

Health Equity Portfolio

**North Carolina Department of
Health and Human Services**

FY 2022-2023 Year-in-Review



August 2023



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

Table of Contents



Letter from NCDHHS' Chief Health Equity Officer	2
Executive Summary.....	4
Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments	6
DEI and HE Strategy Development	6
HEP Digital Footprint	7
Fostering Excellence in Daily Operations	8
Driving Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in NCDHHS Workforce	9
DHHS and NC Footprint: Internal and External Partnerships	12
Training, Consultation, and Technical Assistance	20
Using Data to Hold Us Accountable.....	29
Part 2: HEP Show and Tell for FY 2022-2023	30
A Year of Celebrations and Awards	30
Part 3: Looking to FY 2023-2024 ...	34
Lessons Learned	34
What's Next for HEP	34
Appendix A: HEP Strategic Priorities for FY 22-23	35
Appendix B: ODEI Internal and External Engagements	36
Appendix C: External Partnerships / Communities Served by HEP	38

Letter from NCDHHS' Chief Health Equity Officer



In the last few years, many communities in North Carolina have experienced significant challenges, including the vulnerability of populations that have been historically and are currently marginalized to access services during the COVID-19 pandemic. These same populations are experiencing an unprecedented increase in behavioral and mental health conditions and the immense stress that the pandemic placed on families and children in North Carolina. The Health Equity Portfolio (HEP, the Portfolio) was established to advance the strategy of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS, the Department) to focus on internal and external collaboration, engagement, and belonging to achieve Health Equity (HE) in the Department and across North Carolina.

As NCDHHS continues addressing the health disparities and inequities that exist in North Carolina, we as an organization will continue to speak to and address the unique needs of all populations, especially populations that have been historically marginalized (HMPs). As such, we are engaging internal and external partners to embed equity and foster fair and just opportunities for all North Carolinians. In the past year, the Portfolio is proud to have taken numerous actions in its efforts to promote equitable service delivery and effective engagement in partnership with NCDHHS leadership and staff, including:

1. Introducing an impactful **HEP website and internal Hive (Intranet) site**, showcasing efforts and vital resources to tackle health disparities.
2. Empowering staff through a dynamic **Lunch and Learn**, fostering knowledge of people, culture, belonging, and health equity.
3. Uniting 260 leaders in the **Black Faith Leaders Network** and emphasizing vital links between faith networks and health equity in priority communities.
4. Providing consultation and assistance to communities and partner organizations, through the Offices of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); HE; and Rural Health. Notably, the **HMP Connections Network** reached over 600 health equity advocates from July 2022 to April 2023.
5. Disseminating culturally relevant **DEI and HE resources** for improved health outcomes across North Carolina's diverse population.
 - NCDHHS defines *Health Equity* as the intentional effort to ensure that everyone experiences a fair opportunity to achieve the highest level of health without barriers to access and care. Health equity can be achieved through ongoing focused societal efforts to address and eliminate inequalities and injustices that lead to health disparities.
6. Reaching nearly 5,000 people through the “**Better Health Through Better Understanding**” Fireside Chat and Tele-town Hall in recognition of National Minority Health Month.
7. Supporting equity by creating or sustaining **access to care in rural and underserved communities**.
8. Engaging over 300 staff and leaders in the ongoing work of formalizing the **NCDHHS governance structure** for people, culture, and belonging within our workforce and engagement with our partners as the foundation for advancing and sustaining health equity strategies for NC.
9. Creating the **Olmstead Team** to implement the Transition to Community Living (TCL) plan to build a housing continuum for people with disabilities.

Letter from NCDHHS' Chief Health Equity Officer

10. Successfully launching the NCDHHS Historically Black Colleges and Universities/Minority Serving Institutions (HBCUs/MSIs) Internship Program in partnership with the Division of Public Health for purposes of building a strong and inclusive public health workforce pipeline. 86 interns representing all HBCUs and two MSIs have participated in this program for 2022-23.

This is just the beginning! We are working with NCDHHS DEI Councils to advance key initiatives across the Department and are ensuring that we align our strategy with the Department's equity priorities. We look forward to building upon and sustaining these efforts in the coming years.



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*Chief Health
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Executive Summary

This **Year-in-Review Report** highlights the Portfolio's key accomplishments in Fiscal Year (FY) 22-23, discusses lessons learned, and provides insight into what's coming next in FY 23-24 to build sustainable equity efforts and for the Portfolio to continue growing its outreach, infrastructure, operations, and partnerships to achieve workforce belonging and health equity outcomes in NC.

NCDHHS is making significant investments in advancing its people, the culture and value of belonging, and health equity. Over the last year, the newly established NCDHHS Health Equity Portfolio outlined a strategic vision for the Portfolio's three offices: *Office of Rural Health (ORH)*, *Office of Health Equity (OHE)*, and *Office of DEI (ODEI)* to champion a workforce that values belonging as the foundation for advancing equitable health outcomes for the over 10 million North Carolinians we serve. Led by our Chief Health Equity Officer (CHEO), Debra Farrington, the Portfolio's overarching goal is to ensure that strategies and practices that support workforce belonging and health equity are embedded in the department's strategic and daily operations in offices, divisions, and initiatives.

HEP identified four major impact goals from the NCDHHS 2021-2023 Strategic Plan to help solidify the infrastructure for the Portfolio. These goals are:

GOAL 1

Advance health equity by reducing disparities in opportunity and outcomes for historically marginalized populations (HMPs) within NCDHHS and across the state.

GOAL 3

Build an innovative, coordinated, and whole-person—physical, mental, and social health—centered system that addresses both medical and non-medical drivers of health.

GOAL 5

Improve child and family well-being so all children have the opportunity to develop to their full potential and thrive.

GOAL 7

Achieve operational excellence by living our values—belonging, joy, people-focused, proactive communication, stewardship, teamwork, and transparency.

Figure 1 - Goals 1, 3, 5 and 7 from the NCDHHS 2021-2023 Strategic Plan

HEP's three main objectives for FY 22-23 focused on:

1. Solidifying the infrastructure of HEP
2. Aligning HEP to four (4) **NCDHHS 2021-2023 Strategic Plan Goals**
3. Supporting the NCDHHS Secretary Kody Kinsley's priorities, which include **Behavioral Health and Resilience, Child & Family Well-Being, and a Strong and Inclusive Workforce**

To prepare our strategic vision for advancing DEI and HE, HEP leadership conducted strategy planning sessions to develop the Portfolio's Mission and Vision and a strategic alignment plan. The strategic alignment plan focuses on defining a future state that fosters excellence by building multidisciplinary teams, programs, services, and

Executive Summary

networks, engages internal and external community partners, and expands access to health care services and information through training, consultation, and technical assistance (TA).



Figure 2 - HEP Mission and Vision

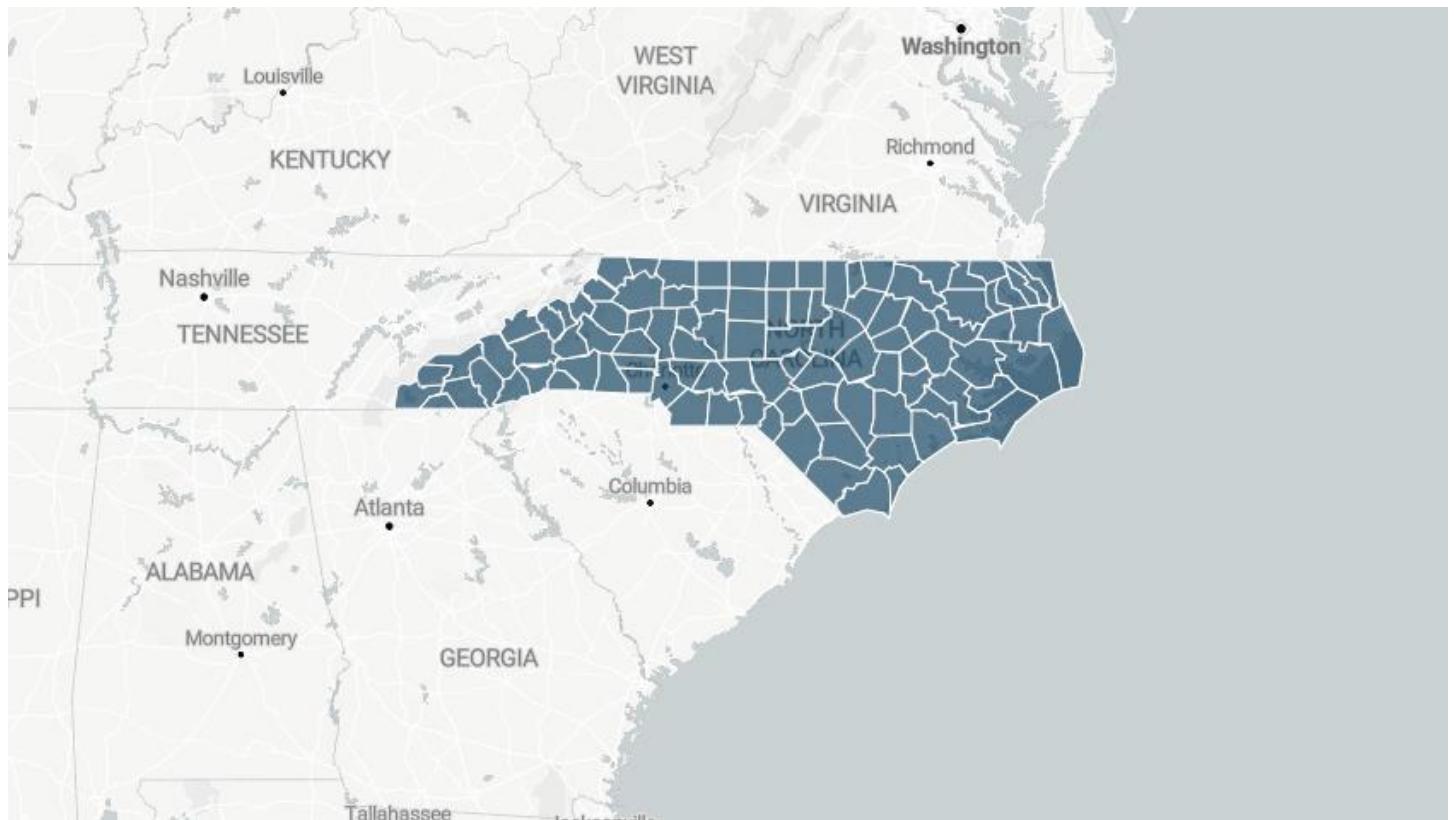


Figure 3 - Map of NC Counties

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

DEI and HE Strategy Development

In FY 2022-2023, the HEP focused on four strategic priorities: (1) **Equity Strategy**, (2) **Operational Excellence and Daily Operations**, (3) **Community and Partner Engagement**, and (4) **DEI, HE, and Rural Health Technical Assistance** to advance its mission. The HEP strategy includes several key priorities and goals for SFY 2023 (See Appendix A: HEP Strategic Priorities for FY 22-23).

