



2023 – 2024 Equity Action Plan



Affinity Health Center (AHC) is committed to infusing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) throughout our culture, into all policies, practices, and procedures. As a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), AHC is entrusted to provide comprehensive primary and preventive services for all people, especially those who are uninsured, underinsured, and living with limited income. As a result, it is vital for our organization to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to access high-quality health services and achieve optimal health outcomes. Additionally, it is our responsibility to continually educate ourselves on the cultural nuances of our diversified community so that we may enhance our operations to be more welcoming and in alignment with our mission to provide healthcare with compassion, dignity, and respect.

AHC has a longstanding history of helping to reduce health inequities by providing specialized care for People of Color, same gender loving individuals, individuals who are gender non-conforming, and individuals living with HIV. From this unique perspective comes an extraordinary opportunity to be a leader in healthcare by advancing racial equity in a manner that is multidimensional so that everyone has better end results.

Racism in its various forms is sadly experienced in all settings across the United States. The healthcare sector is not excluded from this treatment that creates a series of health inequities and disparate outcomes for people based on their racial and ethnic background.

Through this DEI pledge, I am acknowledging that all forms of Racism including Explicit, Institutional, and Structural Racism are an urgent threat to public health and safety. Racism ultimately creates harm for everyone and in all systems, allows for disproportionate outcomes for vulnerable communities, and it especially creates harm for People of Color who also represent other historically marginalized groups like women, individuals who are differently abled, and/or members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Racism impedes the advancement of equity in healthcare and the high-quality care that ALL PEOPLE deserve.

As Chief Executive Officer (CEO) I am committed to make certain that this healthcare institution does the following pertaining to the infusion of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Affinity Health Center:

- Review AHC's current policies, practices, and procedures to identify opportunities to enhance business operations so that everyone has access to high-quality services.
- Ensure organizational operations promote a consciously anti-racist climate via an intersectional analysis throughout Affinity Health Center so that this adopted organizational culture is felt amongst patients, employees, and the community at-large.
- Set goals that improve conditions for historically marginalized groups that have been disproportionately impacted by healthcare institutions because of structures rooted in bias.
- Identify and establish partnership opportunities with community, businesses, academic, and philanthropic stakeholders to create additional resources for DEI initiatives and implement an awareness campaign so that everyone is knowledgeable about all the services AHC provides.

- Anita Case
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Presence of
differences



DIVERSITY

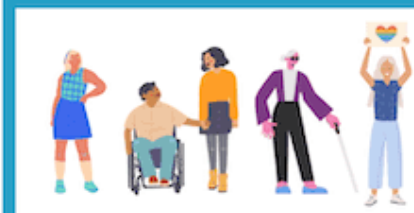
Images Via WordStream By Localiq

Fair access,
opportunity, and
support



EQUITY

Genuine sense of
belonging and value



INCLUSION

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) are federally funded nonprofit health centers or clinics that specialize in serving medically underserved areas and populations, regardless of a person's ability to pay, as services are provided on a sliding fee scale based on an individual's financial capacity.

As an FQHC, it is critical that Affinity Health Center's services and operations are equitable, anti-racist, culturally inclusive, and accessible to all people.

In order for Affinity Health Center to genuinely be a healthcare agency that is accessible for everyone and intentional about creating meaningful change in the community, then Diversity Equity, and Inclusion must be infused in all operations; so that care can be provided fairly, and in alignment with the intersectionality's of Race, Gender and Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, HIV Status, Age, Religion, Socioeconomic Class, and Ability.

- Joseph T. Johnson II
Chief Equity and People Officer (CEPO)

Image Via The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Equality = Sameness | Equity = Fairness

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Mission Statement

Affinity Health Center is dedicated to serve the healthcare needs of ALL people with empathy, inclusion, and fairness. We are committed to improving outcomes for patients, staff, and community to ensure accessibility of our care services, and better serve the needs of our diversified community. At Affinity Health Center, We're Inclusive.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Vision Statement

Affinity Health Center envisions a community where all people are mentally and physically healthy, an individual's diversity does not impede their access to high-quality comprehensive healthcare, and everyone has an equitable opportunity to succeed. Our organization also envisions that we live in a community where everyone feels included and is connected to a sense of belonging.

