

# The health equity briefs

National Association of State Offices of Minority Health Newsletter

## Reflecting on Minority Health Disparities this April

April is National Minority Health Month, a time to raise awareness about the persistent health disparities impacting racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States. These inequities have deep historical roots stemming from policies and practices that created systemic disadvantages.

A key milestone was the 1985 Secretary's Task Force Report on Black and Minority Health, which shed light on minorities' challenges in accessing quality healthcare. This landmark report paved the way for the Disadvantaged Minority Health Improvement Act of 1990 and the Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act of 2000 - policies aimed at improving minority health research, education, and services. However, data shows minorities continue to experience higher rates of chronic illnesses, lower life expectancy, and other adverse outcomes compared to their white counterparts. This underscores that while legislation is crucial, achieving true health equity requires an ongoing commitment to dismantling deeply rooted institutional racism and discrimination.

As we recognize Minority Health Month, explore these resources to learn more about this critical issue:

- [KFF Interactive Timeline on Racial/Ethnic Disparities](#)
- [Disadvantaged Minority Health Act Overview](#)
- [Minority Health and Disparities Act Summary](#)
- [The Groundbreaking 1985 Task Force Report](#)
- [Advancing Health Equity Policy Recommendations](#)

Understanding this historical context is key as we continue striving for a more equitable healthcare system for all communities.

## BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK

Black mothers in the U.S. are dying at three times the rate of white mothers, regardless of their education or socioeconomic standing. Every year, April 11 kicks off a week-long campaign on Black Maternal Health to bring attention to and galvanize action to prevent pregnancy-related deaths and improve maternal health outcomes, especially for Black mothers.



This year's theme is **"Our Bodies STILL Belong to Us: Reproductive Justice NOW!"** Join the movement and help spread the word or share your work using the hashtags #HRSAhelpsMoms and #BMHW24.

Here are some resources to support your work:

[HRSA Media Toolkit](#) | [Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#)  
[CDC Health Equity Feature](#) | [Find Grant Funding](#)

APRIL 2024



### Our Mission:

Promote and protect the health of racial and ethnic minority communities, tribal organizations and nations, by preventing disease and injury and assuring optimal health and well-being.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

*Reflecting on Minority Health Disparities this April*

*Black Maternal Health Week*

*New Members Spotlight*

*Meet-up at the CDC Reverse Site Visit*

*Measles Outbreak Prompts Swift Response States*

*EPA Seeks Applicants for New Minority Advisory Council*

*April Webinars*

*Cheryl Boyce Leadership Award Nominees to be announced this month*

*CDC Health Equity Fact Sheets*

*Resources*

*HHS Regional Minority Health Analysts*

## April is . . .

- [National Minority Health Month](#)
- [Stress Awareness Month](#)
- [Alcohol Awareness Month](#)
- [Irritable Bowel Syndrome \(IBS\) Awareness Month](#)
- [Sexual Assault Awareness Month](#)
- [Autism Awareness Month](#)
- [Parkinson's Awareness Month](#)
- [Oral Cancer Awareness Month](#)

## NEW MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT: *Welcome to the NASOMH Family*

We are delighted to welcome two new members to the NASOMH team. Reuben Hampton and Ya'nelle Powell represent HHS Region I and Region III, respectively, on the NASOMH Board. Their expertise and passion for health equity will be invaluable assets to our organization, and we look forward to their contributions towards our shared mission.

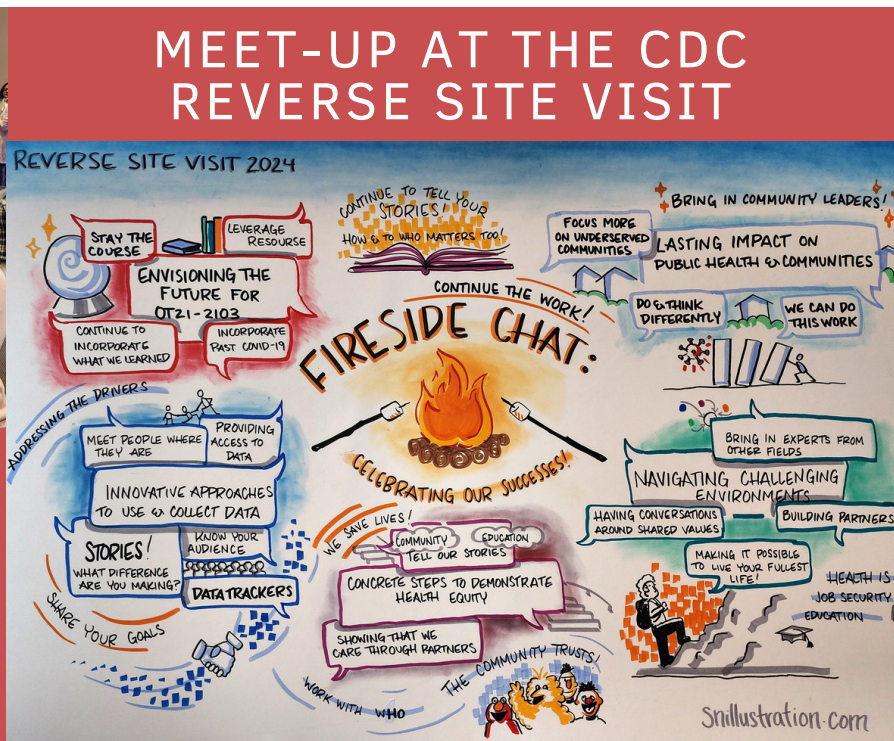
**Reuben Hampton, MBA**, is the Office of Health Equity Director at the New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS). His work identifies and eliminates health disparities for marginalized populations across the state, ensuring equitable access to effective DHHS programs and services. Before this role, Reuben demonstrated versatility as a program manager, consultant, and leader of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. He has developed strategic plans, engaged communities, and served on the board of The Family Place resource center since 2019. Reuben earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and his MBA from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth. Fun fact: Reuben was a competitive chess player in middle and high school, traveling across the U.S. for tournaments.