Additionally, the HEP developed the [NCDHHS Health Equity Framework](#) to be used by NCDHHS as a foundation to catalyze action, putting health equity at the center of the Department's work. The framework promotes a whole person-centered approach to the elimination of health inequities and disparities for North Carolinians while ensuring that health equity remains at the core of the Department's programs, processes, and practices.

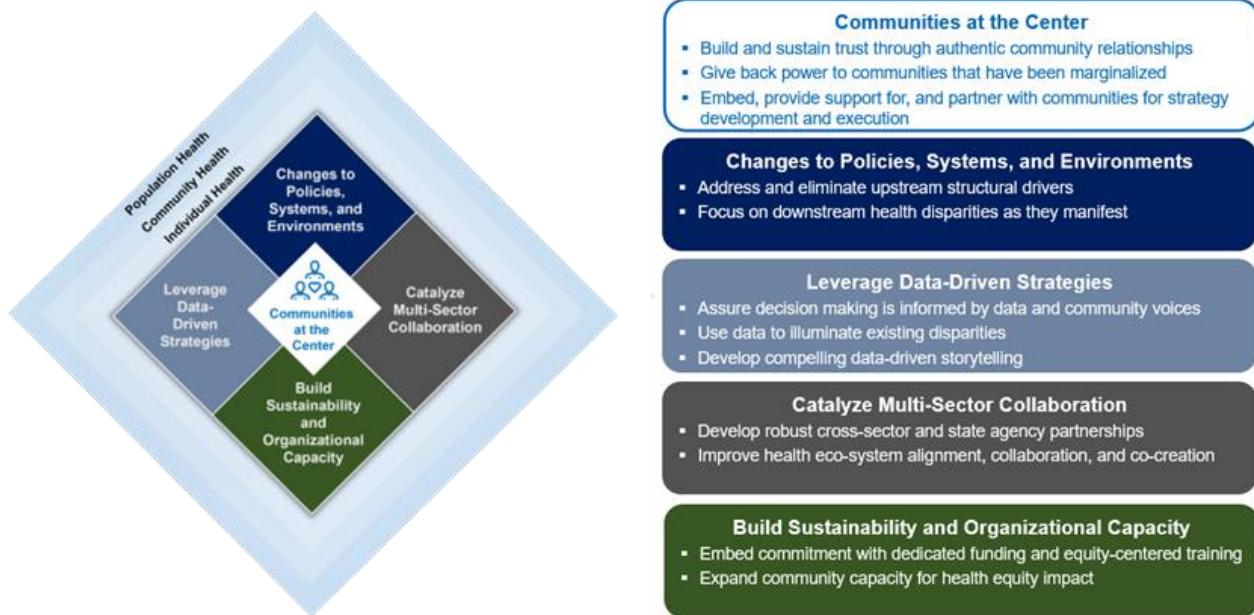


Figure 4 - NCDHHS Health Equity Framework

To allow for meaningful collaboration within and across NCDHHS divisions and deeper engagement with the public health ecosystem, HEP developed the [Health Equity Governance model](#) that engages partners to promote an aligned and amplified health equity call to action. The Health Equity Governance Model serves as a path for creating a decision-making structure within NCDHHS for making HE policy and program decisions.

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

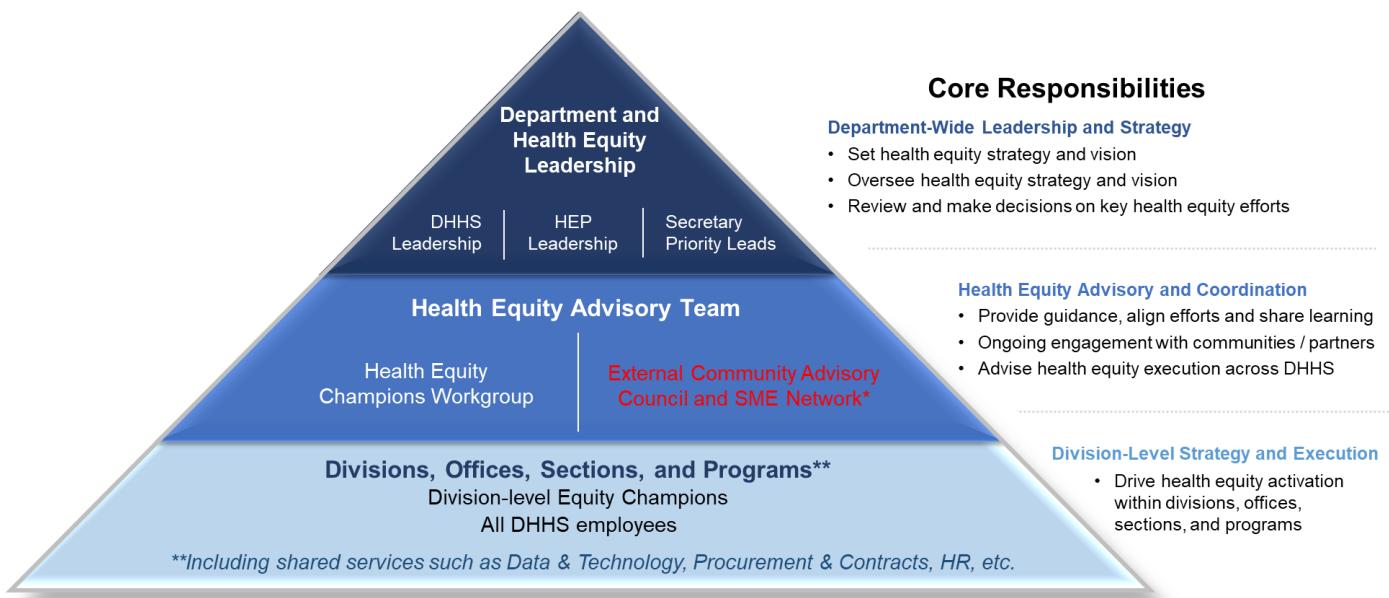


Figure 5 - NCDHHS Health Equity Governance Model

HEP Digital Footprint

In FY22-23, HEP published new websites for the HEP, ODEI, and OHE. ORH, the portfolio's oldest office, had a preexisting website. Through collaboration with the NCDHHS communications team, the new websites were designed to provide accessible information on HEP's equity efforts and serve as a centralized location for valuable resources including DEI and HE-related materials, updates, and tools. Over the course of the fiscal year, HEP, ODEI, and OHE launched their respective official websites (public) and intranet sites (DHHS employees only). The websites and intranet sites will enhance communication and engagement with communities and partners and facilitate the dissemination of DEI and HE initiatives and resources.

Office of DEI

The Office of DEI supports the recruitment, development, and retention of a diverse and inclusive workforce with the skill sets, competencies, and expertise to value belonging, provide culturally appropriate services and programs to communities that are underserved and excluded, and intervene to eliminate disparities. The ODEI website offers timely information aimed at increasing DEI awareness

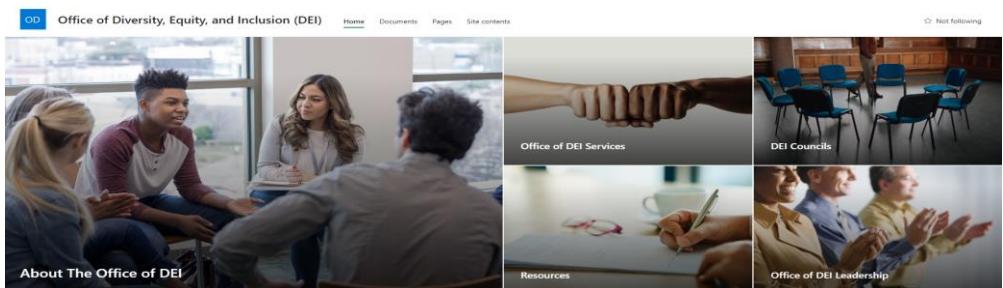


Figure 6 - Office of DEI Hive (Intranet) Site

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

including [common DEI terms](#) and [resources](#) to help employees understand workforce equity issues and learn how to create more workplaces and communities that value and practice belonging.

Office of Health Equity

Office of Health Equity

OHE works to eliminate health disparities for all individuals and keeps communities healthy, safe, and connected to needed resources and services. The OHE website provides information on [OHE's priorities](#), offers updated information on health disparities in North Carolina, and provides a [resource hub](#) of statewide and national resources and data sources on health equity topics and issues.

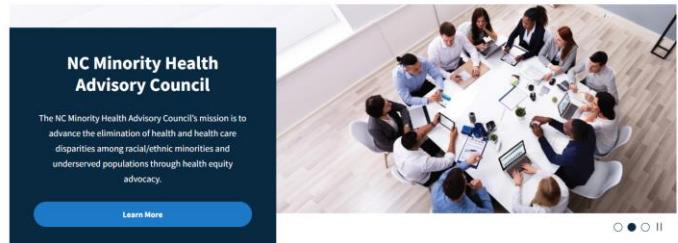


Figure 7 - Image from OHE's (external) website

Fostering Excellence in Daily Operations

To turn HEP's DEI and HE Strategy into action, establishing a dedicated team with the right expertise was a priority for the Portfolio this past year.

Expanding OHE Impact Through Staff Hiring

As of June 2023, all permanent and temporary staff positions have been filled to rebuild and reestablish OHE's capacity to lead and implement health equity programs and services and provide consultative guidance. With 11 new staff members successfully onboarded, OHE is better equipped to proactively respond to the needs of the community and state of North Carolina. The OHE also added four HBCUs/MSIs interns to its summer staffing roster.

Expanding ODEI Impact Through Staff Hiring

To amplify its impact, ODEI strategically expanded its team, bringing in diverse perspectives and expertise through the hiring of six new team members, an Administrative Specialist, two Program Managers, a Project Coordinator shared with the HBCUs/MSIs Internship Program, an HBCUs/MSIs intern, and a Master of Public Health (MPH) intern. These new team members have become vital drivers of ODEI's priorities and goals. ODEI is also the administrative home for the HBCUs/MSIs Internship Program in partnership with the Division of Public Health. Administrative staff for the HBCUs/MSIs Internship Program includes a program manager and project coordinator reporting to the HEP Senior Advisor who leads the program in collaboration with the Asst. Secretary.

ODEI Centering Session

With the first-time addition of staff, the ODEI conducted a thoughtfully designed centering session that aligned office staff members to the goals, strategy, and values of the office and portfolio and emphasized the importance of creating a positive work culture of belonging and productivity throughout NCDHHS. The agenda for the day-long working session included activities aimed at building connections, understanding cultural differences and work styles, exchanging feedback, and establishing a welcoming atmosphere. Staff members actively

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

participated in reviewing accomplishments and progress made, discussed ongoing initiatives, and provided valuable input. Interactive exercises were incorporated to encourage deep reflection on personal and professional growth, fostering a sense of self-awareness and promoting individual development. Additionally, time was allotted for a brainstorming session to generate new ideas and strategies, allowing team members to collectively contribute to the ODEI's goals. The centering sessions included takeaway steps with action planning, where tasks and responsibilities were assigned to ensure the continuity of the office's momentum and growth.

