



PhRMA awards nearly \$350,000 to community-based projects to address inequities in diagnosis, treatment, and adherence

The COVID-19 pandemic deepened health disparities, including the gap in average life expectancy and outcomes for many chronic diseases across race, gender, and geographic location. But, health disparities have deep roots in the U.S. where it is well documented that communities of color have a higher prevalence of preventable, chronic diseaseⁱ and tend to be diagnosed and treated later than white Americans.^{ii,iii,iv}

Because medications play a fundamental role in health management, equal access to needed medicines is a key component to ensuring equal opportunities for good health. Yet, disparities in medicine use among communities of color are well-documented.^{v,vi,vii,viii} PhRMA believes that diversity, equity and inclusion are essential to the discovery of new medicines and that people of all ethnic and racial backgrounds should have equitable access to treatment.^{ix}

Inequities in health status and outcomes among racial and ethnic groups often are rooted in community-level factors like where and how we live, work, and play; inherent bias; lack of adequate coverage and access to providers; and unfortunately, systemic racism and discrimination.^{x,xi,xii}

PhRMA is committed to doing our part to address the many interwoven factors that allow health inequities to arise and persist.^{xiii} Moreover, we believe addressing inequities in a rapid and effective way requires connecting with and learning from affected communities directly.

Recognizing that each community faces unique barriers, PhRMA established the Collaborative Actions to Reach Equity (CAREs) grant program in April 2020. The CAREs grant program aims to support community-centered solutions to address health inequities through partnership with community-led organizations. These awards support local and national activities and research to drive meaningful change on-the-ground to advance health equity. The CAREs grant program not only supports the efforts of grantees to advance equity, it also helps support the identification of community-led best practices toward scalable, practical interventions that can be applied to other communities, disease states, or public health concerns to advance health equity.

There are many community-based organizations, including some of those supported by the PhRMA CAREs grant program, working in geographic areas across the country with persistent health inequities that have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The PhRMA CAREs grant program will continue to look for solutions through key partnerships to make progress towards solutions to address inequities.

To date, awards have supported research and efforts to advance equity across the country:

Snapshot of 2021 Grantees

Using Community Health Workers to Prevent COVID-19 in Low-Income Black Communities | Sisters in Birth, Inc. in Madison, Hinds, and Rankin Counties, Mississippi

More babies die in Mississippi than any other state in the nation. Sisters in Birth, Inc. is a women's health community-based clinic that predominantly serves the Black female Mississippi Medicaid population in counties with the highest share of female-headed households. Sisters in Birth plans to expand their efforts to provide counseling to pregnant women and new mothers with education on COVID-19 prevention and vaccinations, COVID-19 testing, and free masks within women's homes, places of employment, and community events. Using the CAREs grant funding, Sisters in Birth will hire several additional staff to expand its reach and impact, particularly in Hinds County. It will provide COVID-19 education and assessment within the clinic, during home visits, and during some community events such as diaper giveaways.

NAESM COVID-19 Outreach Project | NAESM, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia

NAESM is a nonprofit community-based safety net provider with more than 30 years of commitment to providing health services, particularly for HIV, to Black gay/bi/same gender loving men and women of transgender experience in the Metro Atlanta area. NAESM proposes a large-scale communications campaign utilizing social media programming, street and community outreach, and information provided at its national conference to address vaccine hesitancy in the Black gay/bi/same gender loving and the Black transgender communities in the metro Atlanta area and nation-wide.

Supporting Access to COVID-19 Vaccines among Teens, Young Adults, and American Indian/Alaska Native Communities | National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (National)

The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) is a nationwide network of Developmental Disabilities Councils with connections, partnerships, and engagement with communities in every state and U.S. territory. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NACDD launched the GetOutTheVaccine campaign to provide streamlined access to trusted resources on COVID-19 vaccines. NACDD will expand promotion of the GetOutTheVaccine Campaign to reach American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) populations, as well as teens and young adults.

Barriers to COVID-19 Vaccination in the Black Belt Region | Auburn University in Alabama

The Black Belt region is one of the most impoverished and rural regions in the U.S, represented by a string of counties in 11 states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. These Black Belt states have some of the lowest COVID-19 vaccination rates. This project will compare and contrast state vaccine policies across the Black Belt region and conduct surveys among African Americans living in the Black Belt region to document critical barriers to vaccination.

Breaking Down Barriers to COVID-19 Vaccination for African and African Americans | Bridge-Pamoja in Portland, Ore.

Bridge-Pamoja is a network of faith leaders and culturally specific organizations dedicated to addressing unique needs of African and African American communities in the Portland, Oregon area through grassroots and community-based efforts. Bridge aims to break down barriers to the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines by local African and African American communities using a three-pronged approach: 1) partner with state officials to track how many Africans and African Americans successfully complete doses of COVID-19 vaccines, 2) monitor how the state government partners with Black-led organizations (including houses of worship) for outreach to the African and African American communities regarding

COVID-19 vaccination, and 3) host virtual forums with Black community and faith leaders to address the successes and challenges of the state's COVID-19 vaccination outreach process.

Exploring Patient and Caregiver Beliefs on Remote Patient Monitoring to Decrease Disparities in Medication Adherence among Children with Asthma | Children's Mercy Kansas City Hospital in Kansas City, Mo.

African American children are more likely to be hospitalized and more likely to die from asthma than White children due in part to socioeconomic and environmental factors that frequently lead to suboptimal medication adherence. Electronic medication monitoring is the gold standard for assessing inhaler adherence and has been shown in research studies to improve outcomes, but one challenge to uptake of this remote patient monitoring technology in real life is concern relating to data privacy and security. As part of upstream work to improve adherence and outcomes in high-risk populations, the Advanced Asthma Interdisciplinary Respiratory Clinic at Children's Mercy Kansas City, which serves children with severe asthma who are primarily African American and/or covered by Medicaid, will undertake research to better understand patient and caregiver attitudes and concerns regarding the use of this technology, as well as anticipated barriers.

Addressing Racial Disparities in Medication Utilization and Adherence | Florida A&M University and University of Florida in Tallahassee and Gainesville, Fla.

Racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes may be attributed to several factors, including low utilization of and poor adherence to evidence-based and curative therapies, as well as lack of health insurance. The current COVID-19 pandemic is an example of the pervasiveness of racial health disparities in the U.S. Researchers at Florida A&M University and the University of Florida aim to review current approaches to address racial and ethnic disparities in medication utilization/adherence and identify a targeted set of recommendations to decrease those disparities in Florida.

To learn more about PhRMA's equity efforts please visit phrma.org/equity.

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- ^{ix} PhRMA, “Building a Better Health Care System: PhRMA’s Patient-Centered Agenda” <https://phrma.org/report/Building-a-Better-Health-Care-System-PhRMAs-Patient-Centered-Agenda>
- ^x National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (2017). NIMHD Research Framework. Retrieved from <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/about/overview/research-framework.html>. Accessed on September 17, 2021.
- ^{xi} Yin Paradies, A systematic review of empirical research on self-reported racism and health, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Volume 35, Issue 4, August 2006, Pages 888–901, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyl056>
- ^{xii} Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups. Centers for Disease and Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html#fn8>
- ^{xiii} PhRMA, “Building a Better Health Care System: PhRMA’s Patient-Centered Agenda” <https://phrma.org/report/Building-a-Better-Health-Care-System-PhRMAs-Patient-Centered-Agenda>