

# Health Equity Discussion Guide

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## What is Health Equity and Health Inequity?

The term, health equity, is often used to describe the services, situations, and environments that focus on health outcomes being equal for all individuals. Health equity is defined as the “attainment of the highest level of health for all people.” [1] In order to achieve health equity, the focus should be on equal outcomes instead of equal or inputs; this often requires providers, planners, community leaders, and workers in the public health system to focus on equity rather than equality and fairness. [1]

## Authentic Community Engagement:

Voices for Racial Justice defines authentic community engagement as the **intentional** process of co-creating solutions to inequities in **partnership** with people who know the barriers to opportunities the best because of their own personal experiences. It is grounded in building relationships based on **mutual** respect and **that acknowledge each person’s added value** to the developing of solutions. [2]

## Questions to Consider:

Use the following questions as a guide when making decisions that have the potential to impact groups of people. These questions can help identify areas where health equity can be more easily addressed. This is not an exhaustive list and should be used to initiate conversations around equity, these conversations should be on-going.

1. Is there a specific group of people who is disproportionately impacted by the issue being discussed?
2. Have the people who will be affected by this project been included in the process of creating it? This could be providers, partners, community members, and/or end-users.
  - a. If not, who’s missing and how can they be engaged?
3. Have you reviewed the quantitative and qualitative evidence showing inequities exist?
  - a. If so, what groups of people are most advantaged and most disadvantaged by this issue?
  - b. How are they affected differently and/or what differences do you see?
4. What factors are contributing to inequities associated with this issue?
  - a. Are these inequities expanding or narrowing?

- b. Does the project seek to address root causes or systems (ex: barriers created by education, income, and other social determinants of health)?
  - c. If not, how can it?
5. What does the project seek to accomplish in regard to the issue at hand?
  - a. Can this clearly be identified by reading the project description/goals as it is currently written?
  - b. Will these actions reduce the identified inequities?
6. Equity questions to begin thinking about:
  - a. How does this project benefit the communities or groups affected the most?
  - b. Is anyone harmed or negatively impacted by the focus of this project?
7. Thinking back to previous projects or initiatives seeking to address the same issue, have there been adverse impacts or unintended consequences as a result of the identified actions/activities?
  - a. Has there been a group of people impacted (either positively or negatively) more than others from those actions/activities?
  - b. Have any groups of people been left out of the project/initiative (either intentionally or unintentionally)?
  - c. What results have come from the previous projects or initiatives?
8. Are there more effective ways to reduce inequities than the work being proposed?
  - a. If so, what can we learn from those promising practices and why are they not being used now?
9. Is the proposed project or initiative realistic and adequately funded?
  - a. Are there provisions to ensure stakeholder participation?
  - b. Are there provisions to ensure accountability?
10. What would indicators of success look like based on the identified intended outcomes?
  - a. How can stakeholder engagement be measured?
  - b. How can impacts be documented and evaluated?
  - c. How will you know your work is successful?