The impact of this effort included creating a sense of unity and shared purpose among staff, promoting effective communication, and enhancing teamwork. By celebrating achievements, acknowledging individual contributions, and identifying areas for growth and improvement, the centering sessions played a vital role in cultivating an engaged and motivated workforce. The sessions fostered a positive work culture and empowered the ODEI to make progress in its mission to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

DEI Definitions and Value Statements

To foster a shared understanding of DEI concepts, ODEI introduced definitions and value statements as a foundational framework, guiding team members toward a deeper appreciation of diversity and equity in the workplace. Additionally, the office has empowered leaders at all levels through its Inclusive Leadership guide, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to create an environment where every team member feels valued and heard.

By collaborating with various partners across the Department, introducing definitions and resources, and empowering leaders at all levels, ODEI has solidified its impact and spearheaded the journey toward a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive future for NCDHHS.

WORKFORCE DEI: OUR VALUE STATEMENT

Workforce DEI and a Strong and Inclusive Workforce requires that everyone from all backgrounds and categories have a fair opportunity to reach their full potential at work and achieve successful outcomes.

1

Belonging intentionally promotes an inclusive, equitable workplace that reflects the communities we serve, where everyone feels a sense of belonging, and our diverse backgrounds and experiences are valued, recognized and used as strengths.

2

Accessibility provides equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of inclusion and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings.

3

Figure 8 - Workforce DEI Value Statement

Driving Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in NCDHHS Workforce

DHHS Priority: Strong and Inclusive Workforce Workgroup: ODEI leads activities to disaggregate HR Data by office and division to enable effective and measurable workforce development strategies.

To drive change and embed principles of equity and belonging in our workforce, in May 2022, ODEI joined a newly launched NCDHHS Strong and Inclusive Workforce Workgroup and plan to use data-driven opportunities and strategies to solve workforce challenges (e.g., attrition, retention, vacancy rates, and effective recruitment and hiring strategies). The ODEI leadership participates in monthly leadership team meetings for the Strong and Inclusive Workforce Workgroup and reports the latest equity priority wins and progress. In the last year, we have successfully:

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

- Convened necessary cross-division experts (Human Resources [HR], Data Office, Division of Public Health [DPH], Information Technology Division [ITD], Equal Employment Opportunity [EEO], ODEI, and Office of the Internal Audit [OIA]) to design and accomplish the plan to access and analyze HR data for offices and divisions to determine workforce solutions.
- Engaged OIA, DEI, and ITD teams for coordination on project planning, drafting a projected phased-in plan for key metrics and data requirements.

Examples of Data Disaggregation Key Activities

- Identify data sources
- Understand data access rules/policies
- Understand core data and technical requirements
- Collect, compile, and consolidate core data and technical requirements
- Develop a metrics crosswalk
- Map metrics collected to metrics crosswalk
- Develop an execution plan

Reached a key milestone: Disaggregated DEI/HR data became available and was shared with Division Directors and DEI Councils, with goals crafted for improvement targeting quarter two of the 2024 calendar year.

ODEI Successfully Implemented the Governance Model

ODEI successfully implemented one round of meetings with all the cross-functional groupings in the Governance Model. Collaborating with various partners across the Department to maximize the impact of DEI efforts, ODEI formed the cross-functional DEI Advisory Group which includes the Chief Health Equity Officer, Operational Excellence COO, Director of HR, General Counsel, EEO Officer, the Assistant General Counsel for Health Equity Portfolio, among other key team members. The function of the DEI Advisory Group is to advise ODEI on agency-wide DEI-related priorities, planning, alignment, and key implementation strategies. The group also provides legal and policy interpretations and supports the data strategy and annual EEO planning process.

DEI Councils

ODEI is taking transformative actions that ripple across NCDHHS, leaving a lasting impact on culture and operations. Since its inception, ODEI has taken a leadership role in transforming DEI practice and culture across the Department through a network of 29 NCDHHS DEI councils, representing different Divisions and Offices across the Department. These councils serve as catalysts for collaboration, fostering a sense of shared responsibility in addressing diversity challenges and promoting inclusivity across the organization. They play a pivotal role in driving DEI principles throughout the Department, ensuring that DEI remains a priority at all levels of the Department. Given the role these Councils play in driving DEI efforts across NCDHHS, ODEI implemented a comprehensive decision-making/governance model (Figure 9) that is focused on fostering a collective commitment to DEI principles and creating a more inclusive organizational environment where ideas flow equitably. The model highlights the critical role everyone plays in DEI work at all levels.

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

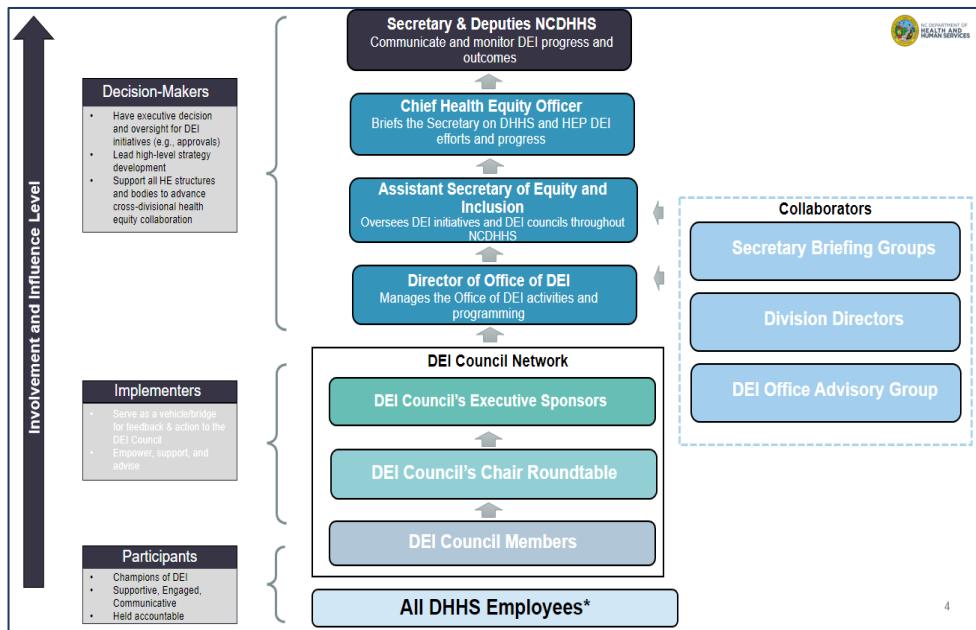


Figure 9 - DEI Decision-Making/Governance Model

Internships

As part of HEP's commitment to a diverse workforce, we have strengthened our future talent by hiring interns from historically marginalized populations.

NCDHHS' HBCUs/MSIs Summer Program

ODEI, in coordination with the Division of Public Health (DPH) and other offices, hosted three cohorts of interns in its HBCUs/MSIs Internship Program. The Internship Program was created by partnering with HBCUs and MSIs in North Carolina as a component of the department's workforce development initiative that encourages college students to seek careers in public health and government. The program featured training focused on NCDHHS' role in improving health outcomes in North Carolina, education on health determinants, HE and DEI thought leadership, and recent public health challenges in vulnerable populations.

HBCUs/MSIs Milestones

- Three cohorts of interns (Summer 2022, Winter 2023, and Summer 2023) consisting of 86 talented students from HBCUs/MSIs. This program provided valuable opportunities for professional development and contributed to building a diverse talent pipeline.
- The launch of the HBCUs/MSIs Change Champions initiative for the Fall 2023 cohort, aimed at empowering and supporting students to create positive change within their respective institutions.
- The establishment of the Executive Branch HBCUs/MSIs Networking Group, fostering connections and collaboration among HBCUs, MSIs, and government agencies to promote diversity and inclusivity.

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

OHE Latinx Policy and Strategy Intern Program

In efforts to diversify the workforce and encourage students to pursue careers in public health and the Department, four bilingual and bicultural graduate students supported the work of the Director of Latinx Policy and Strategy this fiscal year. Intern projects included:

1. Spanish-language communications focused on COVID-19 vaccinations and its impact on the North Carolina Latinx/Hispanic community.
2. A process evaluation on language access at NCDHHS.
3. Interviews with 7 key stakeholders from Wake, Forsyth, Guilford, Durham, and Johnston Counties¹ to better understand current community health needs of the Hispanic population in North Carolina.
4. Review and recommendations for the Department's 2023 Medicaid Expansion work, including outreach strategies for the Latinx/Hispanic Population in North Carolina.

DHHS and NC Footprint: Internal and External Partnerships

Internal Partnerships

The Portfolio understands the importance of cross-divisional collaboration with NCDHHS offices and divisions to promote the sustainability of the many HE and DEI efforts occurring within and across NCDHHS. For example, this past fiscal year, the HEP led efforts to document each Division's external engagement with HMPs and key partner organizations to gain greater visibility of NCDHHS' reach, develop a system of tracking engagements, and increase coordination within the Department. This effort along with other inter-departmental efforts listed below has established the Portfolio's leadership and accountability to carry out the Department's health equity-related goals.

2023 Health Disparities Data Report & Resource Guide

OHE launched cross-departmental engagements to develop a new 2023 Health Disparities Data Report & Resource Guide (the Report) through the establishment of a data collaborative workgroup with the NCDHHS Data Office. The Report will measure and monitor the state's progress towards eliminating disparities, health status gaps experienced by HMPs, and provide current data and evidence-based recommendations that can aid communities across North Carolina in devising strategies to address health disparities.

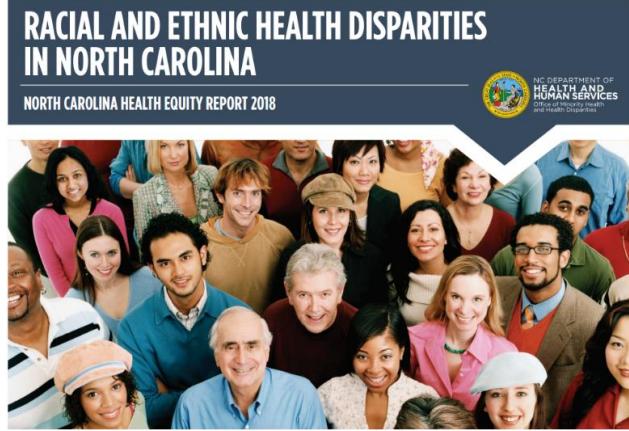


Figure 10 - North Carolina Health Equity Report, 2018

¹ These counties were chosen because they either have the highest number or percentage of Latinx/Hispanic residents in the state. They also represent a diverse makeup of rural/urban populations.

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

The Report will describe the historical, social, and root causes of health disparities, make disparity data accessible to all, and inform key decision-makers about eliminating health disparities through policy reform and system change. The Report engages leadership, data, community leaders, and program teams from NCDHHS' priority areas and emerging priorities (e.g., environmental issues, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, the digital divide, and more).

