

The health equity briefs

National Association of State Offices of Minority Health Newsletter

DECEMBER 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:

Message from the Directors of NASOMH

Poverty, Depression, and Chronic Disease in Rural Communities

Addressing Mental Health Disparities in Alzheimer's Care

Save the Season: NASOMH 2025 Conference

Celebrating our Board Member's Contribution

JUSTICE SQUARED: Transforming Healthcare Equity—Apply Now!

Supporting Health Resilience in Alaska Native Communities

Addressing Racial Disparities in Infant Mortality

Why Disaggregated Data Matters for AA and NHPI Communities

RESOURCES

In case you missed it: Supporting the Mental Health of Latinx Immigrant Youth



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS OF NASOMH

Dear NASOMH Members and Partners,

As 2024 comes to a close, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering commitment to advancing health equity and serving minority and underserved communities nationwide. Your dedication and tireless efforts have been crucial in our remarkable progress—launching new initiatives, building impactful partnerships, and providing essential resources to support state and local offices. These accomplishments highlight the power of collaboration and a shared purpose in our mission to create healthier, more equitable communities.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities that lie before us in 2025. As we continue to expand our partnership, we are very excited about two key initiatives for the new year. First, in January, we will launch the Vivian-Lasley Bibbs Health Equity Fellowship program in partnership with ASTHO, and second, we will hold our inaugural conference in October 2025 in Indianapolis. We continue to revamp our website for a better membership experience, including mentorship and exchanges of best practices and self-care ideas.

Thank you for your continued dedication and support. Let's continue working together to drive meaningful change, strengthen our networks, and ensure everyone can access quality healthcare regardless of their background.

Wishing you a joyful holiday season and a new year filled with renewed energy and inspiration. Together, we will achieve even more significant milestones in 2025.

Sincerely,
The NASOMH Leadership Team

December is . . .

- [National Stress-Free Family Holidays Month](#)
- [HIV/AIDS Awareness Month](#)
- [National Influenza Vaccination Week \(December 4-10\)](#)
- [Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week \(December 1-7\)](#)
- [Childhood Cancer Awareness Month](#)
- [Handwashing Awareness Week \(December 3-9\)](#)
- [National Impaired Driving Prevention Month](#)
- [Universal Health Coverage Day \(December 12\)](#)

POVERTY, DEPRESSION, AND CHRONIC DISEASE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Managing chronic diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure is hard enough—but it's even harder for rural residents facing poverty and depression.

A recent NIMHD-funded study found that low-income rural people with diabetes or hypertension are 2.5 times more likely to experience depression if they couldn't afford their medications in the past year.

Project EDUCATE: Helping Rural Patients

To address this, Project EDUCATE offers phone-based support from trained health educators. These educators help rural patients manage their conditions and mental health, making care more accessible.

Key Challenges in Rural Areas:

- High costs: Medication expenses can lead to untreated depression.
- Limited access: Long travel times and few healthcare facilities.
- Cultural barriers: Many delay care due to a self-reliant mindset.

Why This Matters

Untreated depression makes it harder to manage chronic diseases. This study highlights the need for better support systems to help rural communities afford medications and receive mental health care.

Learn more: [Project EDUCATE Insights](#)

ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES IN ALZHEIMER'S CARE

How do racism and cultural barriers contribute to increased mental distress among African American and Hispanic individuals with Alzheimer's disease? Research shows these groups are more likely to experience depression and anxiety but are less likely to be diagnosed and treated compared to White individuals.

Key findings:

- Higher dementia prevalence: African Americans (7.1%) and Hispanics (5.7%) have higher rates of Alzheimer's disease than Whites (4.5%).
- Mental health link: Depression and anxiety can both contribute to and result from dementia, making accurate diagnosis essential.
- Cultural barriers: Racism and limited access to culturally appropriate care may increase mental distress.

Learn more about bridging this care gap: [Read the full study](#)

Save the Season**OCTOBER 2025**

Join

The National Association of State Offices of Minority Health

for our inaugural conference in Indianapolis, IN

Focused on strategies for advancing healthcare access, and optimizing wellbeing

More details to come in the January newsletter

CELEBRATING OUR BOARD MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTION

We are delighted to recognize **NASOMH Board Member Wilma Alvarado-Little**, representing Region 2 (New York), for her active participation in the recent **Symposium on Best Practices in Demographic Data Collection and Utilization**. Held on **November 8, 2024, at UAlbany's Uptown Campus**, this event brought together thought leaders to discuss innovative strategies for promoting health equity through data.

We also want to acknowledge **Chelsea Lopez, Health Equity Research Analyst** from the **Indiana Department of Health Office of Minority Health (IDOH-OMH)**, who attended the conference. Chelsea's participation highlights the strong partnerships and collaborative efforts necessary to advance health equity and address disparities in minority communities.

Wilma and Chelsea's involvement in this impactful symposium underscores their dedication and commitment to promoting health equity. Their leadership and expertise continue to inspire our mission at NASOMH.

Thank you, **Wilma and Chelsea**, for contributing to our shared goals!



JUSTICE SQUARED: TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE EQUITY—APPLY NOW!

Introducing *JUSTICE SQUARED: A Groundbreaking Opportunity*

We are thrilled to share **JUSTICE SQUARED**, an innovative initiative from Well-being and Equity (WE) in the World, supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This program seeks **12 healthcare leadership** teams dedicated to addressing structural racism and driving systemic change.

What's at Stake?

- Grants of **\$300,000 (\$400,000 for safety net institutions)** over two years
- A guided journey to confront and dismantle structural racism
- Support to build transformative, trust-based collaborations between healthcare institutions and community leaders

Who Should Apply?

