



COMMUNITY DISCUSSION SUMMARY STATEMENTS

From Community Outreach Programs following the “Creating Vibrant Communities” Statewide, Future Leaders, and Community Town Halls

In programs held around the state to follow up on the 2020-2021 Town Hall sessions which centered on the topic of “Creating Vibrant Communities,” audience members were asked to participate in a Town Hall-style discussion on priorities and action items. Statements prepared from the discussions at the outreach programs are set forth below.

In collaboration with AzAEYC– The 4th Annual Arizona Early Childhood Public Policy Forum (February 19, 2022)

Early childhood education is the foundation for a good life, a thriving community, and a healthy economy. Every family should have access to affordable, high-quality childcare but too often it is inaccessible. While the groups discussed several issues, the lack of sustained funding and public investment in early childhood education was the most common theme.

Legislators need to understand both the importance of early childhood education and its economics. Without quality childcare parents cannot or will not work. Parents need to feel that their children are safe, happy, and well cared for. The pandemic made clear that most people cannot work from home while caring for young children. Many workers have not returned to work because they cannot find affordable childcare. This is an issue of cost and availability.

Low- and moderate-income families cannot afford to pay high fees for childcare. As a result, most childcare centers cannot afford to pay living wages to their employees. Workers are not willing to do this challenging work for less than a living wage. In Arizona, some teachers live in poverty, or are even homeless and themselves need childcare subsidies to remain in the profession. This creates a perpetual shortage cycle that requires some outside funding to increase the supply of childcare providers and provide more equitable access to quality childcare. The shortages are worse in certain zip codes where there are fewer resources. Children with special needs and foster children often do not get the special care they need.

We should invest in our early childhood education workforce because these workers are essential to families, workers, and our economy. We should also help families with scholarships and subsidies as necessary to assure that everyone has access to quality, affordable childcare.

Early childhood experiences affect a person’s brain development and thus their health, happiness, and achievement over the course of a lifetime. Research on the neurosequential model described in Dr. Bruce Perry’s book *What Happened to You?* and research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), indicates the cost of making quality childcare available to all children is really an investment in their future and our community that will pay off over time through in lower health care and other costs to remediate a host of social ills. If we can educate the health care community about these issues, they might be persuaded to bring their economic and political power to bear in lobbying for the investments that are needed.

Some techniques that can be used to persuade our legislators about the importance of this issue include: speak from the heart; be authentic; tell your stories; use your voice; and bring parents in large groups to advocate for their children and early childhood education.

Participants committed to do their part to address the issue of equitable access to early childhood education. They expressed the following commitments:

- I will always advocate for children in our communities.
- I will NOT STOP telling the stories of kids, families and teachers until solutions are funded.

- I will listen to and learn from the voices of parents and educators and center their stories.
- I will share the connection between adult health and Adverse Childhood Experience to as many medical groups as I can.
- I will start speaking up about my experiences.
- I will have parents get involved.
- I will continue to encourage professionals in the field and assist them with optimizing the resources that are there.
- I will be brave and speak up for young children, families.
- I will always advocate for foster care children. They are always missed.
- I will always advocate for the parents in our communities to tell their story.
- I will encourage everyone, parents or not, to recognize the value of early education.
- I will try to collect authentic stories from my teachers about their personal struggles.
- I will continue to tell others about the importance of early childhood education.
- I will make sure more parents get involved in advocating for ECE.
- I will use my voice to advocate for children and get parents involved! I will share my story with others!
- ACES is powerful and root cause of incarceration...so healthy safe childhood care is critical.
- I will encourage those passionate about ECE to run for office!
- I will continue to help my community.
- I will share with others that young children are our infrastructure and economic drivers of a robust society.

Cultural Competency Conference: *Impacting Health Equity for Underserved Communities* (August 23, 2022)

After presenting an overview of the social determinants of health as defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Town Hall facilitators provided an overview of how social determinants of health relate to the Town Hall topic “Creating Vibrant Communities,” resources available for understanding and incorporating social determinants of health, and the results of community town hall discussions around the state on the topic. Approximately 180 participants were then asked to weigh in on the following questions. Collectively, they provided the answers below each question.