Translating All NCDHHS Press Releases

Starting this fiscal year, the OHE Latinx Policy and Strategy Program collaborated with the NCDHHS' Communications Office to strengthen Spanish communications, in part by translating all NCDHHS press releases (a total of 12 for FY 22-23). The Program hired an additional translator with a CDC Disparities Grant fund to increase the capacity to translate materials into Spanish in a culturally competent way.

DEI Collaboration with NCDHHS Division of Human Resources

ODEI established a new partnership with HR, exemplifying its commitment to fostering a more inclusive and equitable work environment. This partnership was forged by recognizing the shared goals and objectives of both offices, leveraging their respective expertise and resources to integrate DEI principles into HR practices. Together, they are actively creating initiatives, resources, policies, and programs aimed at promoting DEI throughout the organization and creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace culture. Some of these initiatives include:

1. **Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Fundamental (EEODF) Training Courses:** The EEODF training modules are intended to provide NCDHHS leaders, managers, and supervisors with practical training that will assist them in becoming more effective managers and supervisors of an increasingly diverse workforce.
2. **Learning Management System (LMS) Training Playlist:** The LMS training playlist is a series of engaging and informative training playlists aimed at teaching key DEI and belonging concepts and skills to NCDHHS employees.
3. **Development for and Finalizing of the 2023 EEO Plan:** The 2023 EEO Plan reaffirms NCDHHS' commitment to EEO and DEI in its employment practices, program operations, and service delivery systems by analyzing data related to staffing, recruitment, retention, workforce development, and performance management.
4. **Data Disaggregation Workgroup for NCDHHS' Strong and Inclusive Workforce Priority:** The data disaggregation workgroup was launched to increase the diversity and inclusivity of NCDHHS' workforce through data-driven opportunities and strategies to hire recruit and retain employees.

External Community and Partner Engagement

HEP works with various communities and partner groups, including community and faith-based organizations, legislative and policy groups, and service providers. These partnerships are crucial to sharing health matters that are important to local communities across the state, identifying solution-seeking approaches to eliminate health disparities, making resource connections to build healthier communities, and making plans for action to

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

keep our state healthy and safe. For a full list of HEP's external community partners, please see Appendix C: External Partnerships / Communities Served by HEP.

Healthier Together Program

The Healthier Together program was established as a public-private partnership between NCDHHS and [NC Counts Coalition](#) in 2021. The initial purpose of Healthier Together was to increase demand for and access to the COVID-19 vaccine to HMPs by conducting outreach and education efforts, coordinating local activities at accessible locations, and helping individuals schedule and connect to transportation for appointments.

OHE and the NC Counts Coalition continued to partner through information-sharing efforts which share critical data and insights to improve access to COVID-19 vaccines and promote targeted and effective interventions.

This partnership and information sharing enables evidence-based decision-making, leading to more tailored vaccine distribution strategies and outreach efforts, ultimately fostering higher vaccination rates among historically marginalized communities, and contributing to a more equitable and healthier society.

Over the past 2+ years, NC Counts Coalition has supported NCDHHS by building a strong network of over 55 community-based organizations working to vaccinate communities through door-to-door outreach, literature drops, phone calls, direct messaging, site visits, event-based contacts, and organizing and supporting vaccine efforts. This partnership also resulted in matching vaccine providers with community-based organizations, working to ensure that communities have the vaccine supply, outreach, and transportation resources they need to get people vaccinated. Outreach topics primarily include booster vaccine information, mental health resources, COVID management 101, other illnesses, ACA and Medicaid, and clinical services. This partnership has changed over the past year to expand focus on areas of health disparities. These areas include mental health, Mpox, and continuing work on COVID.

Equity Interfaith Leaders Network

OHE launched phase one of the Equity Interfaith Leaders Network by convening North Carolina's Black Faith Leaders on February 27th, 2023, in a town hall meeting. Approximately 260 faith leaders, community members, and NCDHHS employees gathered to share health matters important to the



Figure 11 - Healthier Together Impact by Numbers

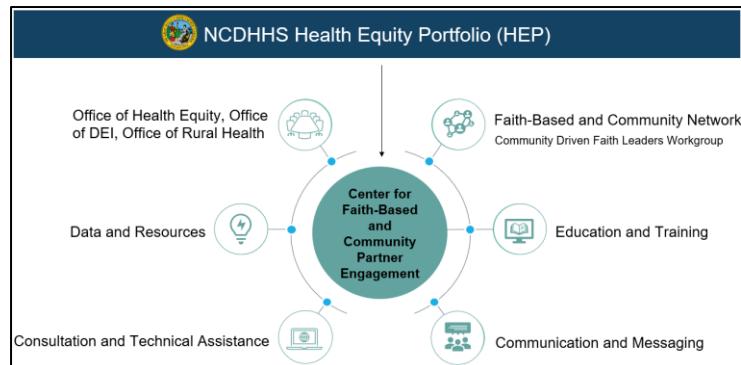


Figure 12 - Future state for OHE's Center for Faith-Based and Community Partner Engagement

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

communities they serve, identify solution-seeking approaches to eliminate health disparities, and agree to work together to make resource connections to build healthier communities. OHE then reconvened this group in June of 2023 to further discuss health issues, engagement approaches, and ways to connect via the OHE Center for Faith-Based and Community Partner Engagement. OHE will deploy the same strategy for other demographic groups in the fall of 2023 with the future state goal of bringing all groups together in an interfaith collaborative working together to eliminate health disparities and advance health equity.

Minority Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP)²

The MDPP continued expanding diabetes prevention work and community aid through local health department screenings, targeted marketing campaigns, and Lifestyle classes. Approximately **690** individuals from HMPs enrolled in NC MDPP in FY 22-23 and **2,145** individuals were screened for diabetes.

Collaborative Agreement (CoAg) & Equity Grant Steering Committee

The OHE established a Department-wide CoAg & Equity Grant Steering Committee in February 2023 to convene monthly coordination and action planning meetings. OHE also paid for the printing of resources distributed to HBCU campuses through health centers, Community-Based Organization (CBO) networks for outreach events, and Community Health Worker (CHW) consults.

National Minority Health Month

In honor of National Minority Mental Health, NCDHHS held a "Better Health Through Better Understanding" Fireside Chat and Tele-town Hall on April 27th, 2023. The NCDHHS CHEO, Debra Farrington, was among the three participants who led the discussion on health issues routinely faced by rural communities and racial and ethnic minorities, as well as efforts to remove barriers to healthcare access and eliminate disparities. More than **4,300** people dialed into the tele-town hall, and over **500** people viewed it via NCDHHS social media platforms.

Latinx Policy and Strategy Program Community and Partner Engagement

The Latinx Policy and Strategy Program's community and partner engagement efforts have reached over **50,000** Spanish-speaking and Latinx/Hispanic individuals across North Carolina.

Public Service Announcements

The Program created **160** public service announcements (PSAs) on health equity materials targeted to Spanish-speaking members of the community. These PSAs were distributed across:

1. **Broadcast:** TV and Radio
2. **Websites:** YouTube and NCDHHS website
3. **Social media platforms:** Twitter (X), TikTok, Instagram, Facebook
4. **Movie theaters**

² NC Minority Diabetes Prevention Program (forsyth.nc.us)

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

5. In-person sporting events

Interviews

The Director of Latinx Policy and Strategy also completed **29** interviews on local Spanish-speaking radio stations regarding vaccine rates, services to communities through NCDHHS programs, and health promotion. The impressions from these interviews are below³:

Radio Station	Total Events	Average 18+ Audience Members	Interview Time (min)	Total Impressions
Los Expertos	10	17,500	2	350,000
Despierta América	2	20,200	2	80,800
WYMY	4	12,286	6.5	319,429
WQXR	5	1,000	4	20,000
La Grande	6	N/A	30	N/A
Norsan	2	N/A	4	N/A
TOTAL	29	50,986	258	770,229

Newsletters

The Latinx Program sent **32** Noticias de NCDHHS Bilingual Newsletters during the 22-23 fiscal year. Throughout the year, the bilingual newsletters were opened **6,142** times⁴ and the links to information and resources listed in the newsletter were clicked **4,284** times. Every month, the Noticias newsletter reached almost **600** subscribers. This newsletter shared the latest NCDHHS news and resources of interest to Latinx CBOs, leaders, and partners. Explore the campaign archive [here](#).

Latin-19

In FY 22-23, the OHE Latinx Policy and Strategy Program leadership participated in weekly Latin-19 meetings. The Director of the program presented on key equity-related topics including Medicaid Expansion, NC Health Choice to Medicaid, and the Public Health Emergency Unwinding. An estimated **60** participants attended these meetings weekly.

³ Please Note: the reach/impressions for interviews are larger than what is shown given that two radio stations (La Grande and Norsan) do not have measurable reach numbers at the moment.

⁴ This number represents each time a user opens an email from the newsletter for the first time.

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

North Carolina Latino Health Alliance (NCLHA)

The Latinx Program ensured monthly attendance at NCLHA meetings to provide valuable public health updates from the Department. Latinx Program Director, Yazmin Garcia Rico, participated as a panelist in the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina, Inc. (formerly AMEXCAN's) NC Latino Striving Towards Health Equity Summit on February 24th, 2023.

Yazmin Garcia Rico also coordinated a meeting between Sec. Kody Kinsley, CHEO Debra Farrington, and AMEXCAN. At this meeting, AMEXCAN presented its Latino Agenda recommendations and engaged in discussion about current efforts and ways to collaborate to continue improving the health and well-being of the Latino population in North Carolina.



