

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Health Equity

VHA Health Equity Action Plan FY2021 Operational Plan

VHA Office of Health Equity (12POP1)

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Aim 1: Awareness

Goal: Increase awareness of the significance of health disparities, their impact on the nation, and the actions necessary to improve health outcomes for racial, ethnic, and underserved populations.

FUNCTION	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE
Leadership	OHE provides leadership, education, and coordination for the HEC in advancing the HEAP in support of VA FY2018-2024 Strategic Plan, Goal 2—"Veterans receive highly reliable and integrated care and support and excellent customer service that emphasizes their well-being and independence throughout their life journey."	OHE and HEC will work collaboratively to be engaged and support OHE's Awareness activities by co-authoring or contributing to at least one information brief and/or contributing to a Health Equity podcast episode each Fiscal Year and sharing at least one relevant publication (e.g. information briefs and newsletters) or trainings to be highlighted in OHE's publications and website, across their networks each Fiscal Year.	OHE (Korshak), HEC	FY2021 Q4
Partnerships	Pursue strong strategic partnerships for implementing the HEAP with internal and external organizations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distribute monthly newsletters highlighting OHE accomplishments, disparities research highlights, and opportunities for trainings. 2. Host quarterly Cyberseminars on relevant and timely health equity topics 3. Launch a Health Equity podcast series highlighting equity research efforts and programmatic efforts across VHA and with external partners promoting Veteran health equity. 	OHE (Korshak, Jordan)	FY2021 Q4

FUNCTION	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE
Comprehensive Communication Planning	Develop a comprehensive communication plan, reviewed at least annually, to address existing disparities and highlight interventions and other efforts to promote equity within VHA.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare monthly information briefs highlighting health disparities and efforts throughout VA to reduce disparities through health interventions. 2. Regularly update OHE website with new information briefs, newsletters, Cyberseminar announcements, and other relevant publications, announcements, and updates. 	OHE (Korshak)	FY2021 Q4

Aim 2: Leadership

Goal: Strengthen and broaden leadership for addressing health disparities at all levels.

FUNCTION	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE
Support VHA Leadership	Establish HEC presence on the National Leadership Council (NLC) or Leadership Governance Board via addition of Chair HEC/Executive Director OHE.	Brief VHA and service line leadership on equity, disparities, and diversity. Strengthen connection between OHE and National Academies projects and products.	OHE (Moy)	FY2021 Q4
Ensure Equity Resources	VHA Leadership, program offices, HEC and Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) commit resources (financial, human, information, etc.) to implement HEAP and health equity projects with outcome evaluation strategies.	Make recommendations to leadership on how to improve VHA race/ethnicity coding. Develop and propose FY2022 spend plan to VHA leadership.	OHE (Moy), OHE Partnered Evaluation Center (Washington), VISN 1 (Russell) OHE (Moy)	FY2021 Q1 FY2021 Q4
Promote Equity Training	Establish and expand access to leadership trainings to equip leaders with the capacity to engage all VHA members on activities for health prevention and equity work.	Identify opportunities to engage VHA leadership on equity, disparities, and diversity.	OHE (Moy), HEC	FY2021 Q4

Aim 3: Health Outcomes

Goal: Improve health and healthcare outcomes for racial, ethnic, and underserved populations.

FUNCTION	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE
Variation in Services	Help VA understand variations in use, preferences, and barriers to VHA care and Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) benefits across different groups of Veterans to increase numbers of eligible Veterans of all groups receiving services.	Produce bundle of integrated products on Veterans health care and disparities across different groups of Veterans.	OHE (Moy), OHE Partnered Evaluation Center (Washington)	FY2021 Q4
Equity Dashboard	Help VISNs and VA medical centers (VAMCs) identify best opportunities for improving outcomes with an Equity Guided Improvement Strategy (EGIS) and identify evidence-based treatments for identified opportunities.	Spread use of the Primary Care Equity Dashboard.	CHERP (Hausmann)	FY2021 Q4
		Spread use of the COVID Equity Dashboard and Reports by VISNs and VAMCs.	OHE (Moy)	FY2021 Q4
Social Determinants	Help VISNs and VAMCs identify social risks and match at-risk Veterans with appropriate social services.	Spread use of tools to identify and reduce health-related social risks.	VISN 1 (Russell)	FY2021 Q4
		Collect information on social determinants of health in SHEP.	CHERP (Hausmann)	FY2021 Q4
Support VHACO	Help VHA central offices understand variations in the services they support across different groups of Veterans.	Conduct evaluation of remote technologies to reduce disparities in diabetic foot ulcers.	OHE (Moy), Innovations (Littman)	FY2021 Q4

