

Meigs County Health Department
112 E. Memorial Drive Suite A
Pomeroy, Ohio 45769



Phone: (740) 992-6626
Fax: (740) 992-0836
www.meigs-health.com

Health Equity Policy

Section 1: Definitions

Health Disparity: Inequities that occur in the provision of healthcare and access to healthcare across different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Health Equity: A state where all persons, regardless of race, income, creed, sexual orientation, gender identification, age or gender are able to be as healthy as they can – to reach their full “health potential.”

Health Inequity: A health disparity based on inequitable, socially-determined circumstances.

Social Determinants of Health: A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Contributing factors that describe social determinants of health include: income and social status; social support networks; education and literacy; social environments; physical environments; health services; personal health practices and coping skills; healthy child development; biology and genetic endowment; culture; gender.

Section 2: Purpose

Meigs County Health Department (MCHD) is uniquely positioned to understand the inequities in its jurisdiction and bring people together to shape more equitable communities throughout the County.

Health inequities result from inequities in the social determinants of health, which in turn result from racial and other forms of oppression and power imbalances. The MCHD faces numerous challenges in tackling these root causes of health inequities, including risk-averse leadership, political pushback, perceptions of the limits of scope of public health practice, and lack of capacity and resources. Advancing equity, therefore, requires “inside” and “outside” strategies. MCHD leadership and staff must first build their understanding of equity, power, and oppression and then act on that understanding. But by itself the MCHD will never have enough power to advance equity, so work outside the department is also necessary. MCHD must build relationships and work closely with community groups and others that can use their democratic rights to advocate for change and hold the agency and others in government accountable to their needs.

Meigs County Health Department
112 E. Memorial Drive Suite A
Pomeroy, Ohio 45769



Public Health
Prevent Promote Protect

**Meigs County
Health Department**

Phone: (740) 992-6626
Fax: (740) 992-0836
www.meigs-health.com

The Health Policy Institute of Ohio reports that adults in Appalachian Counties such as Meigs County are more likely to live in poverty; lack a high school diploma, not be working, be enrolled in Medicaid and be uninsured. They are more likely to be smokers, obese, have high blood pressure and diabetes mellitus, and to have ever had a heart attack. These findings, which are consistent with those in the 2015 Meigs County General Health District Community Health Assessment, provide evidence for the MCHD to work with community partners to shape their understanding of health and healthcare needs of different populations. Data will be used to form strategies for reaching those populations in communities and improving their health.

Section 3: Our beliefs

Racial and social justice: MCHD recognizes that systems and policies must be changed to eliminate racism and other injustices in order to achieve equity.

Community power: MCHD prioritizes the expertise of communities and aims to strengthen the capacity of communities to create their own healthy futures.

Accountability: MCHD strives to build trust with communities, partners and colleagues by owning our biases and respectfully challenging assumptions and stereotypes.

Diversity and inclusion: MCHD believes that every person - no matter their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion or ability - has the right to access culturally relevant information, resources and services that result in optimal health outcomes.

Section 4: MCHD Practices

- 1. Build a shared understanding of and commitment to health equity.**
 - A. Conduct and/or participate in Community Health Assessments.
 - B. Conduct and/or participate in Community Health Improvement Planning.
 - C. Provide health education and promotion.
 - D. Engage with elected officials in the process of advancing health equity.

- 2. Develop organizational knowledge and skills to advance health equity.**
 - A. Select and use a resource from the online Resource Library for Advancing Health Equity in Public Health.
 - B. Create a safe space for staff to start engaging in conversations about poverty, class, racism, sexism, and other challenging issues that affect the possibility of achieving health equity in our communities.
 - C. Prepare the Board of Health and staff to expect and accept that some tension will accompany efforts to advance health equity.

Meigs County Health Department
112 E. Memorial Drive Suite A
Pomeroy, Ohio 45769



Public Health
Prevent Promote Protect

**Meigs County
Health Department**

Phone: (740) 992-6626
Fax: (740) 992-0836
www.meigs-health.com

-
- D. Train staff annually on the national Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards. (The standards offer a framework to address the structural, clinical, and organizational barriers that contribute to health disparities. The CLAS Standards address six areas: Foster cultural competence; Build community partnerships; Collect and share diversity data; Benchmark: plan and evaluate; Reflect and respect diversity; Ensure language access.) The MCHD CLAS Initiative develops and implements the CLAS Standards within MCHD.
- E. Identify and develop multiple competencies essential for advancing health equity (i.e. personal attributes; listening skills; a commitment to health and equity for all; understanding the social, environmental and structural determinants of health; knowledge of affected communities; collaborative and community organizing skills; cultural competency and humility.
- F. Train staff to use language translation resources and services
- G. Provide staff with general tips for interacting with a deaf or hard of hearing person.
- 3. Align programs and resources with the organization commitment to health equity.**
- A. Incorporate health equity into MCHD policies, processes, programs, and budgets.
- B. Integrate health equity into urgent/non-urgent communications policies; health education and promotion policies; staff recruitment, retention and training policies.
- 4. Work in true partnership across communities.**
- A. Include and engage authentically with people of color; those in poverty; immigrants; American Indians and others experiencing health inequities.
- B. Build and maintain sustaining relationships with the populations listed in 4A via community assessment and planning, health education and promotion.
- C. Understand and address barriers to healthcare access.
- D. Make efforts to change policy.
- E. Recognize and celebrate the benefits brought to the community by all populations including those experiencing health inequities and share findings with others.
- 5. Improve data collection, analysis and use of data to advance health equity.**
- A. Expand data collection to include information about smaller ethnic and cultural communities.
- B. Use data that focuses on the conditions that create health.
- C. Incorporate qualitative data to identify root causes of health inequities and to lead to solutions.
- D. Engage the community to understand what the data says.
- E. Use visuals, stories and community voices to make data compelling and actionable.

Meigs County Health Department
112 E. Memorial Drive Suite A
Pomeroy, Ohio 45769



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Meigs County
Health Department**

Phone: (740) 992-6626
Fax: (740) 992-0836
www.meigs-health.com

- 6. Work at the policy level to advance health equity.**
- A. Work with people outside of health on policies that shape the social and economic conditions in which people go about their daily lives (I.e. planning, recreation, transportation, education, public safety).
 - B. Maintain an awareness of a broad range of policies under consideration; identify policy solutions; engage, inform and influence those who set policies.
- 7. Monitor MCHD efforts to advance health equity and hold itself accountable for making progress.**

Section 5: PHAB Standards

The practices for advancing health equity outlined in this policy are evident throughout the PHAB standards and measures (including community engagement, using data, working with elected officials, and monitoring policies for potential health impacts); meanwhile, health equity is explicitly addressed in Measure 3.1.1: The Health Department must document efforts to address health equity.

APPROVED BY: *Maureen Bauer* 1/9/18
Health Commissioner Date

APPROVED BY: *Rogal. Neal* 1/9/18
Board of Health President Date