the well-being of society, the workforce responsible for ensuring the public’s health faces critical challenges, including substantial decreases in funding, resources, and staff; inadequate training; and inequitable distribution in areas of greatest need.”

Morrissey, Tarin. The Affordable Care Act’s Public Health Workforce Provisions: Opportunities and Challenges. Center for Public Health Policy. PHA. June 2011.

Parameters of Diversity

- Diversity is an appreciation and respect for the many differences and similarities in the workplace, including the varied perspectives, approaches, and competencies of coworkers and populations we serve
- Representation
- Sociodemographic (lived experience)
- Linguistic and other characteristics
- Practice
- Technical expertise
- Applied approaches

Premise: Association between diversity in the workforce and achieving health equity

- Greater diversity in the workforce enhances support for addressing health disparities
- Greater diversity of experiences and perspectives supports greater innovations in public health approaches
- Better evidence and training related to health equity facilitates improvements in public health outcomes

Biographical Summary: My cultural background

- Born in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico
- Parents from Dominican Republic and Guadeloupe
- Raised in New York City, NY
- Speak English, Spanish, Portuguese and French
- Frequent traveler to Europe, Caribbean and Latin America

Biographical Summary: Professional background

- HIV Services Director (1991) Alianza Dominicana
- Research Coordinator (1998) – STAR Clinic, SUNY Downstate Medical Center
- Organizational Development Consultant (1998 – 2001)
- Public Health Analyst (2001) – CDC/National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention
- Team Leader (2010) – CDC/Office of Minority Health and Health Equity

Biographical Summary: Practice settings

- Community Health Center (Atlanta, GA)
- International Health Agencies working with Garifunas in rural areas (Honduras and Venezuela)
- Federal agency in the contiguous U.S. and Commonwealth (National – U.S.)
- Support State Department Afro-descendants initiative working with the Brazil Ministry of Health

Fellowship/Internship focus

- Orientation Focus
 - Engage in dialogues with students from other programs
 - Learn about the professional trajectory of professionals during the Round Robbin Sessions
- Summer Fellowship/Internship Focus
 - Work in a variety of settings and conditions
 - Work with colleagues with a variety of skills
 - Build language and community engagement skills
- Post Fellowship/Internship Focus
 - Seek out a comprehensive educational path
 - Seek out opportunities to work in community settings
 - Support commitments to improvements in public health practice



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