Healthcare organizations with at least **five years of experience** in health equity are ready to commit to a collaborative and transformative approach.

Deadline: January 15, 2025

Apply and Learn More: justicesquared.org

Questions? Email J2@weintheworld.org



Apply to JUSTICE SQUARED!

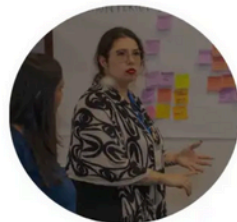
JUSTICE SQUARED is a transformational learning and action collaborative to advance racially just healthcare.

JUSTICE SQUARED will support teams of five from up to 12 diverse healthcare organizations.

[Apply Now](https://justicesquared.org)

Applications close January 15, 2025!

justicesquared.org



Climate Change and Alaska's Native Communities: A Call to Action

Alaska's unique landscape is home to over 180,000 members of 229 federally recognized tribes. Many depend on subsistence foods—hunted, gathered and fished from local lands and waters. However, climate change poses a serious threat, impacting natural resources and intensifying chronic health issues like diabetes, hypertension, and asthma.

The Challenge:

High-latitude regions, including Alaska, face some of the world's most dramatic temperature changes. These environmental shifts jeopardize traditional food systems, leading to nutritional challenges and health disparities for Native communities.

Community-Led Solutions with the AK ACE-CH Team

The Alaska Alliance for Community Engagement — Climate and Health (AK ACE-CH) is partnering with rural Alaska Native communities to address these urgent health impacts. This collaborative initiative focuses on:

- Honoring Indigenous Knowledge: Integrating traditional perspectives on climate change's effects on health and well-being.
- Developing New Strategies: Co-creating tools to assess climate and health risks tailored to local needs.
- Implementing Indigenous-Led Interventions: Building adaptive, community-driven responses to protect holistic well-being.

Why This Matters

The AK ACE-CH team combines Indigenous expertise with research in nutrition, fisheries, and wildlife management. By working hand-in-hand with communities, they ensure solutions are culturally relevant and effective. Recent efforts include:

- Community-Centered Research: Focus groups identify health priorities in rural villages.
- Cultural Immersion: Engaging in traditional practices, like checking under-ice blackfish traps, fosters trust and understanding.
- Flexible Collaboration: Tribal leaders guide research priorities, ensuring projects meet community needs.

Get Involved and Learn More

Discover how collaborative efforts are strengthening health resilience in Alaska Native communities: [Read the Full Story](#)

ADDRESSING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN INFANT MORTALITY

In the United States, Black infants die at more than twice the rate of white infants. A significant contributing factor is the lack of diversity in the healthcare workforce, especially in maternal care. Increasing representation among healthcare providers can be a crucial step toward reducing this disparity.

Key Findings:

- Better Health Outcomes: Research shows that patients with the same race or ethnicity as their provider often report better health outcomes and are more likely to receive preventive care.
- Underrepresentation in Maternal Care: Despite making up 12–14% of the U.S. population, only 7% of midwives are Black. Similarly, the number of Black OB/GYN residents has declined in recent years.

Path Forward:

- Pathway Programs: These initiatives support underrepresented students through medical school, helping diversify the healthcare field.
- Financial Support: Offering targeted financial aid and removing barriers for Black maternal health trainees can increase representation.
- Early Engagement: Encouraging Black K–12 students to explore healthcare careers fosters future participation.

Creating a diverse and inclusive healthcare workforce is essential to reducing the unacceptably high Black infant mortality rate and ensuring equitable health outcomes.

Learn More: [Read the full article](#)

WHY DISAGGREGATED DATA MATTERS FOR AA AND NHPI COMMUNITIES

Asian American (AA) and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (NHPI) communities are diverse. Grouping them together hides important differences in health, education, and income.

What Is Disaggregated Data?

Disaggregated data breaks down information by specific AA and NHPI groups. This helps highlight unique challenges and needs within each community.

Key Insights from a New Fact Sheet

The White House Initiative on AA and NHPI, in partnership with AAPI Data, has released a fact sheet with detailed data on:

- Education
- Poverty
- Employment
- Housing

Why It's Important

Detailed data helps policymakers and organizations better serve each group's needs, leading to more effective programs and support.

Download the Fact Sheet: [AA and NHPI Data](#)



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RESOURCES

Mental Health Resources for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Communities

offers culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health support for AAPI individuals. Access toolkits, training programs, and community-based services designed to reduce stigma and promote wellness.

Improving Maternal Health Outcomes for Black Women

Black women in the U.S. face disproportionately high maternal mortality rates. Organizations like the Black Mamas Matter Alliance (BMMA) are working to change this by advocating for policy reforms, education, and community-driven care models.

Reducing Chronic Disease in Native American Communities

Chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease significantly affect Native American populations. The Indian Health Service (IHS) provides culturally tailored healthcare services and prevention programs to address these disparities.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

Supporting the Mental Health of Latinx Immigrant Youth

Healthcare providers are seeing more Latinx immigrant youth, but there's limited research on their mental health needs.

Key Insights from Dr. Amanda Venta's Research

Dr. Amanda Venta, a psychologist working with unaccompanied immigrant minors, highlights key points:

- Family Separation Affects Mental Health: Migration-related separation raises the risk of depression, anxiety, and PTSD.
- Familismo Provides Support**: The Latinx value of family (familismo) strengthens mental health resilience.
- Reuniting Matters: Family reunification is a crucial motivator for young migrants and supports their mental well-being.

The Bigger Picture

Dr. Venta's research shows that the mental health of immigrant youth is closely linked to family ties and community support. Addressing these needs can enhance resilience and improve outcomes.

Learn more about her findings: [NIMHD Insights](#)

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](#)
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