



Health**Equity**

# 2023 HEALTH EQUITY REPORT





Partnering with our entire community  
to eliminate barriers due to racism or  
any other consequence for Black,  
Indigenous, and people of color



Pharmacy

EXIT

107 & 108

# How Hennepin Healthcare is working to:

**1** | Attain a culture of inclusion and belonging

**2** | Reflect the communities we serve and promote equitable opportunity

**3** | Eliminate health disparities

**4** | Have measurable social impact

## A Message from Chief Health Equity Officer Nneka Sederstrom

What a year 2023 was! We started off with the addition of several new team members and an energy to do the work! The year was spent integrating our growing team into the culture of Hennepin Healthcare. This work included relationship building to help spread the word on how to effectively engage members of the Health Equity team, launching the Hennepin Healthcare Health Equity Compass Program for more than 2,800 team members, implementing wellness programming and coaching initiatives to build up the culture of our house, expanding our youth development initiatives to make the future as bright as we know it can be, showing our community that we are intentional in listening to what they ask from us and improving their experience, and bringing into the fold legacy departments whose work aligns with the goals of eliminating health inequities.

Every road worth traveling has unexpected twists, turns, and bumps. I have such pride in the Health Equity team! We are creating a world that doesn't exist. We are designing, resourcing, implementing, evaluating, and flying the plane — all at once — with grace and commitment. 2023 was a foundational year and this report is full of all the elements we have laid out to support the purpose of this team. We will always keep failing forward. We will always keep striving towards anti-racism. We will always be here, doing the work!

**Nneka O. Sederstrom, PhD, MPH, MA, FCCP, FCCM**

Chief Health Equity Officer



Read the 2022 Health Equity Report at [hennepinhealthcare.org/health-equity](https://hennepinhealthcare.org/health-equity).

## **Our Mission**

We partner with our community, our patients, and their families to ensure access to outstanding care for everyone while improving health and wellness through teaching, patient and community education, and research.

## **Our Vision**

Transforming the health of our community — exceptional care without exception.

## **Our Values**

Patient & Family-Centered, Excellence, Teamwork, Respect, Integrity, Compassion

In alignment with Hennepin Healthcare's mission, vision, and values, the Health Equity team aims to:

- Attain a culture of inclusion & belonging
- Reflect the communities we serve
- Have equity in opportunity and pay
- Eliminate health disparities

# 1

Attain a culture  
of inclusion  
and belonging



## Expanding employee collectives to create an inclusive workplace

Hennepin Healthcare Collectives are employee affinity groups where Hennepin Healthcare team members can gather with others who share their identities, build relationships and professional networks, and find a deeper sense of belonging. They also advise the organization on strategies to eliminate inequities and create a healthy culture of belonging.

### **Hennepin Healthcare Collectives include:**

- American Indian Collective
- Asian Collective
- Black and African American Collective
- Latinx Collective
- LGBTQ+ Collective
- Muslim Collective
- Providers of Color Collective
- Let's Talk Equity Collective

**Opportunity:** The collectives began in 2021 and wanted to engage more deeply with the broader Hennepin Healthcare community to share their missions, visions, and areas of focus, communicate with prospective members, and increase their membership and support.

**Action and Outcome:** In May of 2023, the collectives hosted a two-hour open house event, providing prospective members and leaders with information related to their accomplishments, mission, current areas of focus, and vision for the future. This was also an opportunity for the collective leaders to hear from employees about the issues their own communities face. Over 300 Hennepin Healthcare team members interacted at the open house, and the event grew the collectives program by 37 new members and leaders.

Over 2023, the Health Equity team supported 15 collective-led events related to observances and celebrations of heritage. More than 2,000 employees participated, and collective membership increased by 118 members.

## Coaching our team for professional growth

**Opportunity:** Two Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Executive Coaches, one DEI Leader Coach and two DEI Coaches as well as one Project Manager are now part of the team. These team members help employees foster their personal leadership and growth and support a workplace culture of equity, inclusion and belonging while advancing the Hennepin Healthcare goal of becoming an anti-racist institution.

**Action:** DEI coaching is now available to all employees, normalizing the idea that everyone can become more equitable and inclusive and asking for help is okay. In addition to

one-on-one sessions, DEI coaches also conduct program assessments and review presentations. For example, coaches partnered with the Psychiatry program to update its evaluation standards and criteria. Coaches also helped New Employee Orientation update its program with new health equity information.

**Outcome:** In 2023, the DEI coaching team coached 142 unique clients from 61 departments, providing 386 coaching sessions to Hennepin Healthcare employees. Coaches addressed needs around workplace culture, professional development, workplace concerns, supervision, and DEI strategy. Other common focuses included identity work, project consultation, cultural intelligence, and career pathways.

At the conclusion of 2023, all individuals who completed one or more coaching sessions received a coaching effectiveness survey:

- 86% of respondents believe that their DEI coach has created an environment that is conducive to their learning and growth.
- 71% of respondents agreed that they were able to apply the things that they learned/discussed with their DEI coach in coaching sessions.
- 67% of respondents agreed that they could name a tangible personal improvement or achievement since beginning DEI coaching.

What participants had to say:

- “I found my DEI coaching session incredibly helpful in coming up with unique goals and solutions and the actions to achieve them.”
- “My DEI coach’s ability to help me find my own answers while providing encouragement and resources along the way was what I appreciated most.”

