

The Community Coalition for Equity in Research: An Innovative Approach to Improve Community Engagement and Health Equity

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BACKGROUND



APPROACH

- The Community Coalition for Equity in Research to a community-driven resource developed at Harvard Catalyst: Harvard's Clinical and Translational Science Center.
- Designed to build skills among community members for providing researchers with actionable input on research and increase researchers' understanding of how to embed considerations of equity into research projects – from planning through dissemination.
- Recruited 14 members to a 2-year term in 2020.
- Members dedicate 2-4 hours per month to review research studies, compensated at \$25/hour via honoraria.
- Co-chairs selected at 6 months guide decision making and support communication efforts.
- Health equity review rubric co-created during first 2 months.
- Evaluate researcher and member experience via surveys.

Health Equity Review Rubric Exemplar Items

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| PLANNING Study goals address health equity Diverse study team Accountability to community partners | RECRUITMENT AND CONSENT Inclusive, accessible, and welcoming materials Consent processes allow for careful decisions Enrollment plan matches demographics of focus population |
| PARTICIPATION Participant burden is clear and minimizes harm Participation costs are covered Exclusions are well-justified Opportunities tailored for focus populations | DISSEMINATION Emphasizes real-world translation and includes practitioner and community audiences Clear plan for what will be returned Accessible products with meaningful budget allowed |

Community Coalition for Equity in Research Members

Members:

- Karen Emmons, PhD, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
- Michael Curry, Esq, Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
- Albert W. Pless, Jr., MS*, City of Andover
- Carolina Trujillo, MPA, MSPS*, Citizens Inn
- Abdullah Abdul-Rahim, MEd, Men of Color Health Awareness
- Rosa Alemán, BA, American Civil Liberties Union of MA
- Elana Brochin, MS, MPH, Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations
- Glavieliny Cruz, PsyD, Lynn Community Health Center
- Nancy B. Smith, BS, City of Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management
- Mark Kennedy, MBA, Boston Public Health Commission
- Rebekka Lee, ScD, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
- Jean Dolin, BA, Humanitarian/Advocate
- Brenda Evans, MPH, UMass Amherst, School of Public Health and Health Sciences
- Marie-Jacques Toussaint, MD, Immigrant Family Services Institute
- Chien-Chi Huang, MS, Asian Women for Health
- Shoba Ramanadhan, ScD, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

STUDY REVIEW PROCESS

Preparation

- Researchers develop 10-minute video and 2-page plain language summary 2 weeks prior to review
- Coalition members independently review the materials and complete the health equity review rubric via Qualtrics

Study Review Session

- Coalition members alternate roles as observer or reviewer across meetings
 - Reviewers provide feedback directly to the researcher
 - Observers reflect on the process of the conversation and provide feedback through the chat
- First half of the session is a closed discussion among Coalition members to review the project and prioritize feedback:
 - Strengths of the project related to health equity
 - Clarifying questions for the researchers
 - Opportunities to improve the project's health equity focus
- Second half of the session is a facilitated conversation with Coalition members and researchers to discuss feedback and answer questions from the researchers

Follow up

- Catalyst staff draft written recommendations for the research team, combining issues raised in the:
 - Health equity review rubric
 - Discussion with researchers
 - Chat from the meeting
 - Follow-up email reflections from Coalition members

STUDY EXAMPLE

Groceries for Black Residents of Boston to Stop Hypertension

- Study goal: Determine if weekly groceries modeled after the DASH Diet lowers blood pressure among Black adults
- Strengths highlighted by Coalition: Structural view of factors driving health inequities, positioning hunger as a social issue, participant autonomy in food choices

Key Suggestions for Improving Health Equity

- Hire a staff member with lived experience aligned with the population
- Improve inclusivity of recruitment materials
- Explore sourcing groceries from local and Black-owned business instead of Amazon Fresh

Study Changes in Response to Feedback

- Created a recruiter position (hiring prioritizes Black Bostonians)
- Hired a Black dietitian as a consultant
- Identified local outlets for recruitment, emphasized people of color in materials
- Using intake forms to prioritize languages for translation and staffing
- Expanding grocery options to include Instacart or local and Black-owned businesses
- Engaging chefs with diverse backgrounds whose recipes reflect a range of cultural backgrounds

CONCLUSIONS

- The Community Coalition for Equity in Research is an innovative approach for bridging academia and community.
- We are increasing the number of research studies designed with community interests and equity priorities in mind.
- The Coalition also serves to build trusting academic-community partnerships desperately needed to address our most pressing public health challenges.
- This approach has the potential for scale up and broad reach given the practical tools and strategies developed.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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