Taking Action to Raise the Bar

Hospitals & Healthcare Systems

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Hospitals and healthcare systems are critical to achieving the *Raising the Bar* vision

Every type of healthcare stakeholder has a role to play in raising the bar—in their own organization and in support of others. This begins with organization-wide commitment to a mission of improving health and well-being, and institutionalizing health equity as an integral part of their organizational strategy.

Hospitals and healthcare systems are often critical anchors within the community and play a key role in delivering care, employing people, and shaping both the policy and built environment. Hospitals and healthcare systems can embrace the *Raising the Bar* framework to deliver person-centered, high quality, accessible, comprehensive, and integrated care, and better serve individuals and their communities.

Hospitals and healthcare system stakeholders have unique roles and responsibilities

Individual hospitals and healthcare systems can help accelerate the transformation of healthcare in several ways. The following highlights draw from the 14 actions included in *Raising the Bar* Principles, Roles and Actions and draw from additional examples identified during the development of *Raising the Bar*. They are organized by the types of actions that can be taken at all levels of the organization.

1) Boards or governance committees

- Directors and other hospital leadership can advocate for adoption of principles and for the hospital to commit to *Raising the Bar*'s 14 actions.

- Use status in the community to advocate for change and for greater understanding of equity, racism, etc.

- Establish an equity strategy for the hospital, with clear accountability for administrators and staff, informed by rigorous outreach to and engagement with the community.

- Take steps to broaden board membership, establishing mechanisms to recruit members and otherwise provide for meaningful community input and participation. In many cases this is accomplished by recruiting community members to serve on boards and key committees.

- Ensure that the institution's advocacy priorities are aligned with a commitment to equity, and that the institution joins others in the community to advocate for equity in policies, addressing adverse social determinants of health (SDOH), and reforming payment systems.

- Ensure that organizational investments and grant activities align with (or positively contribute to) a broad mission of building equity and redressing historic patterns of discrimination.

2) Administrators

- Adopt practices that maximize access, including *Raising the Bar*'s actions related to cultural congruency, acceptance of Medicaid, and other actions in healthcare's role in providing whole-person care.

- Ensure that facilities are physically accessible to individuals of all abilities, and that transportation options exist for those seeking care.

- Seek models and reimbursement mechanisms that support implementation of actions that improve equity and support the mission of improving health and well-being.

- Assess the hospital's workforce and the demographics of the community in which it operates and ensure that the hospital workforce is representative of the community. Establish human resources policies and practices that maximize the well-being of employees, including pay and benefits.

- Use the hospital's procurement mechanisms to ensure diversity and fair treatment of contract employees, and to support the local community through local sourcing.

- Highlight the importance of equity and the institution's overall equity strategy in internal communications so that all levels of leadership and the workforce are aligned with the strategy.

- Ensure a robust community engagement effort and that there are resources within the institution that are dedicated to assessing needs, building partnerships, and building the power of community organizations.

- Develop formal connections/agreements with social service providers to enable referrals and follow-up.

- Use procurement and spending power to support local businesses and build equity in the communities served.

3) Clinical care coordinators and providers

- Establish a culture that emphasizes meeting the needs and priorities of individuals and their families, accompanied by protocols that emphasize:
  - o Focusing on creating positive experiences for patients, building trust, and ensuring that patients are treated with dignity and respect.
  - o Emphasize listening, engagement with families and caregivers, and attention to screening for non-medical needs that affect care and well-being.
  - o Facilitating care planning that goes beyond an immediate encounter— or even care provided by the hospital—to build a holistic care plan that meets the needs and priorities of individuals.

- Use residency and other teaching programs to develop practitioners and future leaders focused on healthcare's mission, on building health equity, and improving the care experience of individuals.

Resources for Hospitals and Healthcare Systems That Want to Raise the Bar

These transformational steps are achievable—and are being pursued by hospitals and healthcare centers of all sizes and types. Hospitals and healthcare systems around the country are already taking many of the steps to raise the bar for individuals and their communities. See examples of hospitals and healthcare systems and their initiatives in the Framework in Practice: Bright Spots and the chapters on the four *Raising the Bar* Roles: Provider, Employer, Partner, and Advocate.

The following are a set of curated resources particularly relevant for hospitals and healthcare systems looking for a place to start, or to accelerate ongoing work aligning with the *Raising the Bar* Actions. To see the full set of *Raising the Bar* resources, visit the Resources chapter.

