



## Health Equity Solutions COVID-19 Key Focus Areas To Date

2020

The Health Equity Solutions team remains vigilant in our efforts to ensure that an equity lens is embedded in the pandemic response and recovery efforts to COVID-19. Three key policy goals we are focusing on during the pandemic: inclusion, outreach, and data. By evaluating the impact of response and recovery efforts on communities of color, policymakers can avoid unintentionally exacerbating disparities in the long term.

### During the COVID-19 pandemic, our focus areas are:

- **Inclusion:** Ensuring that an equity lens is embedded in pandemic response and recovery efforts and that underserved communities are represented in decision-making bodies
- **Outreach:** Barriers to accessing health care and social supports differ across communities; leveraging community health workers to engage in contact tracing, assist people enrolling in social services, and share information with hard-to-reach communities can alleviate some of the barriers to wellbeing associated with social determinants of health
- **Data:** Accurate, timely, and accessibly presented data on the race and ethnicity of those tested, contracting, hospitalized for, and dying from COVID-19 enables decision makers to address inequities in the pandemic response; evaluating the impact of response and recovery efforts on communities of color can help policymakers avoid unintentionally exacerbating disparities in the long term

### Key actions HES has taken to date, in chronological order:

- 3/18: [We wrote to the Governor](#) to highlight key issues related to health care and basic needs for Connecticut's communities of color
- 3/30: We began disseminating [a Community Assessment Survey](#). Results from the online survey and our discussions with partners are summarized and regularly updated [here](#).
- 4/2: After submitting requests to the Department of Public Health (DPH) for race and ethnicity data related to the pandemic, we followed up with [this letter](#) to the Commissioner of DPH and the Governor requesting that this data be released publicly. Shortly after, race and ethnicity data on COVID-19 cases and deaths was included in DPH public reporting on the pandemic. More is needed—nearly half of confirmed cases have race and ethnicity noted to be “unknown” and demographic data on hospitalizations, testing, and access to pandemic-related supports (such as Medicaid, unemployment, and loans) would likely policies that need to be adjusted to reach all CT residents

4/6-10: During CT's second annual Health Equity Week, we collaborated with UCONN Health Disparities Institute to bring media attention to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on communities of color.

- [Preliminary Data Raise Questions About Coronavirus Risks For Connecticut Residents Of Color](#) WNPR

# HEALTH EQUITY SOLUTIONS

- [Why We Need To Be Talking About Health Equity During The Coronavirus Pandemic](#) The Hartford Courant
- [Black And Latino Residents Hit Particularly Hard By COVID-19 In Connecticut, As Experts Fear Disparities Will Widen](#) The Hartford Courant
- [Data to Promote Health Equity Amid Multiple Threats of COVID-19](#) CT News Junkie
- [Pandemic Exposes Stark Health Disparities Generations In The Making](#) Connecticut I-Team
- 4/13: HES [wrote to the Department of Social Services' \(DSS\) Commissioner](#) asking that DSS and Medicaid, specifically, employ community health workers to engage in outreach to ensure that all CT residents have access to available assistance and the information they need to access it
- 4/29: HES sent two sign-on letters to the Governor. [The first](#) notes the need to embed an equity lens in recovery efforts to ensure that everyone in CT has the opportunity to access the supports and information they need. [The second](#) asks for a public data dashboard, like those published in other states, to make COVID-19 data accessible to policymakers and residents of the state.
- 6/5: HES [wrote to the Department of Public Health's Acting Commissioner](#) asking DPH to issue clear guidance on the standard collection of race and ethnicity data by hospitals, clinics, and other health service providers conducting COVID-19 testing.
- 6/5: HES [wrote to Governor Lamont](#) requesting to consider how the state is defining “high risk” populations in the current context.
- 9/14: HES [wrote to Governor Lamont & CGA leadership](#) urging them to convene a special session of the Connecticut General Assembly focused on health equity and racial injustice in health and to prioritize these policies in 2021.