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DENVER HEALTH & HOSPITAL AUTHORITY

Equity Blueprint
2021 – 2024

A Strategic Framework for Progress



As Denver Health has begun its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) journey, we have been faced with a hard truth: in our society and in our organization, the everyday reality experienced by members of our community can be radically different based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical abilities, and many other characteristics. Despite the efforts made by Denver Health to provide care to all, without regard to these differences and despite our commitment to an inclusive environment for all our employees, we too have fallen short of our aspirations.

This is a moment in time, a chance not to explain why things are the way they are or to be defensive when faced with the real issues of systemic racism, bias, and barriers that many face. Instead, it's a chance to acknowledge and understand the ways in which we contribute to these issues. We have a chance to make a real commitment to change that will move us forward to a more equitable future. Over the course of the last several months, our organization has asked for input on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion - for our workforce, our patients, and our community. The feedback we received was not always easy to hear and certainly does not reflect the reality we want to have, but it reflects the reality that exists for many.

Our job now is to confront this reality, reject the ways that we contribute to this and begin to shape the reality that we believe should exist. This will require hard work; difficult conversations; a lot of reflection on who we are and how we contribute to systemic racism, both individually and as a collective; and a deep commitment to tackling the issues.

Most importantly, we need to engage in intentional work that will impact our culture, leadership, experiences and outcomes for our employees, patients, and community. This Equity Blueprint is the culmination of the work we've done this past year, but it is only the starting point. Ending discrimination, bias and disparities is likely to be the work of our lifetimes. I have no doubt that with the commitment of the entire organization and our passion for an environment that is equitable, one that celebrates the differences among us and that allows everyone to truly bring their most authentic self forward every day, we can shape a future that we will all be proud of.

Thank you for your work every day in support of our mission.

Robin D. Wittenstein, EdD, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

“ We will profit from a more diverse, inclusive society, understanding, accommodating, even celebrating our differences, while pulling together for the common good. ”

RUTH BADER GINSBURG

COMMON VOCABULARY

Diversity

All the visible and invisible ways in which people differ, including the characteristics that make one individual or group different from another

Equity

Fair treatment, access, and opportunity for all people

Inclusion

The intentional act of creating environments in which all individuals and groups feel a sense of belonging, respect, support, and value, allowing them to fully participate

The Case for DEI

The events of 2020 emphasized that racism is a national crisis that impacts every aspect of our society. The health care system plays a pivotal role in addressing inequities, as a clinical provider, an academic institution, employer, and corporate citizen.

The Denver Health and Hospital Authority Board of Directors, leadership, faculty, staff, and learners affirm and renew our longstanding commitment to the reduction of health disparities, the advancement of health equity and the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We do this because:

- 1 *It is the right thing to do.***
Our patients, our community and our employees deserve no less than an environment that supports them to the fullest degree possible.
- 2 *Our True North***
To change the world by transforming the health of our patients and our community. We can only achieve this if we address disparities and inequities that impact health status and well-being.
- 3 *Denver Health is uniquely positioned to have impact.***
We are deeply committed to vulnerable populations and have served as an advocate and voice for them throughout our history.
- 4 *We are an economic powerhouse.***
We are an economic powerhouse. We have the ability to use our hiring practices, purchasing and investments to drive change in our community.

The Development of Our Blueprint

Establishing a framework for our DEI work for the next three years was done through a very intentional process that included the voices of our employees, leaders, external stakeholders and community partners. Critical to this work was making sure we provided a space to hear how diversity, equity and inclusion can be optimized at Denver Health.

We started from the point that DEI work is critical to us

It is embedded in our mission, in our responsibility to provide the right work and care environments and to fulfill our moral obligations to our community. Just as importantly, we also started with the understanding that as an organization and as individuals, we have significant work to do to reach the state where differences are recognized and celebrated, where everyone feels welcome and able to be their own authentic self, and where we can acknowledge when we haven't met our expectations and must do better.

Advancing DEI as a key organizational priority is based upon a more complete understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion and racism within our organization and using an intentional strategic approach to improve the culture of the organization in these areas. This work focuses on an effective internal environment for faculty, staff and learners; equity in health access and outcomes for our patients; and partnerships with our community to address social and economic risk factors.

Our objectives as we started this journey were to:

1. Build an understanding of the current state of diversity, equity and inclusion in the organization
2. Understand what type of infrastructure is needed to support diversity, equity and inclusion
3. Conduct self-assessments to determine gaps in our policies, procedures, practices and services that negatively impact diversity, equity and inclusion efforts
4. Develop a shared commitment and structure to support diversity, equity and inclusion efforts
5. Develop analytics to understand how Denver Health performs on workplace diversity and in key quality health outcomes

To gather the input and information we needed for this work, we engaged in a four-phase process, as shown in the figure on the next page.



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A diverse mix of voices leads to better discussions, decisions, and outcomes for everyone.

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SUNDAR PICHAI

Our Discovery Process



We started with an environmental scan that provided both data and qualitative feedback about our current state. Our goal was to hear perceptions, experiences and recommendations on diversity, equity and inclusion. We're also using data about our workforce to understand the demographic makeup of our employees, as it relates to who we employ, hire, promote and terminate.



Themes

We analyzed all the different forms of input to identify 4 broad themes, focusing on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, as shared by the stakeholders.