## Promoting wellness and connection

**Opportunity:** According to Mental Health America (2023), Minnesota ranks number 36 out of 51 in its adult mental health ranking, indicating that adults in Minnesota have a higher prevalence of mental illness and lower rates of access to care—a reality that impacts Hennepin Healthcare and its employees. Research shows that company culture also has a bigger influence on employee well-being than salary and benefits. Leaders who prioritize relationships with their employees and lead from a place of positivity and kindness do better.

**Action:** Hennepin Healthcare Healthy and Healing Human Connections (5HC) are monthly events that create an enjoyable social experience during the workday to encourage solidarity within the 7,000-strong employees at Hennepin Healthcare. Activities and experiences are created to appeal to the mind, body, and soul.

Hennepin Healthcare’s Wellness Manager and DEI coaches also kicked off a new event series in December: Wellness Wednesdays—a two-hour interactive tabling session focused on providing joy, encouragement, and wellness resources to all Hennepin Healthcare employees.

**Outcome:** At the 5HC monthly events, coaches and team members have built new valuable relationships and collaborations. Team members left with smiles on their faces and shared that they felt refreshed. The first Wellness Wednesday event drew 75 team members.

Some of the responses from 2023:

- “These are fantastic and fun offerings...thank you for caring and sharing these opportunities with staff.”
- “This was such a great idea. I stopped by for a few minutes and won 2 out of 3 Uno games. LOVED IT!”

In 2024, the team plans to bring 5HC events to departments and clinics across Hennepin Healthcare so patient-facing team members can more easily participate. These events will be focused on individual and collective healing, team-building activities, and providing nourishment.



## Providing healing spaces for team members of color

**Opportunity:** Studies show that people of color experience a higher rate of burnout and mental and physical exhaustion within the workplace than their white peers. This higher rate can be contributed to experiences of racism, microaggressions, and lack of psychological safety and culturally specific resources. When DEI coaches heard this burnout and exhaustion in coaching sessions, they saw the need to create spaces of healing dedicated to Hennepin Healthcare team members of color and their unique experiences of burnout.

**Action:** In partnership with BIPOC community healers, DEI coaches hosted healing retreats and healing spaces dedicated to the well-being of team members of color. Each retreat included art and communal, spiritual, and physical healing components. In 2023, about 35 team members from various departments joined for three 3-hour healing retreats.

**Outcome:** Some responses from participants:

- “They bring us together and remind us to step outside of our departments and connect with others.”
- “Employees are here at HCMC for a reason. We care about our patients. We are mostly from the community. We work hard as caregivers, and often don’t take time for us!”
- “It’s a safe space for people to gather but also feel recognized and appreciated for these spaces of healing.”

This program will continue in 2024 and will collect qualitative feedback on the desired outcomes to build community and increase feelings of safety and hope for team members of color.

## Celebrating cultural heritage

**Opportunity:** In today's workplace, cultural competency is critical to the organization's success. Hennepin Healthcare saw the importance of educating team members about cultural differences and heritages.

**Action:** Every month, Hennepin Healthcare uses articles and events to highlight an array of cultures, encouraging a sense of belonging and helping our team value all cultures. These articles and events celebrate the cultures and identities represented by our employees and community and help others appreciate them, too.



For example, our annual Juneteenth Celebration included opportunities for team members and members of the community to participate in elder storytelling, raise the Juneteenth flag, and view documentaries, live music, and panel discussions — all in collaboration with local Black businesses and leaders. The events drew more than 500 people.

**Outcome:** These efforts show our commitment to centering and uplifting the diverse communities that make up our organization, fostering a more inclusive and culturally vibrant workplace. In 2024, we look forward to continuing to build more solidarity, liberation, justice, and celebration of diverse communities.

## Creating new tools for learning and listening

**Opportunity:** Team members, managers, and executives from all areas of the organization reached out to the DEI coaching team to gain insight into the phenomenon of “toxic culture.” The DEI team recognized a communication breakdown between team members and leaders. They developed a structure for listening sessions that elevates team member voices and helps leaders form action plans that will lead to systemic change.

**Action:** The DEI team created a best practice guide for DEI listening sessions. It begins with preparing leaders and executives for change by providing a template that will help them make changes based on the feedback they hear. The DEI team leads the sessions, providing an open forum where team members can share their experiences without fear of retaliation or judgment. The listening sessions center on the experiences of team members to help leaders understand what is going well and what needs improvement.

**Outcome:** The listening sessions are available to leaders and executives who are ready to make meaningful and inclusive change in their area but may not be sure where to begin. In 2023, the DEI coaching team piloted the listening sessions with one area, collecting feedback from over 20 team members across four listening sessions. The information informed a new strategic action plan for the area and became the basis for ongoing

coaching with positive feedback from team members. More listening sessions are currently in progress and will be debriefed in 2024.

## Collaborating on action

**Opportunity:** As the organization eliminates barriers created by discrimination and racism, different units uncover their own unique challenges and needs. Departmental DEI committees bring together individuals from a given department to look at their work through a DEI lens and provide interventions to move the needle in a positive direction.

**Action:** The DEI team offered support and guidance to new and existing departmental DEI committees as they decided how to make the most impact. Committee members and leaders now have access to coaching and partnership.

**Outcome:** In 2023, the DEI team partnered with Information Services and Technology on their existing DEI committee. In one-on-one coaching sessions and leadership meetings, focus shifted from education to action. The group is now looking at how they can work to eliminate barriers to equitable healthcare.

The DEI team also partnered with Hennepin Emergency Medical Services to establish a DEI committee with two workgroups: one focused on diverse recruitment and retention, and the other focused on helping EMS team members learn about identities and cultures, which have profound impacts on health and social outcomes. In 2024, the DEI team will identify other opportunities to partner with departments.

