

## Health disparities

Health disparities are preventable differences in burden of disease, injury, violence, or the opportunity to achieve optimal health<sup>1</sup> and adversely affect populations that have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial and ethnic background, socioeconomic status, age, geographic location, language, gender, disability status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.<sup>2</sup> While the causes of health disparities are complex, it is possible to make meaningful strides toward achieving health equity.

More than one-third of US adults have limited health literacy skills, which impacts their ability to find and access care, and understand and act on health information.<sup>3</sup> Many communities also face significant barriers in accessing and utilizing care.<sup>4</sup> Both of these circumstances disproportionately affect members of marginalized populations and often lead to poorer health outcomes compared to other groups.<sup>4,5</sup>

To help address health disparities impacting people managing a range of conditions\*, the STEP Program™ provided a total funding amount of USD 450 000 to six organizations for their proposals that aim to improve health literacy, patient education and/or increase access to health services among marginalized populations. Proposals were evaluated by an independent external review committee comprised of experts in health literacy, digital health, community health, and health disparities.

Funded programs include:

Allergy & Asthma Network's Not One More Life Trusted Messengers Program – A screening program and national awareness and education campaign to reduce the prevalence and burden of COVID-19 in Black and Latinx communities living with asthma and/or COPD.

Black Heart Association's A Vehicle for Change: Improving Cardiovascular Health for Marginalized Black Communities in Texas – A heart health screening and culturally appropriate education program conducted out of its Mobile Heart Health Unit to address health disparities among marginalized Black communities in Texas.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Cánceres de la Sangre: Módulos de Capacitación para Promotores de Salud (Blood Cancers: A training for Promotores de Salud) – An online blood cancer training in Spanish for Community Health Workers to provide up-to-date education and enable them to serve and support vulnerable patients and families impacted by blood cancer.

Farmworker Justice's ReUnidos: Farmworker Connections to Skin Cancer Care – A program to improve prevention, detection, and treatment of skin cancer among farmworkers and rural Latinx communities by training community health workers and addressing the structural barriers that impeded access to care.

TOUCH, The Black Breast Cancer Alliance's TOUCH HBCU Internship Program – A program to empower young Black women enrolled at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) with education, tools, and mentorship to facilitate peer-to-peer conversations around breast cancer.

Young Survival Coalition's EMPOWER Initiative: Empowering Equitable Access to Education, Support and Community – A program to empower young Black and Latinx breast cancer and those living with metastatic breast cancer through the development of culturally-adapted education resources and the expansion of

support services to navigate social determinants of health.

## References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, November 24). Health Disparities Among Youth. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/disparities/index.htm>.
2. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2021, June 9). Disparities. | Healthy People 2020. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/about/foundation-health-measures/Disparities>.
3. Hasnain-Wynia R, Wolf MS. Promoting health care equity: is health literacy a missing link? Health Services Research. 2010 Aug; 45(4): 897–903. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6773.2010.01134.x. Accessed August 11, 2021.
4. Ndugga N, Artiga S. Disparities in Health and Health Care: 5 Key Questions and Answers. Kaiser Family Foundation. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-5-key-question-and-answers/>. Published May 11, 2021. Accessed August 11, 2021.
5. Hasnain-Wynia R, Wolf MS. Promoting health care equity: is health literacy a missing link? Health Services Research. 2010 Aug; 45(4): 897–903. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6773.2010.01134.x. Accessed August 11, 2021.

*\*Proposals focused on one or more of the following conditions: cancer, sickle cell disease, immune thrombocytopenia, heart failure, atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, multiple sclerosis, psoriatic disease, chronic spontaneous urticaria, spondyloarthritis, asthma, age-related macular degeneration and/or dry eye.*

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