The Network for Public Health Law

Ideas. Experience. Practical answers.

Advancing Health Equity: The Social Determinants of Health

Introduction

"Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible."[1] Advancing health equity requires recognizing and dismantling the barriers that prevent people from having better health outcomes. It also requires developing and implementing policies and practices to improve the quality of the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play – conditions otherwise known as the social determinants of health (SDOH).[2] Though health care is, of course, a factor in health outcomes, the SDOH are estimated to drive the majority of health outcomes.[3]

Profound inequity in health outcomes across racial and ethnic groups has been well documented. A 2024 report from the Commonwealth Fund evaluated disparities in health and health care across racial and ethnic groups and focused specifically on health outcomes, access to health care, and quality and use of health care services. The report found substantial health and health care disparities among Black, Hispanic, and American Indian and Alaska Native communities compared to White communities in nearly all states.[4]

To acknowledge that racism has perpetuated extreme inequity in the SDOH, jurisdictions across the country have declared racism to be a public health crisis.[5] These declarations impart the sense of urgency needed to address this crisis and are a vehicle to provide data to inform policymakers and others on the disparate health outcomes long experienced by people of color.

The Health in All Policies approach (HiAP) has been emphasized as one way to help address and improve those conditions represented by the SDOH. HiAP is defined as "a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas."[6] The HiAP approach acknowledges that health care accounts for a relatively small percentage of health outcomes and that most policies that influence the SDOH are implemented outside of health care and health department settings. In this way, most policies are really health policies. Therefore, to advance health equity, the health consequences of all laws and policies must be considered, not just those which center on health.

The Network for Public Health Law has developed several resources over the years to help aid those working to improve the SDOH and create more equitable health outcomes. This collection provides a non-exhaustive overview of many of these resources and categorizes them by SDOH area to allow community-based organizations and public health practitioners more streamlined access. Please visit the Network's website for more resources.

1. Social and Community Context

Family, friends, and community have a foundational impact on health and well-being. Those with stronger social bonds experience better health outcomes.[7] Moreover, for better health outcomes people need to live in engaging and supportive communities that intentionally combat discrimination and that create space for meaningful connection. The resources below may be helpful for those looking to study and improve this SDOH.

TOPIC	NAME AND LINK	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Equity Offices	[Overview of State and Local Equity Offices: 2024 Edition](#)	Report	Many state and local governments have established offices of equity to prioritize equity in government policies and procedures. This resource provides a survey of states, cities, and counties across the country that have established such offices and includes information on their structure, activities, and authority.
Equity Tools	[Micro-Toolkit: Equity Assessment Framework for Public Health Laws and Policies](#)	Toolkit	This Micro-Toolkit is a simple, accessible framework that will guide readers through six steps to assess potential equity implications for a new or existing policy and help readers identify opportunities for improvement and for continued assessment.
	[Advancing Equity for all Racial Groups through the Governmental Use of Racial Equity Tools](#)	Webinar	Legal and policy decisions shape the way people experience everyday life and can bolster the conditions needed for people to thrive. However, they can also create and maintain inequities in health, economic, and social outcomes. One key strategy for advancing equal opportunity and addressing inequities in health outcomes is to intentionally evaluate laws and policies to understand their impact on different racial groups. This webinar reviews how equity tools can be used to assess the development, implementation, and evaluation of laws, policies, programs, and budgets to advance equal opportunity and address inequities.
Mental Health	[Six Policies That Advance Mental Health](#)	Policy Brief	Network attorneys and staff identified six key policies with the potential to significantly improve mental health outcomes across the United States. This policy brief is designed as a practical resource for public health professionals, leaders, and partners, offering strategies to enhance mental health and well-being while reducing disparities in mental health care.
Policing	[How Can Public Health Advocates Grapple with the Dual Challenges of Systemic Racism and Discriminatory Policing?](#)	Issue Brief	Following the killing of George Floyd, localities have increasingly declared racism to be a public health emergency or crisis. Despite growing recognition of the fact that racism is a key contributor to poor health in communities of color there is still insufficient attention to the role of policing and systemic racism as institutions that have powerful impacts on the health and well-being of people of color. This issue brief aims to fill that gap by providing an assessment of how structural racism and policing function as critical SDOH for Black people and people of color generally.
	[Meeting the Promise of Racial Health Equity By](#)	Issue Brief	This issue brief assesses suicide risk within communities of color and demonstrates why the demands of racial health equity require taking the problem of police violence seriously and creating systems that reduce contact with police. It also identifies opportunities for limiting the