Figure 13 - Yazmin Garcia Rico at NC Latino Striving Towards Health Equity Summit, pictured third from left

Cafecitos & Tele-town Halls

The Latinx Program conducted Spanish-Language Cafecitos & Tele-town Halls live-streamed from the NCDHHS Facebook, Twitter (X), and YouTube accounts as part of the state's ongoing efforts to ensure equitable access to timely health information, resources, and vaccines, and eliminate health disparities in the Latinx/Hispanic populations. These events reached over **64,000** people from **July 2022 to June 2023** (see the breakdown below):

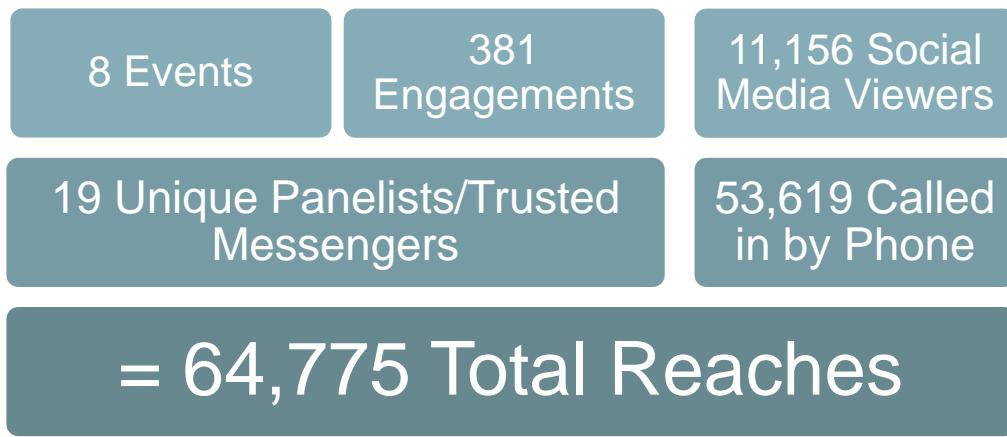


Figure 14 - Metrics from Cafecitos & Tele-town Halls, FY 22-23

The topics discussed during the Cafecitos and tele-townhalls include:

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

- Importance of routine health visits, vaccines, and preventive care
- How to find support for physical and mental health
- Ways to uplift health for men and the LGBTQ+ community
- Resources to increase access to health services and eliminate disparities
- Managing health in rural and farmworker communities
- Importance of farmworker health – education on farmworkers' lived experiences
- Health issues the Latino community and historically marginalized communities navigate
- Ways to protect your mental health, identify mental health issues, and encourage people to seek support services
- Resources for Aging Adults on mental illness and COVID-19 – Latest COVID-19 information (telemedicine treatments, changes to free federally funded vaccines)
- The right to get COVID-19 vaccines, boosters, testing, and treatment, regardless of health insurance or immigration status
- How to prepare for seasonal illness with the flu shot
- Updated eligibility for MPox vaccines
- Long COVID impacts on adults and children



Latinx Program Director, Yazmin Garcia Rico, was interviewed by a Podcast in Spanish on “**Medicaid 101, What should the Latino community know about Medicaid?**” The episode details the Medicaid program, what it is, who benefits, how to apply, and why this expansion is so important for North Carolina.

“Enlace Latino Podcast” is a production of Enlace Latino NC. You can listen [online](#) or via [SoundCloud](#).

Figure 15 - Link to Podcast Interview with Yazmin Garcia Rico

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

Governor Cooper's Interagency Working Group for New Americans

The Director of Latinx and Hispanic Policy and Strategy also participated in Governor Cooper's Interagency Working Group for New Americans by supporting the coordination of two listening sessions on March 16th, 2023, and June 20th, 2023. The Latinx program also provided interpretation services at these events to ensure language access was available. The topic for the session was "A State View for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion for Immigrants and Refugees." This allowed for intentional conversations between community members and state agencies⁵ to continue advancing equitable outcomes for all. The input and ideas shared during the sessions were valuable in Latinx program efforts to enhance services on a statewide level for the Latinx population and ensure the accessibility of resources to meet community needs. Each event had an estimated **150** attendees.

Other Notable Engagements in FY 22-23

- Shared information on Medicaid expansion, NCTRACKS Modular Implementation/Provider Data Manager/Credentialing Verification Organization with a group of 35 behavioral health providers from historically underrepresented communities
- Hosted Legislative Black Caucus meeting in June 2023 to discuss priorities and opportunities for alignment
- Participated in a Men's Health Webinar focused on Sexual Health in June 2023
- Presented and participated at the Andrea Harris Taskforce
- Participated in the UnitedHealthcare Black History Event: How Faith and Medicine can work together
- Partnered with Wake Forest, NCCU to discuss "HIV is Not A Crime"
- Participated in addressing food insecurity, access to healthy food equity, and SDOH via Rural Food Institute Forum
- Hosted events highlighting National Farmworker Awareness week: highlighting the work of the NC Farmworker Health Program in the Office of Rural Health

Office of DEI Facilitation and Collaborations

ODEI has been dedicated to offering a range of services that cater to the unique needs of diverse organizations and communities. ODEI has engaged with approximately **1,140** people through events, meetings, and consultations. The engagements covered a wide range of DEI topics and helped foster greater understanding and inclusivity within various communities and organizations across North Carolina.

By engaging with both internal and external audiences, ODEI has effectively bridged the gap between various teams and communities, fostering connections and promoting a collective effort towards a more inclusive North

⁵ State agencies include NCGOV, DPS, DAC, DOR, DNCR, DIT, DHHS, DEQ, Hometown Strong, Commerce, DA&CS, and DOJ

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

Carolina. The topics listed below covered in these engagements hold paramount importance in the pursuit of a more equitable society.

- **Workforce Pipeline Discussions:** In collaboration with the **Public Health Leaders' Conference** and the **Triad Healthcare Alliance**, ODEI facilitated workforce pipeline discussions to shed light on the pressing need to attract and retain a diverse pool of public health professionals. By addressing recruitment, retention, program initiatives, and innovative hiring efforts, these topics have paved the way for creating a more representative and inclusive workforce that can effectively serve diverse communities. Over **175** participants were part of this crucial discussion.
- **Violence Prevention and DEI Best Practices:** Equally significant is the attention given to violence prevention and its link to DEI best practices during the **NC Black Alliance Annual Meeting**. This engagement, with over **100** attendees, allowed for a focused exploration of violence prevention strategies and how they intersect with broader DEI efforts. By identifying shared concerns and solutions, ODEI facilitated a collaborative approach toward addressing the unique challenges faced by Black communities and promoting safety and inclusivity.
- **Health Outcomes for LGBTQIA+ and African American Communities:** ODEI's dedication to understanding and engaging with diverse communities is exemplified in their presentations on **LGBTQIA+** populations and health outcomes with the Jackson County Public Health Department and the link between **Black Faith Leaders** and the impact on health and educational outcomes in the black community. ODEI, in collaboration with OHE, convened over **260** Black Faith leaders to discuss the pressing health needs of the black community and innovative solutions to tackle these needs. By providing greater understanding and empathy, these engagements have contributed to a more compassionate and inclusive healthcare environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals and highlighted the significance of cultural competence in addressing health disparities among Black communities.

A summary of the ODEI engagements, the services offered, the focus areas, and their impacts, including the total number of participants involved in each event can be found in Appendix B: ODEI Internal and External Engagements.

Training, Consultation, & Technical Assistance

HEP Department-Wide Lunch and Learn

Members of HEP leadership presented in the NCDHHS Lunch and Learn event series in April 2023. The webinar, *Health Equity and DEI: Principles to Inform Your Work*, featured discussions on HE and DEI definitions, introduced the Health Equity Framework, and shared programs, information, and resources available to help NCDHHS staff conduct HE and DEI initiatives. Over **250** people attended, and the feedback was very positive with many attendees wishing the Lunch and Learn was longer so they could learn even more about HEP.

DEI Training Consultation and Technical Assistance

Learning Management System (LMS) Training Playlist

ODEI developed a series of engaging and informative training playlists that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The ODEI joined forces with OSHR and NCDHHS HR to successfully launch four comprehensive DEI

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

training modules, titled LMS Training Playlist, aimed at teaching key DEI concepts and skills to all employees. These pre-recorded sessions cover essential topics, including **building an inclusive workplace**, **DEI essentials for managers**, **mitigating unconscious bias**, and **an explicit focus on anti-racism**. By making the training available online, employees can watch them at their convenience, allowing for asynchronous learning and ensuring broader accessibility to valuable DEI resources throughout the organization.

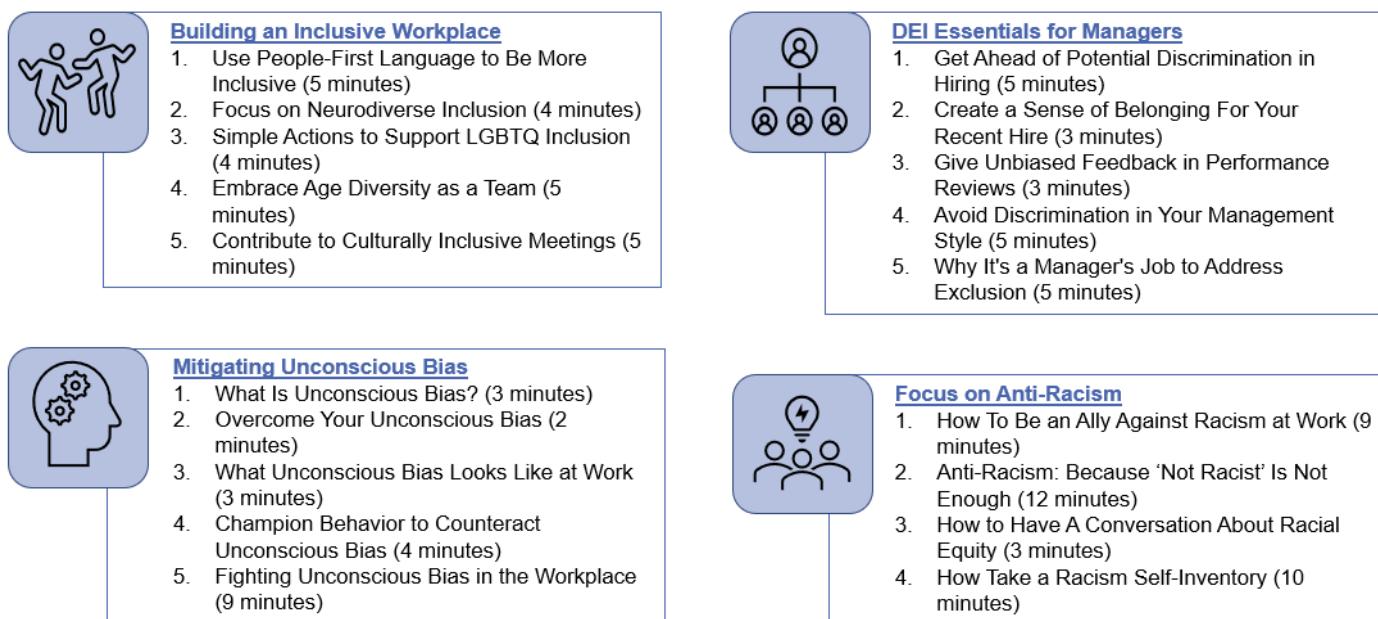


Figure 16 - LMS Training Playlist

EEODF Courses

- 1 History and Law
- 2 Americans With Disabilities Act
- 3 Legally Defensible Hiring
- 4 Unlawful Workplace Harassment
- 5 EEO and You
- 6 Diversity and Inclusion

Figure 17 - EEODF Courses

Employment Opportunity and Diversity Fundamentals (EEODF) Training Courses

ODEI diligently monitors and supports compliance with the 6 EEODF training courses. The result is a workforce that understands the significance of diversity and inclusion and actively contributes to a more accepting and respectful work environment. Guided by a formalized structure, management, and operations plan, ODEI confidently tracks progress, effectively managing DEI initiatives and bringing the office closer to its strategic goals.

Inclusive Leadership Training

In January 2023, the ODEI hosted an inclusive leadership training for NCDHHS Division Directors. The event was titled “Inclusive Leadership: Unlocking the Power of Diverse Organizations Through Inclusive Leadership”. The training event was an interactive workshop that provided an opportunity to develop a baseline

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

framework for practicing inclusive leadership and collaboration and strengthen NCDHHS' culture of equity and belonging.

