

Health Equity Organizational Assessment (HEOA)

Executive Audience: How the HEOA can lower your financial risk and help achieve the Triple AIM



Be Deliberate in Improving Your Scores

Achieving Health Equity is about taking a strategic approach to integrating equity across all quality improvement initiatives to ensure that all patient populations receive the same level of care, regardless of demographic characteristics.

When you identify any groups of patients with quality, outcomes, safety or experience scores lower than the rest, concentrate on these groups and take deliberate action to improve their scores.

Disparities occur across many dimensions, so look for differences by race, ethnicity, and language (REaL), as well as factors such as socioeconomic status, housing, access to transportation, food security, income, education level, occupation, and geographic location.

“There can be no progress on health care quality and population health without health equity.”⁴

Health systems are increasingly focused on managing the health of populations as new payment structures hold them accountable for partial or full risk for the health of every patient they serve. It is more important than ever to consider the financial risk associated with allowing health disparities to persist. According to a 2018 study, health disparities cost \$93 billion in excess medical costs and \$42 billion in lowered productivity each year in the U.S.¹

Racial/ethnic minorities and individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) in the U.S. are more likely to suffer an adverse event, have inappropriate and often costly tests, have longer hospital stays, be readmitted to the hospital, and incur ambulatory-sensitive hospitalizations. Racial/ethnic minorities and individuals with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to have multiple chronic health conditions, and thus higher health care costs.² It is projected that people of color will account for over half of the population in our country by 2050, making it imperative to address disparities.³

Leaders should ask themselves...

- “How do I know if we have disparities and how can I prevent disparities that exist in our patient outcomes?”
- “How can I create a culture and system that reduces disparities to improve quality, save lives and reduce cost?”

According to a 2021 poll of U.S. healthcare professionals conducted by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), the top barrier to advancing health equity cited by C-Suite leaders is inconsistent collection of equity-related patient data. The HEOA will help you assess your organization’s ability to collect, validate and stratify patient demographic data, as well as evaluate the capability of your existing organizational infrastructure to prioritize and take action on disparities to ensure equitable outcomes across all patient populations your organization serves.

HEOA Assessment Categories:

1. Data Collection
2. Training on Data Collection
3. Data Validation
4. Data Stratification
5. Communicate Findings
6. Address and Resolve Gaps in Care
7. Organizational Infrastructure & Culture

1. Turner A. (2018). *The Business Case for Racial Equity: A Strategy for Growth*. W.R. Kellogg Foundation and Altarum. Access at <https://wkkf.issuelab.org/resource/business-case-for-racial-equity.html>.

2. Wyatt R, Laderman M, Botwinick L, Mate K, Whittington J. (2016). *Achieving Health Equity: A Guide for Health Care Organizations*. IHI White Paper. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Institute for Healthcare Improvement. Access at <http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/IHIWhitePapers/Achieving-Health-Equity.aspx>.

3. Ndugga N and Artiga S. *Disparities in Health and Health Care: 5 Key Questions and Answers* (2021). Kaiser Family Foundation. Access at <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/disparities-in-health-and-health-care-5-key-question-and-answers>

4. Institute for Healthcare Improvement (2021). *Health Equity: Prioritization, Perception, and Progress*. Access at http://www.ihl.org/Topics/Health-Equity/Documents/IHI-2021-Pulse-Report_Health-Equity-Prioritization-Perception-Progress.pdf

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Health Equity Organizational Assessment (HEOA) Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a HEOA?

The Health Equity Organization Assessment (HEOA) helps healthcare organizations understand their ability to identify and address disparities to take deliberate and purposeful action to ensure the highest level of care for the populations they serve.

The HEOA contains seven categories that help assess healthcare organizations' readiness to address health disparities through the consistent collection of accurate patient demographic data, use of demographic data to identify and address disparities, and implementation of organizational infrastructure and culture to deliver equitable care.

- Data collection
- Data collection training
- Data validation
- Data stratification
- Communicate findings
- Address and resolve gaps in care
- Organizational infrastructure and culture

2. Who developed the HEOA?

The HEOA was originally developed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Partnership for Patients Hospital Improvement Innovation Network Health Equity Affinity Group. It has been modified for use by hospitals, provider practices, nursing homes and home health agencies.

3. Why is the HEOA important?

New payment structures, such as value-based purchasing, hold healthcare organizations accountable for the quality of care they deliver, making it critical to consider the financial risk associated with health disparities.

Eliminating health disparities requires a commitment to collecting meaningful patient demographic data that can be used by organizations to better understand and assess the needs of the patient populations and communities they serve.

The HEOA can help identify opportunities for improvement in an organization's ability to collect, validate, and stratify patient demographic data, and implement and monitor interventions to address disparities.



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Health Equity Organizational Assessment (HEOA) Frequently Asked Questions

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4. What happens after I complete the HEOA?

Every organization that completes an HEOA will have access to an HEOA dashboard that shows organizational results with clearly identified opportunities for improvement by category, as well as aggregate results by care setting.

5. Who will have access to the HEOA information?

Organizations that complete an HEOA and their IPRO HQIC representative will have access to the HEOA information.

IPRO HQIC may ask organizations to volunteer to share their HEOA results and best practices/ lessons learned from their experience addressing opportunities for improvement.

6. How does an organization complete an HEOA?

The HEOA is completed in REDCap. A link and QR code are in the email from your IPRO HQIC representative. The information is automatically captured once you hit SUBMIT in the REDCap system.

7. How long will it take to complete the HEOA?

It will take approximately 15 minutes to enter the information in to the HEOA in REDCap.

8. Who should complete the HEOA?

Individuals with knowledge of the organization's health equity and quality initiatives, and process for collecting patient demographic data are ideal for completing the HEOA.

9. How do I get help if I run into issues or have questions about completing the HEOA?

Contact your IPRO HQIC representative who sent you the HEOA information. Their contact information is in the email.