**Ya'nelle Powell** joins us with over seven years of experience in Delaware's healthcare field. As the Clinic Manager/ShIPLEY Health Unit Clinical Sciences at the Delaware Department of Health, she provides leadership and oversees clinical development. Previously, Ya'nelle worked as an Employer/Partner Relationship Coordinator for four years. With a bachelor's degree in marketing from Johnson & Wales University and skills in fiscal policy and clinical development, Ya'nelle continues to make valuable contributions to improving health outcomes.



It was great to see many NASOMH members at the COVID-19 Health Disparities Grant reverse site visit last month in Chicago. It is refreshing to see SOMHs representing their states and showcasing the great work accomplished through this unique funding opportunity. We look forward to having a more robust dialogue and spotlight on state projects.



**Featured:** Front - left to right: Kristen Siegenthaler, NY; \*Wilma Alvarado-Little, NY; \*Monique Anthony, TN; \*Charlotte Wood, TN. Back - left to right: Omolola Taiwo, NJ; Veronica Halloway, IL; and Amanda Medina-Forrester, NJ. \* Denotes NASOMH Board

## MEASLES OUTBREAK PROMPTS SWIFT RESPONSE FROM STATES



The United States is currently grappling with a widespread measles outbreak that has impacted communities across the country. As of late April, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported measles cases in over 20 states, comprising one of the largest outbreaks since the disease was declared eliminated in the U.S. in 2000.

The states with the highest number of confirmed measles cases include New York, Washington, New Jersey, California, and Michigan. Because measles is an extremely contagious viral illness, these states have mounted aggressive campaigns to curb its further spread and boost vaccination rates in affected areas.

### **New York: Ground Zero of the Outbreak**

New York has been the national epicenter, reporting over 700 cases concentrated in New York City and nearby Orthodox Jewish communities with low vaccination levels. New York implemented education campaigns, increased vaccine access, and fines for unvaccinated students attending schools in outbreak areas to control the outbreak.

### **Washington Declares Public Health Emergency**

In Washington State, over 70 cases prompted Clark County to declare a public health emergency. Officials barred unvaccinated students from schools in the outbreak zone and opened special vaccination clinics.

### **New Jersey Tracks Exposure and Boosts Vaccinations**

Close to 20 cases have been identified across New Jersey counties. The state warned residents about exposure locations, while some schools prohibited unvaccinated students during the outbreak. Vaccination rates also increased in affected communities.

### **California Identifies Exposure Sites**

In California, over a dozen measles cases were scattered across multiple counties (California Department of Public Health, 2019). Health officials identified potential exposure sites, directly contacting thousands who may have been exposed while also working to raise vaccination levels.

### **Michigan Ramps Up Vaccinations**

Michigan reported around 40 measles cases, which were concentrated in Oakland County. The state helped coordinate mass vaccination clinics and implemented intensive tracking to limit the outbreak.

While the CDC (2019) notes that the outbreaks are linked to travelers who brought measles back from other countries, the rapid spread highlights the dangers of under-vaccinated communities. State health departments have worked tirelessly through widespread education, vaccination campaigns, and, in some cases, stringent limits on unvaccinated residents to control this highly contagious illness.

## EPA Seeks Applicants for New Minority Advisory Council

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is establishing a new Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions Advisory Council (HBCU-MSI AC). The council will provide advice and recommendations to the EPA Administrator on ways HBCUs and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) can:

- Help identify barriers to equal employment opportunity
- Nurture the next generation of environmental leaders
- Ensure these institutions have resources and support to thrive

The council is part of the EPA's effort to advance equity and diversity, which aligns with [President Biden's Executive Order 14035](#) on advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the federal workforce. The EPA seeks 15-20 members from various sectors, including business, academia, non-profits, and governments, to serve two-year terms. Applicants must provide contact information, resume/CV, and statement of interest by May 8, 2024, at 9:59 p.m. CT. For more information, [join the webinar on Wednesday, April 24, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. Central Time. Register here](#)

Visit the [HBCU-MSI Advisory Council webpage](#) for application instructions. This new council aims to bring diverse perspectives into shaping EPA policies and priorities to build a federal workforce reflecting America's diversity.