The Office of DEI hosted a guest facilitator, Dr. Giselle Corbie, the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, Director of the UNC Center for Health Equity Research (UNC-CHER), and Kenan Distinguished Professor in the Department of Medicine. Dr. Corbie is also the leader of the DHB Medicaid Equity Project with UNC-CHER.

The session accomplished four goals:

1. Develop a baseline framework for practicing inclusive leadership and collaboration and strengthening our culture of equity and belonging.
2. Engage with an experienced leader, teacher, and researcher on inclusive leadership.
3. Learn and build consensus on key competencies for inclusive leadership to practice and develop as a team.
4. Build team capacity for honest dialogue and engagement on inclusion.

Attendance and Survey Statistics:

- 37 of 54 (68%) NCDHHS Division Directors attended the session.
- Division Directors rated their overall experience and value of this session an average of 4.63 out of 5 Stars.
- Division Directors rated their overall experience and value of the session to their work an average of 4.45 out of 5 Stars.



Figure 18 - Flyer for Inclusive Leadership Webinar Workshop

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

Development of the Inclusive Leadership Guide

After the January Inclusive Leadership training with division directors, Assistant Secretary of Equity and Inclusion, Angela Bryant, developed an inclusive leadership reminder guide. This guide comprises **five key actions: look, think, ask, care, and include**. Alongside these components, an action framework was developed, incorporating essential values, traits, and competencies of inclusive leadership. The guide also includes comprehensive references, enabling others to refer to relevant resources and research when implementing inclusive leadership principles. The primary objectives of the guide are twofold:

- To serve as a straightforward tool for division directors to emphasize specific inclusive leadership traits and competencies.
- To establish an inclusive leadership huddle group to foster ongoing engagement, skill development, and innovative approaches to promoting inclusivity within the organization.

Development and Launch of Informative One-Pagers

The Office of DEI has taken significant strides in promoting a more inclusive workplace culture by developing four informative one-pager infographics. These infographics serve as easily accessible educational materials on key DEI concepts and practices providing practical insights and actionable strategies for employees' day-to-day interactions. These concise and visually engaging resources serve as valuable educational tools to empower all NCDHHS employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to actively contribute to a more diverse and equitable work environment. These one-pagers include:

Figure 20 - ODEI Inclusive Leadership 1-Pager Document

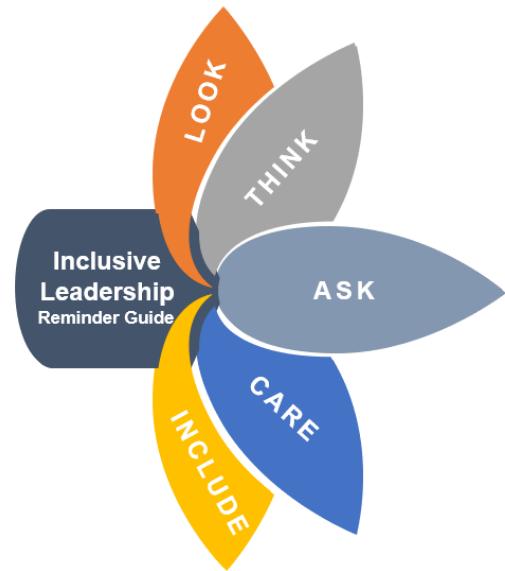


Figure 19 - Inclusive Leadership Reminder Guide Graphic

As valuable educational tools to empower all NCDHHS employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to actively contribute to a more diverse and equitable work environment. These one-pagers include:

- **Building inclusive leadership:** A brief guide outlining strategies and practices for developing inclusive leadership skills within the organization to celebrate diversity and collaboration.
- **Fostering a sense of belonging:** A resource focused on creating an inclusive and welcoming work environment, emphasizing the importance of belonging to and promoting a positive work culture.
- **Advancing accessibility:** A practical toolkit designed to enhance accessibility across various aspects of the organization, ensuring equal opportunities and inclusivity for all employees and partners.

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

- **Key equity terms:** A concise compilation of essential equity-related terminology, providing a clear understanding of relevant concepts and promoting shared language for constructive discussions on equity and diversity matters.

Health Equity Consultation and Technical Assistance

Historically Marginalized Population (HMP) Connections Network

The HMP Connections network consists of internal and external partners and community-based organizations working together to improve the health of North Carolinians by making linkages, increasing access to resources and services, and reducing health disparities.

In FY 22-23, the HMP Connections network conducted virtual meetings with partners reaching over **600** health equity advocates between July 2022 and April 2023. Public Health topics discussed included:

- Navigating the Changing Landscape of:
 - COVID-19
 - Mpox
 - Other Public Health Emergencies
- Awareness Month Support or Celebration of:
 - Hispanic Heritage Month
 - Diabetes Prevention
 - HBCUs and the Leaders They Create
 - Closing the Digital Divide Among NC Farmworker Communities
 - Breaking Down Barriers with the Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Community

Each meeting addressed barriers faced by communities that have been historically marginalized through trust building, open forums, and the facilitation of live Q&A sessions with health equity champions, subject matter experts, and those passionate about improving health outcomes for those in NC. The HMP Leadership Team Advisory group of trusted representatives from within OHE's partner networks provided leadership, coordination, community engagement expertise, and support.

OHE sets priorities for HMP Connections Network through co-leading planning sessions, communicating with speakers, agenda setting, and allocating resources to share with Network members. Over **500** individuals received monthly follow-up resources, access to NCDHHS programs and services, health educational tips, social media promotional materials, and other resources to increase education on timely public health topics.

Equity Brain Trust

OHE's monthly Equity Brain Trust Meetings for NCDHHS hosts, on average, **97** participants on topics such as chronic disease management, community engagement, Men's Health Month, and community/clinical facing navigation to eliminate cancer disparities.

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

Equity Training

The Latinx Program provided “Spanish Language & Communication Equity Training” to [Carolina Community Tracing Collaborative](#) staff, which included background on the Hispanic population in NC, health disparities experienced by this population, barriers to care access, language and communication best practices, cultural competence, and cultural humility. The training emphasized to staff members a shift from case investigation to informational calls to provide individuals with resources on treatment, housing, and food. The post-session survey revealed the following:

- 95% attendance rate
- 75% total average interest rating
- Participants rated the following statement as an average of 4.92 out of 5 Stars: “After attending this training session, I better understand communication equity, specifically as it relates to Spanish speakers”.
- Participants rated the following statement as an average of 4.88 out of 5 Stars: “I will be able to apply what I learned in this training to my work”.

Language Access

The Language, Communication, and Physical Access (LCPA) workgroup continued supporting increased language access by coordinating interpretation services for health equity. Using CDC disparities funding, the workgroup funded and coordinated Spanish interpretation for 48 health equity-related events (in person and virtual) during the 2022-23 fiscal year. Spending totaled approximately \$40,000 to provide interpretation services to an estimated 2,913 individuals.

Rural Health Funding and Technical Assistance

True to its mission, the Office of Rural Health (ORH) has made significant progress in supporting equitable and sustainable access to health in rural and underserved populations across North Carolina through funding, training, and technical assistance. Administering over \$89 million in funding (SFY22) that generated a return on investment of \$2.03 for every dollar invested, an economic impact of over \$50 million, and an additional 377 additional jobs in rural and underserved communities. ORH provided over 4,000 technical assistance encounters that reached all 100 North Carolina counties. Access to health is supported by the following programs: Rural Hospitals, Community Health, Medication Assistance, Placement Services, Farmworker Health, Rural Health Operations, Health Information Technology, and Analytics and Innovations. While each of these programs is critical to mission achievement, the following four programs are highlighted.

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

Provider Recruitment and Placement Program

To increase access to care in North Carolina, ORH recruits providers to address the shortage of primary medical care, dental, and behavioral health providers in geographic, population, or facility Health Profession Shortage Areas (HPSAs) identified by the state and federal government and local communities. In the last year, ORH has placed over **76⁶** healthcare professionals in 37 counties across North Carolina with at least **47%** (36) of these providers placed in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), **18%** (14) placed in hospitals, and **14%** placed in Ambulatory Practices through the ORH Provider Recruitment and Placement program at no charge. To encourage provider retention, ORH provides financial incentives through the ORH Incentive Program. **65** providers who were placed in North Carolina in FY 23 received financial incentives compared to **44** providers in FY 22. On average, **54%** of providers who were recruited by ORH and received financial incentives still worked in their service sites two years after completing their contract according to provider surveys.

Average Number of Years Retained at Placement Site

- Physician: 3.2 years
- Dentists: 3.1 years
- Psychiatrists: 3.3 years
- Physician Assistants: 3.4 years
- Nurse Practitioner: 2.6 years
- Dental Hygienist: 1.7 years

Community Health Grants Program

The ORH Community Health Grant Program provides funds through the North Carolina General Assembly to increase access to preventive and primary care services for vulnerable patients, establish primary care safety net services where one does not exist, create new services, or augment existing primary and preventive medical services, and increase the capacity to serve low-income patients by enhancing or replacing facilities, equipment, or technology. In FY 22⁷, through grants funds:

- **160** Full-time equivalent (FTE) healthcare professionals were supported; **80%** of these grants were used for General Care.
- **105** Grantees in Free Clinics, FQHCs, Health Departments, Rural Health Clinics, Hospitals, School-Based Health Centers, and other non-profits were funded.
- **99** counties were covered; **69** of these counties were rural counties.

⁶ Data as of 6/30/2022

⁷ Data for 2023 is not yet available

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

Rural Health Information Technology Program

The ORH Health Information Technology Team assists grantees and safety net partners with using health information technology to improve patient care by providing technical assistance to improve the use of NCCARE36, the first statewide coordinated care network, and the use of NC HealthConnex, the state-designated

health information exchange (HIE). ORH-funded sites are mandated to connect to HIE.

Percentage of ORH Funded Practices that are Live with NCCARE360

- 100% of eligible Rural Health Center Sites
- 75% of eligible Farmworker Health Sites
- 90% of eligible Hospital programs
- 97% of eligible Community Health/Medication Assistance Sites

- As of FY 22, 95% (141) of the 149 ORH-funded sites in the 76 counties that were eligible for NCCARE360 were live with the network
- 91% (126) of the 138 ORH-funded sites in the 76 counties mandated to connect to HIE achieved connectivity to NC HealthConnex.

Community Health Worker (CHW) Initiative

CHWs are instrumental in providing whole-person care across North Carolina. They have supported over 3.2 million North Carolinians with access to food, housing, transportation, and health-related services. ORH-vendor contracts require CHW Standardized Core Competency Training to recognize the CHW's value on an integrated healthcare team, standardize the training of CHWs to promote reimbursement of their services, and strengthen the CHW workforce. The training is offered through NC Community Colleges. In 2022, **624** students were enrolled to complete the core competency training in at least one community college in North Carolina.