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	Reducing Police Intervention in Suicide Prevention Activities		role of law enforcement in suicide prevention and law and policy pathways for how commitments set forth in declarations of racism as a public health crisis can be put into action.
Racial Equity Dataset	A Searchable Collection of Laws Related to Racial Equity	Dataset	In the wake of the renewed racial justice movement in 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic, jurisdictions across the country enacted laws to address health disparities and advance racial equity – as well as laws that may impede these goals. The Network identified many of these laws from the 2021 and 2022 legislative cycles in all 50 U.S. states and compiled features of the laws enacted into a cohesive dataset for insight into the outcomes of those legislative sessions.
	Introduction to the 2021-2022 Racial Equity Dataset	Webinar	This webinar introduces the Network's Racial Equity Dataset, a searchable collection of laws related to racial equity that were enacted in the 2021 and 2022 legislative cycles across the 50 U.S. states. Legislation identified, though not exhaustive, provides a peek into relevant legal trends across the country.
Racial Equity Impact Assessment Laws	Understanding State Racial Equity Impact Assessment Laws – a 50-State Legislative Scan	Dataset	Addressing structural racism requires structural solutions. Equity impact assessments (or notes or statements) are a tool being used by increasing numbers of state and local governments to drive more equitable policy decisions. They frequently focus on racial equity impacts and are designed to predict whether proposed policies are likely to create, perpetuate, mitigate, or reduce racial disparities, creating opportunities for public awareness, engagement, and policy improvement.
Racism as a Public Health Crisis	How to Work with Local Leaders to Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis	Webinar	Decades of explicit and implicit racism in social, economic, and political systems have led to inequitable outcomes in communities of color with heavy burdens of toxic stress, disease, and premature death. In response, leaders across the country have adopted formal resolutions to declare racism a public health crisis and are committing to specific policy changes. This webinar reviews resources and tools for engaging local advocates and leaders in drafting resolutions.
	Declarations of Racism as a Public Health Crisis: Utilizing Declarations to	Webinar	States, cities, and counties have increasingly declared racism to be a public health crisis or emergency. These declarations are driven by a recognition that systemic, institutional, and other forms of racism drive disparities across employment, housing, education, the justice system, healthcare, and other determinants of health. The declarations also reflect a growing acknowledgment that state and local governments must anchor efforts to eradicate the impacts of racism in order to truly achieve the conditions that create optimal health for all. This webinar

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	Address Health Inequities		reviews declarations or statements issued at the time, provides examples of actions that jurisdictions have taken, and reviews practical steps for using racial equity tools to help ensure meaningful implementation for concrete real-world impacts.
	Racism as a Public Health Crisis—Perspectives on Healthy Aging	Report	While law can perpetuate and reinforce structural discrimination, it can also create meaningful change by helping to identify and remove barriers to access, resources, and opportunity, and thereby advance health equity. This report uses a revised SDOH framework put forward by Ruqaiijah Yearby, JD, MPH that illustrates how law and the systems it interacts with can shape health and well-being and identifies structural discrimination as the root cause of disparities in health outcomes.
	State and Local Efforts to Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis – Western Region Update	Issue Brief	This issue brief, part of a series of analyses looking at resolutions declaring racism a public health crisis in each region of the country, summarizes resolutions at the time in the western U.S. states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington. This analysis focuses primarily on resolutions passed by state and local governments, including city councils, county boards, city and county executives, school boards, and boards of health.
	State and Local Efforts to Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis – Eastern Region Update	Issue Brief	This issue brief, part of a series of analyses looking at resolutions declaring racism a public health crisis in each region of the country, summarizes resolutions at the time in the eastern U.S. region, which includes Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Main, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia. This analysis focuses primarily on resolutions passed by state and local governments, including city councils, county boards, city and county executives, school boards, and boards of health.
	State and Local Efforts to Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis – Southeastern Region Update	Issue Brief	This issue brief, part of a series of analyses looking at resolutions declaring racism a public health crisis in each region of the country, summarizes resolutions at the time in the southeastern U.S. states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. This analysis focuses primarily on resolutions passed by state and local governments, including city councils, county boards, city and county executives, school boards, and boards of health.
	State and Local Efforts to Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis –	Issue Brief	This issue brief, part of a series of analyses looking at resolutions declaring racism a public health crisis in each region of the country, summarizes resolutions at the time in the central U.S. states of Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. This analysis focuses primarily on resolutions passed by state and local governments, including city councils, county boards, city and county executives, school boards, and boards of health.