NAVIGATING HEALTH EQUITY  
DISCUSSIONS: PRACTICAL  
TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES



TRANSNATIONALISM, CULTURE,  
AND HEALTH AMONG AFRICAN  
IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S

**The State, Island, and Territory Health Equity Community of Practice (SITHE-COP)** is a collaboration between William Consulting, NASOMH, and ASTHO, funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Minority Health. This webinar will focus on understanding challenges or barriers against health equity, provide practical tools and techniques for strengthening emotional intelligence skills, and discuss strategies for improving organizational culture, policies, and practices related to health equity that will benefit our members.

**Date: April 25, 2024 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time**

**Join the Zoom meeting**  
**Meeting ID: 881 8714 3601**  
**Passcode: 409119**

For questions, email Robert Bauserman at [RBauserman@williamsconsultingllc.com](mailto:RBauserman@williamsconsultingllc.com).

Join the **Illinois Department of Public Health's Refugee Health Program** for a webinar on ***"Transnationalism, Culture, and Health among African Immigrants in the U.S."*** presented by Dr. Kelechi Ibe-Lamberts of the University of Illinois, Chicago.

Topics include definitions of immigrant subgroups, transnationalism as a health determinant, differences between African immigrants and African Americans, and health disparities and acculturation impacts. The target audience includes community organizations, health professionals, and students.

**Date: April 24, 2024 at 11 am Central Time**  
**Register:**

For Questions, email:  
[dph.refugeehealth@illinois.gov](mailto:dph.refugeehealth@illinois.gov)

## CHERYL BOYCE LEADERSHIP AWARD NOMINEES TO BE ANNOUNCED THIS MONTH

Thank you to all those who nominated individuals for this inaugural award. The Nominating Committee is now reviewing the applications, and the nominees and winner will be announced at the end of this month.

## RESOURCES

### Empowering Rural Health with the Rural Health Research Gateway

is an accessible hub providing research findings, funding opportunities, and engagement activities to help translate evidence into practice for better rural health.

### Your Partner in Rural Health: The HRSA Office of Rural Health

advocates for and supports rural communities through funding, research, partnerships, and guidance across critical rural health topics.

Exploring the Historical Roots of Health Disparities is a timeline that documents U.S. policies and events contributing to current racial and ethnic health inequities stemming from slavery, segregation, exclusion, and discrimination.

Elevating Community Health Worker Programs is a guide to help organizations develop and strengthen community health worker programs. These frontline workers are vital in improving underserved populations' health equity and care linkages. The Guide comprehensively examines program planning, implementation, and evaluation strategies.

New Interactive HealthData.gov Tool is an innovative interactive tool on HealthData.gov to explore key health measures and disparities data. Users can view life expectancy, mortality rates, risk factors, and more indicators - filterable by demographics and location. This resource aims to drive data-informed decisions to create healthier communities.

## HHS REGIONAL MINORITY HEALTH ANALYSTS

The Regional Minority Health Analysts work in the Office of Regional Health Operations to foster and strengthen relationships among federal, state, territory, tribal and community stakeholders by working collectively to improve minority health, eliminate health disparities and advance health equity.

- REGION 1: GEORGIA SIMPSON
- REGION 2: MARLINE VIGNIER
- REGION 3: JALISA SMITH
- REGION 4: ROSHUNDA IVORY
- REGION 5: MILDRED HUNTER
- REGION 6: ELLA EWERT-PIERCE
- REGION 7: CORSTELLA JOHNSON
- REGION 8: JUNE HOMDAYJANAKUL
- REGION 9: VACANT
- REGION 10: VACANT



## CDC RELEASES HEALTH EQUITY FACTSHEETS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recently published two critical factsheets highlighting their efforts and accomplishments in advancing health equity across the United States.

### CDC Health Equity Factsheet:

showcases the CDC's commitment to embedding health equity into its public health approach. The goal is to overcome persistent health disparities and inequities experienced by various population groups. It highlights some of the CDC's most significant accomplishments in this area.

### Advancing Health Equity Across the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Fact Sheet:

highlights the collaborative efforts of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in advancing health equity across the department. It showcases the accomplishments of HHS and its agencies, including the CDC, in promoting health equity and addressing disparities.

These factsheets demonstrate the CDC's and HHS's dedication to prioritizing health equity in their work. The Office of Health Equity at the CDC extends its appreciation for the collaboration and support received from partners, which made these achievements possible.

Together, we can continue to work towards achieving health equity for all.