Grants and Technical Assistance

Grants

ORH administered over **300** grants and contracts in FY 22-23 to safety net organizations including Federally Qualified Health Centers, Free and Charitable Clinics, Health Departments, Rural Health Clinics, State-Designated Rural Health Centers, Critical Access Hospitals, Small Rural Hospitals, School-Based Health Centers, and other non-profits as well as contracts to incentivize individual providers to practice in rural and underserved communities. These grants and contracts were supported by the following programs within ORH:

- Placement Services
- Rural Hospital Assistance
- Rural Health Operations
- Community Health
- Medication Assistance
- Health Information Technology and Telehealth
- Analytics and Innovations
- Farmworker Health

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

Using these grants, ORH tracks important program metrics including technical assistance, return on investment (ROI), FTEs, health indicators, number of encounters, patients served, and average financial support per patient.

Technical Assistance

In FY 22-23, ORH logged over **3,355⁸** technical assistance activities across NC. At least **1,195** of the technical assistance activities focused on Community Development, Contract Development, and Site or Clinic Development.

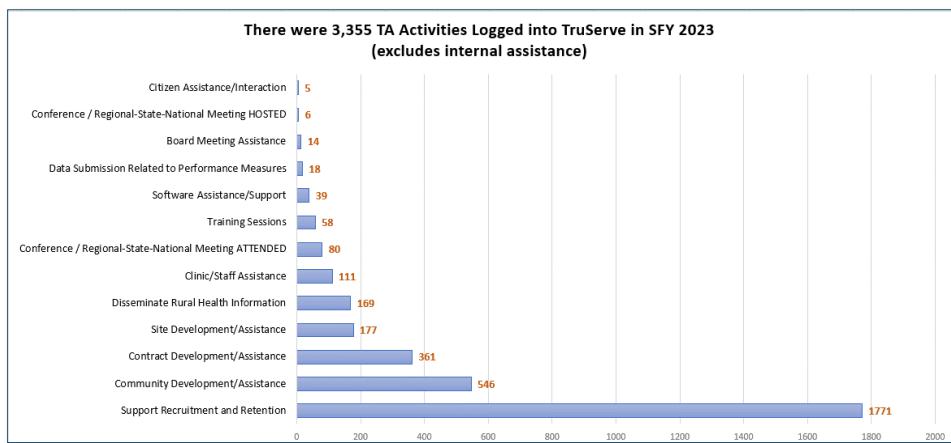


Figure 21 - TA Activities Logged into TruServe in FY 22-23

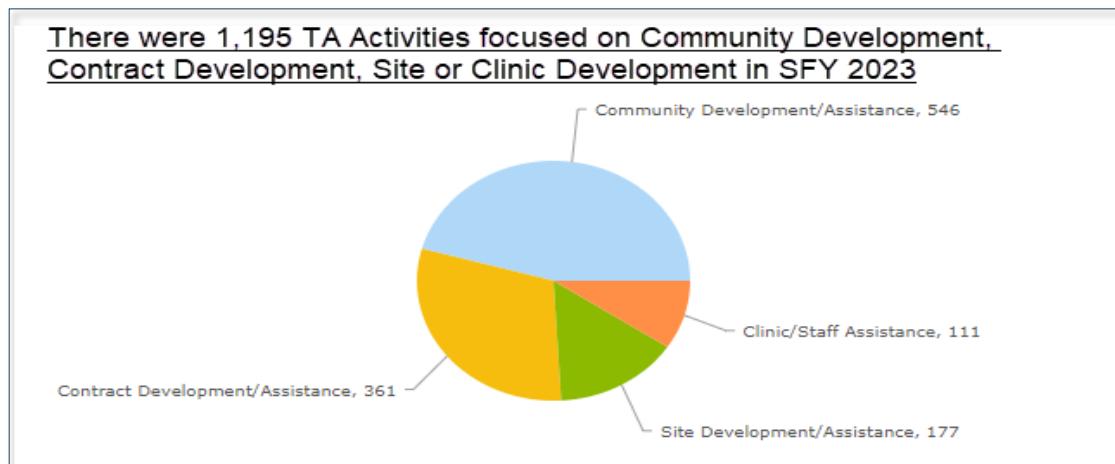


Figure 22 - TA Activities in FY 22-23

⁸ Data as of 6/30/2022. Data from July 2022-June 2023 not yet available

Part 1: FY 22-23 Key Accomplishments

Using Data to Hold Us Accountable

The Health Equity Portfolio is committed to continuously improving its mission. Ongoing feedback from HEP staff fosters open dialogue, trust building, and transparency to ensure HEP efforts in promoting a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace across NCDHHS are modeled within the Portfolio.

All Staff Pulse Survey

In FY 22-23, the HE Portfolio conducted at least one All Staff Pulse Survey to inform HEP leadership on opinions and areas of improvement. **76%** of staff who responded to the survey felt positive about the direction of HEP in creating a *positive HEP culture*, its focus on *employee engagement*, and were motivated in getting involved in supporting the Portfolio's mission and vision. Some areas of improvement identified included understaffing of the Portfolio, and the work across the Portfolio and department being siloed. To address areas of concern, the Portfolio developed a plan to prioritize recruitment and retention in the Portfolio, a HEP strategy that is centered around cross-departmental/cross-divisional collaborations and ensuring the alignment of the HEP strategy with individual staff goals and office action plans. As of 2023, the Portfolio has filled over **80%** of its open positions and has collaborated with several divisions including NCDHHS HR and DPH on DEI and HE-related initiatives.

Health Equity Portfolio Strengths: FY 22 Pulse Survey Results

1. Opportunity to increase access to healthcare.
2. HEP team's commitment and passion for the work that is completed.
3. The flexibility to work around personal schedules and travel to state partners.
4. Self-directed and effective guidance provided by leadership.
5. Proud of the work that is completed to serve NCDHHS customers.

HEP All Staff Meeting Post Session Survey

In FY 22-23, the HEP conducted two HEP All Staff Meetings (November 2022, March 2023). The goal of the HEP All Staff Meeting is to increase team cohesion and alignment, give visibility to HEP's success, and provide a forum to brainstorm on HEP goals, share information, and gain feedback. Feedback from the post-survey distributed after each meeting provided valuable information on how the Portfolio can continuously improve. Staff were excited to learn more about ongoing work in offices across the Portfolio and share their ideas with HEP leadership.

NCDHHS Employee Engagement Survey

In the 2023 NCDHHS Employee Engagement Survey, HEP staff identified their ability to **telework, work-life balance, and a sense of belonging** as their strengths. The ability to be productive working remotely was rated 4.88 out of 5. However, the survey highlighted **promotions, growth, and recognition** as areas of improvement.

Part 2: HEP Show and Tell for FY 2022-2023

A Year of Celebrations and Awards



John Rodman Larkins Award

HEP's Assistant Secretary, Angela R. Bryant, and the Director of Latinx Policy and Strategy, Yazmin Garcia Rico, were among ten Finalists for the Larkins Award in January 2023. The award was established in 1998 to recognize human service, and is presented annually at the North Carolina State Employees' Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Observance Program.

Figure 21 - Angela Bryant (left) and Yazmin Garcia Rico (right) at the Larkins Award Ceremony

TBJ's 2023 Class of 40 Under 40: Bryle Hatch of NC Dept. of Health and Human Services



Figure 22 - Dr. Bryle Hatch 40 Under 40 Article



Racial and Social Justice Community Service Award

Assistant Secretary Angela Bryant received the Rocky Mount Alpha Phi Racial and Social Justice Community Service Award on February 5, 2023. Bryant was awarded for her community involvement as a community strategist and former legislator to honor her contributions and advocacy for racial and social justice.

UnitedHealthcare's Excellence in Health Equity Leadership

CHEO Debra Farrington was selected as the awardee of UnitedHealthcare's Excellence in Health Equity Leadership award. As part of this, she spoke at a webinar titled "The Art of Healing: How medicine and the faith community collaborate for health Equity". This webinar took place in February 2023 as part of UnitedHealthcare's celebration of Black History Month.

Figure 23 - Angela Bryant (middle) with Racial and Social Justice Community Service Award

Part 2: HEP Show and Tell for FY 2022-2023

Milbank Fellows

CHEO Debra Farrington was selected as a Milbank fellow. The Milbank Fellows Program (MFP) is a year-long leadership program for 24 senior executive branch and legislative state leaders who are committed to improving population health in their communities.

2022 Governor's Award for Excellence

The following ORH team members who were part of the NCDHHS COVID-19 Response Team, Elizabeth Freeman, Nick Galvez, John Resendes, Maggie Sauer, and Allison Owen received a group recognition for outstanding government service. The group received the award for stepping up during the public health crisis to strengthen teams and create new collaborations for the public good.



Figure 24 - CHEO Debra Farrington (fifth from right) amongst Milbank Fellows

Governor's Pages

CHEO Debra Farrington spoke to Governor Roy Cooper's pages twice on the importance of health equity and the newly formed HEP.

Office of Rural Health Employee Recognitions

Trenesse Michael from ORH attended and graduated from the 2023 Leadership NCDHHS Management Development Program on June 6th, 2023, where Secretary Kody Kinsley addressed and presented the graduating class with certificates that recognized their achievements.

Nicole Fields-Pierre attended and graduated from the Homegrown Leaders; a highly competitive training hosted by the NC Rural Center on July 20th, 2023.



Figure 25 - Debra Farrington with the Governor's Pages

Sharema Williams was the recipient of the District and Regional State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC) scholarships this past year.

HEP is extremely proud of all our staff who have demonstrated such a deep commitment to serving North Carolinians.

Part 2: HEP Show and Tell for FY 2022-2023

Latinx Policy and Strategy Program

The National Association of Social Workers North Carolina Chapter (NASW-NC) awarded Yazmin Garcia Rico, Director of Latinx Policy and Strategy, the 2023 Myrna Miller Wellons Advocate of the Year Award. The selection was based on outstanding leadership, extensive social service experience, and Rico's commitment to advancing justice for Latinx/Hispanic communities across the state. Read the full description [here](#).

NCDHHS received the ClearMark Awards from the Center for Plain Language for its COVID-19 website and Spanish-language COVID-19 educational campaign in June of 2023. The judges noted that the website content helps readers succeed in self-testing, finding care, and obtaining information on COVID rates in the state. Additionally, NCDHHS was recognized as a Spanish Language Winner for a campaign created to encourage Spanish speakers to get vaccinated in a timely manner. NCDHHS will continue its commitment to providing culturally competent, simple Spanish language communication materials.

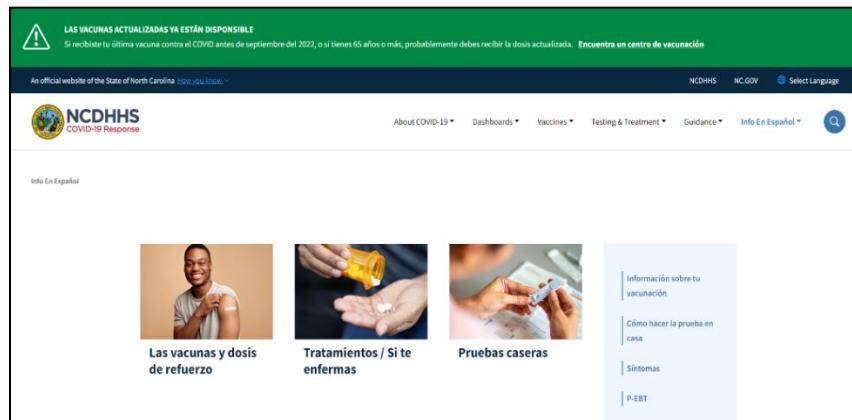


Figure 26 - NCDHHS Covid-19 Website

The [University of North Carolina \(UNC\) Institute of the Study of the Americas](#) awarded Yazmin Garcia Rico with the Sharon S. Mujica Community Service Award for her hard work and dedication to the Latin American community at NCDHHS.

