EXCERPT OF "ACCELERATING HEALTH EQUITY USING WORKPLACE POLICIES & BENEFITS"

Health equity thought leaders discuss identifying and implementing workplace policies and benefits to meet the needs of an increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse workforce

The discussion covered how to address roadblocks to health equity by gathering data that uncovers specific gaps; making benefits available and more equitable regardless of income or job function; work shifts; gender identity; and racial, ethnic or cultural differences; expanding health literacy; and offering more access using virtual networks, telehealth and digital health.

Listen and view the full town hall event underline.

Additional Recorded Employer Town Halls:
- **Accelerating Health Equity Across the Supply Chain**
- **Lessons Learned from Recent Health Equity Efforts**

National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions — Driving Health, Equity and Value

---

The conversation

Christina Bell

It's important to understand health inequities and their impact on the workforce. Once you have this understanding, focus on integrating equity into strategy: Our discussion for today.

Cristie Travis

As far as health equity goes, we're used to thinking about the differences on the clinical side. Does everybody have access to the same care? But why not think about non-medical risks that are getting in the way of your employees really being as healthy as they can be? Regardless of equal access, do employees get the care they need?

Rosa Novo

Health equity is about making care available, despite income level. Removing financial barriers to care means that sometimes we provide free care to employees **with the highest socio-economic challenges**. We remove deductibles at certain clinics and tier premiums based on salary.

Wayne Rawlins, MD

High-deductible health plans for low-income employees result in delayed care and ultimately poorer health. These employees need more health education and better employer contributions to their HSAs.

Dexter Shurney, MD

There is a pervasive element of fear and mistrust around medical benefits. For employees to use the system, you need to encourage certain no-cost preventive services AND contribute to employee HSAs or even a Lifestyle Savings Account—all so employees have no fear to try the system and get comfortable with relationships with healthcare providers.

> *There are studies showing that with the exact same providers in the exact same communities, lower income and people of color don't get returned calls from those providers at anywhere near the rate as others in those communities. It's a bias within the professional community itself, and it damages health equity.*
> *Michael Thompson*

Wayne Rawlins, MD

Diversity, equity and inclusion are about innovation, fairness and belonging in all job functions. These are fundamental American values — the secret ingredient to business success. The Harvard Business Review, the Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey—all have said diversity has a strong correlation with organizational performance. In fact, diverse companies, with inclusive cultures, outperform their peers on revenue, market share, decision making, innovation and retention.

Rosa Novo

Health equity doesn't mean you're meeting everybody's health needs just because you're offering the same benefit. Health equity is identifying an individual's needs either from a racial, social, economic and even language barrier, and then tailoring benefits. For example, this could mean offering different mental health benefits to those in higher stress jobs.

Tammy Fennessy

To help young people understand their care needs and how to navigate the system, we use care navigators and care guides. These navigators will help employees understand their benefits, find the right provider, and even set up the appointment. We want to set them on a path to better health as early as possible in their careers.

Dexter Shurney, MD

Integrating mental health benefits is key. We know that there are mental health issues across the board, but perhaps even more so in certain populations. I would like to see employees participate in an annual mental health checkup just as they now have an annual physical.

> *In addition to looking at data on health equity, which is critically important, identify trusted advisors, employee resource groups, or other individuals or groups which can give clarity and color to what the data means to those specific groups. Then you develop equitable benefits to meet their needs.*
> *Wayne Rawlins, MD*