QUESTION 1. WHAT IS THE BIGGEST ROADBLOCK TO ACHIEVING HEALTH EQUITY? WHAT ACTIONS CAN YOU OR YOUR ORGANIZATION TAKE TO HELP ACHIEVE IT?

Education is one of the major roadblocks to achieving health equity. Language barriers (including barriers for the deaf community) and implicit and actual biases are big roadblocks to achieving health equity.

Many individuals and agencies are simply not aware that assistance is available and are not receiving important information about resources and equitable access to resources.

Knowledge of various cultures and demographics is important for communicating better and minimize distrust from those we serve. Expanding our knowledge of different cultures and demographics will help provide the best possible services for everyone involved. It also helps to be more compassionate towards those using AHCCCS.

Other roadblocks include transportation, fear (especially among non-citizens), the complexity of the system, and how the complexities of the system can easily overwhelm those we serve.

In addition to addressing communication issues and recognizing our own biases and filters, we can embrace creative approaches, such as telehealth services, go to the populations we serve through case management, visit other health agencies to foster communications and shared understanding, provide funding to address these issues, and consciously engage in collaborative conversations with each other and our community to find the best way to address these barriers together going forward.

QUESTION 2. WHAT CHANGES IN POLICIES AND PRACTICES ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR INCORPORATING THE SOCIAL DETERMINATES OF HEALTH IN A MEANINGFUL WAY? CONSIDER CHANGES IN YOUR WORKPLACE AND PUBLIC POLICY.

Participants provided the following list of recommended changes:

1. Education to break down implicit bias.
2. Language access plans that include equitable bilingual stipends for interpreters and translators.
3. Better collaboration between providers.
4. Engaging more with the communities.
5. More robust treatment plans that include every silo of the wheel.
6. Better communication between insurances, Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and our members.
7. Hands on Training!
8. Engaging members to get data from them on what works and what doesn't work.
9. Understanding holidays for different cultures such as times of fasting when scheduling events and trainings.
10. Being there as an advocate to help navigate, answer questions, and to just be there alongside people we serve. Help lessen the burden.
11. Use the approach of the "economic impact" if people don't otherwise understand why health equity is important.
12. Collaborations between insurance companies and others where active listening to details and making valid changes are incorporated.
13. Take steps to make insurance companies and resources more reachable.
14. Contacting Health Plan Liaisons.
15. Educating providers on recognizing and fading bias.
16. Public Policy – Second Chance Act for those with criminal records. Limited English Proficiency Rules, policies, and procedures. Greater Education to the public sector. Organizations needs to learn about other agencies' services. How can we wrap around all agencies for our population needs?
17. Provide more training in Trauma Informed Care. Many who hesitate to access services have some level of trauma history, and we do not benefit them if we do not help them to address this and recover from it.
18. Better communication between different entities so that members feel understood by having proper language interpreters.
19. Engaging with community members and asking what their needs are. Bringing those concerns to policy makers, community organizations, health care workers, etc. to bring about policies that positively affect our communities.

20. Offer support for members to understand policies.

21. For those with several children, including one with special needs, address the lack of resources for families to find respite care for their child with special needs.

QUESTION 3. WHAT ONE ACTION WILL YOU TAKE?

- Work to break down silos of care.
- VOTE up and down the ballot. For school boards, for city offices, for state and national offices. I will also stay informed and keep learning.
- I work in the Policy Unit at DDD, I will continue to take a mindful approach when developing policies and procedures.
- Advocate for improved language access for all families.
- Voting is a huge action to take.
- Stay informed, get more training, help support grant funding, share resources.
- Education.
- Have deeper discussions.
- Advocate for my clients and help teach them to advocate for themselves as a therapist in community behavioral health.
- Advocate for change and provide a wide range of possibilities to members and families, encourage and empower them to make wise decisions, and support their decisions.
- Encourage, support, and assist patient to identify and measure each silo of need and follow through until patient is empowered to take the wheel.
- Advocate and educate.
- Education and voting.
- Call out biases.
- As someone working in the policy unit, being mindful while developing policies and procedures.
- Be a voice at school district meetings discussing better health options and modeling a healthy lifestyle.
- Connect with people to understand them and not just hear them.
- Continue being educated or learning and implementing what I learn such as being an active participant and not just present, etc.
- I will educate myself.
- Advocate for those who can't advocate for themselves.
- Spread awareness at all levels.
- Create Groups or forms with the professionals and members. To hear the members voices but, also to inform and educate.
- Advocate for the client getting the services they WANT.
- Educate myself, vote and advocate.
- Advocate, collaborate and educate.
- Share my observations and concerns about health equity with my friends and acquaintances who may not see what I see on a regular basis.