Open to Care Media

The Portfolio secured \$15 million to launch a K-12 Initiative to address access and barriers to mental health care and an anti-stigma campaign. A portion of the funds focused on a public and social media and marketing campaign which included print, digital, radio, and television ads to encourage adults to help children get the mental health care they need. The campaign titled [Open to Care](#) included partnerships with the Child and Family Wellbeing Portfolio, the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, and the department's communication team.

Another component of the initiative leveraged the existing Healthier Together Program to assess and expand community-based organizations' capacity to respond to access issues and mental and behavioral health.

HEP Funding for FY 22-23

The Office of Health Equity secured millions in funding to expand their public/private partnerships and community engagement strategies to achieve health equity. This funding helps to expand community and partnership initiatives and services to respond to access issues, communicable disease outbreaks, and the digital divide. See below:

Part 2: HEP Show and Tell for FY 2022-2023

\$790,665

CDC COVID Health Equity
Grant

\$250,000

CDC Funds for MPox and
CoAg work

\$300,000

HE Broadband Community
Engagement Initiative for
Digital Equity

ORH Funding

In collaboration with state partners, federal agencies, and other philanthropic organizations, ORH administered **\$27.5 million** in funding across North Carolina to support rural and underserved communities and partners and directed appropriations of over \$100 million.

DEI Council Celebrations

The Office of DEI has been actively fostering a culture of inclusion and representation through its extensive network of 29 DEI councils. These councils spread throughout various divisions within the organization, play a pivotal role in driving positive change and promoting diversity in the workplace. In a recent June DEI Council Network Meeting, the Office proudly showcased the remarkable achievements of three exemplary councils for their outstanding efforts and successes over the past year. The divisions of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Carswell Development Center, and State Operated Healthcare Facilities, specifically Broughton Hospital, were recognized for their exceptional dedication and commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within their division and council.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES

Part 3: Looking to FY 2023-2024

Lessons Learned

As HEP looks ahead to 2023-2024, the work will be guided by lessons learned in the previous year. Partnerships and building infrastructure will be supported through the following five guiding principles:

1. Cross-divisional/departmental priorities (NCDHHS Strategic Plan)
2. Transparency, open communication, and staff engagement
3. Creating paths for career opportunities and job advancements
4. Focus on aligning and maximizing external partner engagement across NCDHHS
5. Ensuring that DEI and Health Equity resources are readily available for all to access.

In the next fiscal year, the HEP will continue to utilize team members' unique skills, expertise, and motivators to build a strong and inclusive NCDHHS workforce. This will create high-performing NCDHHS teams that collaborate when problem-solving and making decisions.

What's Next for HEP

The 2022-2023 fiscal year welcomed many celebrations and accomplishments to sustain the HEP going forward. This next fiscal year, the HEP will continue its efforts to champion equitable health outcomes for all North Carolinians and increase internal DEI efforts through the following strategies:

1. **Prioritizing the Collection and Use of Data:** HEP will support and evaluate operational and strategic performance by launching a HEP-specific data dashboard. The data will be shared and used to guide improvements in policies, procedures, and processes as well as guide employee supports such as resources and training. The Portfolio will also implement a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool.
2. **Promoting a Culture of Inclusion by Enhancing Employee Engagement in HEP Work and HEP Culture:** HEP will improve employee engagement and departmental culture by meeting in person every quarter, increasing communication and cross-collaboration within the Department, and providing more visibility into HEP projects and programs for NCDHHS staff involvement. Additionally, the Portfolio leadership, in partnership with DHHR HR and OSHR, will improve career opportunities, job advancement, and pay equitably and inclusively.
3. **Finalize, Standardize, and Publicize Partner Engagement:** The HEP will continue to foster equitable and inclusive partnerships across the state of North Carolina through the finalization of their Community and Partner Engagement Framework.
4. **Ensure the Sustainability of HEP's Capacity to Address Health Equity Across NCDHHS:** The HEP leadership will build upon the goals identified by the HEP team members which include improved communication, integration, and cohesiveness across HEP offices, and enhanced work-life balance and joy in the workplace. To strengthen the sustainability of programs and services, HEP will effectively administer recurring funds as well as seek funding opportunities to create innovations. Finally, in alignment with Department-wide efforts, HEP will build upon Medicaid Expansion, centering Medicaid beneficiaries and increasing visibility into this service.

Appendix A: HEP Strategic Priorities for FY 22-23

Strategy

1. Develop and implement HE Portfolio strategic plan and roadmap.
2. Develop guiding principles/framework for applying DEI and HE equity lens to policy and procedure development and equity promoting programs and practices.
3. Create resources that programs can use to evaluate policies, governance, and decision-making processes.
4. Serve as technical advisors in the development of a DEI workforce plan, training, and implementation.

Operational Excellence and Daily Operations

5. Develop service delivery performance measures, baselines, and targets as part of the HE Portfolio Strategic Plan.
6. Establish alignment of HE Portfolio offices to the HE Portfolio strategy and implement DEI, HE, and Rural Health-related initiatives.
7. Collaborate with NCDHHS Data Office to develop a HE Portfolio data strategy to address health equity.
8. Develop capacity within HE Portfolio offices to conduct data analysis and reporting.
9. Provide consultation, technical guidance, training, learning, and development opportunities for local health departments, community groups and organizations, and historically marginalized populations.
10. Execute the day-to-day operations of HE Portfolio offices.

Community and Partner Engagement

11. Develop and implement a community and partner engagement plan.

HE and DEI Consultation and Technical Assistance (TA)

12. Serve as a technical resource on DEI/HE/Rural Health and Learning & Development to the enterprise.

Appendix B: ODEI Internal and External Engagements

Key: External to NCDHHS (E), Internal to NCDHHS (I)

Organization	Service Offered	Topic/Focus Area	Impact (total attendees, key takeaways, notable outcomes, etc.)
NC Nurses Association (E)	Facilitation	DEI for Health Practitioners (Nurses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 150 people Key Takeaways: DEI best practices shared, connectivity to public health adjacent teams and groups. Subtopics: NDHHS' approach to DEI, Cultural Humility, and Bias
Ann Johnson Institute for Senior Center Management – Division of Aging and Adult Services (I/E)	Facilitation	Cultural Humility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 150 people Key Takeaways: DEI best practices, DEI connectivity to public health adjacent teams and groups. Subtopics: NDHHS approach to DEI, Cultural Humility and Bias, political connection
Public Health Leaders' Conference (E)	Facilitation	Workforce Pipeline (Panel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 100 people Key Takeaways: Attracting and recruiting next generation of public health workforce. Subtopics: Recruitment, retain, program initiatives, hiring efforts, workforce best practices
North Carolina Rehabilitation Association (E)	Facilitation	LGBTQIA+ presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 200 people (virtual) Key Takeaways: Providing a greater understanding of the LGBTQIA+ population in health and DEI contexts. Sub-topics: DEI, public health, belonging,
Triad Healthcare Alliance (E)	Consultation and Facilitation	Workforce pipeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 25 people Key Takeaways: Attracting and recruiting next generation of public health workforce. Subtopics: Recruitment, retention, program initiatives, innovative hiring efforts, workforce best practices
NC Black Alliance Annual Meeting; Violence Prevention Panel Presentation (E)	Convening	Violence Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 50-100 people Key Takeaways: Subtopics: Violence prevention, DEI best practices
City of Raleigh - DEI Team (E)	Convening/Collaboration	Team member collaboration meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 10 people Key Takeaways: Localized best practices on DEI. Subtopics: NCDHHS & the city of Raleigh's approach to DEI efforts

Appendix B: ODEI Internal and External Engagements

Key: External to NCDHHS (E), Internal to NCDHHS (I)

Organization	Service Offered	Topic/Focus Area	Impact (total attendees, key takeaways, notable outcomes, etc.)
Governor's DEI Leads (E)	Convening/Collaboration	Team member collaboration meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 25 people (meets quarterly) Key Takeaways: Statewide convening of DEI leaders across executive branch. Subtopics: Broad DEI topics, external and internal presenters.
Governor's Page Program Presentation (E)	Facilitation	Black leaders panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 50 people Key Takeaways: Systemic impacts on Black North Carolinians. Subtopics: Broad DEI, employment, familial, and health topics covered
With OHE - Black Faith Leaders Network (E)	Convening	The link between Black faith networks and health/educational outcomes in the Black community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 260 people Key Takeaways: Shared health matters important to the communities served. Subtopics: Solution seeking approaches to eliminate health disparities, advance health equity, best practices, OHE & ODEI commitment
Jackson County Public Health Department (E)	Consultation & Facilitation	Engaging the LGBTQ+ community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 50 people Key Takeaways: Providing greater understanding of LGBTQIA+ population in health, DEI contexts. Subtopics: DEI, public health, belonging
NC Council on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I)	Consultation & Facilitation	Office of DEI overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Attendees: 20 people Key Takeaways: NCDHHS approach to DEI Subtopics: Office functions, value statements, DEI

Appendix C: External Partnerships / Communities Served by HEP

Community Based and Faith-Based Organizations	Healthcare Organizations	Federal, State and Local Governments	Policymakers/ Legislators	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alamance Health Network • Black Leaders • CHW Association (with Vendors) • Eastern NC Civic Group (ENCCG) • Equality NC • Farmworker Advocacy Network • Hispanic Taskforce (Forsyth County) • HMP Connections Network • Hispanic Federation • Hometown Strong • Indian Health Board • Latin-19 AMEXCAN's NC Community Latino Task Force • NC Rural Health Association • Rural Center • Triangle Empowerment Center • UNCW Latino Alliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Health Center Association • Free Clinic Association • Health Equity Index Group • Healthier Together CBO Network • NC CARE360 • NC Minority Health Providers • North Carolina Community Health Clinic Association • Primary Care Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Communities Program with Local Health Departments (LHDs) in collaboration with DPH and network of Health Departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrea Harris Task Force • Colleague DEI Practitioners • Executive Branch Implementation Team (State Collaborative, SRCC) • Governor's Advisory Council on Hispanic Affairs • HBCU/MSI Network • Legislative Black Caucus • Minority Health Advisory Council (MHAC) • NC Commission on Indian Affairs • NC Statewide Re-Entry Collaborative • State Govt DEI Network • Taskforce for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice (TREC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other African American Partners • Old North State • Latin 19 • BCBS Foundation/Kate B Reynolds