Tammy Fennessy

Health insurance vendors can and should offer bias training to providers to get to the core of systemic racism in our healthcare system. Sometimes you need to dig deep to identify discrepancies in healthcare. For example, we've updated bereavement leave not just to cover the elderly but also to cover the loss of a child, and to do so in a way that respects ethnic traditions when someone passes.
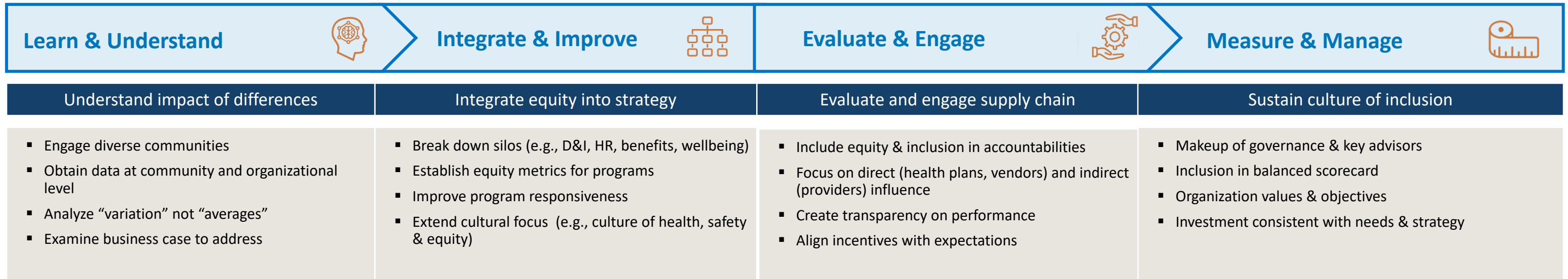
Christa-Marie Singleton, MD

We can be short-sighted about not offering sufficient benefits. Employee retention is critical. You've got great workers, great employees, but when they leave it's costly to replace them. So, why not spend that money to keep the ones you have rather than having to spend even more after they're gone to bring someone new back in?

Town Hall Panelists:
- Tammy Fennessy, American Eagle
- Rosa Novo, Miami-Dade County Public Schools
- Wayne Rawlins, MD, Wellspark
- Dexter Shurney, MD, Blue Zones Well-Being Institute
- Christa-Marie Singleton, MD, US Office of Personnel Management
- Cristie Travis, HealthCareTN

Health Equity: The Building Blocks

Learn & Understand	Integrate & Improve	Evaluate & Engage	Measure & Manage
Understand impact of differences	**Integrate equity into strategy**	**Evaluate and engage supply chain**	**Sustain culture of inclusion**
▪ Engage diverse communities ▪ Obtain data at community and organizational level ▪ Analyze "variation" not "averages" ▪ Examine business case to address	▪ Break down silos (e.g., D&I, HR, benefits, wellbeing) ▪ Establish equity metrics for programs ▪ Improve program responsiveness ▪ Extend cultural focus (e.g., culture of health, safety & equity)	▪ Include equity & inclusion in accountabilities ▪ Focus on direct (health plans, vendors) and indirect (providers) influence ▪ Create transparency on performance ▪ Align incentives with expectations	▪ Makeup of governance & key advisors ▪ Inclusion in balanced scorecard ▪ Organization values & objectives ▪ Investment consistent with needs & strategy

DID YOU KNOW? Inequities in the US health system cost approximately <u>$320 billion</u> today and could eclipse $1 trillion in annual spending by 2040 if left unaddressed.

Resources
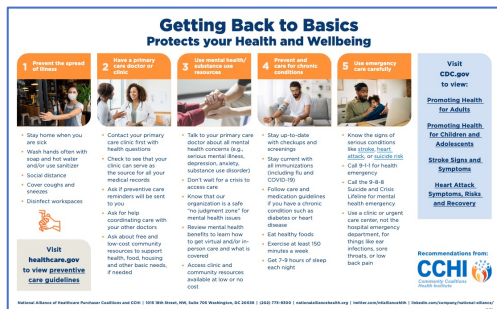
Getting Back to Basics
Prevention and health management are the building blocks for lifelong health and wellbeing.

Leading by Example and Moving Upstream Together:
A Fresh Look at Addressing Social Needs and Social Determinants of the Workforce

How the Advancement of Telehealth is Benefitting Mental Healthcare & Health Equity
Telehealth is an important tool to improve access to care for racially and culturally diverse communities.

"Equity is about focusing on those factors that are causing variation in health outcomes. What the benefits professionals should be thinking about is how do I reduce the variation of the impact of healthcare, so that all my people feel supported?"

Michael Thompson, president & CEO, National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions