



Equity, inclusion and anti-racism

Report to the community



Every person welcome, included and valued

A message from Andrea

As an organization dedicated to the health and well-being of every person, we're committed to the responsibility we all share to build a stronger workplace and community.

Throughout our history, we've been passionate about serving all in our increasingly diverse community. Inequities in care and coverage harm health, significantly and without question. But inequities persist. So we continue to deepen our commitment to this work – because it's critical to our mission, and because it's simply the right thing to do.

In 2020 we created our Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Cabinet, a diverse group of leaders from across HealthPartners, to guide our collective plan and goals. We're making progress on increasing diversity and inclusion in our workplace; advancing health equity in our care, coverage and research; and partnering with our community in advocating for change. We're working hard to ensure we use a diverse, inclusive and equitable lens when we make decisions, adopt policies and develop ways of working.

Having a strategy and goals is important, but it's not everything. Change starts with each of us. It takes intention, commitment and courage. And it extends beyond the borders of our health system. Economic stability, the safety of our neighborhoods, the strength of our social networks, and access to quality education, food, housing and transportation all greatly affect our health and quality of life.

The issues we face together are systemic, and it will take all of us working together to solve them. We're grateful to our colleagues for their leadership at work and at home. And we appreciate our partnerships with a growing number of organizations in our community who share our purpose and vision.

Thank you for joining us on our journey to build a brighter, more inclusive and equitable future. We're honored to be your partner.

Andrea M. Walsh

Mission

Improve health and well-being in partnership with our members, patients and community.

Vision

Health as it could be, affordability as it must be, through relationships built on trust.

Values

Excellence | Compassion
Partnership | Integrity

Equity, inclusion and anti-racism goals

We're focused on advancing health equity and eliminating racism, and we've set ambitious goals. To help us reach them, our Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Cabinet provides leadership, direction and oversight.

We're striving to achieve these goals by 2025:

- Build an anti-racist culture and deepen our collective understanding of cultural humility – including a requirement that all team members complete bias training.
- Eliminate disparities in maternal and infant care – prenatal, perinatal and early childhood care have a critical impact.
- Eliminate disparities in childhood immunizations – redoubling our efforts to reach families and children to protect against preventable illness and disease.
- Accelerate and expand our efforts to eliminate disparities in chronic conditions and preventive screenings – including type-2 diabetes and vascular disease; preventive care including breast and colorectal cancer and other screenings; as well as a focus in specialty and hospital care.
- Increase the racial diversity of our leadership team by 100% – from 10% in 2020 to 20% by 2025 – to match our patient and member population.

Designing for equity

One of the aspects of our commitment to equity, inclusion and anti-racism is to design workflows, policies and technology approaches that reflect our commitment. With that in mind, we follow these foundational principles as we design for equity:

Our strategic goal to advance health equity means a commitment to using a diverse, inclusive and equitable lens in the design of our work.

- We must be mindful of who is negatively impacted or left out.
- Consider changes to increase/improve equity and inclusion.

We have a commitment to making health care simple and affordable for everyone we serve. This will advance health equity and build trust with underserved communities. At the same time, we recognize that the most simple and affordable solution may not work for all patients, members and colleagues.

We'll simultaneously explore options for customization where it's needed to meet all needs from an equity perspective.

Through rapid cycles of improvement, we'll continue to adjust to meet the needs of all patients, members and colleagues.

Increasing diversity and inclusion in our workplace

Recruiting a diverse workforce

In 2022, we welcomed more than 6,500 new colleagues to our organization, of which 36% were people of color. With continued limitations on in-person meetings and gatherings, our recruiters got creative with hiring events.

Recruiters hosted virtual career fairs, which made it easier to connect with more candidates. We also sponsored and hosted a table at the Hmong Nurses Association National Conference to share information about jobs at HealthPartners.

“It’s more important than ever that we actively recruit and retain diverse colleagues to support those we serve,” said DeLinda Washington, senior vice president and chief people officer. “Our recruiting teams have found new and innovative ways to connect with and attract amazing candidates.”

Through mentorship programs, internships and clinical rotations, we create opportunities for students to learn more about careers and gain hands-on experience. Examples include Hudson Hospital & Clinic’s partnership with high schools, local colleges and universities for clinical rotations and internships and our participation in the 30,000 Feet Tech Geek intern program by hiring three diverse students as interns in our IT department.