Aligned Resources

RECENT PUBLICATION: Health Equity Roadmap and Health Equity Action Library
American Hospital Association (AHA) (2022)

- *Raising the Bar*'s Principles, Roles, and Actions provide an overarching framework and context that seeks to integrate multiple streams of work. *Raising the Bar* takes a broad view of healthcare, including steps taken by all stakeholders and using all of healthcare's roles, levers, and resources.

- AHA's Health Equity Roadmap focuses more directly on how hospitals can assess their own status and take action to address equity. These two frameworks—broad and focused—are mutually reinforcing guideposts for hospitals seeking to address excellence and equity.

Achieving Health Equity: A Guide for Healthcare Organizations
Institute for Healthcare Improvement (2016)

- This IHI White Paper provides a framework for healthcare organizations to improve health equity in the communities they serve. It also provides guidance for measuring health equity, a case study, and a self-assessment tool for organizations to gauge their current efforts to improve health equity.

A Roadmap to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Healthcare
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2014)

- This resource provides a six-step framework to help organizations integrate disparities reduction into all healthcare quality improvement efforts. The roadmap is designed to allow an organization to develop programs to address disparities based on available resources and expand as needed.

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.

Equity Resources on Advancing Health Equity
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2005-Present)

- Advancing Health Equity provides a set of resources for implementing the steps outlined in the Roadmap to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care described above. Resources are provided for each step of the roadmap.

Equity of Care: A Toolkit for Eliminating Health Care Disparities
Equity of Care: American Hospital Association, American College of Healthcare Executives, America's Essential Hospitals, Association of American Medical Colleges, and Catholic Health Association of the United States (2015)

- The Equity of Care Toolkit is a user-friendly "how-to" guide to help accelerate the elimination of healthcare disparities. The toolkit includes resources on increasing the collection and use of race, ethnicity, and language preference data, increasing cultural competency training, and increasing diversity at the leadership and governance levels.

Health Equity Roadmap and Health Equity Action Library
American Hospital Association (2022)

- The Health Equity Roadmap is a framework to help hospitals and healthcare systems chart their own paths toward transformation—thus becoming more equitable and inclusive organizations. The Health Equity Action Library (HEAL) is a collection of tools and resources focusing on practical, how-to solutions to help hospitals and healthcare systems of all sizes build more inclusive and equitable communities.

Hospitals Index
Lown Institute (2021)

- The Lown Institute Hospitals Index is a ranking system that defines standards for hospital social responsibility by examining performance across health outcomes, value, and equity. The Lown Institute provides several listings for hospitals that meet different equity measures such as racial inclusivity, community benefit, and cost efficiency, and social responsibility.

Health Equity Accreditation Standards
National Committee for Quality Assurance (2021)

- This resource outlines the standards employed by NCQA as they transition from a Distinction in Multicultural Healthcare to a Health Equity Accreditation program for health plans.

Webinar: Measuring Health Equity: Building a U.S. News Health Equity Index for Hospitals and Health Systems
U.S. News (2022)

- In this webinar, U.S. News editors and analysts describe several measures examining disparities in healthcare services provided to people of different races and ethnicities that were debuted in 2021. They review findings from recent analysis and discuss how equity measures may be incorporated into the Best Hospitals rankings going forward.

#123forEquity Campaign to Eliminate Healthcare Disparities
American Hospital Association (2015)

- The AHA #123forEquity pledge provides a way for hospitals and healthcare system leaders to sign on to the National Call to Action to Eliminate Healthcare Disparities released by Equity of Care.

PROVIDER ROLE Resources

Becoming a Culturally Competent Healthcare Organization
American Hospital Association/Health Research Educational Trust (2013)

- This guide explores the concept of cultural competency and builds the case for the enhancement of cultural competency in healthcare. It offers seven recommendations for improving cultural competence in healthcare organizations. Also included are self-assessment checklists for hospital leaders and a list of relevant cultural competency resources.

Creating a Culture of Equity
Institute for Medicaid Innovation, Center for Health Care Strategies (n.d.)

- This document outlines how a culture of equity is defined for healthcare organizations and systems and provides resources designed to facilitate the work of creating a culture of equity.

Ensuring Access in Vulnerable Communities - Taskforce Report and Resources
American Hospital Association (n.d.)

- This report and accompanying resources from the American Hospital Association provide nine strategies for healthcare organizations to pursue to preserve access in vulnerable communities.

Integrating Social Care into the Delivery of Healthcare: Moving Upstream to Improve the Nation's Health
National Academy of Medicine (2018)

- This resource uses an 18-month study to develop five healthcare activities to better integrate social care into healthcare. These activities are awareness, adjustment, assistance, alignment, and advocacy. The report details specific tools for change within each activity.