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	Northern Region Update		
Youth	Law and Policy Pathways to Addressing Rising Youth Suicide Rates	Fact Sheet	Death by suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24. Certain youth populations, children, and young people, are particularly vulnerable, including female, rural, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ youth. Black youth have also experienced troubling increases in suicide deaths and attempts. There is a broad consensus that suicide risk is multi-factored. Young people may also fall within multiple at-risk populations. As such, effective suicide prevention strategies require a multi-dimensional, holistic, and intersectional approach. This resource can assist in decision-making processes and resource allocation to reduce youth suicide.

2. Neighborhood and Built Environment

Where people live influences their well-being and health outcomes. Factors that influence this condition include community violence, environmental health, affordable and safe housing, and transportation. Improved neighborhoods and environments improve chances for better health outcomes. The resources below may be helpful for those looking to study and improve this SDOH.

TOPIC	NAME AND LINK	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Climate	Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change through Law and Policy	Webinar	With more frequent and intense natural disasters, such as flooding, extreme heat events, and severe storms, addressing the health risks associated with these events is critical. Laws and policies can impact how communities plan for climate change and can assist in the development of resilience plans to protect public health. This webinar provides an overview of the public health implications of climate change and the role of laws and policies in reducing the associated health risks.
	Community Adaptation to Climate Change	Fact sheet	This resource provides examples of community adaptation policies organized by issue – including housing, clean energy, transportation, natural environment, and emergency preparedness. Community adaptation is a process communities utilize to lessen the impacts of climate change locally, such as through providing cooling and shade, reducing air and water pollution, or mitigating the effects of flooding.
	Equitable Community	Toolkits	It's critical that climate solutions prioritize and improve lives in communities that have historically been at the margins of government priorities. Yet, even as governmental agencies

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	Engagement and Climate Change: Two Toolkits		work to reach out to community members to engage them in this work, community members often express how difficult it is to get government agencies to really listen to their urgent needs and act in their best interests. These two toolkits provide practical guidance for addressing two climate-driven public health needs: community-centered emergency response and preparedness, and community-centered solutions to extreme heat.
	Prioritizing Cultural Safety During Climate-Related Emergencies	Fact sheet	Cultural safety is distinct from the more familiar concept of cultural competency which tends to place emphasis on more privileged groups learning about non-dominant cultures. Cultural safety calls for self-knowledge about the cultural biases reflected in dominant institutions in order to see how these biases frequently work as barriers to inclusive practices. In the context of public health, practicing cultural safety is a valuable tool for promoting racial health equity. This resource is a short practical guide for understanding why cultural safety must drive community engagement and how it can be prioritized in emergency management and response during climate-driven emergencies.
	Inequitable Outcomes of Climate Emergencies Demonstrate the Need for Changes in Practice and Policy	Fact sheet	This resource focuses on the concrete harms that result from the development of laws, policies, and practices produced without meaningful efforts to engage with communities by highlighting some of the real-world impacts of inequitable practices with respect to drought, wildfires, flooding, and extreme heat. The examples provided are starting points for thinking through how things have gone wrong, where change may be needed, and opportunities for successful collaboration.
	Ensuring a Just Transition in All Aspects of Climate Action	Webinar	The devastating effects of climate change represent a significant risk to the health and safety of all, but not all people are equally impacted. A disproportionate share of exposures to environmental pollution and climate change hazards impact communities of color. This webinar reviews law and policy approaches to environmental justice and a just transitions framework that equitably distributes the costs and benefits of climate action.
	Legal Strategies and Local Solutions to Equitably Mitigate the Health Impacts	Webinar	While climate change requires mitigation efforts on a global scale, local mitigation and adaptation solutions are equally critical to reduce the negative health outcomes and address the health threats posed by climate change, including extremely poor air quality; food and water insecurity; dangerous weather events and fires; increased disease burdens; and cultural and economic insecurity. Because these threats vary by community, strategies to improve climate resilience and preparedness are needed at the local level. This webinar reviews how climate change can be integrated into a health department's core mission and work; a standardized climate change and health curriculum for community health workers

