

Bridging Health Equity Across State Lines and Communities

August 2-3, 2017

This past August, Jefferson College of Population Health (JCPH) hosted the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' (HHS) Office of Minority Health for the "Bridging Health Equity Across State Lines and Communities" meeting.

This meeting brought together state officers of minority health (SOMH) from HHS Region III (DC, DE, PA, MD, VA, and WV) to discuss how federal and state policies impact their state's health disparities programs that specifically focus on minority, vulnerable, marginalized, and disabled populations. The SOMHs, along with members from the Regional Health Equity Council, identified key health priorities and recommendations to address health disparities and health equity across state lines.

The first day of the meeting was open to the public; approximately 65 individuals attended, including clinicians, public health professionals, academicians, representatives from social services organizations and the government, along with students.

The meeting began with a welcome from Daniel Gallardo, MPH, Regional Minority Health Consultant, Region III, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) at

the HHS; Alexis Skoufalos, EdD, Associate Dean for Strategic Development and Executive Director of the Center for Population Health Innovation at JCPH; Dalton Paxman, PhD, Regional Health Administrator, Region III, OASH at HHS; Pam Kania, MS, Acting Regional Director, Region III, Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs at HHS; and Mary Cooney, Chief, Health Systems Transformation at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Rosie Frasso, PhD, MSc, CPH, Public Health Program Director at JCPH, provided an overview of equity, disparity, and the social determinants of health to set the tone for the two-day meeting. She explained how the social determinants of health contribute to health equity and disparity and reviewed case studies to demonstrate what people in the community are doing to help. One example was a project involving the homeless population that artist Willie Baronet has been working on for nearly 20 years. He collects signs that homeless people carry and displays the signs along with a story of the individual. This project is a creative way to bring awareness to people at a more human level by pairing qualitative research with quantitative data. Dr. Frasso's presentation was imperative to provide context and ensure that all attendees were using the same terms and vocabulary.



Following Frasso's presentation, the HHS regional agencies and state offices provided short updates of various issues specific to their programs, policies, and interventions to address health disparities and health equity. This provided a great deal of insight for the officers of the SOMH, but also for the students, staff, faculty, and community leaders who attended.

The second day was focused on the SOMHs from Region III and provided an opportunity to discuss best practices to reduce and prevent health disparities, as well as brainstorm potential solutions across the region. The group left inspired and motivated to continue the discussion on their own and aim to have regional communication and workshops on a periodic basis.