

# Wisconsin partnership program: Awards \$4 million to health equity initiatives

Posted on Thursday, Oct 25, 2018

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(MADISON, WI) – The Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health has announced \$4 million in awards to initiatives working to improve health and health equity across Wisconsin. The new awards address a diverse range of issues including the health impacts of racism, tackling the social determinants of health in Milwaukee's Latino community, preventing early childhood expulsion and strengthening support systems for citizens returning from incarceration. The grants, awarded through the Partnership Program's Community Impact Grant program, each total \$1 million over five years, support large-scale, evidence-based, community-academic partnerships aimed at achieving sustainable systems changes to improve health equity in Wisconsin. The awards are as follows:

## **Improving Health Outcomes of Milwaukee's Latino Community**

**Sixteenth Street Community Health Center** will use its Community Impact Grant to address health inequities by addressing housing instability among Sixteenth Street's patients and community, who are primarily Latino and live below the federal poverty line. The community faces numerous challenges to accessing community resources, such as navigating complex applications requirements,

language differences and concerns about divulging sensitive information. The project aims to gain a deeper understanding of the socio-economic factors, such as housing insecurity, that influence health on the south side of Milwaukee. Knowledge gained will be used to develop a collaborative model for healthcare and social services to close these health gaps and improve health outcomes for patients and community members. The model will focus on patient-centered screening and interventions and purposeful data sharing across agencies to ensure a sustainable, systematic change to approaching and addressing social determinants in Sixteenth Street's primary care practice.

## **Reducing Health Disparities in Dane County's African American Communities**

**Nehemiah Community Development Corporation, Inc.** will expand its Justified Anger pilot work through an initiative titled *Reducing Health Inequity through Promotion of Social Connection*, which focuses on reducing disparities in overall health among African Americans by addressing implicit and structural racism. African Americans in Wisconsin have poorer health outcomes than their white neighbors due to the powerful influence of their social and community context. Those health disparities include higher rates of heart disease, high blood pressure, premature births and maternal deaths. To address these health disparities, Nehemiah has been piloting an innovative approach to increasing health equity by developing new, and strengthening existing, social and professional networks for African Americans. This grant will implement a three-tiered approach that will involve education and training for grassroots African American neighborhood leaders, African American professionals, and white allies through its "Justified Anger Black History for a New Day." The team will facilitate cross-cultural interactions with mentorship support that will result in building and strengthening social networks within each community and will support participants with identifying opportunities for collaborative social action.

## **Promoting the Social and Emotional Health of Children**

Through its grant, **Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA)**, and its grant partners, will focus on improving health outcomes by implementing intervention strategies in early childhood education to address disparities in rates of expulsion among young children in Wisconsin. Early expulsion negatively affects social emotional health because it interrupts children's learning of key skills, like self-regulation and forming relationships, and prevents the early identification or

diagnosis of underlying behavioral or mental health issues. SFTA and their collaborators will adapt for Wisconsin an existing and effective model that addresses challenging behaviors, traumatic experiences and implicit bias to reduce expulsion in the early education system and the disparities associated with it. By preventing expulsions in early childhood through a systemic model of supports, the project will create better health and social emotional development outcomes due to increased positive social emotional behaviors, increased early identification of behavioral or mental health needs and decreased disparities among children of color and children of lower socioeconomic status.

### **Improving the Health Outcomes of Communities Impacted by Incarceration**

Through its project, *the Milwaukee Re-entry Alliance*, **Employ Milwaukee** and collaborators will address the widespread negative health effects of incarceration by establishing a better coordinated re-entry system to support criminal justice-involved individuals. Incarceration influences a myriad of factors that shape and affect the health of incarcerated individuals and their families, and compounds socio-economic inequities within families and the entire community. Generationally, incarceration erodes the family structure, and compromises access to education, employment and housing by removing a central family member from contributing to the economic stability it takes to create a safe and enriching environment for a child. Ultimately, the project aims to increase employability and job retention among the re-entry population, reduce the rate of recidivism, and improve the health outcomes of returning citizens by more intentionally addressing the social determinants of health that impact well-being and life expectancy.

The [Wisconsin Partnership Program](#) at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health is committed to improving the health of Wisconsin residents through investments in research, education and community partnerships. The Partnership Program was established in 2004 with funds from the conversion of Blue Cross & Blue Shield United of Wisconsin to a for-profit corporation. To date, the Program has awarded more than 450 research, education and community grants totaling more than \$200 million aimed at improving the health of Wisconsin residents.