Image Via The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center



The feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group or place.

Source: [Workology](https://www.workology.com/)

Strategic Goal: Leadership & Governance		
Strategic Goal Statement: Affinity Health Center Leadership will have the cultural awareness to institutionalize and advance racial equity.		
Strategy	Team(s)	Due Date
Objective #1: All AHC Leadership/Governance Members will build their understanding of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI).		
Strategy #1 Adopt Results-Based Accountability, created by Mark Friedman to establish key filtering questions for equity efforts that includes questions such as "What are we doing, how well, how much, and is anyone better off?" These questions will be integrated into a tool created by the Chief Equity and People Officer to add equity-based practices in decision making.	Leadership Team Members, Equity and Inclusion Board Committee	March 2023
Strategy #2 Institute a required DEI training for all board members, that takes place during the annual Board Retreat. This training will capture the foundational principles of DEI, unconscious bias, and will become more nuanced over time to ensure that members understand why this work is important, and the opportunity that AHC has to reduce disparities in the community.	Chief Equity and People Officer, Chief Executive Officer, Board Members	October 2023 & 2024
Strategy #3 Equity and Inclusion Board Committee Members will engage in Outreach and Engagement opportunities to further their awareness of community needs & challenges regarding their health, network with community partners of the agency, and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the social influences of health in our local community.	Chief Equity and People Officer, Chief Executive Officer, Board Members	August 2023/Ongoing
Objective #2: Leadership/Governance Members will adopt policies and practices that result in equitable outcomes for all staff members and fosters a culture of inclusivity and belonging.		
Strategy #1. Update handbook to reflect equity values, code of ethics, standards of behavior, and commitment.	Senior Leadership Team Members, Board Members	March 2023
Strategy #2 Equity and Inclusion Board Committee Members will meet with Equity and Inclusion Core Team Members to provide updates that notes their DEI accomplishments via the Equity Action Plan, review the DEI Scorecard, and co-collaborate to discuss current challenges and opportunities moving forward.	Equity and Inclusion Board Committee	April/September 2023 & 2024
Strategy #3 Board Members and Senior Leadership Team Members will adopt and integrate language and policies that ensure inclusion and equitable outcomes representative of York County's diversified community.	Senior Leadership Team Members, Board Members	October 2023 & 2024/Ongoing
Strategy #4 Action items and accountabilities based on the Equity Action Plan will be integrated as a performance metric for all-staff, custom to their position.	Leadership Team Members	May 2023

