

# Implementing Health Equity for Change



Health equity is achieved when all Ontarians can reach their full health potential and are not disadvantaged from attaining it because of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, socioeconomic status or other socially determined circumstances. Our approach to health equity recognizes that determinants of health and their root causes influence health and wellbeing across different populations and communities. Efforts should be targeted to equity-deserving groups, who bear disproportionate impacts of health inequities.

Social and economic factors in peoples' lives have a greater influence on individual and community health status than medical care and personal health behaviours. Evidence-informed "upstream" approaches to health — those designed to address and positively impact the social determinants of health — are imperative to decreasing health inequities and creating conditions for improved health across all populations, especially marginalized populations.

**Public institutions, organizations and individuals should adopt an approach guided by the following core principles to implement health equity:**

- Apply a social justice and human rights lens and approach
- Recognize a broad definition of "health"
- Acknowledge shared responsibility for equity
- Increase distribution of power
- Strive for integrity and cultural humility

Implementing structures that improve **health equity** for marginalized populations will drive improvement in **health outcomes**, **patient experience**, **provider experience**, and **value** to the health care system.



**Alliance for Healthier Communities**  
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To sustainably provide equitable and comprehensive care to the people who are at most risk of poor health, and to achieve better health outcomes, all aspects of the Model of Health and Wellbeing and Model of Wholistic Health and Wellbeing need to be integrated and implemented.



We call on the Ontario government to implement **5 key actions** to achieve **health equity**:

### 1. Strengthen Primary Health Care

- Enhance legislation and/or regulations that would mandate Ontario Health and Ontario Health Teams to develop a high performing primary health care system with the capacity to fulfill its role as the foundation of the health system
- Develop a consistent, health equity-informed population based planning methodology to be used for all OHT planning for primary health care services
- Develop a provincial strategy for those facing barriers to health, including additional funding and expansion of IPCHOs, CHCs, NPLCs, Community FHTs, and others

### 2. Mandate the Collection of Socio-demographic Data Across the Health System

- Mandate a standardized set of socio-demographic questions for data-collection to be used by all front-line health care organizations
- Develop templates and scripts to overcome the barriers to data collection
- Incorporate socio-demographic data collection as a measure of data completeness in quality improvement plans
- Establish infrastructure to centrally collect and synthesize socio-demographic data to be shared with all providers, planners, policymakers and funders
- Include the linguistic variable for Francophones on all health cards and collect language identification based on the inclusive definition of Francophone

### 3. Embed Health Equity into definitions and Metrics of Success and Quality Improvement

- Build in health performance indicators focused on health equity into government accountability agreements
- Embed accountability to health equity in evaluation agreements, quality improvement plans and eligibility requirements for funding agreements
- Ensure that all current and future priority indicators be disaggregated by determinants of health using equity stratifiers

### 4. Enhance Social Supports and Mental Health and Addictions Supports

- Putting forth policies that address stigma and to increase funding for harm reduction, such as expanding consumption and treatment services and safe supply programs
- Developing culturally relevant and targeted strategies to address mental health and addictions, such as the [investment in IPHCOs](#)
- Prioritize policies focused on living wages/ income and adequate and affordable housing, both of which have a major impact on health

### 5. Confront Historical and Systemic Barriers

- Fund and support the [Black Health Strategy](#), which was co-designed with communities who've faced barriers due to racism and evidence-informed
- Strongly encourage organizations to build in anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches into organizational policies, decision-making processes, program and evaluation frameworks, and metrics for monitoring outcomes, among other structures