

# Reducing Health Disparities

Increasing health care access

Hennepin County's North Star is to serve residents. Systemic racism impacts many residents, depriving them of the same opportunities to grow and thrive as others in our population.

A resident's ZIP code is a better predictor of life expectancy and health outcomes than their genetics. Residents in certain areas, especially BIPOC residents, experience preventable health disparities with a greater burden of disease, injury, violence, and death. These communities have worse outcomes in health due to lower incomes, lower education attainment, and lack of access to physical and mental health care.

## Hennepin County Health Care Ecosystem

The county is best positioned to lead transformative change and improve resident health outcomes. The county's vision for the health care ecosystem focuses on reducing disparities by building a comprehensive system that ensures equal access. This comprehensive continuum includes health activities focused on access, prevention, early intervention, and quality care that meet resident needs in a variety of settings that work best for them:

- **Homes and the community** – Residents receive health care in these settings through programs like Family Home Visiting and Healthcare for the Homeless, a Federally Qualified Health Center, which serves any child or adult experiencing homelessness.
- **Clinics** – The county's operated clinics provide primary care to residents, including target populations.
  - **Public Health clinics** and the **Mental Health Center** meet the unique needs of residents regardless of income or insurance.
  - **NorthPoint Health and Wellness** is a Federally Qualified Health Center providing health and human services to residents in North Minneapolis and beyond.
  - **The Behavioral Health Center** is a critical provider of crisis services, withdrawal management, and recovery programs that treat residents using a holistic approach reducing emergency department admissions and law enforcement involvement.
- **Hospital system** – **Hennepin Healthcare Systems, Inc.** is an integrated system of care including a Level 1 Trauma center, hospital, and clinic system. Hennepin Healthcare is a subsidiary corporation of

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[hennepin.us](http://hennepin.us)

Hennepin County and a major provider within Hennepin County allowing Hennepin Healthcare to work closely with the county to improve resident outcomes.

- **Managed Care – Hennepin Health** is the county-owned, state licensed managed care organization for Hennepin County adults and families who use Minnesota health care programs. The plan operates a unique, integrated model that improves outcomes with special focus on addressing the social determinants of health by coordinating health care with county services.

In addition to these direct healthcare services, the county is uniquely positioned to coordinate and leverage services for residents across the entire health and human services continuum. County human services staff **manage enrollment** for Minnesota health care programs and provide **healthcare navigation** to assist residents to apply and maintain healthcare coverage and make connections to other social services. This work is essential to residents' access to other parts of the social safety net (e.g., housing, transportation, employment supports) that are important to improving their health outcomes.

## Investing in health care access and quality care for residents

Hennepin County is focused on increasing access to health care and reducing disparities. Communities have complex needs and challenges and require a systemic approach. Hennepin County has a broad health care system, which we align with work and strategies to reduce racial disparities. Over the last year, the county has invested in some of the following strategies to further this work:

- Use of data analytics to identify health disparities and guide targeted prevention, response and treatment efforts.
- Continued expansion of contracted provider networks to enhance access to culturally congruent and culturally competent medical and behavioral health care.
- Reduced or free healthcare through NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center and Public Health clinics to all regardless of ability to pay through a model that reimburses services at rates to cover the cost of uninsured. This ensures that communities and more specifically communities of color have access to quality care.
- Direct funding and programming for residents to support and strengthen foundational health needs of food, housing, and income.