



February 22, 2021

Tackling health disparities and improving health equity are top priorities as the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront, once again, longstanding inequities in communities of color. Over the past eight months, IHA has strengthened our existing efforts to advance long-term solutions to improve health equity through several actions:

- Established the Committee on Health Disparities (COHD), a permanent standing IHA committee on health disparities. The COHD met four times in 2020 to begin developing and implementing strategies to address health disparities and the underlying socioeconomic factors that continue to adversely affect vulnerable communities and populations across Illinois—especially Black and Latinx communities.
 - Committee co-chairs are George Miller, President and CEO of The Loretto Hospital, and Jose R. Sanchez, President and CEO of Humboldt Park Health (previously called Norwegian American Hospital).
 - The COHD identified and discussed key challenges to addressing health disparities; engaged in a discussion on diversity, equity and inclusion, facilitated by an outside consultant; and evaluated and recommended that IHA distribute an “Advancing Health Equity Guide” similar to that developed by the Michigan Health and Hospital Association.
 - The COHD will be issuing its first Report to the IHA Board of Trustees in early 2021 offering its recommended strategies for IHA to pursue in 2021.
- Established the Health Equity Leaders’ Workgroup (HELW), composed of senior hospital leaders responsible for health disparities, equity and diversity at the organizations on the COHD. HELW co-chairs are David Ansell, M.D., Senior Vice President, Chief Equity Officer, Rush University Medical Center and Brenda Battle, Vice President, Urban Health Initiative and Chief Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Officer, UChicago Medicine. The HELW met once in 2020 and will continue to convene in 2021 to provide guidance on health equity issues and initiatives.
- Successfully advocated for [Senate Bill 1510](#) that was passed by the Illinois General Assembly in early 2021 to authorize the Hospital and Healthcare Transformation program. The transformation program provides the opportunity for vulnerable communities to receive \$150 million per year, for seven years, in state Medicaid funds to implement strategies to reduce health disparities, advance health equity, and improve the health and healthcare of their community.
- Successfully advocated for increased hospital Medicaid payments under the [Calendar Year 2021 Update to the Hospital Assessment Program](#) that the Dept. of Healthcare and Family Services estimates will result in total spending in the January – March 2021 quarter that is approximately \$33.6 million more than the spending estimates from May 2020. For calendar year 2021, assuming all quarters are similar to this first quarter, these changes would result in an estimated \$134.4 million increase from the estimated spending under the May 2020 estimates. Equitable Medicaid reimbursement supports hospitals as they strive to reduce health disparities and improve health equity.
- Collaborated with the Chicago Provider Working Group of the Chicago Racial Equity Rapid Response Team on the development of the “Racial Equity in Healthcare Progress Report.” The “Progress Report” is an assessment tool for hospitals and healthcare organizations to use to assess their progress on key strategies aimed at reducing health disparities to achieve equity and improve quality. With the guidance of the HELW, IHA is assuming responsibility for this project in 2021 and will be distributing the Progress Report to hospitals statewide.
- Preparing a second-year report on the [Chicago Hospital Engagement, Action and Leadership \(HEAL\) Initiative](#). Working in partnership with U.S. Senator Richard Durbin, 10 leading health systems are collaborating on a bold, three-year plan to improve health and reduce violence in 18 vulnerable Chicago neighborhoods by increasing local hiring and procurement of

supplies, supporting community partnerships to improve the health and safety of public environments, and enhancing clinical practices and neighborhood engagement to address social determinants of health.

- Created IHA's [Health Disparities Resource Hub](#) to provide hospitals with strategies to reduce health disparities and improve health equity. This new online resource showcases hospital and health system efforts to reduce disparities through programs and outreach initiatives. Over a dozen IHA members' activities on improving health equity are represented in the Resource Hub.
 - If your organization is not yet represented in the Resource Hub, please send your story [to IHA](#).
- Hosted "Improving Health Equity and Confronting Implicit Bias: An Action Agenda for the Future," a session during the 2020 IHA Leadership Summit. Panelists were Brenda Battle, Vice President, Urban Health Initiative and Chief Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Officer, UChicago Medicine and Darlene Oliver Hightower, Vice President, Community Health Equity at Rush University Medical Center. The session offered a forward-looking discussion on how Illinois hospitals and health systems can effectively address implicit bias and reduce health disparities in their organizations and communities.
- Engaged in diversity, equity and inclusion discussions and training for the IHA Board of Trustee, COHD members, IHA's Senior Leadership team and all IHA staff.

As a hospital community committed to healing and providing care to all patients, these steps highlight a few of our joint efforts toward real change to achieve racial justice, equality and inclusion, and to end health disparities. Our work with communities, government partners and other stakeholders will continue throughout 2021 and beyond.

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