Community Care	Help Community Care access data on variations in the services purchased by their program across different groups of Veterans.	Expand partnership with Community Care to understand variation in participation.	OHE (Moy)	FY2021 Q4
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Aim 4: Cultural Competency and Diversity

Goal: Improve cultural and linguistic competency and the diversity of the health-related workforce.

FUNCTION	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE
Workforce Engagement	Support and/or provide training and learning resources in the areas of health equity, cultural and linguistic competency, and shared decision-making tools for all levels of the workforce and Veterans.	Distribute training/learning resources for the workforce and Veterans via the monthly OHE newsletter and announcements, website, SharePoint, and TMS.	OHE (Jordan)	FY2021 Q4
Leadership	Partner and collaborate with appropriate program offices to incorporate cultural and linguistic competency into education activities and programs within and outside VA, new and established.	Establish and maintain partnerships that produce and incorporate health equity resources throughout VA and outside organizations.	OHE (Jordan) HEC	FY2021 Q4
Partnerships	Promote best practices, share resources, and create programs for diversifying the clinical workforce.	Create a VA career diversity and health equity video series and market the series through the WHIHBCU and other partners to diversify the workforce while monitoring VA diversity data.	OHE (Jordan) HEC	FY2021 Q4
Cultural and Linguistic Competency Resource Development	Support and/or provide resources that address: the inequities and needs of specific Veteran populations (women; racial and ethnic minorities; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender; seniors; rural; etc.) health literacy, and language barriers in all forms of communication.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the OHE website and add additional social determinants of health (SDOH) and population web pages and resources that address equity and competency needs. 2. Complete redesign of OHE website and maintain usage monitoring 	OHE (Jordan) VISN 1 Team	FY2021 Q4

Aim 5: Data, Research, and Evaluation

Goal: Improve data availability and coordination, utilization, and diffusion of research and evaluation outcomes.

FUNCTION	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	RESPONSIBILITY	DATE
Data Sources	Identify VA and non-VA data sources for health equity and related information.	Maintain, and refine as needed, COVID-19 operational space and tools for understanding Veteran care needs.	OHE (Jones)	FY2021 Q4
Data Analysis	Conduct data analyses and maintain inventory of data, research, and evaluation activities occurring within and outside of VA related to Veterans.	Develop analysis plan for All Employee Survey diversity and inclusion questions and a report based on plan.	OHE (Jones)	FY2021 Q4
Data Reporting	Identify strategies for capturing data for vulnerable populations and social determinants of health and promote data collection, evaluation, and reporting for such populations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop report on recommendations use natural language processing in research and operations to further knowledge of Veteran health equity and SDOH. 2. Document the completeness and accuracy of VHA race/ethnicity data in a report that will be used to develop recommendations to VA offices/leadership for improvement. 3. Produce national report and VISN-level reports on VA performance measures for vulnerable population groups. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. OHE (Jones) 2. OHE Partnered Evaluation Center (Washington) CHERP (Hausmann) VISN 1 (Russell) 3. OHE Partnered Evaluation Center (Washington) 	FY2021 Q4

Data Strategy	Develop strategy for prioritizing, monitoring, and tracking identified disparities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submit topic nomination for Evidence Synthesis Program review of Veteran health equity issues. 2. Coordinate race/ethnicity data standardization and reporting across VA. 	OHE (Jones)	FY2021 Q4
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