- Educate staff and clients. Encourage clients to advocate for themselves.
- Contact the other programs within our agency to make it more streamlined for clients to access.
- Advocate and educate.
- I will be more mindful to assist members in navigating the phone systems that are used by AHCCCS and the collaborating agencies. These phone systems can be challenging to navigate, and most members will become frustrated and not be able to access their services effectively.
- Education and awareness.
- Advocate for less intimidating internet access to the website-websites can be very intimidating, i.e., search this, go here, on and on.
- Assist with ensuring self-advocacy is being done. and Inclusion for all people affected.
- Engage as much as possible within this community to further support the work.
- Educating people and advocating for clients.
- Educate others on services and resources, vote, advocate for services beyond my scope of work and help people navigate getting connected to services and agencies.
- I need to be a proactive communicator and knowledgeable with the information I am providing to members while understanding their complex needs.
- Increase my education (as I am engaging in today) to increase my awareness; I am new to being RN CM in Medicaid population and am very interested in learning more and more about DEI; advocating for my members.
- Educate and share resources.
- Advocate!
- Advocating and finding new ways to make the process easier for all people.
- Create policies aligned with scopes of practices.
- I'm going to get to work on updating our cultural competency policies and procedures.
- Educate the service providers on community needs.
- At all staff quarterly meetings, have this topic on the agenda with questions regarding action steps each employee will take to bring about changes.
- Identify the need (document) and make the step (action).
- Educate the community.
- Education and advocacy.
- Train providers to be resourceful.
- Remain persistent.
- Inform, educate, advocate.
- Continue to do my best to assist others.
- Lead by example and enable others by teaching them to reach out for resources.
- Staying informed and advocating
- Advocate, education.
- Advocate and conduct good actions yourself.

- Educate and advocate.
- Develop checklist of resources available. When needed, it can be utilized. Then, be sure the member is aware and understands his or her own responsibilities to access this and ask questions as needed to those of us who are trying to serve them.
- Advocate for people who have difficulty navigating the system and support/educate people so they too can advocate for others.
- Recognize policy barriers and finds ways to overcome them.
- Educate with tangible assistance, ASL, get more family support involved with invitations, follow up, educate myself regarding cultural differences, communication etc., and participate in community events.
- Continue to get the free education out there about what housing rights one has and continue to search for partners to collaborate with and further our goals of a more inclusive community.
- Ensure follow-ups after educating and advocating, collect feedback from the families to gain a better understanding of their needs and what works/doesn't work for them.
- Education for Tribal communities.
- Step outside my comfort zone to help educate others. Yesterday at church 2 moms were talking about being so confused regarding offered services, as I walked by. I stopped and offered to help them find services for their kids with disabilities. It would have been easier to keep walking, but I could help.
- Continue to educate myself about health care issues/cost and then sharing those with the agencies I interact with.
- Communication with all the members of the team to improve progress.
- I am Native American, and I have learned so much from working at DDD. I would like to return home help family, friends and those with a disability, or health issues... all issues... along with those who have federal charges. Resources to help with counseling, assigned with PO who understand how it is to live on the reservation.
- I would like to teach individuals and families a variety of coping mechanisms to help them manage their stress levels.
- Be compassionate and kind and find alternative ways.
- Register to vote at servicearizona.com.
- I'm going to get to work on updating our cultural competency policies and procedures.
- Advocate for improved Language Access for all families.
- Voting is a huge action to take.
- Stay informed, get more training, help support grant funding, and share resources.
- Have deeper discussions.
- To advocate for change and provide a wide range of possibilities to members and families and encourage and empower them to make wise decisions. And support their decisions.
- Encourage, support, and assist patient to identify and measure each silo of need and follow through until patient is empowered to take the wheel.
- Spread awareness at all levels.