New scholarship program for students pursuing health care careers

In 2023, we teamed up with Wallin Education Partners to launch the [HealthPartners Pathway](#), a college-to-career scholarship that provides students with financial aid, ongoing support and a path to a full-time job.

The HealthPartners Pathway is designed to serve Twin Cities high school seniors pursuing a two-year degree from a partner college and who intend to seek a full-time position with our organization upon graduation. Twenty HealthPartners Scholars receive up to \$6,000 over two years in financial aid, individualized advising and expanded access to career experiences. Students can work part-time at HealthPartners while in college and receive a full-time paid internship.



This innovative and career-focused path supports an incredible pool of talented young adults and showcases careers in health care. This is a great opportunity for students interested in health care as we find new ways to address workforce shortages.

Toweya Brown-Ochs,
HealthPartners director of diversity,
equity and inclusion

Colleague resource and clinician affinity groups help create a sense of belonging

We know it's important for colleagues who share common backgrounds, interests or identities to build personal and professional relationships with one another. Our voluntary employee-led Colleague Resource Groups and Clinician Affinity Groups are organized around shared identities throughout HealthPartners, such as race, gender, age, sexuality, veteran status and disabilities. Groups may also be organized around shared interests that affirm diversity and inclusion throughout the organization.

We currently have three colleague resource groups and three clinician affinity groups.

Our Black and African American Colleague Resource Group hosted an all-colleague Juneteenth event, featuring music, refreshments

and a poem by Tesneem Zaid, medical administrative technical assistant lead at our Midway Clinic. Tesneem hopes her poem can inspire others to stand up, advocate for social justice and press on for change.

"I was inspired to write this as an ode to my grandmother," Tesneem said. "As a direct descendant of enslaved people, she has never allowed that to define her or invalidate her. She has always been a source of strength for me through the years with her wise words and constant encouragement."

Our LGBTQ+ Colleague Resource Group was proud to represent the organization at the National Coming Out Day Luncheon.



"This event gave us an opportunity to network with other organizations leading the way in LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workforce," - Katie Paro, manager, specialty and operations and one of the LGBTQ+ Colleague Resource Group's leads

"Change starts with me": Colleagues share their commitment to diversity and inclusion

In 2022, we launched a series of unconscious bias trainings and inclusive leader cohorts, open to all colleagues and led by volunteer facilitators.

Fifty colleagues opened themselves up to lead vulnerable and meaningful conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion. Each colleague dedicated eight to 10 hours in training, in addition to the dozens of hours they facilitated throughout the year.

Reflections from our colleague facilitators:

"My goal when I went through the unconscious bias training was to grow in my own understanding of bias so I could better serve my colleagues and our members."

Curt Doucette, supervisor,
Riverview member services

"Being a facilitator has truly been about asking questions and opening up the space for people to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings and questions."

Allie Badaczewski, program manager,
health and care engagement

"We're all on a journey. I'm an avid learner and being involved in the facilitation of the unconscious bias trainings allows me to continue to learn from others and advance my own personal growth."

Greg Fedio, senior clinical project manager,
ambulatory quality and measurement

"I've been surprised by people's openness to learn and their courage to share during the sessions. I learn new things every time."

Jessica Maloy, quality improvement consultant



Clinical simulation brings anti-racism training to the bedside

When an emergency room technician at Regions Hospital was the target of racial slurs from a patient, and her colleagues present didn't speak up, what was hurtful in the moment turned into something bigger – an opportunity to focus on anti-racism in the workplace.

A team of colleagues from Clinical Simulation, Diversity & Inclusion and Nursing Education worked with our colleague to develop a training based on her own experience. In a way, teams and colleagues who participate re-live the events she experienced.

During the 25-minute simulation session, a patient (in this case, a mannequin) makes racist remarks to an incoming nurse. Then, the colleague participants — acting as the nurses — decide how to respond and what to do next.

Leaders from the Clinical Simulation and Diversity & Inclusion teams facilitate a dialogue to debrief.

Colleagues who've participated in the simulation agree that the training was a valuable experience. According to one participant: "It was very uncomfortable but a very good simulation and discussion. Change doesn't happen without getting uncomfortable, so I found it very helpful and insightful."

Nearly 300 nurses have participated since the first Diversity, Equity & Inclusion simulation at Methodist Hospital in March 2021.