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	of Climate Change		can advance health equity; and law and policy strategies can be implemented to mitigate the adverse and inequitable health impacts of climate change.
Energy	Ideas for Action on Renewable Energy Standards	Fact sheet	This policy brief builds upon recommendations within the U.S. Call to Action on Climate, Health and Equity: A Policy Action Agenda, which identifies policy priorities that advance climate solutions with health and equity benefits. Renewable energy standards are an important component of that effort. The brief can help health professionals understand and engage in improving standards, whether in their city, state, or nationally and provides some recommended ways and ideas to act on one of the most impactful climate policies.
	Heat Pumps: An Emerging Tool to Support Cleaner Air, More Affordable Energy, and Better Health	Webinar	Through appropriate laws, policies, and incentives, heat pumps can be an accessible tool for single-family and multi-family homes and other buildings in communities impacted most by poor air quality. Webinar presenters describe recent initiatives to rapidly expand adoption of heat pumps, including through innovative laws and policies, as well as opportunities for increased advocacy by public health practitioners, and community health and health equity advocates.
	Legal Strategies to Promote Solar Energy, Public Health, and Climate Adaptation	Fact sheet	Solar energy production can reduce public health risks caused by climate change. This quick reference resource provides an overview of the legal strategies that have been implemented by communities to promote renewable energy and equitable public health outcomes.
Food	Food Loss and Waste: Snapshot of Food Donation Laws and Other Incentives to Increase Food Security and Reduce Environmental Harm	Policy Brief	In the United States, 30 to 40 percent of food produced is wasted. Diverting edible food headed for a landfill onto dining room tables and homeless shelters can help reduce food insecurity and the negative environmental impacts of food waste. This resource outlines policy options to reduce food waste, including incentivizing food donation.
	Incentivizing Fresh Food	Issue Brief	The term "food desert" describes communities that have limited access to affordable and nutritious foods. In the United States, food deserts occur most typically in urban and rural

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	Retail in Food Deserts: Lessons Learned from Pennsylvania and Maryland		low-income neighborhoods and are more prevalent in communities of color. This issue brief examines barriers to increasing healthy food retail in food deserts and the implementation of Fresh Food Financing Initiatives (FFFI) to overcome these barriers.
	50 State Survey: State Laws Addressing Food Donation	State Survey	Access to food is an important social determinant of health, necessary to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle. More than 40 million people in the U.S. report being food insecure, many of whom are children. Food donation laws can reduce food waste and improve food security. This resource highlights laws promoting food donation in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
Injury Prevention	Tax Incentives and Public Health: Injury Prevention on the Road, on the Water, and at Home	Policy Brief	Tax incentives, in the form of tax credits, deductions, or exemptions, can be effective legal interventions for advancing the public's health. This resource examines tax incentives that encourage prevention of child and adult injuries that occur while traveling, during recreation, and at home.
Water	Public Health and Drinking Water Quality: How State Laws Affect Responses to Water Quality Contamination in Private Wells	Fact sheet	According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about one in five private wells contain unhealthy levels of contaminants. While a landmark federal law, the Safe Drinking Water Act, generally protects individuals that use a public water supply from exposure to unsafe levels of regulated contaminants, there is no similar protection for U.S. residents who rely on private wells for water. State laws and policies requiring water quality testing of private wells vary both in scope and the extent to which that water quality data is made available to the public. This resource provides a sample of state laws that highlight key similarities and differences between water quality testing programs.
	State Laws and Regulations Addressing Fluoridation in Water	State Survey	Community water fluoridation is recommended by nearly all health organizations, and many studies illustrate the benefits of a fluoridated community water supply, particularly in preventing tooth decay. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, community water fluoridation is a cost-effective, efficient way to deliver fluoride to all members of a community. Because of its effectiveness at reducing dental cavities , water fluoridation is known as one of the ten great public health achievements of the 20th century. This resource provides a summary of the laws and regulations regarding water fluoridation in each U.S. state and select jurisdictions.

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Workplaces	Law and Policy Considerations for Workforce Protections from Extreme Heat	Fact sheet	Extreme heat is the number one cause of weather-related death in the United States. This resource outlines federal, state, and local legal and policy protections for indoor and outdoor workers; and barriers to protecting this workforce, including legal methods like preemption – a legal method used by a higher level of government to limit the authority of a lower level of government – that can be used by some to override existing or potential local protections.