- Create groups or forms with the professionals and members. To hear the members voices but, also to inform and educate.

Creating Vibrant Communities (October 13, 2022)

KEY IDEAS LEARNED

- The Arizona Bar Foundation website is useful, and many did not know it had so many resources, including those relating to Arizona evictions that are available in both English and Spanish. Lower income level individuals tend to not read their leases which can lead to more evictions for this population group.
- The Arizona Economic Recovery Center is a great resource for finding grant opportunities. Seeking grants can be very daunting if you don't have a grant writer. The impact of this program has rippled throughout the state. Allowing up to three applications for each organization is an incredible resource.
- Pinnacle Prevention is helpful, especially with work in South Phoenix.
- Focusing on public legal education is extremely important. Translating through the lens of culture has helped. Purposeful, intentional assistance is important. We must close the gaps.
- Those who need assistance most are those who have the least success in finding them. The health field and legal field overlap in so many ways. We must connect people to the proper places. For example, there are many elderlies who have lived in trailer parks for decades. With the lot being sold, they lose their place to live.
- We need to bring healthy food into healthy communities. We should support community food gardens and sustainability. We need to also restore watersheds and reduce toxins.
- Be open to opportunities: when you look for unusual partners, they start appearing.
- This type of program is how to get people together and knock down the silos.

HOW KNOWLEDGE LEARNED CAN SHAPE ACTIONS GOING FORWARD

- Contact information from the different presenting organizations can be exchanged so that individuals can share these important resources with others.
- Create additional communication tools. For example, the Arizona Bar Foundation is putting together new material on cards.
- Organizations can collaborate to create vibrant communities. Vitalyst has helped convene and connect organizations. Different names can be put on master stakeholder lists and then we need to follow through with new contacts.
- Silos can be very lonely places to be. There are gaps between resources and needs; we need to stand in that gap and provide resources, always asking, "How do we move the needle?"
- Having knowledge of these resources will allow us to use them and to refer people to them when needed.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY PROJECTS

- State agencies working together is important. Integration and collaboration are critical overall. Consider how you can improve integration and collaboration within your own organization and then expand from that. Intentionality is important.
- It's important to gather different organizations together, such as with this type of program.

- Collaboration is key. The landscape has changed, and people are coming together more. We should not reinvent the wheel and should continue to support existing efforts that work.
- Explore how to work more collaboratively and provide more resources to the community. For example, consider housing: How do we move people from leasing to home ownership?
- We can't do everything ourselves; we need community partners. When it comes to supporting families, community partners are essential.
- Send more people to the resources presented in this program and connect people and resources whenever possible.

WHAT SUPPORT WOULD HELP YOU TO IMPLEMENT THESE IDEAS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

- Support collaborative efforts.
 - Continue to have these sort of facilitated conversations.
 - Networking groups are helpful for coordination.
 - More administrative support for coalitions.
- Workforce support and resources.
- Resource navigation.
 - We need a coordinated effort that provides easy onboarding access to resources for all of the services needed. Technology does allow it, including with apps. We need a coordinated cohesive effort that can be implemented at the start of someone seeking assistance. This can include resource guides that are easy to navigate (similar to the effort in La Paz County).
 - Creating one stop shops would help make a difference. Part of the challenge is getting the agencies to use the same forms. 2-1-1 Arizona is a good resource, but a lot of the information is outdated.
- Advocacy and Policy Changes.
 - Policies are essential to address for prevention. We need to strengthen our advocacy and policy muscles to elect leaders who support addressing the underlying causes.
 - Create more capacity building for advocacy.
 - Fund more in the middle, centering on equity and building resilience.
 - Provide support for nonprofits to step more into the role of advocacy.
 - Create more advocacy and legislative support for tenants' rights.