Over and over, we heard that this work is critically important to the organization, with many people speaking about diversity, equity and inclusion with passion, commitment and enthusiasm.

1 "Race Matters"

Diversity needs to be improved. Many people acknowledged that there are systemic biases deeply embedded in the organization that impact not only people of color, but LGBTQ and others. The lived experience of diverse groups is not believed to be understood and respected by the broad organization. This leads to unintended impacts and consequences of policies, situations where messages are poorly received because the context for the message is not considered and interactions between people that are negative.

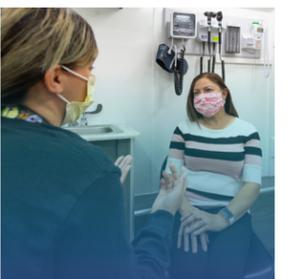


2 "Smoke and Mirrors"

There's a concern that we aren't moving fast enough or in a coordinated manner. It was pointed out that there is a lack of an organization-wide approach and frustration with the pace of change. For some, they expressed skepticism about the leadership commitment to DEI work and pointed out the lack of diversity in leadership. And there was some concern that diversity, equity and inclusion work would be treated as the latest initiative, rather than being integrated into everything we do.

3 "Transparency and Community"

One particularly strong message was about the need for both transparency and accountability for real change. There is a historic lack of trust and faith that leadership intends to address these issues, which requires us to be completely open with data, how we are performing and how we are trying to drive change.



4 "Anchor Institution"

Employees embrace this framework which focuses on economic opportunity, especially for BIPOC. However, employees were adamant that, as an Anchor Institution, Denver Health needs to start at home, invest more in our own workforce and ensure that opportunities exist at every level and for all employees.

“ A more diverse future begins with more opportunity. ”
OSCAR AULIQ-ICE

Developing the Future

Using the feedback we received, talking to experts in their field and learning from best practices shared by organizations across the nation, we identified four main work streams.



Creating an inclusive and engaging workplace



Improving health equity and outcomes



Building partnerships to enhance opportunity and give voice to all



Fostering accountability and a fair and just climate

Our success will be based on implementation of intentional actions in each of these specific areas, with clear metrics to monitor our progress and accountability. The most important aspect of this Equity Blueprint is leadership's public commitment to set and communicate goals, invest in DEI work on a long-term basis, and publicly report on our progress against our goals.



Goal:

Creating an engaging and inclusive workplace

Desired outcome

An equitable and inclusive culture, including shared vision and common language

Key Initiatives

- Recruit, retain and promote diverse faculty, staff and learners to improve our workforce diversity
- Develop career pathways that enable employees to grow personally, professionally and financially
- Conduct a critical review of employment practices, spanning the full continuum from recruitment to compensation to talent development
- Review key human resource policies to identify barriers to full participation of all employees
- Provide manager education/training on how to advance and develop employees
- Develop a mentoring program for BIPOC and women
- Develop an educational strategy for increased learning opportunities for staff on diversity, equity and inclusion
- Create standardized approaches, education and toolkits to support recruitment of diverse candidates

Measure of Success

- Employee population reflects the diversity of our community
- Diversity of leadership

“ Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance. ”

VERNA MYERS



Goal:
Improving health equity and outcomes

Desired outcome

All members of our community have access to high quality health care and services needed to address social and economic challenges

Key Initiatives

- Identify key health conditions to prioritize for improvements in patient outcomes
- Implement standard system of capturing social determinants of health information and use it to drive understanding of and improvement in clinical outcomes
- Enhance cultural and linguistic competency through implementation of National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (NCLAS) standard work
- Develop data standards and analytics for understanding current demographic profiles and for measuring longitudinal progress
- Collect, evaluate and share performance on key quality metrics along gender, racial, ethnicity and language domains

Measure of Success

- Reduction in performance gap on 5 key quality metrics
- Changes in clinical practice on 6 identified algorithmic prediction models



Goal:
Building partnerships to enhance opportunity and give voice to all

Desired outcome

We will work together with other organizations to drive change and opportunity for economic advancement

Key Initiatives

- Develop strong community partnerships with organizations that have significant connections to underrepresented populations
- Invest in appropriate apprenticeship, internship and pipeline programs
- Increase the involvement of patient and family advisors as partners for DEI activities
- Promote diversity and health equity research, including an enhanced focus on health disparities and increased collaboration among researchers
- Implement a supplier diversity program to improve economic opportunities for women and minority owned local businesses
- Denver Health will actively engage in local, regional and national DEI efforts

Measure of Success

- Increase in the recruitment of BIPOC individuals into Denver Health
- Spend goal for MWBE businesses

“ *It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences.* ”

AUDRE LORDE



Goal:

Fostering accountability and a fair and just climate

Desired outcome

As an Anchor Institution in our community, we will strive to model best practices, share our learnings and encourage open communication

Key Initiatives

- Provide training on implicit bias and cultural awareness for all managers and leaders
- Diversify our leadership to reflect and leverage the diversity of populations served
- Review the investigative process for complaints and issues raised through the Values Line to ensure confidential, unbiased and transparent dispositions
- Increase awareness of complaint reporting processes, including for instances of bias and racism
- Produce a Dashboard on key employee DEI metrics
- Implement an ongoing Equity Learning Series
- Create a repository of educational materials and resources

Measure of Success

- Open reporting of Values Line complaint resolution
- Production of DEI Dashboard