

EQUITY IN ACTION

ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

ACF Healthy Equity Factsheet April 2024

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) promotes health equity through comprehensive efforts that support the well-being of pregnant women and people, children, youth, families, and communities. Equity is a driving factor throughout ACF. Focused efforts include incorporating equity into practices such as embedding equity elements into Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), utilizing technical assistance to increase tools and training for communities and grant recipients, and policy development and implementation. ACF Program Offices will continue to align efforts to comply with Executive Orders that call for an intentional government align efforts with 13985: Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, 13988: Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, 13995: Executive Order on Ensuring an Equitable Pandemic Response and Recovery, and 14091: Executive Order on Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.

Expanding Funding and Assessment Criteria to Promote Health Equity

Major expansion of the **Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting** program brings evidence-based home visiting services to expecting families or families with young children. Funding increased from \$12 million in FY 2022 to \$30 million, and grants increased from 23 to 41. This program is administered by the **Office of Early Childhood Development (ECD)**.

Impact: Will improve maternal and child health outcomes, child well-being, and children's school readiness, contributing to more equitable outcomes for children and families who have historically experienced resource and opportunity barriers in these areas.

Incorporate equity principles into NOFOs for organizations funded by the Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP). This includes requirements for staff in service delivery organizations to complete training each year on human trafficking that includes equity principles (e.g., implementation of culturally and linguistically appropriate services, development of disparity impact statement). NOFOs encourage applicants to partner with minority-serving institutions, schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education, migrant health centers, and other organizations that work with underserved communities.

Impact: Increase the capacity of service delivery organizations to provide culturally responsive services that strengthen practices and outcomes.

The Administration for Children and Families is committed to ensuring our audiences and employees with and without disabilities benefit from using accessible electronic and information technology. This includes but isn't limited to, websites, applications, software, emails, documents, and graphics.

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Creating Resources that Support Health Equity

Leverage the experience of persons with lived experience in destigmatizing mental health. ACF has co-developed several resources – including a [tip sheet](#), videos, a [new webpage](#), and [training](#) – with parents, caregivers, and youth. ACF published two briefs to promote equity and behavioral health **among young people experiencing homelessness**: [Integrating Harm Reduction into Services and Supports for Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness](#) and [Advancing Mental Health Supports for Youth of Color Experiencing Homelessness and Other Youth Populations Critically in Need of Services](#).

Impact: These briefs encourage grant recipients and partners to increase focus on the behavioral health of youth experiencing homelessness, who are disproportionately people of color and Indigenous people.

The **Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), Division of Runaway and Homeless Youth**, created a [Health Equity Toolkit](#) to address the health disparities that have contributed to the incidence of adolescent pregnancy.

This toolkit equips FYSB's Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP) program organizational leaders, program implementers, and partners with information and strategies to address health disparities and advance health equity in APP programming. The guide includes information about the structural and social determinants of health contributing to disparities in adolescent pregnancy, adolescent birth rates, and STIs, as well as strategies for applying a health equity lens within organizations and in program delivery. **Impact:** Provide current resources for programs to address disparities in health equity in youth and promote health equity in youth.

A guide was created to highlight wellness in Native Communities. The **Administration for Native Americans (ANA)** released a guide in December 2023 to address food insecurity and advance food sovereignty in tribal communities. **Impact:** Promote wellness among Native communities through a comprehensive resource guide on food and wellness resources.

In March 2023, the **Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP)** updated a [toolkit](#) on building survivor-informed organizations with three new chapters on survivors' leadership, equity, and wellness. In September 2021, OTIP published a [report](#) on understanding existing implicit bias training among populations impacted by human trafficking, including gender and sexual orientation. **Impact:** The implicit bias training analysis identified barriers and complementary solutions to address barriers supporting quality services.

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Promoting Health Equity in the Early Childhood Workforce

ACF and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) hosted a week of action during open enrollment for health insurance, held several national webinars, connected early childhood leaders with health navigators in virtual platforms, and developed and disseminated a toolkit for early childhood leaders that includes action steps they can take to help early educators sign up for health insurance on the Marketplace and offers resources to accelerate their action (e.g., sample emails, social media graphics, etc.).

In December 2021, the Office of Early Childhood Development (ECD) worked with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and CMS to develop a **strategy to improve health coverage for the early childhood workforce**, dedicating a Week of Action to target outreach to this population during Marketplace Open Enrollment.

Impact: The predominately women and disproportionately women of color in the early childhood workforce accessed the webcast and materials to take advantage of information about health insurance options.

Ensuring Language Access through the Translation of Materials

ACF regularly provides interpretation for live and virtual events and translation of resources for the public to ensure that language is not a barrier to accessing federal resources and information. Examples of this include:

- Translation of a psychological first aid toolkit for young children into multiple languages and used to support communities impacted by the wildfires in Hawai'i in 2023
- Interpretation at virtual public information sessions and translation of materials for the Children and Youth Resilience Challenge to ensure ACF reached Spanish-speaking communities
- Interpretation at live training for parents and caregivers related to children's mental health

In FY23, The **Office of Community Services (OCS)** significantly increased the number of available outreach and program materials to improve language access.

Impact: Materials translated into Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Cherokee, Diné, and Yup'ik increased access to program materials that can enhance the health outcomes of speakers of those languages.

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Partnering to Promote Health Equity

Children's Bureau (CB) partnered with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to implement requirements for states to provide Medicaid to young adults who move states after transitioning from foster care. On April 5, 2023, CB issued an [Information Memorandum \(IM\) ACYF-CB-IM-23-04](#) highlighting and summarizing Medicaid guidance and offering implementation recommendations for child welfare agencies.

