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Wednesday, June 23, 2021

**Organizational Assessment on  
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**



Dear Colleagues,

This past fall, we committed to the development of a three-year strategic blueprint to guide Denver Health in becoming a stronger place of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Much of the blueprint’s foundation comes from an organizational assessment that included our employee and provider engagement surveys, employee focus groups, community engagement sessions and feedback from Denver Health staff involved in DEI work – all to understand our current DEI reality. The findings are in, and they paint a picture of an organization with a long way to go. As part of this process, and in the spirit of openness and transparency (as promised), I want to share them with you. The themes that emerged will be crucial in determining the action we need to take in order to make a real impact to improve DEI for our staff, patients and the community.

The organizational assessment was intended to help us understand what is and isn't working at Denver Health. From the information gathered, four themes emerged. Number one is that **race matters**. Some shared that being a person of color at Denver Health is hard. While we may foster a racially and ethnically diverse workforce, the diversity is not represented equally at all levels of the organization. You expressed that the impact of that disparity is that our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) employees may feel discouraged from speaking up. The second theme that came through was a concern that our DEI work is “**smoke and mirrors**.” While leadership may talk about the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion, there's uncertainty about a real commitment to change with definitive action going forward. Third, the topic of **transparency and communication** arose. You want us to acknowledge our shortcomings, recognize the good work going on in the organization and share steps to tackle the challenges that lie ahead. Lastly, Denver Health as an **Anchor Institution** stood out as a very important part of our DEI efforts. Many of you embrace the concept of improving the health and economic well-being of the people we serve, but you feel we should start by helping our own employees.

We are sharing these findings widely – with community leaders, our DEI Council and all staff members who attend Town Hall meetings this month. We want reactions, feedback and input as we move forward. This will be used as we draft our equity blueprint, declaring our purpose, detailing our goals and outlining the direction that our DEI work will take over the next three years. The work will continue to focus on three major areas: internally, to develop a workplace that is fair and equitable; clinically, to improve social determinants of health for our patients; and externally, to support and uplift the community we serve. The plan will also include clear definitions of diversity, equity and inclusion so there is common understanding of what we hope to accomplish.

As an organization, we are committed to making a difference for our staff, our patients and the community. Putting a stop to systemic racism, inequity and exclusion won't happen overnight. It won't happen in three years either. But together, we can and will make changes that matter.

The equity blueprint draft will be ready to review and made available to you in July. As our plans take shape, I look forward to sharing more about the challenging and meaningful work on the horizon.

If you haven't already, please attend a [Town Hall](#) session between now and June 30.



# 3 GOOD THINGS

Pride flags are flying at Denver Health. Four flags featuring rainbow colors in honor of LGBTQ+ Pride Month are up around the main campus circle. Denver Health is committed to creating a welcoming environment for our employees who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. The 'progress' pride flag, a variation that retains the common six-striped rainbow design as a base, adds a chevron along the hoist with black, brown, light blue, pink and white stripes. The chevron represents marginalized communities of color and transgender people. Denver Health is celebrating Pride Month with a variety of activities. Information is published on the [Pulse homepage](#).





Artistic symbols of hope are inspiring patients and staff on Denver Health's Inpatient Adult and Adolescent Psychiatric units. Nationally known Denver artist Koko B. Brown, from the left, installed Hope Hearts on the units' walls in a project led by the Denver Area Based Council. The hearts went up last week after the Council voted to help brighten the units. One heart shares the message in Spanish. "My hope is that you will remain hopeful with their treatment, whether that is starting medications, receiving care, having a safe place for treatment, or simply knowing that our staff truly care." Pink, Inpatient Adult Psychiatric Unit manager (pictured second from the left) says, "We need to know that we are there to help through empathy and compassion and that we will always be here for them."



This week, the Denver Health Vaccine Team opened a walk-in clinic for patients, visitors and eligible family members to receive their COVID-19 vaccination. Those who come to the main campus for appointments or visits today, tomorrow and Friday can walk in to the basement of the Webb Center for Primary Care (Pavilion G) and get their Pfizer vaccination between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. [This flyer](#) with information and a map is available to print or share and is posted at pavilion entrances. In addition to this week's walk-in clinic, our teams are working hard in the community. Our [community vaccination clinic](#) is out daily bringing vaccines into neighborhoods and partnering with organizations. As of today, Denver Health has administered 212,114 vaccinations.

Thanks for all you do,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin Wittenstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robin D. Wittenstein, Ed.D., FACHE  
Chief Executive Officer