## Educating on LGBTQIA+ issues

**Opportunity:** According to the Minnesota Homeless Study, LGBTQIA+ teens and adults make up a disproportionate number of homeless Minnesotans. This inequity also shows up in healthcare access, including access to safe and affirming mental health care. The Trevor Project (2022) found that 43% of LGBTQIA+ youth in Minnesota seriously considered suicide in the past year with 13% attempting suicide. These statistics show the immediate need for comprehensive education and equitable care for all LGBTQIA+ people. Several departments, including Psychiatry and IS&T, recognized this need and requested training.

**Action:** The LGBTQ+ Collective and DEI coaches partnered to create LGBTQ+ education available to departments upon request. The one-hour presentation covers the differences between gender and sexuality, pronouns, deadnaming, trans identities, and allyship.

**Outcome:** More than 90 participants were engaged in these presentations. This presentation has contributed to several departments' continuing conversations about equity, inclusion, and the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, and identity. This presentation will be recorded and accessible to all Hennepin Healthcare employees in 2024.

# 2

Reflect the communities we serve and promote equitable opportunity



## Promoting opportunity and reflecting our community

As the Hennepin Healthcare Talent Garden enters its third year, it continues its mission to inspire and support historically excluded youth to pursue careers in healthcare. Talent Garden programs make big strides in creating a healthcare system that reflects the communities of color that we serve by introducing youth to healthcare careers and demonstrating that these roles are within reach.

The Talent Garden programs strive to change the trajectory of the lives and careers of young people of color through:

- Youth Summits to engage and encourage with hands-on activities
- Education and mentorship
- Paid internships

## Introducing youth of color to healthcare careers

**Opportunity:** Research clearly demonstrates that Black and Brown people are more likely to have poor health outcomes. Some of these health disparities are due to people of color being underrepresented in the ranks of providers.

**Action:** Hennepin Healthcare added new Youth Summits to expand programming for children of color and youth from other underrepresented and historically marginalized populations with the goal of building their interest in top careers in healthcare. Hands-on learning opportunities, information, and contact with healthcare professionals of color increased their excitement and showed them these careers are in reach.

**Outcome:** Hennepin Healthcare has held nine Youth Summit events for youth ages 12-18 since December 2021 with 596 youth attending:

- Four Youth Summits were held during 2023, attended by 300 youth, including our first American Indian Youth with Stethoscopes event and our second Latine Youth with Stethoscopes.
- New hands-on demonstrations were added to the Youth Summits in 2023, including Pathology, Dermatology, Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology, opening up interest in a broader array of career possibilities for these young scholars.
- Two Youth Summits will be held in early 2024 - our first Asian Youth with Stethoscopes and our second American Indian Youth with Stethoscopes.
- We are on pace to host four major Youth Summits each school year.



## Mentoring future leaders in their healthcare careers

### Talent Garden Summer Internship

- For the second summer in a row, 21 young people served as our 2023 Talent Garden Summer interns.
- With philanthropic funding, these 16- to 18-year-old interns were paid \$15.41 per hour, averaging 33 hours per week over the six-week program. To reduce barriers to participation, interns were once again provided with uniforms, daily lunch, and transit passes.

Our 2023 Talent Garden interns:

- Were selected among 67 applicants based on letters of recommendation and interviews.
- Represented 16 area high schools and collectively spoke 9 languages.
- Began each internship day at the hospital at 7:30 am.
- Shadowed physicians, nurses, and advanced practice providers, completing a total of 256 shadowing assignments over 12 days in areas like hyperbaric medicine, clinical ethics, and anesthesia.
- Passed the Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) certification exam after receiving 55 hours of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) training.

As of year-end 2023, of our 41 past Talent Garden Interns:

- Four are in their junior year of high school. Seventeen are seniors in high school and at some point in the college application process.
- Eight are currently in their first or second year of nursing school
- Five are currently in undergraduate pre-medical studies. Two are currently pursuing undergraduate studies in clinical psychology or physical therapy.

## Expanding diversity through career opportunity

**Opportunity:** Expand diversity and representation so that our workforce across the healthcare system reflects the community.

**Action:** Hennepin Healthcare held two Expanding Diversity Career Fairs in 2023 to highlight career paths in healthcare. Job seekers talked directly to team representatives, received resume help, and could even hold an interview and receive a verbal offer at the event.

**Outcome:** More than 130 people attended the two career fairs with opportunities to engage more than a dozen departments at each event. Job seekers submitted more than 60 applications and had 30 on-site interviews between the two events, resulting in more than 18 hires. Overall, of the 2,035 employees hired in 2023, 49% identified themselves as diverse hires. Hennepin Healthcare achieved a 40% representation ratio in 2023.

3

Eliminate  
health disparities



## Advancing the priorities our community identified

**Opportunity:** Through the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), our community identified needs they wanted us to prioritize across all parts of Hennepin Healthcare.

**Action and Outcome:** In 2023, Hennepin Healthcare made significant progress on the following CHNA goals:

### ***Comprehensive, equitable education***

- Training: Systemic Racism
  - Complete and extend full implementation of the Compass Program (a year-long health equity training) to equip all Hennepin Healthcare employees with knowledge and tools needed to address systemic racism and reduce health inequities.
- Coaching/Mentorship:
  - Continue Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Executive Coaching to support Hennepin Healthcare's goal of becoming an anti-racist organization.
- Engage with diverse communities to understand and respond to community-defined education needs/wishes:
  - Establish community groups led by Cultural Navigators, in part, to better understand community definitions of "health" and "being healthy."
  - Partner with community entities to support existing and/or co-create new health educational opportunities in community settings that address requested topics such as culturally responsive approaches.

