

Principles into Practice

Advocate Role

Supported by the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**, *Raising the Bar* provides an actionable framework for the entire healthcare sector to embed equity and excellence throughout its work. In this first part of the project the **National Alliance to impact the Social Determinants of Health** (NASDOH) convened extensive discussions with providers, hospitals, payers, and community leaders to develop foundational principles, essential roles, and concrete actions for the sector to help achieve optimal health for all. A second part, led by the National Partnership for Women & Families, is exploring more detailed guidance for maternal health.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Partners and Process

Principles

Provider Role

Employer Role

Partner Role

Advocate Role

Bright Spots

Glossary

Resources

Principles into Practice:

Advocate Role

Raising the Bar's five principles provide the foundation for transformational action by healthcare payers, providers, and other organizations. *Raising the Bar* describes four essential roles played by healthcare, providing a framework for how the principles can be put into practice.

This section focuses on healthcare's role as a **ADVOCATE**, including the essential role payers and other organizations play in facilitating the provision of healthcare, and outlines concrete actions, each with a commitment that healthcare can make to advance equity and excellence, and a set of tactical strategies.

Following the Roles and Actions, there are a set of vignettes which highlight examples of organizations already advancing efforts in line with those actions outlined in the **ADVOCATE** role. There is also a set of resources for healthcare stakeholders looking for a place to begin or to amplify ongoing work in this role area. An aggregated set of the *Raising the Bar* [Resources](#) is available.

ADVOCATE ROLE

Advocate for and Invest in Health Equity

Healthcare's economic resources and influence can be harnessed as positive forces for payment reform, community well-being and resilience, and equity.

Healthcare's Actions

Action 11 **Actively push for and adopt payment reforms, especially reforms that align investments with the mission of improving health and well-being.**

Healthcare's Commitment

Create, promote, adopt, and participate in healthcare payment and accountability systems that align with and support adoption of the *Raising the Bar* Principles and Actions. Embed equity into these systems to ensure that payment transformation reduces (rather than inadvertently increases) inequities.

Why this action is included

The healthcare sector includes organizations in multiple roles, including purchasers of health coverage for employees or other beneficiaries; administrators of benefits plans; providers participating in payment systems; and others. In all these capacities, healthcare organizations and institutions can be advocates for and active participants in payment transformation that improves health.

Payment systems should prioritize the allocation of overall healthcare spending according to greatest need, seeking to mitigate disparities in capacity that result in lower access or quality for disadvantaged communities. Achieving healthcare's primary mission of improving health and well-being also means focusing resources on individual and community interventions that achieve the greatest health impact and promote quality and efficiency in the delivery of services.

Putting this action into practice

- Develop, support, and participate in payment systems that align incentives, measures, and accountability systems toward the advancement of health, well-being, equity, and service to the community.
- Work toward practices and payment systems that emphasize efficiency and high-value care so that resources can be available for the full range of *Raising the Bar* Actions.
- Advocate for public payment system reforms to advance transformation in line with the *Raising the Bar* Principles.
- Even while broad public policy debates evolve on payment reform, take immediate and constructive steps in the private sector.
- Healthcare payers should accelerate innovation in their own payment models (as private payers or plans).
- Healthcare providers should actively seek and participate in models and systems that advance their mission of improving the health of individuals and communities and advancing health equity, and that can be monitored and evaluated for their impact on health equity.
- Stakeholders should seek payment reforms that allow them to align their practices with what patients have identified as priorities, including access to and time with their providers and a respectful care environment.

Action 12 Use healthcare's voice to shape public understanding about the importance of health equity and dismantling racism and all forms of discrimination

Healthcare's Commitment

Use healthcare stakeholders' status, credibility, and relationships to increase public understanding about the root causes of health inequity, including racism and all forms of discrimination, poverty, and other adverse social determinants of health. Take concrete steps to influence the narrative and culture to promote efforts to address those root causes.

Why this action is included

Healthcare payers, providers, and organizations have a critical role to play in identifying the root causes and impacts of health inequities and in educating the public and policymakers about them. Further, these same stakeholders can use their powerful voices to build awareness of the full range of steps that are critical to health equity—in the delivery of health services, as well as addressing social determinants of health through creating sustainable, equitable conditions in the community.

