

**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
*Office of Health Equity*

# **VHA Health Equity Action Plan FY23 Operational Plan**

VHA Office of Health Equity (12POP1)

November 10, 2022

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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	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MILESTONES	POINT OF CONTACT	DATE
Leadership	OHE provides leadership, education, and coordination for the HEC in advancing the HEAP in support of VA FY18-2024 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."	1. OHE, HEC, and OHE's partners will collaborate on the development of 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.	1. OHE (Korshak), CHERP (Pittsburgh), HEROIC (Charleston, SC), Health Equity QUERI (Greater LA), OHE-funded pilot quality improvement project leads, members of Health Equity Community of Practice et al.	1. OHE and partners will collaborate on one Awareness Product (information brief, podcast episode, Cyberseminar, contribution to monthly newsletter) each month.
Partnerships	Pursue strong strategic partnerships for implementing the HEAP with internal and external organizations.	1. Distribute monthly newsletters highlighting OHE accomplishments, disparities research highlights, and opportunities for trainings.	1. OHE (Jordan, New Team Members)	1. Published NLT the 7 <sup>th</sup> of the month

		<p>2. Host bi-monthly Cyberseminars on relevant and timely health equity topics.</p> <p>3. Publish monthly information briefs highlighting disparities focused on monthly health observances.</p> <p>4. Host and promote a Health Equity podcast series highlighting equity research efforts and programmatic efforts across VHA and with external partners promoting Veteran health equity.</p> <p>5. Complete TMS curriculum with EES, CHERP, and VISN 1 to</p>	<p>2. OHE (Korshak)</p> <p>3. OHE (Korshak) and CIDER</p> <p>4. OHE (Korshak) and Patient Care Services Communications</p> <p>5. OHE (Korshak, Hooker)</p>	<p>2. Sessions are the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• October (special session)</li> <li>• November</li> <li>• January</li> <li>• March</li> <li>• May</li> <li>• July</li> <li>• September</li> </ul> <p>3. Published NLT 5<sup>th</sup> of the month</p> <p>4. Record at least 9 episodes with accompanying blogs during FY23. At least 1 episode is recorded at least every 1.5 months.</p> <p>5. Complete curriculum created by 6/1/23; 2 permanent FTEs to</p>
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		<p>allow all VA staff to learn about health equity and SDOH, use equity dashboards to reduce health disparities in VAMCs, and use ACORN to screen Veterans for and address health-related social risks.</p> <p>6. Establish an Equity Art Gallery on OHE's website to visualize the military experience, social justice, and what health equity for all Veterans might look like.</p>	6. OHE (Korshak)	<p>support onboarded by 2/1/23; develop curriculum dissemination plan by 3/1/23. Therefore, by end of FY23, curriculum will be complete and available for CE credit.</p> <p>6. Art Gallery is established and opening for first exhibition is complete by 2/28/23. By end of FY23, there will be at least 2 exhibitions at the Gallery.</p>
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.	<p>1. Draft initial FY23 Communications Plan and distribute to OHE Leadership for feedback and recommended edits.</p> <p>2. Incorporate feedback and edits to draft final FY23 Communications Plan</p>	<p>1. OHE</p> <p>2. OHE</p>	<p>1. 12/1/22</p> <p>2. 12/15/22</p>

## Aim 2: Leadership

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

FUNCTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MILESTONES	POINT OF CONTACT	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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. HEC members brief VHA leadership quarterly on equity, disparities, and diversity.</li> <li>2. Strengthen connection between OHE and National Academies               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Plan two meetings</li> <li>b. New fellows integrated into planning</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. VHA leadership</li> <li>2.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. OHE</li> <li>b. NASEM fellows</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 12/31/22, 3/31/23, 6/30/23, 9/30/23</li> <li>2.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 3/31/23, 9/30/23</li> <li>b. 9/30/2023</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve VHA race/ethnicity coding               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Technical assistance to problem VAMCs</li> <li>b. Guidance to all VAMCs</li> <li>c. Tracking process demonstrates improvement</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Develop and propose FY24 spend plan to VHA leadership.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. OHE</li> <li>b. VHA leadership</li> <li>c. OHE</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. OHE</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 12/31/22</li> <li>b. 3/31/23</li> <li>c. 9/30/23</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. 8/31/23</li> </ol>
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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educate VHA leadership on equity, disparities, and diversity.</li> <li>2. Educate VHA leadership on Healthcare Equality Index               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Understand results</li> <li>b. Promote participation</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. VHA Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</li> <li>2. OHE</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 3/31/2023</li> <li>2.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 3/31/23</li> <li>b. 9/30/23</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

