

## Health in All Policies Success Story: Boston Public Health Commission



### Background

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), the governmental public health agency for the City of Boston, is the country's oldest health department. BPHC provides a range of critical services, including Boston's main ambulance service, substance abuse treatment facilities, and some of New England's largest homeless shelters. Boston's 685,000 residents are majority people of color, and Boston continues to be on the list of most racially segregated cities. There are persistent disparities in health outcomes for Black and Latino Bostonians as compared to White Bostonians for many health indicators including birth outcomes, asthma, diabetes, hypertension, and other chronic conditions. This racial segregation results in great differences in health outcomes by zip code.



There are many examples in Boston of city departments and agencies considering health in decision-making; however, there has not been a systematic or well-coordinated approach for addressing health as policies and programs are being developed. The Health Equity in All Policies (HEiAP) initiative would build on efforts to integrate health in policymaking throughout Boston city departments and provide tools for a more standardized approach across departments. The HEiAP initiative was launched in May 2018, with a survey sent to 68 City of Boston department heads to identify needs and interest in cross-department collaboration and integration of racial justice and health equity principles into practice. Information from the survey and first meeting demonstrated a high level of interest in these topics. Specific trainings requested were around community engagement and evaluation, including the use of health data.

### Goal

The goal of the HEiAP initiative, led by the BPHC Office of Health Equity, is to better equip city departments to address racial justice and health equity issues within their sectors.

### Objectives

BPHC and participating city departments identified the following objectives to meet the goal:

- Increase use of BPHC health data in other city departments;
- Establish quarterly learning collaboratives to build technical skills and foster collaborative partnerships between departments;
- Provide HEiAP technical assistance to department teams to implement change, particularly around community engagement, evaluation, and the use of health data;
- Promote cross-departmental relationship building and identify opportunities for collaboration; and
- Implement three practice changes through the HEiAP Initiative (e.g., policy, evaluation, system).



*BPHC Director of Community Engagement Triniese Polk facilitates the HEiAP Community Engagement Training.*

# [FACT SHEET]

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## Achievements

Led by Boston Mayor Martin Walsh, City of Boston departments are making concerted efforts to ensure equitable access to health-promoting resources including jobs, transportation options, and stable and affordable housing. Here are some recent achievements:

- Boston's StreetCaster program is an innovative and equitable approach to capital resource allocation. The program is focusing first on sidewalk replacements, particularly in those neighborhoods that have historically initiated fewer requests for repairs. They are also changing the way they handle resident requests for repairs through the city's 311 system. The Public Works Department is exploring ways to measure the impact of this sidewalk maintenance program on health.
- The Department of Neighborhood Development's Office of Housing Stability convened an Eviction Prevention Task Force. They will issue a report to Mayor Walsh with recommendations about how to more effectively prevent evictions in Boston. Data is helping to frame eviction as a health issue and recommendations will include collaboration with local health partners seeking to address housing as a core health determinant.
- BPHC convened an internal working group led by BPHC's Administration and Finance Office to develop an equitable procurement policy. The group conducted a staff survey, interviewed key informants, and did online research to develop the policy, which prioritizes certified underrepresented business enterprises including businesses owned by people of color, women, LGBTQ+, veterans, and individuals with disabilities. The policy also prioritizes locally owned businesses.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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