

Know Your HD Lingo

Use these key terms and frameworks to frame your organizing work when approaching HDs*

Key terms

- **Health Equity:** Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. To achieve this, we must remove obstacles to health — such as poverty, discrimination, and deep power imbalances — and their consequences, including lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.⁹
- **Health Disparities:** Differences in health status and mortality rates across population groups, which can sometimes be expected (e.g., cancer rates in the elderly vs children).
- **Health Inequities:** Differences in health status and mortality rates across population groups that are systemic, avoidable, unfair, and unjust (e.g., breast cancer mortality for Black women versus White women).

Key frameworks

- **The 10 Essential Public Health Services:** The public health system includes health departments, hospitals, clinics, payer systems, and many others; this system is intended to provide [10 essential public health services](#). These essential services are established at the federal level and inform accreditation standards for HDs. These essential services were revised in 2020 to center equity; focusing on health equity is a new concept for some HDs.
- **The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH):** The SDOH are complex, integrated, and overlapping social structures and economic systems that are responsible for most health inequities. A SDOH public health framework sees health as a result of the conditions in which people live and work—including their access to money, power and resources—rather than individual choice.¹⁰ Public health is increasingly turning to “upstream” solutions like organizing and advocacy to address the root causes of health issues and focusing less on individual care. To learn more about this shift in public health practice, see [this BARHII infographic](#).

*Health departments are referred to as **HDs** throughout this resource

Works Cited

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5. Advancing Public Health Interventions to Address the Harms of the Carceral System
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8. I.K. Zola, "Helping Does It Matter: The Problems and Prospects of Mutual Aid Groups." Addressed to the United Ostomy Association, 1970.
9. This definition of Health Equity is slightly adapted from one developed by Paula Braveman and colleagues in the RWJF commissioned paper, "What Is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make?"
10. World Health Organization