### ***Advocacy and cultural sensitivity***

- Prioritize cultural responsiveness within Hennepin Healthcare's approach to providing care and supporting the health of our community.
  - To increase greater access to culturally responsive provider/patient communication, hire more providers and front-line team members who are culturally and linguistically representative of the communities Hennepin Healthcare serves.
  - Support and grow the Cultural Navigator program to help patients navigate our health system and advocate for individual needs.

Visit [hennepinhealthcare.org/about-us/community-involvement](https://hennepinhealthcare.org/about-us/community-involvement) for more information on the CHNA process and progress.

## Educating our entire team in health equity

**Opportunity:** The Compass Program, developed by Hennepin Healthcare, is a yearlong journey where team members receive an incredible chance to reflect, learn, and connect with other employees while focusing on racial inequities in healthcare systems.

Hennepin Healthcare team members are benefiting from the unique opportunity to learn more about the history of racism in the US, how different racial groups—including Black/African Americans, Latine/Hispanic Americans, American Indian and Alaskan Natives, as well as Asian American Pacific Islanders—have faced racism in the US and how systemic racism contributes to health disparities.

Team members are now armed with historical knowledge and awareness. They have increased their skills to navigate systemic forms of racism as well as interpersonal microaggressions—all aimed at eliminating health inequities.

**Action:** The Executive Leadership Team committed to prioritizing health equity and supported a plan to bring all 7,000 employees through the year-long training by the end of 2025. More than 130 senior leaders across the organization completed the Compass Program in March 2023. In January 2023, 1,440 team members started the program and another 1,415 began in June 2023.

**Outcome:** Hennepin Healthcare used a pre-Compass and post-Compass survey to track participants' self-reported knowledge of DEI, health equity, and Black/African American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latine American, and Asian American history. The surveys show participants reporting an increase in their knowledge of these areas after completing the program.

Here's what participants had to say:

- “Unlearning racism is not an easy challenge...I am proud to see Hennepin Healthcare tackle this within our ranks where the leadership are putting time, money, actions, and what I believe is authentic engagement into this effort.”
- “Participating in the Compass Program has been a life-changing experience for me. As a nurse, bearing witness to someone else's pain is central to our profession. It is equally as important as aligning ourselves with where our patients are in their journey and meeting them there. Bearing witness to the pain, violence, and trauma experienced by Black, African American, American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic people help us not strive for equality but equity in how we treat and care for people.”
- “What I've learned is my commitment to continue the conversation and the work — the need to be better.”
- “The impact of this training will reach far into the future for all of us as an organization and as individuals.”

The team offered additional health equity trainings throughout the year:

- Gender pronouns as professional development for nurses
- Health Equity series for the public
- Bias and awareness in marketing or public relations
- Embodied health series with emphasis on implicit bias and trauma-informed care
- Disarming microaggressions for medical residents

Visit [hennepinhealthcare.org/compass-program](https://hennepinhealthcare.org/compass-program) for more information.

## Supporting front-line teams with DEI partnership

**Opportunity:** DEI Clinical Consultants are trained mental health professionals who work in tandem with medical front-line employees and offer DEI support and interventions in real time. This helps our team provide the best healthcare to patients regardless of their identities or backgrounds and supports a workplace where diversity thrives.

**Action:** Three DEI Clinical Consultants joined Hennepin Healthcare as permanent and embedded members of the care team. They are knowledgeable about culture, organizational development, human behavior, DEI, and health equity. They build working relationships with the individuals and teams where they are assigned and work to understand the group's dynamic, shifting the culture to make it more inclusive and equitable as they customize DEI interventions to the team's unique needs. They also support the team on the floor through real-time DEI interventions. The three DEI Clinical Consultants currently partner with Emergency Services, Critical Care, and Medical Surgical units, Float Pool, and work closely with Labor and Delivery. These teams include five directors, 32 nurse leaders, 29 physician leaders, and 3,000 team members.

**Outcome:** 2023 outcomes include:

- Collaborated to create an MRI policy for non-English-speaking patients in the Emergency Department
- Initiated a trauma-informed revision of workflow in the Emergency Department
- Consulted on interpersonal relationships to enhance a culture of belonging and promote trust and safety
- Supported residents of color — our new physicians in training who recently graduated from medical school — to improve inclusion and belonging by holding ongoing trainings to equip them to advocate for themselves and others
- Offered 1:1 resident support across departments

## Enhancing our tools to serve our community

**Opportunity:** Every patient deserves equal access to healthcare, regardless of the language they speak or their ability to hear. We understand the unique challenges that Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHoH) patients face when seeking healthcare. Our commitment is to provide prompt, high-quality, patient-centered communication access using the latest technology. The Interpreter Services Department (ISD) joined the Health Equity team in 2023 and is constantly exploring new ways to improve our interpretation services, so all patients receive the same level of care.

**Action:** In response to the pandemic, the delivery of language services has been transformed to remote modalities, and the shortage of interpreters in Minnesota has made in-person interpretation more challenging. Hennepin Healthcare recognized the need to improve and update our Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) technology and to enhance our

technology devices and platforms to create a more efficient and effective system for language services.

After extensive testing and quality monitoring, we switched our VRI vendor so that our LEP and DHoH patients have on-demand interpreter services at any time and on any device in 30 seconds or less.

