



Table of Contents

- Welcome
- Harlem Health Advocacy Partners
- CMO Citywide Updates
- Public Health Critical Race Praxis
- MHQIN Program Updates
- Recent Community Events
- Upcoming Events

Welcome

Welcome to the fifth issue of ***The Bridge!*** We hope this newsletter keeps you updated, informed, and connected with the NYC Health Department. Your input and collaboration are vital to our mission of protecting and promoting the health of all New Yorkers. We would love to hear from you — please share your thoughts and feedback on what else you would like to see in this newsletter, or inquire about how to connect with the Health Department by emailing us at chiefmedicalofficer@health.nyc.gov.

Thank you for your partnership and commitment to a more just and equitable New York City!

CMO Strategic Plan Updates

Read below to learn more about each domain of the CMO Strategic Plan.

Domain I: Bridging Public Health and Health Care

Bridging public health and healthcare requires us to prioritize and increase access to preventive health care, accompany individuals to prevent and manage chronic disease through health and social care, and to invest in health literacy and improved relationships with health care providers. [The Harlem Health Advocacy Partners \(HHAP\) Community Health Workers \(CHW\)](#) model is a great example of these principles.

HHAP aims to improve health-related quality of life for residents of East and Central Harlem. Led by director Elizabeth Drackett, the program's founding partners are the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, NYC Public Housing Authority (NYCHA), Community Service Society, & NYU-CUNY Prevention Research Center.

The CHW health coach model focused on education, action, advocacy, empowerment, and health integration over a 6-month period to improve residents' health-related quality of life. The program structure followed a multi-step process:

1. Residents were first educated on their chronic illnesses. [\(Based on Community Needs Assessment\)](#) .
2. Residents then met with an insurance navigator (if needed) to help enroll in a health insurance plan. Residents could also receive social service referrals.
3. CHWs provided advocacy for residents to receive support in organizing and creating their health plans and priorities.
4. Wellness activities were sponsored by HHAP throughout various NYCHA housing developments.
5. Program coordinators and HHAP assisted with contracting pest control specialists for residents.
6. CHWs offered continued support for residents in the form of health coaching, peer support and connection with community visits and events.

The outcomes of this program were powerful. HHAP was able to connect with over 5,200 participants, enroll ~1,800 residents, and host over 550 wellness activities. Resident participants reported improvement in overall health-related quality of life and wellness.

CMO Citywide Updates

All New Yorkers with Medicaid/Managed Care, Child Health Plus (CHIP), or the Essential Plan (EP) will need to renew their insurance coverage starting in Spring 2023. This renewal process has been on hold since 2020 due to COVID-19. Each patient will receive a mailed notice with their renewal deadline. We ask for your help reminding patients to look out for this mailed notice - and take action - to avoid any gap in coverage. Provider and patient resources are available from NYS in 14 languages; resources include a [Toolkit](#) and [flyer](#).

Update on NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's work on supporting asylum seekers.

More than 50,000 people have come to New York City (NYC) in the past year shortly after crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. As more people arrive and many make NYC their home, the scale and scope of need continues to grow. Please see our recently published [Dear Colleague](#) letter for details on all topics related to comprehensively assessing the needs of our newcomers from acquiring health insurance to school based health needs to legal services.

Domain 2: Advancing the Health Department's Commitment to Anti-racism in Public Health Practice and Policy

For over a decade research on the effects of racism—specifically how it shapes health inequities—has widened the public health discourse. Structural racism in healthcare is deeply embedded in policy, unspoken beliefs, and teaching practices replicated through specialties, clinics, and training programs. One intervention we are using to advance our goals is employing public health critical race praxis (PHCRP).

PHCRP is a research tool that highlights the fact that science is not objective and that race consciousness, not colorblindness, will get us closer to ending racial inequities. Present approaches and frameworks are inadequate and we see this in the vast wealth and health inequities across our society.

As an agency, we need intentional, integrated, and imaginative solutions to tackle the racial inequities inherent in our health systems. One of the ways CHECW has implemented this call to action is through direct training, workshops, webinars, and education of staff in PHCRP. This initiative was spearheaded by Race and Gender Health Equity Manager, Nina Rembert, Acting Assistant Commissioner of Health Equity Capacity Building (HECB) Dr. Julian Watkins, and Almitra Gasper, Program Specialist of HECB. [PHCRP is an action-oriented framework for public health](#) that combines theory, experimental knowledge, and scientific conceptualization/measurement to prevent and repair racial inequities and begin the steps toward finding solutions. This first wave of the in-service workshop provided research and evaluation staff with the tools to restructure anecdotes and narratives into qualitative data that can be used to shift their niche health space into radical action. The change for anti-racism will be for us and by us. We thank Dr. Collins Airhihenbuwa and Dr. Chandra Ford, who pioneered and developed [PHCRP](#), for taking the time to lead these workshops for our staff.

Domain 3: Building Institutional Accountability

Last year, Mayor Adams announced that the Maternity Hospital Quality Improvement Network (MHQIN) will be working with all the NYC birthing facilities. **The mission of MHQIN** is that all pregnant New Yorkers, especially Black New Yorkers, receive high-quality, respectful, and equitable care throughout their pregnancy and childbirth in New York City maternity hospitals as well as the postnatal period. **The three strategic areas of MHQIN** are 1) Enhancing clinical awareness and practice change; 2) Supporting anti-racist hospital systems, and 3) Elevating and centering the voices, experiences and power of communities.