### Aim 3: Health Outcomes

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

FUNCTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MILESTONES	POINT OF CONTACT	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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce bundle of integrated products on Veterans health care and disparities across different groups of Veterans.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Veterans Health Equity VISN Report</li> <li>2 other products</li> </ol> </li> <li>Develop new clinician education tool to reduce stigmatizing language in medical documentation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OHE</li> <li>OHE (List)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9/30/2023</li> <li>6/30/23, 9/30/23</li> </ol> </li> <li>9/30/23</li> </ol>
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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Community of Practice for sharing HERO/EGIS best practices.</li> <li>Provide support to field (~\$750,000) for pilot and innovations projects that use and support HERO/EGIS.</li> <li>Augment technical assistance capabilities</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OHE (Jordan)</li> <li>OHE (Moy)</li> <li>OHE/VA Pittsburgh</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CoP SharePoint developed 9/30/2023</li> <li>Proposals received and funds awarded by 12/31/22; Final reports from awarded projects received by 9/30/23 to support compendium of best practices</li> <li>3 permanent FTEs to support TA</li> </ol>

		4. Present OHE tools and EGIS/PCED dashboard to VAMC leadership around the country	4. OHE (List)	onboarded by 12/31/23; TA plan developed by 3/31/23 4. 9/30/23
Social Determinants	Help VISNs and VAMCs identify social risks and match at-risk Veterans with appropriate social services.	1. Expand use of ACORN screener across VHA clinical sites. 2. Support addition SDOH module to SHEP.	1. Social Work / VA Providence 2.OHE	1. 9/30/23 2.9/30/23
Support VHACO	Help VHA central offices understand variations in the services they support across different groups of Veterans.	1. Spread use of the Equity Quality Improvement Playbook and High Equity Reliability Organization framework. 2. Build strategy to advance OHE relationships across VHACO offices to expand available data to identify disparities in health outcomes and curricula to support eliminating those disparities.	1. OHE (Hooker) 2.OHE (List)	1. Connect with at least 3 program offices on the Equity Quality Improvement Playbook and High Equity Reliability Organization framework by 9/30/23 2.9/30/23
Community Care	Help Community Care access data on variations in the services purchased by their	Veteran survey of satisfaction with community care a. Analyze data b. Produce report of findings	OHE (Leder)	FY23 – ongoing

	program across different groups of Veterans.			
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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	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MILESTONES	POINT OF CONTACT	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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Distribute training/learning resources for the workforce and Veterans via the monthly OHE newsletter and announcements, website, SharePoint, and TMS.</li> <li>2. Continue managing the HE Community of Practice, monthly and CE Credits.</li> <li>3. Expand student fellowship program (move from OHE only to a national) and support other student programs.</li> <li>4. Expand marketing VA/VHA as a career option to professionals external to VA with a focus on students, recent graduates, early career.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OHE (Jordan, Korshak) NVO DEIA&amp;HPO ORMDI LGBTQ+ Health HEC</li> <li>2. OHE (Jordan) VA-ECHO (Castillo)</li> <li>3. OHE (Jordan, Hooker)</li> <li>4. OHE (Hooker, Jordan)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>2. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>3. FY23 Q4</li> <li>4. FY23 – ongoing</li> </ol>

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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish and maintain partnerships that produce and/or incorporate health equity resources throughout VA and beyond.</li> <li>2. Identify OHE materials to be translated in Spanish or other languages to support Veteran care, and resources to support translation.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OHE (Jordan) CMV DEIA&amp;HPO LGBTQ+ Health HRC</li> <li>2. OHE (Jordan) VHA Comms, BRS</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>2. FY23 Q2</li> </ol>
Partnerships	Promote best practices, share resources, and create programs for diversifying the clinical workforce.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore diversity data tracking/index via GW Workforce Institute.</li> <li>2. Explore potential health equity capstone project with Veterans Justice Program.</li> <li>3. Support HEI/LEI efforts via resource/training tools and communications for the field; social media videos/reels to support workforce diversity.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OHE (Jordan) GWU, WMC, ORMDI</li> <li>2. OHE (Leder, Jordan)</li> <li>3. OHE (Jordan, Lamba) HRC, LGBTQ+ Health</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>2. FY23 Q2</li> <li>3. FY23 – ongoing</li> </ol>