**Outcome:** The new technology empowers healthcare providers to deliver exceptional care to patients with diverse language needs, offering efficient interpretation services in over 243 languages and a user-friendly phone application. In 2023, Interpreter Services interpreted over **8 million minutes** and serviced **200 languages** both remotely and in-person. Patients and providers could connect with an interpreter in **18.5 seconds** on average.

## Welcoming the community through our doors

Hennepin Healthcare serves diverse communities, and it is critical to create an environment where everyone feels welcomed no matter their race, religion, ability, gender, or language. The Welcome Services team is the first point of contact on the downtown campus, and they are committed to providing helpful information with courtesy and respect, so everyone has a warm welcome that reflects our mission and values.

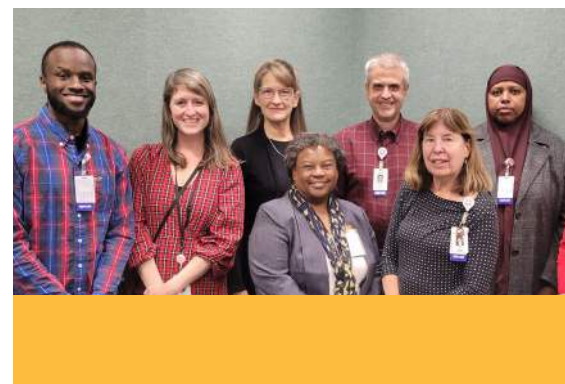
Welcome Services partners by:

- Providing accurate and timely information in-person or over the phone to patients, families, visitors, and team members in the language of the visitor or patients.
- Coordinating and partnering with other departments to facilitate patient and visitor needs as necessary, such as with transportation services to assist with ability differences.
- Facilitating arrival of compassionate care visitation and patient families for patient care conferences and coordinating with chaplains as needed.
- Reporting incidents that occur in the lobbies for proper review and resolution relating to violence or perceived inequity by patients and/or patient families.

**Outcome:** In 2023, Welcome Services had 256,158 encounters with patients, families, vendors, and team members.

## Meeting the spiritual needs of our patients

**Opportunity:** In October 2023, Spiritual Care moved to the Health Equity team. The Spiritual Care Department's 15 chaplains and three Muslim Spiritual Care Providers are available day, evening, and overnight to serve a diverse population of patients, families, and team members at Hennepin Healthcare. This year, we had opportunities



to offer education for providers, expand diversity in the Spiritual Care team, and develop a hospital bereavement program. The alliance of Spiritual Care and Health Equity is an important connection as health equity concerns are at the heart of spiritual care work.

**Action:** Three Muslim Spiritual Care Providers provide culturally specific care for Muslim families. Spiritual Care hosted a Clinical Pastoral Education Program this year that supported the Muslim Spiritual Care Providers in gaining education credits towards chaplain certification. In 2023, Spiritual Care increased diversity in the department with the hiring of two chaplains of color. A Bereavement Chaplain was also added to the team in 2023 through a generous grant and is developing a program to extend spiritual care to bereaved families.

The Muslim Spiritual Care Program began in 2021 when the Spiritual Care Department partnered with Psychiatry, Population Health, and Open Path Resources to co-create a culturally responsive model of psychiatric care for Muslim patients. This program included Muslim Spiritual Care Providers who support Muslim patients in psychiatric units and in the community after discharge. This new model of care is occurring in stages with new documentation tools created to support continuity between inpatient and outpatient care. The outpatient part of the program was introduced in the summer of 2023. The program is securing resources to sustain its work in the future.

## Integrating cultural needs into patient care

**Opportunity:** In the Community Health Needs Assessment and community conversations, communities told us they wanted a more culturally responsive way to navigate our hospital system — they wanted their cultural needs integrated into care planning and delivery.

**Action:** Our Cultural Navigators help patients and families in inpatient units navigate our health care system. Five Cultural Navigators — representing the American Indian, African American, Latine, and Somali communities — help patients and their families in inpatient units navigate our healthcare system. The navigators make sure the care team understands a patient's cultural needs and they help patients, families and caregivers communicate with each other. They identify culturally relevant methods of healing and develop resource guides for care planning and discharge.

In February 2023, navigators began their inpatient programming by meeting with patients, working with team members on inpatient units, and working with families. The navigators



actively participate in morning huddles and in several organization-wide initiatives, including breast cancer outreach in the American Indian patient community, co-leading heritage month activities, and initiating culturally responsible care programming (Muslim prayer access via iPad). Additionally, the Cultural Navigator team has developed a Cultural Resource Guide for each community they represent, available at each inpatient nurse's station and online.

**Outcome:** From February to December, five Cultural Navigators saw over **1,700 patients** and made more than **170 community referrals**.

## Supporting togetherness, connection, and community trust

The Cultural Navigators work to build communities' feeling of belonging when they interact with their healthcare provider. Data shows that patients, specifically in communities of color, have better health outcomes when they can access spaces that support togetherness, connection, education and sharing.

**Action:** In August 2023, the Cultural Navigators launched community groups in the Latine, Somali, American Indian, and Black communities in partnership with community organizations. The groups are designed to provide healthcare education, promote patient self-advocacy, and identify barriers to patients' relationships with healthcare systems.

The groups were held monthly through November 2023 as the team determined the best outreach methods, best space opportunities, and how to create an active presence in these communities. Starting in March of 2024, the groups will reconvene and continue to build trust and community presence. Topical education will begin in June of 2024, shaped by community feedback. The goal is to strengthen relationships between communities and Hennepin Healthcare and to provide a sense of autonomy in community members' healthcare education.

**Outcome:** We will continue to monitor outcomes in 2024.

## Revising hospital policies for inclusion

**Opportunity:** American Indian ceremony and spiritual beliefs and practices have been outlawed as a tool of oppression to violently assimilate American Indian people and communities.

**Action:** In partnership with the policy owner, a DEI Executive Coach, Community Engagement Manager and American Indian Cultural Navigator reviewed the Hennepin Healthcare Tobacco Policy with an equity lens.

**Outcome:** The Tobacco Policy was updated to indicate that ceremonies that include sacred herbs such as sweetgrass, sage, cedar, and tobacco may be burned indoors in small amounts with guidance from an American Indian Cultural Navigator or Spiritual Care. The navigator or chaplain will be available to assist the family before the ceremony.

## Improving maternal child health in partnership with Hennepin County

**Opportunity:** National data and data from the University of Minnesota shows that Black and Indigenous birthing people die two to three times as often as their white counterparts across the US. Black and Indigenous babies die before reaching their first birthday two times as often as white babies. Understanding structural racism is critical in eliminating health inequities.

**Action:** Hennepin County Public Health and Hennepin Healthcare serve a subset of the same population. This gave an opportunity to leverage expertise and resources to directly improve the health of BIPOC birthing individuals and others at risk for poor birth outcomes.

**Outcome:** Hennepin County Public Health provided funding for a range of community-initiated solutions to address maternal and infant health outcomes in Hennepin County. This includes:

- Healing from trauma, starting with our team
- Screening patients to provide better resources and support
- Creating a healing space in our waiting room
- Providing doula support to birthing people
- Addressing food insecurity and connecting patients to resources
- Training professionals to support infant mental health

## Healing from trauma, starting with our team

**Opportunity:** Trauma-informed care shifts our perspective from “what is wrong with you?” to “what has happened to you?”—prompting us to see the full context of a person’s behavior and what might have led to it, making us more compassionate and able to see people’s strengths. This means trauma-informed care must start with our team relieving their own stress and focusing on their own healing so they can provide the best care to our patients.

**Action:** With support from Hennepin County under the Maternal Child Health Initiative, our East Lake Clinic is holding trauma healing trainings at monthly all-team meetings with a focus on topics like trauma-responsive care and tools to use in moments of dysregulation. The team is holding healing pauses at huddle every morning with monthly themes of gratitude, breathing, mindfulness, and emotion regulation. The team also held an all-team trauma healing retreat in August.

**Outcomes:** The team will be using quarterly feedback forms to evaluate understanding and experience of the monthly trainings. So far, respondents agree that the trainings enhance their understanding of trauma, give them resources for regulating themselves, and are relevant and applicable to their work. Here are some comments from the team:

- “The engagement and openness to learn and participate and show gratitude towards others has been great!”
- “Help(s) us regroup and take a minute to breathe and continue with our daily work in a positive manner.”

88% of team members who completed the survey about the retreat selected “I feel an increased sense of belonging at Hennepin Healthcare System,” and 92% selected, “I feel more connection to the goals of diversity and inclusion that we hold at Hennepin Healthcare System.” Here are some comments from the team:

- “This retreat makes me want to keep working here.”
- “My favorite thing was hearing my coworkers’ stories.”

## Screening patients to provide better resources and support

**Opportunity:** The shift from “what is wrong with you?” to “what has happened to you?” includes the understanding that everyone has gone through experiences that affect our lives and behaviors. The difficulties of navigating a healthcare system are compounded by having social and mental health needs, especially when one is pregnant. There are points in time during pregnancy that are key for maternal and child health.

**Action:** With support from Hennepin County under the Maternal Child Health Initiative, East Lake Clinic can provide pregnant patients and kids under ten with trauma-informed screenings, needed resources, support, and continued care coordination. An on-site Community Health Worker and Social Worker began 24-week, 28-week, and postpartum screenings which include questions on access to cribs, car seats, breast-feeding, physical or emotional abuse, mental health, insurance, and more supportive factors. This model allows for all patients to discuss these factors with a Community Health Worker or Social Worker at a set time without the need of a referral or direct ask. After identifying needs, Community Health Worker or Social Worker provide trauma-responsive services to patients that may need food, transportation, housing, and parenting and mental health resources. When patients know everyone is asked the same questions, it reduces stigma and reaches individuals who may not bring up concerns with providers and therefore not receive a social work or community health work referral.

**Outcome:** A Community Health Worker or Social Worker met with and provided services to **128** or **65%** of East Lake Clinic pregnant patients and families throughout the year, showing the need for continued support and services. The patients who gave feedback reported that meeting with the team improved their care and made them more prepared and aware of resources for their pregnancy. One patient said, “It was nice to get a call and talk through some doubts I had as a first-time mom, and nice to tell me different options and resources if I need them.”

## Creating a healing space in our waiting room

**Opportunity:** Many patients experience a significant amount of anxiety related to medical care as they anticipate results or experience fear around treatments or procedures. In focus groups, community members and patients discussed what would make them feel safer, welcomed, and like they belong at East Lake Clinic.

**Action:** With support from Hennepin County under the Maternal Child Health Initiative, East Lake Clinic is implementing various changes to create a more inclusive and welcoming clinic. A coffee and water cart and care team photos in the waiting room, a massage chair in the group room, and a collaborative artwork activity have contributed to a sense of belonging and healing.

**Outcome:** Patient surveys show positive feedback about the activities, pictures of the care team, and the coffee and water cart. All the respondents said participating in a waiting room artwork activity made them feel like they belong at East Lake Clinic.