MHQIN will assist birthing facilities with:

1. Improving identification and delivery of services for perinatal and postpartum mood, anxiety and substance use disorders
2. Implementation of the [NYC Standards of Respectful Care](#) at Birth at birthing facilities
3. Operationalizing anti-racist and equity principles into policies and culture
4. Building collaborations between communities and hospital systems to address non-clinical factors of health
5. Becoming [Doula Friendly](#)

Benefits of participation in MHQIN include:

- A. Participation in a learning collaborative for hospitals to examine and enhance screening, testing, and delivery of services related to Perinatal and Post-Partum Mood, Anxiety and Substance Use Disorders.
- B. Hospitals will implement quality improvement projects, share experiences, tools, and resources.
- C. Foundational training on topics including implicit bias, trauma-informed care, sexual and gender identities with technical assistance on ways to move from concepts learned, to action and implementation.
- D. Improved ways to collect and utilize data about patient experience.
- E. Support addressing the socio-economic needs of patients through partnerships with [Birth Justice Hubs](#) and other community organizations.

The MHQIN is currently recruiting hospitals to participate in the 2nd cohort. The kickoff for the Learning Collaborative will be in June 2023. If hospitals are interested in participating, please contact:

Alzen Whitten – **Director**
awhitten@health.nyc.gov
718-637-5307

Jacqueline Quinones-Lugo – **Lead Hospital Coordinator**
jquinon1@health.nyc.gov
347- 396-4493

General Email
MHQIN@health.nyc.gov

Recent Community Events

On February 28th, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene co-hosted an event with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York titled “Reimagining Public Health for NYC: A Discussion on the Racial Wealth Gap and Health Equity.” The event featured a discussion on the connection between health and wealth, how to better measure both, and how racial justice policies can address the racial wealth gap. To view the event recording, visit our [YouTube Channel](#). In addition to this event, the NYC Health Department co-authored a white paper, [Analyzing the Racial Wealth Gap and Implications for Health Equity](#). The report focuses on how the racial wealth gap shapes health inequities and the ways data and policy can reduce the gap.

On March 8th, The Brownsville Neighborhood Health Action Center partnered with the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) to kick off NKF’s campaign on [Black Kidney health](#). The event offered the community a wide range of resources including health screening tools for understanding blood and urine kidney health testing, recipes to support kidney health, patient-provider shared decision-making tools to support treatment planning for the five stages of kidney disease, preventative health resources, and risk factors.

On March 15th, 2023, the CMO Office in partnership with National Kidney Foundation hosted a webinar entitled: [What Black New Yorkers Need To Know About Kidney Health](#). The panelists included patient and advocate Mrs. Thelma Baker, internist-pediatrician and Senior Medical Advisor to the CMO Dr. Toni Eyssallenne, and nephrologists Dr. Dinushika Mohottige & Dr. Kirk Campbell. The conversation covered kidney education, physician accountability, and shared decision-making between healthcare providers and patients.

There were also the following pop-up information booths throughout the boroughs:

BROOKLYN

- @ Brownsville - March 28th Diabetes and Kidney Health (Virtual & In-Person)
- @ InterFaith on March 29th – **Your Kidneys & You** (Virtual & In-Person)

STATEN ISLAND

- @ Central Family Life Center on March 24th - Kidney Health Event

On April 2nd, 2023 the CMO Office hosted an informational [CERCA webinar](#). We discussed the building blocks of CERCA and provided guidance for carrying out the initiative's activities in other contexts and regions.

New Releases, Staff Updates, and Announcements

The Race, Gender & Equity team completed its expansion adding two new members to our CHECW community.

Ashanti Chimurenga, JD, is the new Director of Equity and Inclusion. She graduated from New York University School of Law and began her professional career as a Criminal Defense Lawyer, where she represented indigent persons in the criminal justice system and handled civil rights cases. However, her commitment to helping others through addressing root causes and social determinants, led her to join the staff of Amnesty International USA, where she directed global human rights programs and built grassroots and international movements alongside community members and other human rights advocates to abolish the death penalty. Committed to reaching youth in order to help change their life trajectory, Ms. Chimurenga also spent over a decade in education as a public school teacher and principal (with time spent in the NYC Board of Education.) Most recently, she directed public health programs designed to reduce infant mortality and maternal mortality in Central Harlem in her role as Director of the Birth Equity Initiative with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Welcome Ashanti!

Nina Rembert, MPH, is CHECW's new Race and Gender Health Equity Manager. Prior to joining the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, she worked at the Center for Justice Innovation (formerly the Center for Court Innovation) in community participatory budgeting and youth engagement as the manager of the ONS Youth Leadership Council, an initiative from the Mayors Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. Nina previously worked in global women's health, international relations, and studied the relationship between the built environment and health outcomes. She received her B.A. from the University of Wisconsin, and her MPH from Columbia University. She is thrilled to be able to bring her interdisciplinary background and passion for equity to the work of the CHECW, and we are excited to have her on the team. Welcome Nina!

Upcoming Events

Inaugural NYC Anti-Racism in Medical Education Symposium (NYCAMES) - On **June 23rd, 2023 the CMO office will host the** Inaugural NYCAMES event **at Hostos Community College** – in partnership with the AAMC, The Macy Foundation, The Fund for Public Health NYC, and the Coalition to End Racism in Clinical Algorithms (CERCA). The purpose of this event is to host a convening of medical school leadership and student-led groups to discuss ways to advance [CERCA](#) and address issues of systematic racism embedded in medical education.

You can share feedback on what you would like to see in future issues of this newsletter or ask how to connect with NYC Health Department work by emailing chiefmedicalofficer@health.nyc.gov.

For more updates, follow [@nychealthy](#) and [@nychealthcmo](#) on Twitter.