

# GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES

## Community Forum Summary

May 10, 2017

Yakima, Washington





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities (Council) thanks the Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction's Office of Student Support for generously hosting the Council's forum, and the Commission on Hispanic Affairs for providing the interpretation equipment.

The Council also wishes to acknowledge and thank all of those who attended and shared their valuable stories, insights, and suggestions.





## INTRODUCTION

The Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities (Council) held its May 10, 2017 public meeting in Yakima, Washington at the Yakima Convention Center. Following its meeting, it convened a public forum in order to raise awareness of the Council, report back to the community on its work, and to seek input to guide future activities.

## WELCOMING REMARKS

Benjamin Danielson, Council Co-Chair, welcomed forum participants and thanked them for attending. About 40 people were in attendance, including forum participants, Council members, and staff. Participants included community members, students, and representatives from community-based organizations and the public health, healthcare, and education sectors.

Christy Hoff, Council staff, provided an overview of the Council and its work. She said the Council's primary responsibility is to work toward the elimination of health inequities, primarily by addressing the social and economic factors that influence health. She explained that the Council does not provide direct health services, but rather creates recommendations for changes to state policies and programs. She provided information about the different state agencies represented on the Council and said its current focus is on promoting fairness and equity in state government.



## COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Chair Danielson and Nora Coronado, Council member representing the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, facilitated a discussion with forum participants. Following is a summary of topics discussed and comments provided by attendees.

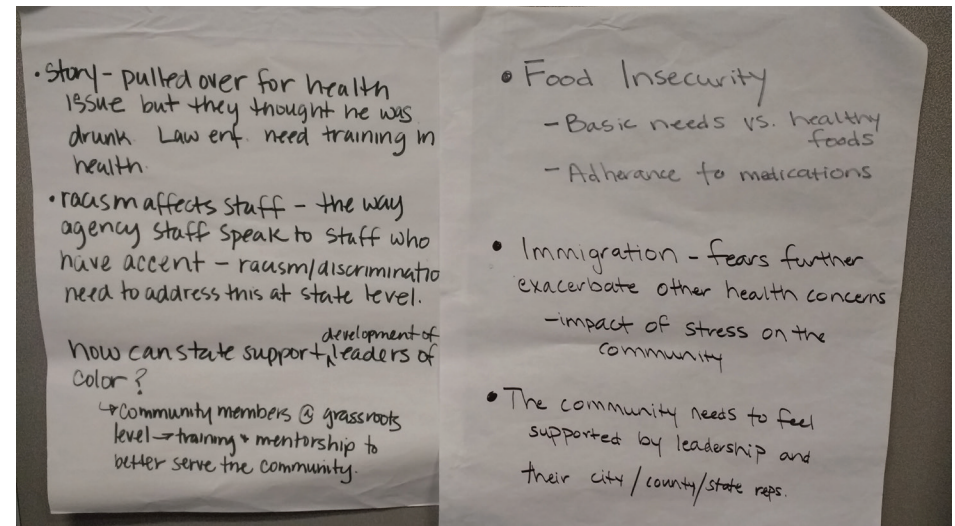
### What are Yakima's strengths?

- It has strong cultural diversity.
- People care about what happens and take ownership of the community.
- There is strong collaboration across organizations and sectors.
- The community lives close to the land.
- It is a giving and philanthropic community.
- There are strong educational institutions—the community invests in building local leaders.
- There are beautiful natural resources.

### Examples of how state government services haven't worked well for the local community:

- Difficult to obtain crime victims' coverage for mental health services, especially for those who are undocumented. The process is complex and you must try multiple times.
- Not enough resources for people with limited English proficiency (e.g., applications are not always translated, need for more dual-language staff). Also translations might not be appropriate, both in terms of accuracy and cultural adaptation.
- Employment Security Department – difficult to get a staff person to speak to one-on-one to get support.
- State projects are short-term solutions but the community needs long-term interventions.

- Agencies need to talk to each other, especially when they serve the most high-need clients. Clients need to go to multiple agencies. The agencies should track people through a system to help them get the services they need.
- Government agencies make plans without knowing what the community needs.
- The state should promote interagency collaboration. Funding is currently in silos so it cannot address social determinants of health.
- Literacy levels of materials need to be lower.



## COMMUNITY DISCUSSION (CONT'D)

### What are priorities for the community? What should the Council focus on in the future?

- **Safety:** Lack of law enforcement presence in the community. Communities do not feel safe. People do not feel safe walking in their neighborhoods and this is a barrier to health. Division among communities—we need to look out for one another. The state could help by providing funding for community days so community members can come together and get to know one another. The state can also address tensions between people of color and law enforcement. Law enforcement needs to understand how safety impacts health. The state can facilitate collaboration between law enforcement, corrections, the criminal justice system and the health sector. Community members don't always feel safe with law enforcement. Law enforcement should have a more positive presence in the community, including volunteer work.
- **Food Insecurity:** People have to make choices between food and other needs, such as medication. Healthy foods are more expensive.
- **Immigration Concerns:** Fears further exacerbate health issues. Stress has a negative impact on the community. Community needs to feel supported by leaders and representatives.
- **Racism:** People with accents may receive different treatment (e.g., lack of or different information).
- **Diversity in Leadership:** How can the state support the development of leaders of color, both in state government and in the community. We need to train and mentor grassroots community members so they can better serve the community. Leaders should need to pass cultural literacy tests. Diversity in education is also needed, including gender diversity.
- **Stress:** Adverse childhood events (ACEs), violence, and poverty affect children into adulthood. We need to foster resilience and also provide services to adults.
- **LGBTQ Community:** Need for more support and services for the LGBTQ community, especially children and young adults and transgender kids. We need to connect them to health services.
- **Community Health Workers:** The training from the Department of Health is not conducted in Spanish.
- **School Discipline:** The state should provide professional “cover” to address issues related to disproportionality in how kids are disciplined in school.
- **Older Adults:** Need to have systems that support a healthy older population (e.g., medication management, nutritious food).
- **Data:** Need to do a better job of collecting and analyzing data related to disparities. The state can do a better job of using data in a proactive way to look at trends and emerging issues rather than waiting until there are problems.
- **Language Access:** People need to understand they have a right to an interpreter, including deaf and hard of hearing individuals. We need to share this information broadly. State agencies need to develop language access policies. There is also no standard compensation for interpreters/translators.

## RESOURCES

The Foundation for Healthy Generations has trained a cohort of 25 people on the neuroscience and effects of ACEs.

## NEXT STEPS

- Suggestion for the Council to offer web-based meetings.
- Request for the Council to share back with the community the notes from the forum with information on how it will be used.



## SUMMARY

There were several themes repeated throughout the community discussion.

Community members stressed the need for more effective interagency collaboration in state government, particularly for clients with multiple needs and older adults. Participants provided examples of how individuals have trouble navigating the state system to find the services they need. They also provided examples of institutional racism in state government, highlighting the need for a workforce that better reflects the communities it serves and for more community involvement in government decision-making.

Participants also stressed the need for more meaningful and culturally appropriate language assistance services and for materials to be written for lower reading levels. Another theme repeated throughout the forum surrounded issues of safety, fear, and stress. Community members discussed how fear from not feeling safe and from immigration concerns causes stress and anxiety, which exacerbates health problems. They discussed how trauma also affects stress and how we need to foster resilience.





striving to eliminate health disparities by race/ethnicity and gender in washington state