Putting this action into practice

- Acknowledge historic and current patterns of racism in healthcare and society, and their impact, which is essential to achieving equity.
- Promote values of equity, inclusion, and antiracism through both internal and external communications.

- Demonstrate that real change is possible by uplifting up examples of successful work to address inequities and their root causes.
- Support community organizations and public health entities by highlighting their importance, partnering with them, and building their visibility.
- Use reputation and credibility to help shape public opinion, to “change hearts,” and to advance health equity.

Action 13 Use power and influence to advocate for health equity in the development and implementation of public policies.

Healthcare's Commitment

Promote health equity by advocating for public policies that build equity, dismantle structural racism, and address adverse social determinants of health. Adopt a “health equity in all policies” approach and stand with leaders of the places served to support and advocate a robust public health infrastructure, improved social services, affordable housing, equitable economic development and anti-poverty initiatives, educational equity, and other community priorities.

Why this action is included

As powerful organizations in their communities, healthcare stakeholders are critical partners in advancing health and well-being. Healthcare institutions are in a unique position to recognize the limits of medical care in fully achieving equity and the importance of working with others to advance policies at the community level. Many healthcare organizations have considerable experience in addressing public policy, and therefore are an essential part of coalitions to address social determinants of health.

Putting this action into practice

- Establish mechanisms for engaging the community in defining advocacy priorities and strategies to ensure that advocacy is responsive to the needs and priorities of those who live, work, and play in the areas where healthcare providers, payers, and organizations operate.
- Use government relations capacity, access to legislators and their influencers, and other mechanisms to advocate for the adoption of policies focused on improving the health and well-being of those who have been historically disadvantaged, as well as paying continued attention to the effective implementation of those policies.
- Provide important insight into the health consequences of housing, transportation, and environmental justice public policy and motivating action in areas beyond the immediate control of the healthcare sector.
- Advocate for sustainable funding for the public health sector and public health infrastructure to protect communities against health threats and improve community health and resilience. Partner with public health to advance health and well-being.
- Engage with individuals and organizations in the community and lend support and capabilities to grassroots organizing and advocacy for the advancement of equitable public policies.
- Advocate and invest in the broader technology and data infrastructure needed to enable cross-sector, holistic approaches to advancing health equity.

Action 14 Use investment and procurement power to contribute to the health and resilience of communities.

Healthcare's Commitment

Promote health equity through procurement methods and by investing in the economic and social development of the community, accelerate the creation of wealth in communities that experience the effects of historic and/or ongoing marginalization.

Why this action is included

Endowment investments and community-benefit spending are crucial factors in a "health equity in all investments" strategy, ensuring that priority is placed on meeting the fundamental needs identified by the community, rather than the needs of the institution.

Putting this action into practice

- Invest in the economic development of the community by prioritizing local purchasing, and by taking other steps to create wealth in communities that have experienced the effects of historic or ongoing marginalization and disinvestment.
- Invest in addressing adverse social determinants of health by providing direct funding for initiatives and partnerships that increase affordable housing supply, access to quality foods, reliable and affordable transportation, neighborhood physical and environmental safety, and more.
- Disinvest in financial relationships or ventures that perpetuate discrimination to demonstrate a commitment to equity.

Advocate Role: Vignettes

White Bird Clinic

White Bird Clinic is a Federally Qualified Health Center in Lane County, Oregon that has provided community-based health and crisis services since 1969. It started as a grassroots collective of concerned citizens responding to youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, as well as community needs for medical, legal, mental health and substance-use disorder services. After 50 years, White Bird Clinic still runs as a collective, partnering with local organizations and volunteers to serve this mid-size urban community at the southern end of the Willamette Valley.

White Bird Clinic runs a long-standing harm reduction, crisis response service called [CAHOOTS](#) that provides de-escalation services in non-criminal and non-violent calls. White Bird estimates that CAHOOTS responds to approximately 20 percent of all 911 calls in the area and has meaningfully reduced justice involvement when clinical care was more appropriate.



Every health center has a chance to be a local expert on what's not working. We are in a position of privilege as providers. We take that to amplify community voices. We feel the obligation to serve and improve outcomes. It can be easy to just focus on billable encounters, focusing inward, but we have a priority to look outward."

