

TREMENDOUS HEALTH DISPARITIES EXIST between the different racial and ethnic groups in San Francisco. These disparities are most glaring in the neighborhoods with high concentrations of Blacks and Latinos. Data supporting the existence of these disparities have been collected over the past decade-and-a-half. Yet, the health inequities persist.

The **African American Community Health Equity Council (AACHEC)** has examined research on health disparities and has sought input, energy and public policy recommendations from residents of the City's neighborhoods with the highest Black populations (Western Addition, Bayview-Hunters Point, Visitacion Valley-Sunnydale, and Oceanview-Ingleside-Merced). These recommendations come from the heart of the community and are intended to impact and support a reduction of disproportionate illnesses and death in the Black community.

To have any real success of eliminating health disparities, a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach must be planned, adopted and implemented; therefore, we recommend a holistic approach that addresses the areas of mental health, physical health and environmental health, while acknowledging the need for attention to social capital and social justice in the community.

HOLISTIC AND INTEGRATED APPROACH TO HEALTH



The human body is a whole integrated system living in the natural environment. Health disparities can originate from a particular area, but the impact will be systemic. To address health disparities and make long term progress at closing the gap, a holistic and integrated approach must be taken.

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A public policy project of the Health and Wellness Network of the Black Coalition on AIDS

To get involved in the public policy work of the Council or to participate in Council activities, please contact us at:

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Picturing Better Health for Our Families

**URGENT
Health Policy
Recommendations**

**TO IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR
SAN FRANCISCO'S BLACK COMMUNITY**

*“Of all forms of inequality,
injustice in healthcare is the
most shocking and inhumane.”*

— The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



A COMMUNITY REPORT



Environmental Health

KEY CHALLENGE: TOXIC AIR QUALITY

Outdoor and indoor air quality issues—from diesel emissions to household cleaning products—are putting San Francisco’s Black community at greater risk of disease than other ethnic groups and leading to disproportionate levels of asthma, cancer, and heart and lung ailments.

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve the quantity and quality of outdoor air monitoring—both ambient and ground level—particularly in Bayview-Hunters Point.
- Ensure that air monitoring results are clinically analyzed and the results regularly shared with the community.
- Expand education programs in targeted communities to increase awareness of environmental health risks and necessary preventive actions.
- Collaborate on innovative initiatives with other agencies responsible for ensuring air quality, such as Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), California Air Resources Board (CARB) and the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA). Special attention must be paid to strategies that extend beyond current experience and consider new technologies, economic impact and the overall health of the community.

NECESSARY COMMUNITY ACTIONS

- Increase and improve involvement in community-based organizations.
- Increase awareness and use of preventative information.
- Be active with local governmental authorities about community health effects.

The African American Community Health Equity Council

(AACHEC) is an independent community body and is funded by the San Francisco Department of Public Health. The mission of the Council is to be a powerful advocate for health in San Francisco and to close the gap of negative health disparities affecting people of African descent by gathering and sharing health information and resources that promote effective health policies, community action and well being.

Mental Health

KEY CHALLENGE: TRAUMATIC STRESS SYNDROME

Black people who live in poor, isolated neighborhoods in San Francisco are disproportionately vulnerable to traumatic stress syndrome due to heightened levels of violence, unexpected deaths and prolonged economic malaise, which contribute to increased levels of high blood pressure, depression, chronic fatigue, anxiety and even death.

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish and dedicate a facility in the Black community that addresses symptoms and treatment of traumatic stress syndrome among individuals and families affected by the condition.
- Develop and conduct comprehensive screenings to assess the risk of traumatic stress syndrome and identify and treat symptoms of traumatic stress syndrome among Black people seeking services at all city public health clinics and hospitals.
- Track the number of people diagnosed with traumatic stress syndrome in San Francisco.
- Increase awareness about symptoms of traumatic stress syndrome and how it affects people.
- Establish and ensure quality medical programs and care for Black people with traumatic stress syndrome by requiring a best practice standard or standard of care for traumatic stress syndrome in all hospitals, clinics and medical offices.

NECESSARY COMMUNITY ACTIONS

- Increase awareness of symptoms of traumatic stress syndrome.
- Be supportive of people and families affected by traumatic stress syndrome.

We must create public policies that support human health and close public policy loopholes that perpetuate negative health outcomes.

THE COUNCIL’S RECOMMENDATION

San Francisco must adopt a holistic approach to addressing health disparities in the Black community by integrating key environmental health, mental health and physical health policy recommendations throughout city health services, including the Healthy San Francisco model. This policy innovation must also be supported by resources for community-based activities in prevention, self-care and education.

Physical Health

KEY CHALLENGE: METABOLIC SYNDROME

Metabolic syndrome is a devastating health issue in San Francisco’s Black community; it predisposes one to heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Metabolic syndrome is when several conditions occur together, including obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and high lipids (blood fats).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish and ensure quality medical programs and care for Black people with metabolic syndrome by requiring a best practice standard or standard of care for metabolic syndrome in all hospitals, clinics and medical offices.
- Develop an educational campaign about metabolic syndrome and conduct comprehensive screenings to assess the risk in the Black community.
- Ensure access to quality health care for community members found to be at increased risk of metabolic syndrome or who have already developed it.
- Provide funding and other support to develop a community-based pilot program to prevent metabolic syndrome, including in schools.
- Keep annual statistics on the levels of metabolic syndrome in the Black community and inform the community of the findings.

NECESSARY COMMUNITY ACTIONS

- Participate in the screenings for metabolic syndrome and in any pilot projects to prevent metabolic syndrome.
- Provide social support to one another.
- Be advocates for policy changes to address metabolic syndrome in San Francisco.

NEEDED ENDORSEMENTS

The Council seeks the endorsement or adoption of this holistic policy approach by all relevant organizations and agencies in the city including, but not limited to, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, San Francisco Health Commission, San Francisco Mental Health Board, San Francisco Department of the Environment and others.