Strategic Goal: Workforce Equity		
Strategic Goal Statement: Affinity Health Center will have the cultural awareness to institutionalize and advance racial equity.		
Strategy	Team(s)	Due Date
Objective #1: Enhance the understanding of racial equity and its intersectionality's for Affinity Health Center employees, and establish an infrastructure that allows employees to advance racial equity.		
Strategy #1 Institutionalize an all-day required annual DEI Training for all-staff, intended to be a time where employees have an opportunity to learn more information related to DEI, learn individual experiences that are emblematic of systemic disparities, and build cohesion to aid organizational culture.	Chief Equity and People Officer	April 2023 & 2024
Strategy #2 Create a rotation plan for the Equity and Inclusion Core Team so that all frontline staff members have an opportunity to be involved in organization-wide activities related to DEI.	Chief Equity and People Officer, Equity and Inclusion Core Team	January 2023
Strategy #3 Establish opportunities for Equity and Inclusion Core Team Members to participate in external training opportunities to further their awareness/understanding of DEI	Chief Equity and People Officer, Equity and Inclusion Core Team Members	January 2024
Strategy #4 Provide DEI training opportunities throughout the calendar year. Trainings will focus on specific sectors that comprise the social influences of health. Furthermore, trainings will involve collaborating with AHC partners such as AHEC, SCPHCA, SCORH, so employees have an opportunity to maintain professional certifications.	Chief Equity and People Officer, Equity and Inclusion Core Team	January 2024/Ongoing
Objective #2: Adjust employee centered organizational practices to ensure more equitable outcomes.		
Strategy #1. Conduct a Market/Compensation Analysis for all employment positions on a bi-annual basis to ensure that AHC is providing fair and competitive wages based on our size, industry, and market.	Chief Equity and People Officer, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer	June 2024/Ongoing
Strategy #2 Establish a protocol to ensure that AHC is making an intentional effort to have a diverse pool of candidates to be interviewed for every position.	Human Resources Department	August 2023
Strategy #3 Standardize an interview panel session prior to the date of the interview that outlines the responsibilities of each panelist, is inclusive of an implicit bias training, and requires an online self-assessment.	Chief Equity and People Officer & Leadership Team Members	August 2023
Strategy #4 Fund examinations for employees interested in becoming Certified Medical Interpreters (CMI) to translate documents & conversations to reduce language barriers and amplify AHC's patient care model.	Senior Leadership Team Members	January 2023

Strategy #5 Adjust employee name badge protocols, email signatures, and employee workspace signs to incorporate Gender Pronouns to be inclusive based on an individual's self-identification.	Human Resources Department, Leadership Team Members	January 2023
Strategy #6 Outline Affinity Health Center's DEI Vision & Mission Statements on various materials including but not limited to job postings, job descriptions, & organizational website so stakeholders are mindful of the agency's commitment to this social justice responsibility.	Human Resources Department	January 2023
Strategy #7 Create professional development opportunities for staff that enables employees to enhance their abilities in their field of practice.	Leadership Team Members	Ongoing
Strategy #8 Establish opportunities for employee healing and staff engagement. Comfortability in these healing opportunities can be developed by having a club that uses tools such as videos, podcasts, music, and books to discuss relevant and sensitive issues.	Equity and Inclusion Core Team	July 2023
Strategy #9 Create an Online Employee Newsletter that communicates organizational updates, accomplishments relevant to DEI initiatives, Monthly Peer Recognition Award Winners, and cultural activities in the York County area.	Leadership Team Members	July 2024
Strategy #10 Collaborate with local organizations to highlight AHC as an employer of choice. This partnership involves attendance in community events, job fairs etc., that will increase the visibility of AHC in all communities.	Human Resources Department, Leadership Team Members	September 2023/Ongoing
Strategy #11 Partner with Ambassadors of Gratitude (AOG) to design an annual event calendar to ensure that all cultures are celebrated during the course of the calendar year. Additionally, this partnership will also work to develop relationship-building strategies with staff to enhance culture and employee experiences.	Chief Equity and People Officer, AOG, Equity and Inclusion Core Team	January 2023
Strategy #12 Communicate the grievance system to enhance understanding for staff and patients to report discrimination and DEI concerns.	Leadership Team Members, Board of Directors	February 2023