## Providing doula support to birthing people

**Opportunity:** Understanding structural racism is critical in eliminating health inequities for Black birthing people and their babies. Research has consistently proven that birthing people who have doula support have improved maternal and infant healthcare outcomes. They have a better patient experience and see lower rates of NICU admissions and C-sections, which have been associated with higher rates of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity.

**Action:** The On-call Doula Program supports laboring and birthing individuals. Doula support includes physical, emotional, and informational support. Physical support may include massage, assistance with position changes, nutrition, and hydration support. Emotional and informational support includes therapeutic presence, advocacy, medical system, and jargon interpretation. In 2023, with support from Hennepin County under the Maternal Child Health Initiative, the program's goals were to expand to provide two doulas available 24/7 and to work on the formal assessment of the On-call Doula Program.

**Outcome:** The program has expanded to successfully schedule **two doulas on call 24/7** more than half the time. Hennepin Healthcare and Hennepin County Assessment team members are assessing the On-call Doula Program and completing a process evaluation. The assessment focuses on both qualitative and quantitative outcomes of the program for patients, doulas, and Hennepin Healthcare team members. Preliminary outcome data from the formal evaluation show that people receiving this care experienced higher vaginal birth rates, lower NICU admissions, and higher breastfeeding initiation rates when compared to the general population. In addition, patients rated the On-call Doula program at **9.3 out of 10** for likelihood to recommend the program to a friend.

## Addressing food insecurity and connecting patients to resources

**Opportunity:** Access to sufficient and nutritious food is essential for promoting and maintaining health. Food insecurity disproportionately impacts our communities of color. Screening for food insecurity and connecting people to food resources is part of the way we deliver whole person care. Nutrition and food are particularly important for maternal outcomes during the preconception, prenatal, and postpartum stages.

**Action:** With support from Hennepin County under the Maternal Child Health Initiative, Hennepin Healthcare worked to test and expand standard screening for food insecurity and expanded access to immediate and sustaining food resources for food-insecure patients and their families. With funding from Hennepin County, Hennepin Healthcare also conducted a focused pilot that offered medically tailored, home-delivered meals to high-risk pregnant patients during pregnancy and the weeks after delivery. Meals were available for partners and, in some cases, dependents.

### Outcome:

- Primary care clinics tripled the number of patients screened for food insecurity.
- Across the whole organization, nearly 26,000 pre-packed food bags were distributed to patients experiencing food insecurity.
- Hennepin Healthcare also referred 3,352 individuals to Second Harvest Heartland's SNAP outreach team for assistance connecting to community-based resources as well as SNAP and WIC.
- 95 high-risk pregnant people were referred to Open Arms of Minnesota for medically tailored, home delivered meals.



## Training professionals to support infant mental health

**Opportunity:** Research demonstrates that healthy, nurturing relationships with parents and caregivers are key to a baby's social and emotional development, which lays the foundation for all future development. Infant and early childhood mental health (IECHM) is an emerging field and is critical to improving infant health outcomes. Infant mental health training will be an integral part of the maternal child health two-generational approach to improving birth and infant health outcomes.

**Action:** With support from Hennepin County under the Maternal Child Health Initiative, Hennepin Healthcare partnered with the Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health (MACMH) and consultants credentialed in infant mental health to provide:

- Infant mental health model development
- Curriculum and trainings
- Increased capacity and knowledge of non-clinical professionals who provide in-home services to BIPOC families

**Outcome:** In 2023, MACMH and Hennepin Healthcare partnered to provide two conferences, 10 trainings and webinars, and two workshops to professionals and stakeholders working to improve the care needs of families with young children. The education was targeted to individuals from BIPOC communities and organizations that provide services to those communities, including community health workers, case managers, home visiting professionals, county leaders and staff, infant mental health professionals, and social service professionals. More than 4,500 individuals benefited from the trainings.

4

Have measurable  
social impact



## Strengthening local artist and business ties

**Opportunity:** One focus of our employee affinity groups, the collectives, is to build strong community partnerships, support the financial vitality of local BIPOC-owned businesses, and create opportunities for our employees to engage with members of the diverse communities we serve at Hennepin Healthcare. Our American Indian Collective identified an opportunity to support Indigenous businesses by connecting them with customers at Hennepin Healthcare.



**Action:** During National Native American Heritage month, the American Indian Collective drew from their community connections and influence to host a market that connected local Indigenous artists with the Hennepin Healthcare community. Using the high-traffic hospital skyway space to reach employees and patients, the event created a welcoming environment for 14 Indigenous businesses offering jewelry, artwork, and shelf-stable food products. The collective promoted this opportunity to Hennepin Healthcare employees and offered incentives to attend and purchase items from vendors.

**Outcome:** Their efforts strengthened ties with local Indigenous artists and businesses, yielding over 1,000 visitors and over 150 sales for our guest artists.

## Increasing our partnerships with women- and minority-owned businesses

**Opportunity:** The Small Business Administration 2021 Small Business Profile reported that 99.5% of businesses in Minnesota are small, 41.1% of businesses are women-owned, and 9.6% of businesses are owned by racial minorities. Hennepin Healthcare spent \$682.6M with vendors in 2023 and has the goal to expand the percentage it spends on small, women-owned, and minority-owned businesses.

**Action:** Hennepin Healthcare worked with Strong and Starlike Consulting, Inc. to finish an assessment and engagement process to create a supplier diversity program—reviewing our existing policies, programs, practices, and procedures with an eye towards where changes may be most impactful. The team engaged with both business owners and Hennepin Healthcare team members through surveys, listening sessions, and engagement sessions.