Digital accessibility team finds new ways to connect with members and patients

Coming up with solutions for people who have disabilities is all in a day's work for Steve Sawczyn, HealthPartners digital accessibility supervisor. He and his team are responsible for helping ensure our members and patients can access the information they need.

Incorporating accessibility means everything from making sure someone who is blind can hear HealthPartners blog posts and website content to helping a deaf person access a podcast through captions.

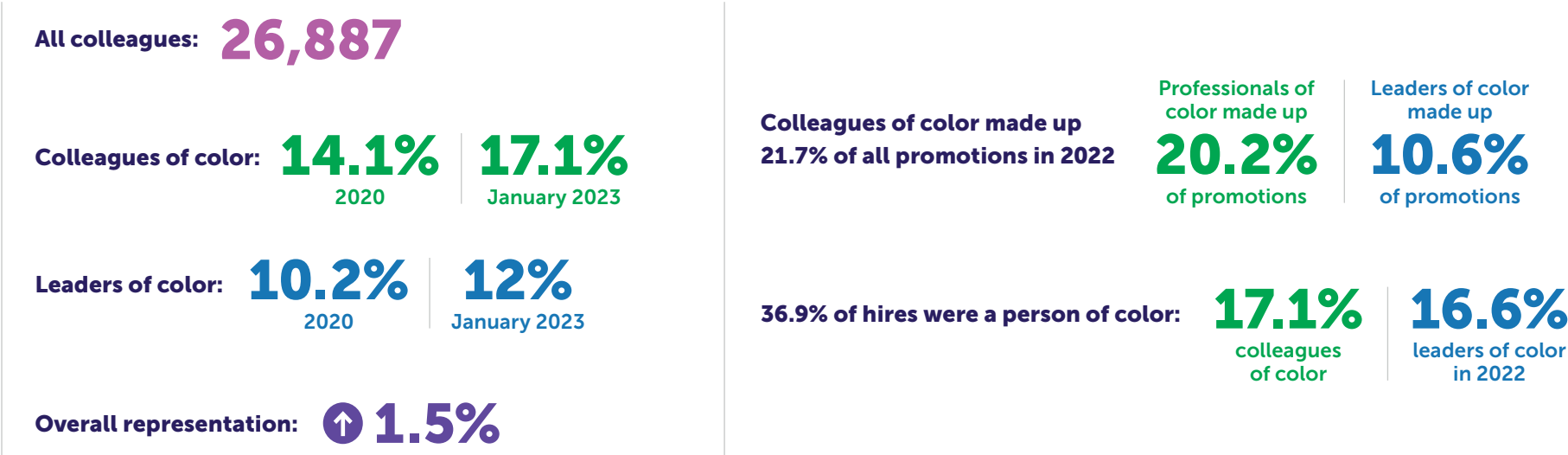
"Accessibility is so important in health care because people engage with us when they're focusing on their health," Steve says. "Accessibility shouldn't be something else they have to worry about."

Colleagues volunteer to champion health equity

To reduce health disparities, we've mobilized an internal grassroots movement to educate colleagues about health equity, reducing bias, cultural humility and anti-racism. About 350 colleagues have volunteered to become health equity champions and serve as a resource for their teams to advance equitable care.

In addition to being ambassadors, health equity champions help research, write and share our HealthPartners Culture Roots newsletter. Each issue sheds light on various aspects of cross-cultural health care and health equity issues. Recent topics have included addressing breastfeeding disparities, advancing health literacy and agism in health care.

HealthPartners workforce diversity by the numbers



Advancing health equity in our care and coverage



HealthPartners Medicaid plans recognized with health equity accreditation

Whether it's tailoring our myPregnancy online education platform with culturally-specific resources or ensuring that our plan bi-lingual staff meet fluency standards, HealthPartners continues to identify opportunities to support inclusive care and coverage. That's one reason the National Committee for Quality Assurance recently awarded HealthPartners Medicaid plans its Health Equity Accreditation status.

The accreditation recognizes organizations that have successfully implemented market-leading practices to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive services, and work to reduce health care disparities.

The accreditation was also awarded because of our commitment to seeking community feedback and identifying and prioritizing quality improvement activities designed to enhance health equity. In 2022, our health plan expanded community input by collaborating with the HealthPartners Institute to create a [Community Advisory Council for Research and Evaluation](#).

HealthPartners is one of two health plans in Minnesota that have achieved Health Equity Accreditation.