Strategic Goal: Health Equity		
Strategic Goal Statement: All members of the York County, South Carolina community are healthy.		
Strategy	Team(s)	Due Date
Objective #1: Shift practices and procedures to put Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the forefront of healthcare operations.		
Strategy #1 AHC will ensure accessibility of services to all patients; this includes but is not limited to, reading level of materials, technology for communication, and interpreters for language/sign language.	Leadership Team Members	Ongoing
Strategy #2 Affinity Health Center will hire a Certified Medical Interpreter (CMI) to assess gaps in materials/documents not available in Spanish for patients/community members. The interpreter will verbally translate patient needs, draft pertinent materials in language(s) other than English and will translate documents and marketing materials for print to provide to agency stakeholders.	Leadership Team Members	December 2023
Strategy #3 Collect data and report monthly during standing meetings on patient demographic metrics. Demographic data consists of age, gender, geography, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, along with other contributing health disparity data related to a patient's diagnosis.	Data & Quality Team, Healthcare Staff Members, QA Risk Committee Members	Ongoing
Strategy #4 Develop a DEI Scorecard that outlines patient demographic data along with benchmarks/goals to ensure that AHC is able to evaluate and reduce disparities in our organization for all people.	Data & Quality Team, Healthcare Staff Members, QA Risk Committee Members	July 2023
Strategy #5 Use demographic data to identify Quality Improvement (QI) projects/ initiatives to address disparities.	Data & Quality Team, Healthcare Staff Members, QA Risk Committee Members	Ongoing
Strategy #6 Launch an awareness campaign for the patient portal, outlining the manner in which health services can be provided to increase access to clinical care.	Data & Quality Team Members	February 2024
Strategy #7 Institute a prerequisite that college interns must attend a DEI training that has a keen focus on racial and gender discrimination, along with LGBTQIA inequities, before they begin interning in their desired field of practice. These trainings will be provided by AHC to ensure quality/content is in alignment with agency language and protocols.	Chief Equity and People Officer, Chief Executive Officer	February 2024
Strategy #8 Create a Social Influences of Health Simulation so that in a mock environment, people can experience inequities in the healthcare system, the challenges many of our patients' experience, and better understand AHC's role towards all members in our community.	Equity and Inclusion Core Team	April 2024

Strategy #9 Consistently implement the patient screening tool (PRAPARE) to assess the social determinants of health impacting patients and immediately make referrals to case management when a need is identified. AHC will review data collected and identify trends as part of the Needs Assessment process and use trend data to identify service gaps and patient needs.	Chief Operations Officer, Director of Quality, Director of Integrated Supportive Services	July 2023
Objective #2: Enhance the health literacy of all patients, provide resources, and increase access to AHC health services.		
Strategy #1. Community Health Workers will focus outreach to Black and Latinx communities to address diabetes prevention and diabetes education, both internally with patients and externally in community; they will highlight Food Share and Veggie RX programs to our patients and community members; have food flyers available in exam rooms to be given as soon as food insecurity is noted.	Community Health Workers, Clinical Teams	August 2023
Strategy #2 Enhance awareness around the importance of oral health and the consequences of unhealthy dietary habits. Additionally, AHC will enhance the integration in the dental clinic for the connection of oral health to diabetes through Community Health Workers. From this heightened awareness, AHC will amplify the connection between one's oral health and their overall physical health.	Dental Team, Chief Operations Officer, Chief Equity and People Officer, Community Health Workers	September 2023
Strategy #3 AHC staff will support health equity by providing disease specific education (example: hypertension, HIV, STDs, mental illness) that raises health literacy of AHC patients	Community Health Workers, Community Health Educators, Clinical Teams	September 2023
Strategy #4 Promote self-monitoring blood pressure program with patients in an effort to reduce hypertension disparities amongst patients of color.	Clinical Staff, Case Management Team	Ongoing

