

## Taking Action to Raise the Bar

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# Consumer and Community Advocates

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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.

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## Advocates can play a critical role in motivating healthcare organizations to commit to *Raising the Bar*.

The *Raising the Bar* [process](#) benefited from listening to the aspirations of community organizations, people with lived experience of inequities, and advocates for health equity to understand their needs, priorities, and aspirations. We have organized what we learned into a broad framework for action by healthcare and its partners.

*Raising the Bar: A Framework for Promoting Equity and Excellence in Healthcare* is intended to be of use to advocates in framing their “ask” of their counterparts in healthcare organizations. In addition to five broad principles, the full report includes 14 specific actions, examples of how actions can be implemented, and examples of organizations that have already begun their own transformation. These can be used by advocates to show that these actions are within reach of others in healthcare—that they have already been adopted by many of their counterparts, even within payment systems that make it difficult.

Many in the healthcare community are already taking important steps to address health equity, and many are recognizing *Raising the Bar*'s work as an important framework for action (see “[What People Are Saying](#)”). Yet, there is a large unfinished agenda.

## Advocates Play Unique Roles

Advocates can use *Raising the Bar* to engage with healthcare organizations to seek their commitment to starting or accelerating this journey:

- Amplifying discussion and attention to *Raising the Bar*'s principles, roles, and actions;
- Helping healthcare organizations to recognize the priority of making a strategic commitment to adopting *Raising the Bar*'s principles;
- Reinforcing the needs and priorities of the community in discussions with healthcare organizations;
- Encouraging healthcare to adopt a broad view of all of their roles and levers in pursuing health equity; and,
- Helping to identify opportunities for multiple participants in communities to work together to implement *Raising the Bar*'s actions.

As with other groups, this starts with advocacy organizations aligning with *Raising the Bar*'s principles for healthcare and making health equity a central part of their advocacy strategy. Advocacy needs to be executed through a diverse workforce, with focused strategies for how to engage with healthcare to promote equity. The transformational principles and actions laid out in *Raising the Bar* provide advocates an opportunity to develop a broad agenda for their interactions with healthcare in advancing equity, identifying strategies for connecting healthcare to community organizations and public health agencies to work toward mutual objectives, and help healthcare engage with local communities as they work to address equity.

Specific opportunities for advocates include:

- Advocate with policymakers, employers, and others who influence coverage and benefits for access to care for members of the community.
- Advocate that healthcare institutions do their part in providing access, including such actions as accepting Medicaid (Action 1) and providing care in a manner that meets community needs and priorities (Actions 1 and 2).
- Organize community members to take advantage of opportunities to engage on boards, committees, and other ways of helping shape the agenda of organizations (Action 8).
- Ensure that community needs and priorities are reflected in community needs assessments, including engaging with public health agencies who are involved as partners in that process (Action 10).
- Help community-based organizations approach healthcare organizations for funding, partnerships, and other opportunities (Actions 9 and 10).
- Engage leaders of healthcare organizations as partners in efforts to advocate for payment reform, or other changes in incentives and accountability measures (Action 11).
- Identify opportunities for healthcare leaders to speak or write as advocates for broader policy change, giving them a platform where they can voice support for your advocacy agenda (Action 12).
- Develop relationships with government affairs officials at healthcare institutions in your community and encourage healthcare leaders to join coalitions or networks that advocate for policy change that builds communities and advances health equity (Action 13).



**Raising  
the Bar**  
Healthcare's Transforming Role

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