Centering health equity in birth center experiences

Black expectant and postpartum women face far worse health and mortality outcomes than their white counterparts in Minnesota and across the United States. Studies show Black women are less satisfied with their care and use fewer health care services.

In 2021, we partnered with consulting agency Heart of the Customer to improve outcomes for our Black patients by documenting their pregnancy experiences. The goal was to build empathy, undermine systemic racism and improve outcomes. As part of that project, we followed and documented each step along the path of pregnancy, from the time a patient learns they're expecting through delivery and postpartum. Then we used the data to help us improve and provide patient-centered care.

The result: The birth of two new virtual group classes focused on supporting Black women through their prenatal and postpartum journeys. Community Circles virtual group classes focus on shared community and experiences. The circle is made for and driven by its members, who are guided by discussion topics. Participants bring their thoughts, fears, questions and joys of pregnancy and parenthood to share with the group. Expecting Together virtual group classes are guided by one of our OB-GYN physicians. Together, participants learn about the medical care that happens throughout each stage of their pregnancy

Since launching in mid-2022, we've hosted 18 Community Circles groups. Feedback from participants has included that their "experiences and personhood were validated"; the "circle space reduces feelings of isolation"; "acknowledgement that other areas of their life impact parenting"; "social support complements clinical care"; and they "appreciate circles as a bridge to community resources."



Reducing barriers to breastfeeding

While research suggests that breastfeeding has health benefits for babies and mothers, studies also show that Black mothers are less likely to initiate and maintain breastfeeding.

Since 1990, when tracking of breastfeeding rates began, the disparity gap between white and Black women has remained at 16%. Common barriers to breastfeeding including pain, discomfort, lack of time or preference to bottle feed. But there are also breastfeeding disparities that are rooted in historical trauma, bias and systemic racism.

Strategies such as peer support, prenatal education, ongoing in-clinic support after delivery, longer parental leave, and breastfeeding support in the hospital, workplace and community may help more moms breastfeed longer.

What we're doing

We continue to grow our Lactation Café offerings and partnerships. At these once-weekly cafés, breastfeeding moms can weigh their babies, learn and connect with others and get help with questions or concerns. Each café is led by a certified lactation consultant.

- We expanded our Lactation Cafés, now with seven locations across the Twin Cities.
- We're partnering with Hennepin County's Special Supplement Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and providing WIC peer counselors at our Minneapolis and Brookdale clinics.
- We have a Somali interpreter at our Minneapolis café and Spanish interpreter at our Shakopee café.
- We've added a virtual Lactation Café every Tuesday.

We've also partnered with Ramsey County WIC and the Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition to develop a program to help lactation counselors of color get the clinical hours needed to achieve their certification as International Board-Certified Lactation Consultants. And, we've sponsored scholarships for diverse lactation professionals.

Connecting members with doulas

HealthPartners is committed to expanding access to doula services for members and patients. Birth doulas are non-medical professionals who provide informational, emotional and physical support during pregnancy and childbirth. Some studies show that patients who use doulas have improved outcomes for themselves and their babies, including shorter labors, fewer C-sections, fewer low birthweight babies and higher breastfeeding rates.

Doulas can be especially beneficial for our members and patients of color in our effort to

close health care disparities gaps. Doulas have been a Medicaid covered benefit for many years, but services aren't often used. In a recent one-year period, fewer than 1% of HealthPartners members eligible for the benefit met with a doula during their pregnancies.

To increase awareness of how doulas can provide pregnancy support, we created a video explaining what a doula is, the value they bring to the birth experience and how members can connect with a doula. The video has been translated with subtitles into [Somali, Hmong and Spanish](#).



Ensuring equitable access to COVID vaccines

The pandemic cast new light on the ongoing issue of health disparities in the community. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected communities of color, and it highlighted the issues of mistrust in our community and health care systems.

Across HealthPartners, we saw this inequity play out in vaccination rates. When COVID-19 vaccines first became available to our patients and the community, we noticed a significant difference in who was receiving the vaccine by race.

In response, we began outreach efforts to connect with patients who might have been hesitant to get vaccinated or faced barriers to scheduling an appointment. We provided call-back lines in multiple languages, transportation vouchers, and trusted messengers to address hesitancy. Invitations to vaccine clinics

were sent via text or email that had been translated into Hmong, Somali and Spanish received a higher response rate.

Thanks to these efforts, we quickly made progress toward closing gaps and eliminating disparities across all races. And within several months we had fully closed the gaps.

