

NQF's Health Equity Program

Improving Health and Healthcare Quality for All through Advancements in Health Equity



NATIONAL
QUALITY FORUM

NQF's Health Equity Program is a comprehensive, multiyear, and action-oriented approach to reduce disparities and advance the highest quality healthcare across communities, populations, and socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic groups. The Program builds on NQF's renowned ability to bring stakeholders to the table and a decade of NQF thought leadership to promote health equity and healthcare quality improvement.

Despite overall improvements in public health and medicine, disparities in health and healthcare persist. Disparities are differences caused by inequities linked to social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantages. NQF's Health Equity Program will work to eliminate health disparities by addressing social risk factors that adversely affect excluded or marginalized groups. The goal of this work is to achieve health equity, an essential component of improving health and healthcare quality for all.

NQF'S HEALTH EQUITY PROGRAM:

- Aligns with NQF's transformation of pursuing improvement in healthcare quality for all
- Includes a planned, broad portfolio of cross-cutting projects that put into action the guidance laid out by NQF's substantive work in health equity, including:
 - » The NQF Roadmap to Promote Health Equity and Eliminate Disparities—the blueprint for achieving health equity and reducing disparities. The Roadmap details how stakeholders, including clinicians, providers, payers, community partners, measure developers, and policymakers, can work to reduce disparities and promote health equity
 - » NQF's two-year trial to risk adjust certain healthcare performance measures for social risk factors to better understand how social risk factors can influence health and health outcomes
- Incorporates NQF's leadership of practical, action-oriented initiatives (e.g., NQF's National Quality Partners™), and facilitation of measure

development to address critical gaps (NQF's Measure Incubator™)

- Brings together partners to leverage national efforts



**Improve Healthcare
Quality for All**

How NQF Will Drive Greater Health Equity

Identifying Disparities and Those Affected by Health Inequity

NQF will promote a common understanding and standardized language around health equity in order to address data and infrastructure challenges related to the identification of disparities and at-risk populations.

NQF will gather innovative strategies for social risk factor data collection and use this data to support the detection and reduction of disparities in health and healthcare across the nation.

Influencing Performance Measurement

NQF will facilitate the development of needed measures to promote health equity and reduce disparities.

NQF will drive toward the systematic approach laid out in the NQF Health Equity Roadmap for using measures to eliminate disparities and promote health equity.

Inspiring Implementation of Best Practices through Innovative Approaches

NQF will lead and engage strategic partners to implement effective interventions and best practices to promote health equity and reduce disparities.

NQF will disseminate effective interventions, best practices, and lessons learned in reducing disparities.

NQF will facilitate the use of innovative, successful interventions by creating practical, applied, implementation guidance.

Informing Payment

NQF will convene thought leaders and experts to address the impact of payment on health equity, including through risk adjustment, stratification, and payment reform.

NQF will explore emerging issues related to risk adjusting performance measures for social risk factors such as income, education, and health literacy. This work also will explore unresolved questions raised by NQF's Trial Period for Risk Adjustment for Social Risk Factors (SES Trial Period).

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: Achieving Health Equity

NQF's Health Equity Program will drive toward an ideal state of healthcare where:

- Healthcare delivery is improved for all people, communities, and populations;
- High-quality and timely data on social risk factors and disparities are available;
- All stakeholders work together to systematically reduce disparities, including through the use of proven interventions;
- Interventions are evaluated to demonstrate progress toward health equity;
- Performance measures are used to ensure rewards or penalties are fairly assessed and based on true differences in performance; and
- Payment models reward those reducing disparities.

COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT: Taking Collective Action to Advance Health Equity

Meaningful progress toward health equity will require collective action and innovative partnerships. NQF will engage its more than 430 member organizations representing the full spectrum of healthcare, the nation's quality experts, as well as additional stakeholders and potential partners in this effort.

NQF is seeking external funding for the Health Equity Program from a variety of sources and interested parties. In 2017, NQF received funding from the Aetna Foundation to develop an approach for addressing the social determinants of health and from The Urban Institute to develop a measurement framework for food insecurity and housing instability. Multiple opportunities are available to fund various components and projects within the Program.

To learn more, please contact NQF at info@qualityforum.org.
