

Education Briefing Document
Presented to the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
September 20, 2007

Education, along with income and occupation, are common measures of socioeconomic position. For the purposes of this briefing document, education is measured by college graduation rates and on-time high school graduation rates.

CRITERION #1: PREVALENCE / INCIDENCE

- In 2006, 36.2% of Washington adults had completed at least four years of college, 31.4% had completed some college, 24.3% were high-school graduates, and 8.1% had less than a high-school education.
- Data from the 2004-2005 school year revealed that 74% of Washington students graduated on-time (i.e., within four years).

CRITERION #2: SEVERITY

- Washington adults with lower levels of education are more likely to smoke, binge drink, be obese, and eat fewer fruits and vegetables, than adults with more education.
- Populations with less education have lower levels of health literacy, are less likely to have health insurance, and are less likely to use medical services, particularly preventive health services, than populations with more education.
- In Washington, lower levels of education are associated with higher rates of diabetes, drug-induced deaths, and deaths from breast cancer, heart disease, stroke and suicide.
- There is substantial evidence documenting higher mortality rates among people with lower levels of education compared to those with higher educational levels.

CRITERION #3: DISPARITY

- In Washington, from 2003-2005, the proportion of residents with a college education was lowest for Hispanics (16%), followed by American Indian/Alaska Natives (18%), blacks (28%), whites (42%), and Asians and Pacific Islanders (59%).
- The Index of Disparity for not having a college education was 81%.
- On-time high-school graduation rates were lowest for American Indian and Alaska Native students (55%) and Hispanic students (60%), and highest for Asian and Pacific Islander students (80%) and white students (78%).
- In 2006, women in Washington were less likely to have completed at least four years of college (34.6%) than men (37.9%).

The Index of Disparity is the average of the difference in rates between the racial/ethnic group with the "best" rate and all other racial/ethnic groups.

Keppel KG et al., Measuring progress in healthy people 2010. Statistical Notes, no 25. NCHS, 2004.

**Consistent with Keppel et al., (2004), college education rates were transformed to rates for not having a college education for purposes of calculating the Index of Disparity.*