

Health Equality, Health Equity & Health Barriers

Health equality is equal treatment and availability of health care services for all people. The goal of equality is to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things. Realistically, people with diseases like diabetes or physical disabilities, and people who live in communities where health care services are limited, will need different things to achieve and maintain their overall level of wellness.



A Florida 5K race illustrates equality, equity and barriers.

The same-sized ladders represent **equality**. Equality assumes that everyone will benefit from the same supports.

Health equity is the availability of health care while taking in to account the other factors that influence health such as employment, housing, transportation, education, socio-economic status, food access, etc. When health equity is achieved, no one is excluded because of a pre-existing health condition or external circumstances. Health equity acknowledges that everyone does not start from the same place or need the same things.



The different-sized ladders represent **equity**. Equity acknowledges that different individuals need different supports to attain similar results.

Health barriers to services include the high cost of care, inadequate insurance coverage, unavailability of services in a community and lack of culturally-competent care. Often linked to socioeconomic status, education level, age, sex, disability, geographical location, race and ethnicity, barriers can lead to unmet health care needs such as delays in receiving appropriate care and inability to secure preventative services.



With the fence removed, all the runners can join the race. When **barriers** are removed, needs for all people are more likely to be met.

Essential Health Equity Terms to Further Public Health Discussions

Health Equity



Health equity is 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 health care disparities.¹

Health Disparities



Health disparities are differences in health outcomes and their determinants between segments of the population, as defined by social, demographic, environmental, and geographic attributes.²

Health Inequalities



Health inequalities is a term sometimes used interchangeably with the term health disparities. It is more often used in scientific and economic literature to refer to summary measures of population health associated with individual- or group-specific attributes (e.g., income, education, or race/ethnicity).

Health Inequities



Health inequities are a subset of health inequalities that are modifiable; associated with social disadvantage, and considered ethically unfair.²

Social Determinants of Health



Social determinants of health are conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.³



1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A Practitioner's Guide for Advancing Health Equity: Community Strategies for Preventing Chronic Disease www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/pdfs/health-equity-guide/Health-Equity-Guide-intro.pdf. www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/minority-health/

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC health disparities and inequalities report—United States, 2011. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2011;60(Supplement):1-113.

3. US Department of Health and Human Services. Social determinants of health. www.healthypeople.gov/2020USDepartmentofHealthandHumanServices.Socialdeterminantsofhealth./www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=39.