Strategic Goal: Community Engagement & Outreach		
Strategic Goal Statement: All community members are aware and engaged in opportunities to access affordable healthcare, both at Affinity Health Center, and in York County, South Carolina		
Strategy	Team(s)	Due Date
Objective #1: Establish and institutionalize an ongoing outreach and engagement loop to address community needs.		
Strategy #1 Establish a network of information sharing amongst community partners to better understand community challenges and advance a more holistic understanding of health equity gaps.	Chief Equity and People Officer, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer, Equity and Inclusion Core Team	April 2024
Strategy #2 Invest and promote community-based research and community organized health promotion strategies. AHC will learn about the specific values, needs, and resources of the York County community to amplify those priorities to help identify solutions.	Senior Leadership Team Members, Equity and Inclusion Core Team	December 2024
Strategy #3 Ensure partnerships with current stakeholders including governments, businesses, non-profits, institutions of faith, patients, etc. to amplify the existence of the Equity Action Plan and DEI Scorecard (when created) to support community needs.	Affinity Health Center (Board Members, Leadership Team Members, Front-Line Staff)	January 2023/Ongoing
Strategy #4 Utilize various forms of media to amplify all of the healthcare services at Affinity Health Center, along with our commitment to DEI, and to the community at-large. These media advertisements will also include the Social Influences of Health and its impacts.	Prevention Services Supervisor, Equity and Inclusion Core Team, Senior Leadership Team Members	July 2024
Strategy #5 Enhance community surveys to attain more insight regarding the health challenges of our local area and use the survey as baseline for metrics moving forward, given that this survey will be shared regularly for community input.	Leadership Team Members, Equity and Inclusion Core Team	February 2023
Objective #2: Provide resources to community members and partner agencies to increase local awareness of pertinent issues and put a spotlight on local health inequities & opportunities to reduce/eliminate disproportionalities.		
Strategy #1. Create a “Roster” of community partners to share information about community resources with staff and community members through AHC’s Community Health Workers and Community Health Educators to increase community awareness and advance health equity.	Equity and Inclusion Core Team, Community Health Workers, Community Health Educators	December 2023

Strategy #2 Establish a model for recruiting, interviewing, and onboarding vendors to ensure equitable opportunities for Supplier Diversity. From this initiative, AHC will elevate the importance of DEI from our key vendors and require regular reporting of their DEI work for our awareness.	Chief Financial Officer, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Equity and People Officer	May 2024
Strategy #3 Connect with community partners to support the homeless population. This support is inclusive of outreach initiatives to inform homeless community members of our services and provide access to care both inside and outside of Affinity Health Center.	Equity and Inclusion Core Team, Community Health Workers, Community Health Educator	February 2024
Strategy #4 Promote services of the Benefits Navigator to staff, patients, and community members, such as the ACA campaign that has a keen focus on communities of color during open enrollment.	Benefits Navigator, Case Managers, Community Health Workers, Community Health Educators	October 2023 – December 2023/Ongoing 2024
Strategy #5 Promote Voter Registration/ Engagement with staff, patients, and community members so that everyone’s voice in this republic is represented in the democratic process.	Prevention Services Supervisor	September 2023 - November 2023/Ongoing 2024
Strategy #6 Enhance community survey opportunities for people in need of Behavioral Health (BH) services to ensure, that their voices are being represented in our assessments which will ask for community led solutions.	Behavioral Health Team, Community Health Workers, Community Health Educators	January 2024
Strategy #7 Affinity Health Center staff will amplify Health Literacy in partnership with Clinton Health Connexion.	Equity & Inclusion Core Team	Ongoing
Strategy #8 Provide health equity trainings, that have a keen focus on racial and gender discrimination/bias and LGBTQIA inequities to community partner organizations to ensure a culturally aware collaborative.	Equity & Inclusion Core Team	July 2023
Strategy #9 AHC will evaluate the feasibility of an onsite community garden and will create such a garden, based on its organizational partnerships, to provide fresh food to communities in need of affordable healthy eating options.	Leadership Team Members, Facilities Maintenance	December 2023

Key Terminology Regarding Affinity Health Center (AHC) Teams

- **Leadership Team Members** = Supervisors, Managers, Directors, Officers
- **Senior Leadership Team Members** = Directors, Officers
- **Executive Leadership Team Members** = Officers
- **Equity and Inclusion Board Committee** = A subgroup of AHC’s Board of Directors focused on institutionalizing organization-wide DEI strategies.
- **Equity and Inclusion Core Team** = A group comprised of front-line staff members dedicated to supporting the Chief Equity and People Officer in developing and implementing organization-wide DEI strategies.