<p>Cultural and Linguistic Competency Resource Development</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>1. Continue to develop population and SDOH content for website and SharePoint.</p>	<p>1. OHE (Jordan, Lamba, Leder)</p>	<p>1. FY23 – ongoing</p>
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## Aim 5: Data, Research, and Evaluation

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

FUNCTION	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MILESTONES	POINT OF CONTACT	DATE
Data Strategy	Develop strategy for prioritizing, monitoring, and tracking identified disparities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Publish annual data strategy with specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, time-delimited goals for each milestone under Aim 5.</li> <li>2. Coordinate with VA offices and Federal agencies on efforts to collect and use disparity data.</li> <li>3. Develop and support efforts to enhance race/ethnicity data for operational purposes.</li> <li>4. Identify and propose strategies to collect granular race/ethnicity data.</li> <li>5. Develop a system to track health equity data consultation and pulls to support operational analyses.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OHE (Jones)</li> <li>2. OHE (Jones, List) Analytics and Performance Integration (Jones) Office of Enterprise Integration (Thomas)</li> <li>3. OHE (Jones, Temp Employees) NEPEC (Hoff, Greenberg)</li> <li>4. OHE (Jones, Temp Employees)</li> <li>5. OHE (Jones, Hooker)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FY23 Q1</li> <li>2. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>3. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>4. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>5. FY23 – ongoing Establish plan and identify 2-3 potential systems to support data pulls by 9/30/2023.</li> </ol>

		6. Partner with key stakeholders to monitor and provide feedback on race/ethnicity efforts related to new electronic health record.	6. OHE (Jones) OHE-PEI (Washington) SMITREC (Pelzman, Shiner)	6. FY23 – ongoing
Data Sources	Identify VA and non-VA data sources for health equity and related information.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify VA and non-VHA data that can be used to link VA patient data.</li> <li>2. Maintain inventory of identified data sources that can be used to understand Veteran health equity.</li> <li>3. Update and expand Veterans Geography of Opportunity Tool.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OHE (Jones and Data, Research, and Evaluation Team)</li> <li>2. OHE (Jones, Lamba)</li> <li>3. OHE (Leder, Lamba, Jones) Student Interns</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>2. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>3. FY23 Q2</li> </ol>
Data Analysis	Conduct data analyses and maintain inventory of data, research, and evaluation activities occurring within and outside of VA related to Veterans.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use of National Center for Health Statistics data linkage file for high-level health equity report.</li> <li>2. Comparison of health care quality using community care data.</li> <li>3. Exploration of specialty care data and health outcomes by disability type, status.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OHE (Jones) OHE-PEI (Washington)</li> <li>2. OHE (Leder, Jones) OHE-PEI (Washington) Integrated Veteran Care (Mehta)</li> <li>3. OHE (Lamba, Jones) Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders System of Care (Sippel)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FY23 Q3</li> <li>2. FY23 Q3</li> <li>3. FY23 Q3</li> </ol>

		<p>4. Track adoption of ICD-10 codes in the VHA electronic medical record to understand social determinants of health.</p> <p>5. Conduct routine data pulls and analysis to support operational work.</p>	<p>4. OHE (Jones, Jordan)</p> <p>5. OHE (Jones &amp; Data, Research, and Evaluation Team)</p>	<p>4. FY23 – ongoing</p> <p>5. FY23 – ongoing</p>
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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"> <li>1. Disseminate 2<sup>nd</sup> National Veteran Health Equity Report (NVHER)</li> <li>2. Develop Veteran chartbooks and VISN specific reports related to the NVHER</li> <li>3. Develop and promote LGBTQ+ SHEP PCHM Tool</li> <li>4. Automate collection and processing of data used in routine reports and dashboards</li> <li>5. Maintain and monitor OHE dashboards</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OHE (Jones, Korshak) OHE-PEI (Washington) Publication Services (Lancaster)</li> <li>2. OHE (Moy, Jones) OHE-PEI (Washington) Student Interns</li> <li>3. OHE (Jones, Lamba) LGBTQ+ Program (Kauth, Shipherd, Matza) Performance Measurement (Schaefer)</li> <li>4. OHE (Leder, Jones, Lamba)</li> <li>5. OHE (Leder, Lamba, Jones)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FY23 Q1</li> <li>2. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>3. FY23 Q2</li> <li>4. FY23 – ongoing</li> <li>5. FY23 – ongoing</li> </ol>
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