

Attachment 8: Information on Health Equity

WHAT IS HEALTH EQUITY? The formalized definition of Health Equity can be found in Section 240 of the Public Health Law. According to the law, “Health equity’ shall mean achieving the highest level of health for all people and shall entail focused efforts to address avoidable inequalities by equalizing those conditions for health for those that have experienced injustices, socioeconomic disadvantages, and systemic disadvantages.” (Public Health Law §240.7, as added by L.2022, ch 523).

The Department of Health adopted the following statement on health equity in 2024: Health equity means everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthy, where no one is limited in achieving optimal health because of who they are or where they live.

Key Terminology related to Health Equity

WHAT ARE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH? Social determinants of health are some of the conditions in a person’s life that influence their ability to achieve optimal health. To work towards health equity, everyone must be able to access and experience conditions in life that contribute to optimal health, conditions such as:

- (A) Access to safe and secure housing
- (B) Living wages, secure employment, and safe working conditions
- (C) Access to quality education
- (D) Access to quality health care services
- (E) Access to affordable and nutritious food
- (F) Freedom from racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination
- (G) Access to social support networks
- (H) Access to transportation
- (I) Access to safe green spaces
- (J) Access to clean air and water; community is free from environmental hazards

WHAT IS STRUCTURAL RACISM?: Structural racism is the combination of public policies, institutional practices, social and economic forces that systematically privilege White people and disadvantage Black, Indigenous and other people of color. Structural Racism could impact a person’s ability to achieve optimal health. This term underscores that current racial inequities within society are not the result of personal prejudice held by individuals. Adapted from [Aspen Institute](#) and [Bailey, Feldman, Bassett.](#)

WHAT ARE HEALTH DISPARITIES?: Health Disparities are the statistical difference in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of disease and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups in the United States. Health disparities can result from health inequities. [USDHHS.](#)

WHAT ARE HEALTH INEQUITIES?: Health inequities refer to the systematic, unjust differences in the health outcomes and opportunities among different groups in society. These inequities are driven by social, economic, and environmental factors, and they often affect marginalized populations disproportionately. [World Health Organization.](#)

HOW CAN I PLAY A ROLE IN ACHIEVING HEALTH EQUITY?: Every program area in the Department works to advance health equity for all communities in New York both directly and indirectly. The advancement of health equity extends to our contractors, vendors, and partners. To learn more about how you or your organization can help advance health equity, please view the following resources: [CDC](#), [American Medical Association](#)