



Coming to consensus: health equity definitions

HPIO Equity Advisory Group

Meeting three – Thursday, May 3, 2018

Criteria for coming to consensus on a health equity definition

1. Actionable (guides policy priorities/agenda)
2. Measurable (can be evaluated)
3. Compelling (appeals to stakeholders across the political spectrum and motivates action)
4. Unambiguous (terms can be clearly defined)
5. Concise

Health equity definition elements

1. Highest level of health
2. Fair and just opportunity
3. Fair distribution of resources
4. Eliminate obstacles to health (e.g. inequities such as poverty, discrimination, lack of access to resources)
5. Eliminate disparities (absence of avoidable differences)

Definition options

Overall definition

(key definition elements highlighted)

Option 1 (Group 1 and 4, C+B)

Achieving the highest level of health for all people. This means valuing everyone equally and removing historical and contemporary injustices and obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.

Option 2 (Group 2, C+A+B)

Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to achieve their full health potential. This requires addressing historical and contemporary injustices by removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.

Option 3 (Group 3, C+A+B)

The fair and just opportunity to achieve optimal health outcomes. Achieving health equity requires that no one is disadvantaged by historical or contemporary injustices, and social or economic circumstances.

Option 4 (C+A+B)



Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to achieve their full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential. This requires addressing historical and contemporary injustices by providing supports and removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.

Option 5 (C)

Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.

Definition for measurement

Option 1(C)

For the purposes of measurement, health equity means reducing and ultimately eliminating disparities in health and its determinants that adversely affect excluded or marginalized groups.

Option 2 (C +A)

For the purposes of measurement, health equity means reducing and ultimately eliminating disparities in health and its determinants that adversely affect groups excluded or marginalized based upon social, economic, demographic or geographic factors.



Top three definitions of health equity (based on meeting one poll voting)

	Source	Definition
A.	World Health Organization. Health Equity . Accessed January 2018.	<p>The absence of avoidable, unfair, or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically or by other means of stratification. "Health equity" or "equity in health" implies that ideally everyone should have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential and that no one should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential.</p> <p>Elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) full health potential c) no one should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential f) fair opportunity o) absence of avoidable, unfair, or remediable differences among groups of people
B.	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. National Partnership for Action to End Health Disparities. The National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity, Section 1 . April 2011.	<p>Attainment of the highest level of health for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of health and healthcare disparities.</p> <p>This definition is also used by HealthyPeople 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division of Community Health and the Public Health Accreditation Board.</p> <p>Elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) attainment of the highest level of health d) valuing everyone equally k) focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices p) elimination of health and healthcare disparities
C.	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. What is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make? May 2017.	<p>Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.</p> <p>For the purposes of measurement, health equity</p>



		<p>means reducing and ultimately eliminating disparities in health and its determinants that adversely affect excluded or marginalized groups.</p> <p>Elements:</p> <p>n) removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)</p> <p>r) reducing and ultimately eliminating disparities in health and its determinants (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)</p>
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Additional health equity definitions		
D.	Working definition from the Centers for Disease Control Health Equity Working Group. Defining and measuring disparities, inequities and inequalities in the Healthy People initiative . October 2007.	The fair distribution of health determinants, outcomes and resources within and between segments of the population, regardless of social standing. Elements: g) fair distribution of health determinants, outcomes and resources
E.	National Academies of Health. Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity, Key Terms . January 2017.	The state in which everyone has the opportunity to attain full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance. Elements: i) no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance
F.	Prevention Institute. Countering The Productions of Health Inequities: A Framework of Emerging Systems to Achieve an Equitable Culture of Health . December 2016.	Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthy. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination and their consequences –including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs, education, housing, environments, and healthcare. Fairness requires dedicated efforts to remove these obstacles to health. The concept of health equity focuses attention on the distribution of resources and other processes that drive a particular kind of health inequality—that is, a systematic inequality in health (or in its social determinants) between more and less advantaged social groups, in other words, a health inequality that is unjust or unfair. Elements: j) attention on the distribution of resources and other processes that drive a particular kind of health inequality m) removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination and their consequences –including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs, education, housing, environments, and healthcare
G.	Health Equity Institute. Defining Health Equity . Accessed January 2018.	Attainment of the highest level of health for all people. Health Equity means efforts to ensure that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.



		<p>Elements: e) full and equal access to opportunities</p>
<p>H.</p>	<p>2016 State Health Improvement Plan; Adapted from Whitehead, Margaret and Goran Dahlgren. Levelling Up Part 1: Concepts and Principles for Tackling Social Inequities in Health. Copenhagen, Denmark: World Health Organization. 2006 and Health Equity Institute. Defining Health Equity. Accessed January 2018.</p>	<p>The absence of differences in health that are caused by social and economic factors. Achieving health equity means that all people have the opportunity to achieve their full health potential, with no one at a disadvantage because of social or economic circumstances.</p> <p>Elements: h) no one at a disadvantage because of social or economic circumstances l) absence of differences in health that are caused by social and economic factors q) absence of differences in health</p>



Health equity definition elements and sample wording	
Elements	Sample wording
1. Highest level of health	<p>a) full health potential [World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control]</p> <p>b) attainment of the highest level of health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health and Health Equity Institute)</p>
2. Fair and just opportunity	<p>c) fair opportunity...no one should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential (World Health Organization)</p> <p>d) valuing everyone equally (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health)</p> <p>e) full and equal access to opportunities (Health Equity Institute)</p>
3. Fair distribution of resources	<p>f) fair opportunity (World Health Organization)</p> <p>g) fair distribution of health determinants, outcomes and resources (Centers for Disease Control)</p> <p>h) no one at a disadvantage because of social or economic circumstances (2016 State Health Improvement Plan)</p> <p>i) no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or any other socially defined circumstance (National Academies of Health)</p> <p>j) attention on the distribution of resources and other processes that drive a particular kind of health inequality (Prevention Institute)</p>
4. Eliminate obstacles to health (e.g. inequities such as poverty, discrimination, lack of access to resources)	<p>k) focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health)</p> <p>l) absence of differences in health that are caused by social and economic factors (2016 State Health Improvement Plan)</p> <p>m) removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination and their consequences –including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs, education, housing, environments, and healthcare (Prevention Institute)</p> <p>n) removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)</p>
5. Eliminate disparities (absence of avoidable differences)	<p>o) absence of avoidable, unfair, or remediable differences among groups of people (World Health Organization)</p> <p>p) elimination of health and healthcare disparities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health)</p> <p>q) absence of differences in health (2016 State Health Improvement Plan)</p> <p>r) reducing and ultimately eliminating disparities in health and its determinants (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)</p>