"Traditionally we've come up with what we think is important, and then impressed that on our patient populations. Going forward, we need to continue to partner with our patients and local communities to understand what they think is important. Once we start building that trust ... we can reach out to those patients to close health gaps."

Jason Maxwell, MD, medical director, HealthPartners Como Clinic



Dr. Maxwell was recently featured in a [video](#) by the American Medical Group Association on immunization best practices and prioritizing health equity.

Closing gaps and improving access to mammography screening

Breast cancer is the most-diagnosed cancer in women and is the second leading cause of cancer-related death among women in the United States. And while African American women are less likely to develop breast cancer, they're more likely to die from it – a lot more likely.

The five-year survival rate for Black women is 20 percent lower than for white women, based on 2019 Minnesota Cancer Registry reports. Early detection is the key to improving health outcomes, but there are significant health care disparities there, too, both within HealthPartners and across the country. Women of color get recommended breast cancer screenings at significantly lower rates than white women.

Mammogram on wheels brings preventive care to the community

Our Mammo a-go-go mobile mammography units are just one of many ways we're working to eliminate this gap. The mobile units bring the best in mammography screening services to a variety of community locations in a tranquil, "spa-on-wheels" environment, making it easy for women to get mammograms on their lunch break or another convenient time.

"Across HealthPartners and Park Nicollet, we're committed to ensuring our members, patients and community have access to high-quality, affordable preventive screenings, including mammograms, regardless of their background," said Laura Loberg, vice president of surgical services at Park Nicollet.

Since 2014, the Mammo a-go-go units have provided more than 30,000 mammograms to women at hundreds of screening events throughout our local communities, with a focus on providing care to women in underserved areas.

Examples include the Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota, our local Mexican Consulate, Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, the Tubman Center – which is Minnesota's largest provider of domestic violence shelter services, and multiple tribal partners.



Same-day mammograms offer a convenient option

When we looked at what was preventing some women from getting their recommended screenings, a second visit to the clinic was often a barrier. To address this, we started offering same-day access for mammograms at many of our clinics.

Women who are in one of our clinics for any type of appointment are offered mammograms that day if records showed they're overdue to be screened. This is particularly helpful for patients who can't easily afford to take additional time off work or struggle with the transportation needed for a second appointment. The result has been an overall increase in women screened, with an even bigger impact among women of color.

Breast Cancer Gaps Project

HealthPartners participated in the [Breast Cancer Gaps Project](#), which focuses on reducing disparities in breast cancer screening for Black women.

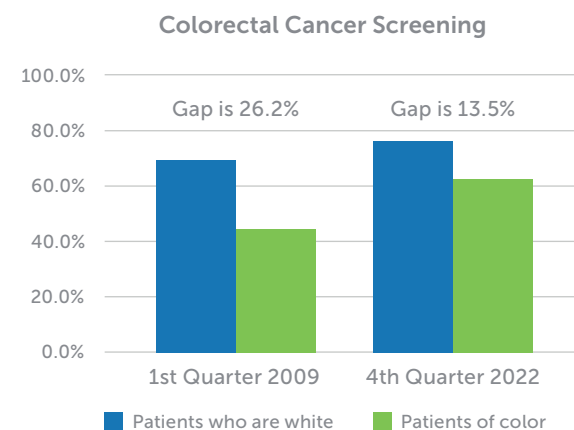
The first stage of this project was to engage African American women to hear barriers to screening. Then, using principles of community co-design, the group created solutions to address these barriers. The project [filmed videos](#) at our Regions Hospital Breast Health Center to dispel myths about mammograms with the message "We Matter" to encourage women of color to get screened.

Care process improvements reduce colorectal cancer screening disparities

We want to eliminate gaps in colorectal cancer screening between patients of color and patients who are white. To start, we developed a goal of increasing colorectal cancer screening rates among all patients to at least 80 percent. The process allows us to consider disparities in colorectal cancer screenings and reduce gaps.

As a result, the colorectal cancer screening percentage for our patients of color went from 43 percent in 2009 to 61.7 percent by the end of 2022. Rates increased from 2020 to 2021 despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

These data to the right show our system is improving the number of screenings:



Caring for Minnesota's newest Americans

Dr. Yeng Yang became a doctor after seeing her father suffer from a lack of medical care. She never wanted to see anyone suffer as he did. A first-generation Hmong American who lived in a refugee camp for five years of her childhood, Dr. Yang works tirelessly to serve our immigrant population, improve the health and well-being of our community and advance health equity.