Director of Consulting, regional community health center in Oregon, 2021

Its early partnership with local law enforcement and strong relationships with community members, fire departments, and city officials underlies much of the program's success. CAHOOTS provides stabilization for those with urgent behavioral health needs, minor medical issues, crisis counseling, conflict resolution and mediation, grief support, housing support, resource connections and referrals, and transportation to services. White Bird has also worked with high schools to embed crisis workers in education settings.

The city's community police initiative eventually funded CAHOOTS, subsequently reducing police presence in the community. CAHOOTS' tenure and reputation as a caring and reliable resource for all, regardless of socioeconomic status, has enabled White Bird to build trust with and serve the community effectively.

White Bird uses extensive data collection to analyze the success of the program, particularly on community impact. For example, White Bird measures total call volume, impact on the criminal and legal system, and cost savings from preventive ER services. White Bird's recent success gathering 15,000 signatures in support of re-allocating policing funds to CAHOOTS, demonstrates overwhelming community support. These concrete impact measures, in addition to anecdotes, about community impact help support the continuation of the CAHOOTS program, and broader advocacy efforts for replicating and [reimbursing crisis intervention](#) services throughout the country.

CommonSpirit

CommonSpirit Health is a national Catholic healthcare system headquartered in Englewood, Colorado with 140 hospitals stretched across 21 states. Formed in 2019 through the merging of Catholic Health Initiatives and Dignity Health, CommonSpirit is now one of the largest nonprofit health systems in the country.

While CommonSpirit Health already employs and supports a diverse workforce, the organization is also investing in and growing leaders who advance and embed equity, quality, and value across the organization.

Just five percent of [practicing physicians](#) in the United States are Black. Recognizing the impact of a lack of diversity in the healthcare workforce, CommonSpirit partnered with Morehouse School of Medicine, one of only four Historically Black Medical Schools in the United States, to develop and train more Black physicians. The partnership dedicated \$100 million over ten years to establish five new regional medical school campuses and graduate medical education programs in at least ten markets connected to CommonSpirit Health. The medical school curriculum at these campuses explicitly includes education about the history and impacts of racism in the United States.

CommonSpirit acknowledges that healthcare equity will not improve without acknowledging the past. Collaborating with Morehouse, the organization is administering an antiracism curriculum that is intended to invest in and grow leaders to advance and embed equity within medical organizations.

Boston Medical Center

Boston Medical Center (BMC) is a 514-bed academic teaching hospital located in Boston. As the largest safety-net hospital in New England, BMC strives to provide quality, accessible care to its diverse patient population—many of whom live in areas of high socioeconomic deprivation throughout the Boston Metropolitan Area.

Many of BMC's patients face ongoing, localized socioeconomic stressors, with housing insecurity chief among them. One quarter of BMC's admitted patients experience homelessness, and initial data suggests that one third of their pediatric patients experience housing insecurity.

BMC has long recognized the role of housing in health. For decades, they have sent wellness teams of community health workers and nurses to conduct onsite health services for unhoused residents in shelters, as well as provide case management services to help elders overcome barriers to permanent housing. In 2018, BMC decided to do more, committing \$6.5 million over five years towards supporting community-based housing development and housing services. Projects include a \$1 million stabilization fund to provide grants to community-based organizations to help families avoid eviction in and around Boston as well as a \$1 million donation to community partners to create a housing stabilization program for individuals with complex medical needs.

BMC's original \$6.5 million dollar commitment led to the creation of the Innovative Stable Housing Initiative (ISHI), a \$3 million fund created in collaboration with Boston Children's and Brigham and Women's Hospital. It contains three funding streams. The flex fund supports organizations that provide immediate access to resources that help individuals and families maintain or attain stable housing. The upstream fund aims to invest in organizing and coalition building efforts that are geared towards advancing policy and systems change to promote stable, affordable housing. Finally, the resident-led fund engages housing insecure residents to inform the provision of grant funds in a more democratic and community-centered way.

Throughout the creation of ISHI, community members and organizations played a central role in helping to identify, evaluate, and fund approaches that increase housing stability—including funding community organizations that advocate for changes to city and state policy. They hope to help transform healthcare's approach to housing by tackling, rather than navigating, the broken systems that give rise to issues in the first place.

To learn more and find resources, see the [BMC Housing Security](#) site, and visit [Innovative Stable Housing Initiative](#).