**Outcome:** In 2023, Hennepin Healthcare increased its diverse vendor spend to **\$34.6 M**, a 15% increase from 2022. Hennepin Healthcare has the goal to increase this amount by another 10% in 2024. Hennepin Healthcare has a roadmap to expand our supplier diversity program and will implement those strategies moving forward through 2025.

## Addressing the effects of violence in our community

**Opportunity:** Hennepin Healthcare's Next Step program is a hospital-based violence intervention program that connects survivors of violent injury to resources and support. Up to 45% of patients who have experienced a violent injury will sustain another, and one of the strongest predictors of future violent injuries is a prior injury.

**Action:** Next Step enrolled **599** new participants into the program and served **832** participants for all of 2023. The team also expanded trauma-informed training and support groups:

- ARC trauma-informed training: ARC offers a framework for intervention with youth and families who have experienced multiple or prolonged traumatic stress, based on the three core domains of Attachment, Regulation, and Competency. The department completed the first phase of training that will be rolled out to the larger hospital system.
- Harriet Initiative: This first-of-its-kind community outreach program welcomes anyone who has experienced violence. It aims to improve the holistic well-being of the mind, body, and spirit and offers healthy strategies to overcome challenges. Learn about the Harriet Initiative at [hennepinhealthcare.org/next-step-program](https://hennepinhealthcare.org/next-step-program).

### Outcome:

- In 2023, 90% of people admitted for treatment to either Hennepin Healthcare, North Memorial, Abbott Northwestern, or Children's Hospital were approached about joining the program.
- 70% of Next Step participants agreed to use community-based services after they leave the hospital.
- 75% of those who use community-based services achieve progress toward one of their identified goals.
- In 2023, only 3% of people who were new Next Step participants returned to Hennepin Healthcare, North Memorial, or Abbott Northwestern with another violent injury again in 2023. Hospitals without hospital-based violence intervention programs have shown a recidivism rate of 36%.

Next Step will expand its advocacy and partnership in 2024 by meeting with state officials and partnering with health systems, gun violence prevention advocates, and the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention. The team will also join the Hennepin Healthcare Advocacy and Public Policy team in advocating for Medicaid reimbursement for violence prevention specialist services.

Visit [hennepinhealthcare.org/foundation](https://hennepinhealthcare.org/foundation) and click on "Read our Latest Impact Newsletter" for a story on how our Next Step team connects with survivors and offers support.



## Advocating for equitable legislation and policies

Our health system engaged in and supported various health equity proposals at the State Capitol that will improve health equity and outcomes for patients and the surrounding community.

Hennepin Healthcare formally submitted nearly 30 individual letters through the legislative process. This does not include the individual outreach our colleagues did directly to their legislators, or the letters other coalitions submitted which we co-signed as an organization. Over 50 Hennepin Healthcare employees visited the capitol to testify before a committee or advocate one-on-one with legislators.

We advocated for the passage of the following health equity policies that were signed into law:

- Expanding MinnesotaCare eligibility to be available to all undocumented noncitizens and include continuous eligibility for children. This will increase access to preventative health care for undocumented patients.
- Investments for grants to expand the community health worker workforce, which will significantly improve health outcomes by addressing the social conditions that impact health status, or social determinants of health.
- The Emmett Louis Till Victims' Recovery Program will support people and families who have experienced trauma based on race, ethnicity, or national origin—all key to decreasing health disparities.
- Maternal health investments
  - a. Funding for Health Beginnings, Healthy Families Act which focuses on perinatal quality and infant mortality.
  - b. Medical Assistance (MA) coverage for long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC).
  - c. A rate increase for reproductive health services in MA and MinnesotaCare.
  - d. The creation and investment in the Task Force on Pregnancy Health and Substance Use Disorders to ensure we can keep mothers and babies healthy and establish uniform responses that are supportive and not punitive.
  - e. Removing the requirement of supervision by a licensed provider for doula services in Minnesota Health Care Programs and a rate increase for doula care. Both will increase access to services that help reduce maternal and infant health disparities.
  - f. A Diaper Distribution Grant Program for under-resourced families.
- Project ECHO funding for Hennepin Healthcare to continue current tele-mentoring programming and add additional programs that serve diverse communities.
- Funding for the Addiction Medicine Fellowship program which trains physicians in the specialty of addiction medicine so they can treat patients in critical populations and locations across the state.

- Recuperative Care funding that will help solve the existing gap between hospitalization and homeless shelters. Black, Indigenous, and people of color are at much higher risk for homelessness, making homelessness a key social risk driving a variety of inequitable health outcomes.
- Protections from legal repercussions and extradition orders for transgender people and their families traveling to Minnesota to receive gender-affirming care.
- A ban on the discredited practice of conversion therapy, which seeks to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Free school meals for children regardless of family income. Food insecurity is experienced disproportionately by children of color and immigrants, who experience all the associated negative effects at much higher rates than white children. Good nutrition in childhood is a strong predictor of reduced disease not just in childhood, but throughout adulthood.



## **Gratitude**

Hennepin Healthcare would like to take a moment to thank all the departments who partnered on these many health equity initiatives. Moving this mountain requires all of us and we want to be deliberate in acknowledging the massive amount of work done by many in the partnering departments. Thank you all for being part of the solution and committing to keep doing this important work!





[hennepinhealthcare.org/healthequity](https://hennepinhealthcare.org/healthequity)