Dr. Yang is medical director and a primary care physician at our Maplewood Clinic. She believes deeply in working with patients to create shared plans of care that empower them and families to obtain their best health. And as co-chair of our Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Cabinet, Dr. Yang is working to teach others how to recognize and mitigate unconscious or implicit bias to close health care disparity gaps.

HealthPartners Center for International Health

Our [Center for International Health](#) in St. Paul is a primary care clinic designed to meet the health care needs of immigrants and refugees. Many of the clinicians have additional training in global health, refugee and immigrant health, and travel and tropical medicine. The clinic is renowned for its practice of culturally competent care, with specific knowledge of patients' unique health care needs, sensitivity to their beliefs and integration of their customs into each interaction.





Incorporating inclusive language into everyday interactions

Research shows lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) individuals face greater health disparities and have poorer mental, emotional and physical health status due to a lack of social acceptance surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity.

Left unaddressed, this can affect mental, emotional and physical health. And LGBTQ+ patients who have had a negative experience in the clinical setting are also less likely to return for follow-up care and comply with treatment or preventive care recommendations, which can put them at greater risk for chronic conditions.

Using gender inclusive language and chosen pronouns is an especially important way to show support for people who are transgender – it can even save lives. According to a survey from the Trevor Project, trans youth were half as likely to consider suicide when their chosen pronouns were used.

How we're taking action:

In 2022, HealthPartners introduced a new option for patients to enter their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) information via mobile check-in and in their online myChart account. Patients can update their preferred name, gender identity, sex assigned at birth and sexual orientation.

A recent upgrade to our electronic medical record system removed legal sex from all wristbands, visit labels, registration labels and lab labels.

We created templates for colleagues to add pronouns to email signatures to minimize misgendering and normalize conversations around gender and identity.

Our Diversity and Inclusion and Gender Services Clinic has designed a new LGBTQ+ learning experience for colleagues, helping teams build a greater understanding and awareness of LGBTQ+ identity.

Partnering with the community and advocating for change

New advisory council works to strengthen mutual trust with the community



[Watch a video featuring our community advisory council and share in our deep appreciation for their involvement in our work.](#)

It was 2020 and the inequities that have long plagued our society seemed clearer than they'd ever been. COVID-19 was devastating communities and disproportionately affecting people of color. The murder of George Floyd sparked outrage locally and around the world. It was a period of grief, mourning and introspection. Our colleagues asked themselves how their skills could be used to help undo the racist systems that are embedded in the American experience.

Colleagues from the HealthPartners Institute and our health plan developed the principles and processes for a community advisory council. It wouldn't be a group that provided occasional consultation on one-off projects. Rather, it would be people from all walks of life who could regularly provide feedback on our work to help ensure we are inclusive of the diverse communities we serve.

The council is made up of members representing different ages, cultures, races, religions, gender and sexual identities, disability status, professions and other attributes that reflect our diverse state. Additionally, members are knowledgeable about state and public health programs.

The advisory council has already provided valuable feedback on a research grant submission, and the council's insights are also informing HealthPartners 2023 quality improvement plan, making sure that the quality improvement work we do as a health plan addresses needs in the community.

Looking ahead, the community advisory council will continue to inform our work, helping us provide more equitable health care for our patients, members and communities.

Podcast explores diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism

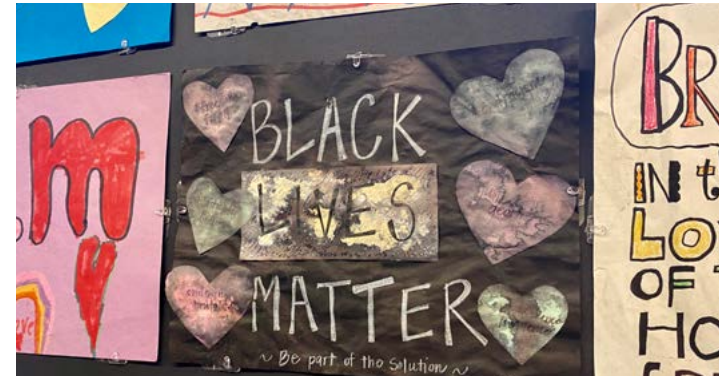
[Off the Charts: Examining the Health Equity Emergency](#) is a HealthPartners podcast co-hosted by Dr. Kari Haley, an emergency medicine physician and EMS medical director at Regions Hospital, and Dr. Steven Jackson, a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician at Regions Hospital and HealthPartners' department chair for physical medicine and rehabilitation. The podcast, which launched in January 2022, is believed to be the first audio show dedicated to diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism produced by a health system.