Portland, Oregon Healthcare Organization Affordable Housing Work

In 2016, a group of six Oregon-based healthcare institutions—Adventist Health, CareOregon, Kaiser Permanente Northwest, Legacy Health, Oregon Health & Science University, and Providence Health & Services—joined forces with three local foundations—the Collins Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, and the Oregon Community Foundation—to support Central City Concern, a local community-based housing provider, to address the rising rates and increased visibility of homelessness in the tri-county Portland Area.

Recognizing that wellness is not achievable without safe and stable housing, these organizations made it their mission to increase the housing availability for community members with very low-income and complex health challenges, including mental health and substance use disorders. These conversations led to a historic commitment of \$22.6 million towards constructing 379 new units of supportive housing across the region—the largest private housing investment to date in the United States.

To further advance this work, these organizations, along with the Cambia Foundation, partnered with Health Share of Oregon, the regional Medicaid Coordinated Care Organization, to establish the Regional Supportive Housing Impact Fund (RSHIF). RSHIF is a flexible funding pool that aims to enhance and supplement existing supportive housing efforts within the Tri-County Portland Area with a stated focus on:

- Incorporating racial equity into its infrastructure, activities, and outcomes,
- Building out regional efforts, including ensuring the availability of housing and supportive services for the zero to 30 percent Area Median Income (AMI) population,
- Continuing to provide services to individuals who are experiencing, homelessness and have complex health challenges,
- Engaging local leaders in the collaboration, and
- Ensuring RSHIF's financial sustainability over time.

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, RSHIF's first concrete project, the Metro 300 program, achieved considerable success. Catalyzed by a \$5.1 million investment from Kaiser Permanente in January 2020, this program helped more than 350 older adults with disabling conditions access safe, stable housing. This program was launched just prior to the voters' approval of a new Supportive Housing Services program, which will generate about \$250 million per year for the next decade for the region's most marginalized community members.

Beyond surpassing its initial goal of housing 300 older adults, the Metro 300 program offers an early opportunity to leverage those ongoing funds so that every client served through the Metro 300 program who needs permanent housing and long-term rent assistance will now be able to receive that support.

Through the use of the RSHIF collaborative's strategic framework, the healthcare institutions' investment, Health Share's infrastructure, and the region's voters, one community is showing the immediate impacts made possible when health and housing efforts are joined together.

Advocate Role: Resources

[A Framework for Advancing Health Equity and Value: Policy Options for Reducing Health Inequities by Transforming Healthcare Delivery and Payment Systems](#)

Families USA (2018)

- This report serves as a resource that health equity and healthcare system transformation leaders can use to assist in policy development and prioritization that best serves their communities and constituencies. The report outlines six policy option domains for health equity-focused system transformation.

[A National Goal to Advance Health Equity Through Value-Based Payment](#)

Joshua M. Liao, MD, MSc; Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, MBA; Amol S. Navathe, MD, PhD (2021)

- This viewpoint describes three steps policymakers should take to engage the clinical community and translate lessons from the early value-based payment movement into “pay for equity.”

[Addressing Racial Health Disparities and Promoting Health Equity](#)

Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBS) (n.d.)

- This resource is a BCBS Association white paper outlining strategies for payers to address equity issues using data, targeted condition specific interventions, investing in behavioral health and preventative care, improving access to insurance coverage, addressing social determinants of health, and increasing provider diversity.

[Advancing Health Equity: Leading Care, Payment, and Systems Transformation, Leveraging Value-Based Payment Approaches to Promote Health Equity: Key Strategies for Healthcare Payers](#)

Center for Health Care Strategies (2018)

- This report identifies six connected strategies to guide payers, including Medicaid agencies and managed care organizations, in developing equity focused value-based payment approaches to mitigate health disparities at the state and local level.

[Advancing Health Equity through APMs](#)

Healthcare Payment Learning & Action Network, Health Equity Advisory Team (2021)

- This resource provides stakeholders with actionable guidance on how they can leverage Alternative Payment Models (APMs) to advance health equity in ways that are both aligned and tailored to meet their communities' needs to ensure that health equity and person-centeredness are prioritized throughout the design, implementation, and evaluation processes.

[Bringing Light & Heat: A Health Equity Guide for Healthcare Transformation and Accountability](#)

HealthBegins, Health Leads, JSI, SIREN, Human Impact Partners (2021)

- Bringing Light & Heat provides a framework for healthcare institutions to pursue health and racial equity, with a proposed process and approach to organizing action and ongoing improvement. The guide also includes ideas about the kinds of strategic goals and sample practices institutions might adopt at the patient, organizational, community, and societal levels to operationalize health and racial equity.