Person Centered Engagement at the Organizational Level
Center for Consumer Engagement in Health Innovation, Community Catalyst, Healthcare Transformation Task Force (n.d.)

- This resource is a guide for leaders and staff at healthcare organizations to aid in developing meaningful person-centered engagement structures at the organizational level. It is informed by a review of literature on consumer engagement and case studies from healthcare organizations that have made commitments to engaging patients and families at the organizational level.

Using Data to Reduce Disparities and Improve Quality
Center for Health Care Strategies (2021)

- This brief recommends strategies that healthcare organizations can use to effectively organize and interpret stratified quality data to improve health equity for their patients.

EMPLOYER ROLE Resources

A CEO Blueprint for Racial Equity - Inside the Organization, Within the Community, and Broader Society
FSG, PolicyLink, JUST Capital (2020)

- This blueprint provides corporate leaders actions to support racial equity by redesigning their "business-as-usual" practices and policies. The actions are organized in three key domains: 1) inside the company, 2) within the communities where the companies are headquartered and conduct business, and 3) at the broader societal level.

Amplifying Black Voices: What Healthcare Organizations Can Do to Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workforce
Deloitte (2021)

- This resource summarizes Deloitte's recent research showing that improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workforce can support quality of care and financial performance goals. The research found that addressing racism and other biases can give organizations a competitive advantage, helping them attract the best talent and elevate their brand and reputation.

[**Health Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Measures for Hospitals and Health System Dashboards**](#)
American Hospital Association (2020)

- This document serves as a tool for hospitals and healthcare systems to develop health equity, diversity, and inclusion dashboards to measure opportunities and improvements as they address inequities and reduce disparities in their communities.

[**Inclusive Local Hiring: Building the Pipeline to a Healthy Community**](#)
Healthcare Anchor Network (2019)

- This toolkit offers a guide for how healthcare systems can leverage hiring practices to advance inclusive, local job creation and career development for communities experiencing the greatest health and wealth disparities.

[**The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (the Standard)**](#)
Mental Health Commission of Canada (2013, reaffirmed 2018)

- The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (the Standard) – the first of its kind in the world, is a set of voluntary guidelines, tools and resources intended to guide organizations in promoting mental health and preventing psychological harm at work.

[**Paid Leave: Workplace Policy**](#)
Paid Leave for the United States (n.d.)

- The resource offers an FAQ on paid leave, a toolkit and template proposal to achieve a quality paid family leave policy, cost benefit analysis resources, and paid family and medical leave trends.

PARTNER ROLE Resources

[**Advancing Resilience & Community Health**](#)
Nonprofit Finance Fund (2021)

- The Advancing Resilience & Community Health (ARCH) project was designed to help burgeoning relationships between healthcare institutions (payers and hospital systems) and community-based organizations (CBOs) get off the ground successfully and at a scale that could make a difference.

[**Building Effective Health System-Community Partnerships: Lessons from the Field**](#)
Center for Health Care Strategies (2021)

- This brief shares considerations for healthcare organizations and government entities seeking to build effective partnerships with the individuals and communities they serve to better address their health and social needs.

[**Ensuring Access in Vulnerable Communities: Community Conversations Toolkit**](#)
American Hospital Association (2017)

- This toolkit is designed to help organizations begin to engage in discussions related to the healthcare services offered in their communities. It provides ways to broadly engage communities through community conversation events, social media, and use of the community health assessment. The toolkit outlines strategies to focus engagement on specific stakeholders such as patients, boards, and clinicians.

[**Guide: Engaging Patients and Communities in the Community Health Needs Assessment Process**](#)
American Hospital Association/Health Research & Educational Trust (n.d.)

- This guide provides a framework for hospitals to launch their community health improvement efforts and engaging patients and community members throughout the process makes the community health needs assessment more powerful for hospitals and the communities they serve.

Person Centered Engagement at the Organizational Level
Center for Consumer Engagement in Health Innovation, Community Catalyst,
Healthcare Transformation Task Force (2020)

- This resource is a guide for leaders and staff at healthcare organizations to aid in developing meaningful person-centered engagement structures at the organizational level. It is informed by a review of literature on consumer engagement and case studies from healthcare organizations that have made commitments to engaging patients and families at the organizational level.

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.

Advancing Health Equity through APMs
Health Care 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.

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.

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 systems should look within to address social determinants
Health Systems Should Look Within to Address Social Determinants (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.

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.

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.

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