"The coolest thing about how it started is that we weren't asked to do it," Dr. Haley said. "We're lucky enough to have an organization that's committed to having an anti-racist stance and fully supportive of our efforts to make this podcast a reality."

On the show, the doctors host candid conversations with guests on topics such as equity and education in the community, microaggressions, cultural humility, the importance of trust in health care, and what it means to be an anti-racist. Now in its third season, guests have included clinicians, leaders and people in communities making a difference in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion.

"There's something everyone can take away from the guests and topics," said Dr. Jackson, who is also co-chair of HealthPartners Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Cabinet. "I've found myself scribbling notes a lot when we've recorded. There have been so many things I've learned and want to apply to my everyday life. I hope the audience feels that way, too."

Off the Charts is available on Apple Podcasts and most podcast platforms.



Art exhibit brings frank discussions on racial injustice

We're committed to creating spaces where everyone feels welcome, included and valued. As part of that commitment, Methodist Hospital was proud to host the George Floyd Memorial Art Exhibit, which turned heads and sparked discussion about racism and health care.

The new exhibit, titled "I Am Not You. You Are Not Me. Healing Begins with Acceptance," showcased more than 100 pieces of art and offerings left at George Perry Floyd Square near the intersection of East 38th Street and Chicago Avenue South in

Minneapolis by people from around the world. These collective and individual expressions of pain and hope were displayed across the Methodist campus.

[Listen to or read a transcript](#) from an episode of the Off the Charts podcast to hear George Floyd Global Memorial Executive Director Jeanelle Austin and Methodist Hospital President Jennifer Myster discuss the exhibit's origins, racism's connection to health and the importance of expanding our perspectives.



Little Moments Count explores the impact of racism on the developing brain

We know the foundation for learning, health and behavior are built early in life, and we know a child's early experiences can help prepare them for encountering and accepting differences. In 2015, we helped launch Little Moments Count, a statewide movement to help parents and the community understand that each little moment of connection with a child has a tremendous impact on brain development.

Our Little Moments Count initiative has learning materials for parents and all people looking to understand how racism impacts our society. [View resources from Little Moments Count](#) designed to assist families on their path to greater racial and social justice.

The 2022 Little Moments Count annual meeting featured keynote speaker Dr. Rosemarie Allen, early childhood expert and the president and CEO of the Institute for Racial Equity and Excellence. Her keynote address, "The Impact of Racism on the Developing Brain," increased our collective knowledge about early childhood development and bias.

"The Little Moments Count annual meeting showcases HealthPartners' role as a community convener and our leadership in ensuring all children have a bright start and strong future," said Pahoua Yang Hoffman, HealthPartners senior vice president of government and community relations. "Dr. Allen's expertise combined our focus on children's health with our commitment to anti-racism and reducing bias."



Early Risers: A podcast from Little Moments Count

[Early Risers](#) is a podcast from Little Moments Count and Minnesota Public Radio, hosted by Dianne Haulcy, President and CEO at The Family Partnership. The podcast aims to engage people raising children with a clear-eyed understanding of cultural differences, race and implicit bias. Dr. Nathan Chomilo, a pediatrician with Park Nicollet and a leading voice in health equity, was featured on the podcast in the summer of 2022 discussing how he incorporates conversations about race into his annual wellness checkups with families. [Listen to the episode here](#) and view the corresponding discussion guide to help process the conversation.

Recognizing barriers and reducing stigma

In 2012, we developed Make It OK, a campaign to reduce the stigma of mental illnesses. The campaign aims to change attitudes about mental health by increasing understanding and creating caring conversations.

Ten years into the campaign, we surveyed 2,000 HealthPartners members who live in communities where the campaign is active. The survey results suggest that while community stigma has decreased, there's still work to be done, especially in communities of color.

As we work together to reduce stigma, it's also important to recognize that some members of our communities face additional barriers to seeking mental health care. In the survey results, respondents who are people of color indicated that they were more reluctant to seek care for

their mental health. A history of trauma in health care and systems has resulted in mistrust for many in communities of color.