[Build Health Places Network Playbooks](#)

Build Healthy Places Network (n.d.)

- This resource provides practical advice to help healthcare organizations and community development organizations partner with each other.

Center for Community Investment Resources

Center for Community Investment (2022)

- This library of resources provides helpful tools and guides for community investment. Some of these include Investing in Community Health: A Toolkit for Hospitals, Improving Community Health by Strengthening Community Investment: Roles for Hospitals and Health Institutions, and Investing Upstream for Community Health Equity: Getting Started.

Financing that Rewards Better Health and Well-Being: A Workshop Series

National Academy of Medicine (2021)

- This brief summarizes the discussions that occurred throughout the workshop series “Financing That Rewards Better Health and Well-Being,” a program focused on accelerating movement away from fee-for-service and toward integrated payment approaches.

Health Equity Should Be a Key Value in Value-Based Payment and Delivery Reform

Health Affairs (2020)

- This resource provides three strategies for payers and providers to integrate health equity into performance measurement, reimbursement, and care delivery.

Health in All Policies

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Office of the Associate Director for Policy (2015)

- This resource supports the inclusion of health considerations when making decisions about things like transportation, education and other areas that impact communities. The Health in All Policies Resource Center houses practical tools and resources to achieve better health for individuals, families, and communities.

Health Systems Should Look Within to Address Social Determinants

Modern Healthcare (2018)

- This commentary offers a perspective on how healthcare systems could improve the health of their own employees and contractors by providing them with the same support offered to at-risk patients to improve social determinants of health.

Healthy Communities Policy Framework

Healthcare Anchor Network (2020)

- This resource provides a framework for a policy agenda to create equitable, engaged, connected and economically strong communities.

Inclusive Local Sourcing: People and Place

Healthcare Anchor Network (2019)

- This toolkit offers a guide for how healthcare systems can leverage their supply chains to support diverse and locally owned vendors and help incubate new community enterprises to fill supply chain gaps.

Integrator Role and Functions in Population Health Improvement Initiatives

Nemours (2012)

- This resource describes the role of an integrator—an entity that serves a convening role and works intentionally and systematically across various sectors to achieve improvements in health and well-being—and outlines the goals of an integrator or system of integrators. The paper proposes 11 integrative roles and functions that a range of partners within population health networks must play to ensure that their efforts have the best opportunity for achieving their population-level health goals.

Place Based Investing: Creating Sustainable Returns and Strong Communities

Healthcare Anchor Network (2019)

- This toolkit outlines place-based investing strategies that allow healthcare systems to earn a financial return on their investments while producing a positive social, economic, or environmental impact within their geographical service areas.

Preliminary Findings on the Role of Healthcare in Multi-Sector Networks for Population Health: Notes from the Field

Nemours (2020)

- This issue brief is an update to the 2012 Nemours paper “Integrator Role and Functions in Population Health Improvement Initiatives.” This brief updates the understanding of integrative roles and functions based on a scan and interviews completed in 2019, and identifies barriers to, and accelerators for, healthcare to carry out these roles in a sustained fashion. The brief also includes recommendations for the field and for the provision of technical assistance to healthcare partners that are seeking to strengthen their integrator role over the longer-term.

Promoting Health and Cost Control in States (PHACCS)

Trust for America's Health (2019)

- This resource outlines 13 evidence-based, state-level policies that can be adopted and implemented to promote health and control cost growth.

The Road Ahead: A Model for Advancing High Performance in Primary Care and Behavioral Health Under Value-Based Payment

The Delta Center (2019)

- This resource details the Model for Advancing High Performance (MAHP) 2.0, a unified set of evidence-based actions and infrastructure necessary for community health centers and community behavioral health organizations to both provide high-quality, comprehensive care and succeed in value-based payment arrangements.

Value Based Payment Planning Guide

The Delta Center (2016)

- This planning guide provides a framework to shape the process of organizational transformation needed to prepare for value-based payments (VBPs). The tool is designed to help identify manageable objectives and tasks that will build towards the long-term goal of preparedness for value-based payments.



**Raising
the Bar**

Healthcare's Transforming Role