Impact: Child welfare agencies received guidance to strengthen health outcomes for youth transitioning from care.

In FY23, the Office of Community Services funded eight long-standing medical-legal partnerships to expand and strengthen their legal capacities by introducing social service navigators, increasing collaboration with other social service organizations, and contributing to knowledge around medical-legal partnership best practices, ultimately serving as crucial links to families as they navigate these systems during emergencies.

Impact: Improves individual and family well-being by addressing the social determinants of health and improving health equity through wraparound legal and social services in healthcare settings.

Leveraging Head Start as a Health Equity Intervention

In FY2023, Early Head Start programs served 225,560 (Data source: Head Start Program Information Report-PIR) pregnant women and pregnant people through enrollment in the federally funded program. Head Start and Early Head Start services continue to implement intentional interventions that address health disparities and promote health equity.

In the past three years, the Office of Head Start (OHS) has developed and distributed educational materials to raise awareness about the social factors influencing health outcomes and the significance of enhancing opportunities for children and families to flourish. These resources include a visual framework employed by National Training and Technical Assistance Centers during equity training sessions, which portrays Head Start as an intervention promoting health equity. In addition, OHS orchestrated trainings across the United States on how Head Start programs serve as a [maternal health equity](#) intervention, specifically promoting awareness of [Black maternal health equity](#).

Impact: Head Start programs nationwide have been made aware of the maternal health disparities that exist, allowing them to deliberately focus on and cater to the specific needs of pregnant women and pregnant people within their communities.

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Using Research to Understand Barriers to Health Equity

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) launched two major multisite experimental evaluations of employment interventions that support individuals with mental and physical health challenges, substance use disorders, and others who have been historically underserved—the Building Evidence on Employment Strategies (BEES) Project and the Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Strategies Project.

Designing Responsive Programming to Ensure Health Equity

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) utilized \$100 million to design and implement new health programs, applying an equity lens to program expansion in new programs such as services to Afghan survivors impacted by combat and Support for Trauma Affected Refugees to offer culturally and linguistically appropriate behavioral health services to trauma-affected refugees.

ORR also develops policy and guidance for grantees and stakeholders to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility across health programming. This includes inserting specific language regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in ORR's Notices of Funding Opportunities, as well as encouraging grant recipients to incorporate people with lived experiences in staff, advisory boards, and governing structures.

ORR's Division of Health for Unaccompanied Children (DHUC) promotes timely, quality, trauma-informed, linguistically, and culturally competent care for children in ORR care.

- DHUC launched trauma-informed care training in English and Spanish for ORR care providers program staff in the Unaccompanied Children Program.
- DHUC also oversaw the training of 60 clinicians in Trauma Informed Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Impact: ORR provides trauma-informed care in English and Spanish for program staff in the Unaccompanied Children Program.

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Designing Responsive Programming to Ensure Health Equity continued

In the Spring of 2023, the **Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response (OHSEPR)** partnered with the Office of Climate Change and Health Equity (OASH/OCHE), the Office of Regional Health Operations (OASH/ORHO), and the Division of Human Services Policy to host several community conversations across the country to learn from communities directly affected by severe weather or community environmental hazards in response to Executive Order (EO) 12898, EO 14008, and EO 13045.

OHSEPR launched a targeted effort to leverage persons with lived experience to elevate the responsiveness of the work. OHSEPR conducted engagement events with community members in Buffalo (New York), Mobile (Alabama), Chiloquin (Oregon), Phoenix (Arizona), and Kansas City (Missouri) to incorporate input from individuals with lived experience into the initiative. This partnership focused on raising awareness across health and human services sectors of the nexus between environmental justice, climate change, and climate disaster; developing cross-industry connections to facilitate the transfer of valuable knowledge ideas; and leveraging existing programs and resources to address these concerns.

Impact: OHSEPR continues to engage communities to understand resource needs to address environmental hazards and justice.

ACF co-hosted a meeting with the CDC, the White House, and UnidosUS on Latino youth mental health in March 2023. This event spotlighted data, strategies, and experiences serving Latino youth. The event brought together federal, state, and local government leaders, practitioners, philanthropic leaders, and community-based organizations to discuss the unique strengths, innovations, and challenges of protecting and treating the mental health needs of Latinx children and teens.

In partnership with **SAMHSA and IHS**, ACF held a virtual convening on children's behavioral health in tribal communities in May 2023. At this convening, communities provided each other with examples of promising practices and resources. Federal leaders shared information about federal programs and resources to support the behavioral health of AI/AN children.

Impact: Communities benefitted from the opportunities to share experiences and create support networks.

In 2023, ACF, the **Office of Population Affairs (OPA)**, and the **Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)** launched the HHS Children and Youth Resilience Challenge as part of the President's Unity Agenda and Mental Health Strategy. The Challenge aims to identify innovative, community-led solutions that promote the mental health of children and youth. HHS received over 500 submissions in the first phase of the challenge. Fourteen finalists received awards for their proposed projects that aim to support children and youth from birth to age 24 and received HHS support to pilot projects through May. On May 2-3, 2024, in time for Mental Health Awareness Month, HHS will convene our 14 teams, including young people, for a two-day innovators summit in Washington, DC. **Impact:** Leverage the experience of underserved communities and ensure youth and community leadership are embedded into youth resilience projects.