Recognizing these barriers will help guide expanded partnerships and outreach, to ensure equitable access to information about stigma and mental illnesses, as well as community and care resources for our entire community.

[Learn more about Make It OK](#)

"Reducing stigma is important to me because I've watched family members not get the help they needed. I've seen far too much unnecessary suffering and uncertainty about where to turn for help." Joyce Coleman, HealthPartners behavioral health care coordinator and Make It OK ambassador.



Supporting a safe haven for gender-affirming care

We strive to create safe and inclusive spaces and practices for our patients and members, and this includes people seeking or receiving gender-affirming care. We were one of the first health care systems in the Midwest to provide gender care, and we're continually improving our care and support for the LGBTQ+ community.

"HealthPartners and Park Nicollet have a long history of providing care that is inclusive of the diverse communities we serve," said Dr. Deborah Thorp, medical director for gender services at Park Nicollet. "We are steadfast in our commitment to providing gender-affirming care for our patients and we support efforts to protect access to care and service."





Racial disparities take center stage

We're proud to partner with Penumbra Theatre, a local theater company that creates professional productions focused on the African American experience. Penumbra has evolved into the Center for Racial Healing that nurtures Black artists, advances equity and facilitates wellness for individuals and community.

HealthPartners began a partnership with Penumbra to support the commissioning and development of a play, *Weathering*, written by Harrison David Rivers as a response to the growing awareness of racial disparities in maternal health.

Weathering was brought to the stage in 2022 with rave reviews. The play puts a human face on the staggering statistic that Black infants are more than twice as likely to die as white infants. The audience experiences the tragedy of one family as well as the healing that can happen within a community. Through our ongoing collaboration with Penumbra, we're working to accelerate equitable practices inside health care organizations.



Strengthening our commitment to St. Paul

As an anchor institution and the largest private employer in St. Paul, we have a responsibility to support the city and community. Together, with other business leaders, we're helping keep St. Paul strong by leading health and economic development strategies to measurably impact well-being.

Our St. Paul-focused strategy has three simple goals: more people, more trust and more business.

- We aim to recruit, retain and advance diverse colleagues.
- We engage with marginalized communities through active listening.
- We use our resources, expertise and connections to promote, support and partner with small businesses owned by Black and Indigenous people and other people of color.



St. Paul Anchor is one of the few initiatives that has married good intentions to thoughtful action to create a tangible, significant and lasting impact for Black-owned businesses and the communities they serve.

Sahr Brima, co-founder and CEO of Love You Cookie, pictured here with wife and Love You Cookie co-founder Sarah Brima

Bringing green space to St. Paul

In summer 2021, we celebrated the grand opening of Midway Peace Park, an urban park located behind our Midway Clinic in St. Paul. The park, which was a collaboration between our Midway Clinic, the City of St. Paul and other community groups, provides green space and a safe place for families to congregate, play and get active. The park name came from a desire for a place of peace and healing after the murder of George Floyd.

"I feel connected to this community because of its rich cultural and diverse population. My passion is fueled by the excitement, engagement, and authenticity of the people whom I encounter every day in my work as a health care leader."

Sharon Brown, supervisor, Midway Clinic and Center for International Health and Midway Peace Park steering committee member



Clinic wall goes from blank to beautiful

It's a story of how bright colors brighten days.

Our Minneapolis clinic had a blank building wall; it wasn't appealing and sure wasn't inspiring. Artist Lissa Karpeh changed that with a few thousand brush strokes. She created a mural on the side of the building at 2001 Blaisdell Ave.

"Everyone at the clinic just wanted color," Karpeh said. "They wanted something bright when they were approaching to come to work."

Colorful definitely is one way to describe it. Inspirational is another way. Karpeh, who founded the nonprofit Free in Color Arts, wanted the mural to reflect the clinic's diverse colleagues, patients and community.

"One of our visions is just creating a sense of belonging through health and wellness that inspires the individuals who walk by here all the time," Karpeh said.

That sense of belonging is important to clinic manager Lin Combs. The mural welcomes her to work now. She hopes it will help patients feel welcome, too, and comfortable seeking care.

"I think our patients take great pride and ownership, and they like seeing themselves reflected in pieces on the mural," Combs said.

With the work complete, the building and retaining walls are blank canvases no longer and bright spots for the community for years to come.

Watch how the mural at our Minneapolis Clinic came together in [this story](#) by WCCO-TV.



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