

Understanding Health Equity in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) through Implementation Science Partnerships

- Health equity-focused implementation research requires using definitions and approaches that are relevant and meaningful to implementation partners.
- Toward this goal, we asked leadership and staff at FQHCs to share how they defined and addressed health equity at their practice settings.
- FQHC staff defined health equity as the essential mission of FQHCs as safety net organizations delivering care to medically underserved populations.



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WHO PARTICIPATED



- **19 FQHCs leaders** (primarily in a staff-and-operations oversight role)
- **12 FQHCs staff**

WHAT WE DID

- Conducted semi-structured interviews with leaders and staff at 10 FQHCs.
- Performed rapid qualitative analysis, synthesizing codes into themes and mapping them onto a framework.
- Shared findings with community health centers at an Implementation Learning Community (ILC).



WHAT WE LEARNED



- Participants defined health equity as central to the mission of FQHCs, and identified barriers (e.g. financing models) and facilitators (e.g. interpreter services) to addressing inequities.
- FQHC participants recommended that future research and practice consider how FQHCs are challenged to address the root causes of healthcare inequities with limited resources.
- FQHCs are essential partners during project planning and evaluation for health equity-focused implementation research.
- In partnership with FQHCs, it's important to share findings with community leaders who can shape policy to advance health equity.
- Conducting research to understand how FQHCs operationalize and address health equity can lay a foundation for future health equity-focused implementation research.