3. Economic Stability

People who struggle to afford healthy foods, health care, and safe housing are more likely to suffer worse health outcomes. Steady employment can help but may be difficult due to lack of opportunity, childcare costs, degree requirements, disabilities, injuries, or other conditions. Moreover, many who do have steady work may not make a living wage and will still have difficulty affording items needed to become and stay healthy. The resources below may be helpful for those looking to study and improve this SDOH.

TOPIC	NAME AND LINK	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Debt	Medical Debt is a Public Health Crisis	Webinar	Medical debt is a social determinant of health affecting millions of people in the U.S. with far-reaching impacts. This debt burden, including aggressive collection practices, threatens individuals' physical, mental, and financial health. This webinar explains how and why medical debt is a public health crisis, how communities are differently impacted, and the upstream and downstream law and policy solutions to eliminating medical debt burden and improving health.
Employment	Legal Considerations for Community Health Workers and their Employers	Issue Brief	There is growing recognition of the unique role that Community Health Workers (CHWs) can play in addressing social determinants of health. Health departments and community-based organizations are increasingly relying on them to provide a variety of services. This issue brief explores legal issues relating to the regulation and employment of community health workers.
	Addressing Legal Obstacles to Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Individuals as	Issue Brief	Individuals returning from incarceration have more health care needs than the general population but face numerous barriers to receiving care. Specially trained community members with lived experience of incarceration, serving in the role of community health worker (CHW), are uniquely effective at engaging returning community members in health services. This issue brief provides examples of key legal barriers that may be encountered

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	Community Health Workers		by individuals with incarceration histories who are seeking employment as CHWs along with ways in which policymakers and health systems can address these barriers.
Eviction	Eviction Diversion and Prevention Programs	Fact Sheet	Eviction is costly and damaging for all parties involved. For tenants, "[e]viction is a cause, not just a condition, of poverty," precipitating a "spiral of financial instability" that culminates in decades of poor health and economic hardship. For communities, evictions break down communal bonds and burden the court system with crowded dockets and administrative costs. For landlords, evictions come with surprising costs. Despite these deleterious effects, eviction filings have become a routine part of the collections process for landlords, who frequently leverage the threat of eviction to coerce tenants to move or pay. This is particularly problematic in states where barriers to filing are already relatively low. This fact sheet discusses policy options for eviction diversion and prevention.
	Limiting Public Access to Eviction Records	Fact Sheet	The consequences of eviction do not end with a tenant's removal from their home. Many tenants fail to recognize that a trip to housing court creates a long-term public record that can persist for years, following tenants as they search for new homes and opportunities. This fact sheet explores law and policy options for limiting the impact of eviction records on housing stability.
	Legal Representation in Eviction Proceedings	Fact Sheet	More than two million eviction cases are filed against tenants each year in the United States. Eviction can impact the physical, psychological, and economic health of individuals, families, and communities for years, and yet the vast majority of tenants navigate these weighty eviction proceedings without the help of legal counsel. This resource outlines various approaches to providing legal counsel to those facing eviction.
Housing	Mortgage and Homeownership Assistance	Fact Sheet	Research indicates that policies designed to facilitate home ownership may do more to improve health and wellbeing, as well as economic stability, than renter protections. A significant barrier to home ownership is the need for most first-time homebuyers to obtain mortgages. This fact sheet discusses state and federal mortgage and homeownership assistance programs, which can remove some barriers to homeownership.
	Community-Based Measures to Promote Housing Stability	Fact Sheet	People who experience homelessness report overall poorer health. Knowing the negative relationship between housing instability and health, communities can choose to invest in infrastructure and resources to better respond to homelessness. This resource outlines possible measures to support housing stability in the community.

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	The Public Health Implications of Housing Instability, Eviction, and Homelessness	Fact Sheet	Housing instability is a public health crisis that causes and exacerbates health problems, erodes communities, and drives health inequities. Families grappling with housing uncertainty experience physical and mental health challenges, from elevated rates of childhood and chronic disease and mortality, to stress, depression, anxiety, and suicide. Those who lack stable housing are more likely to experience homelessness, unemployment, substance use, food insecurity, and violence. Housing instability makes it difficult for residents to invest in their homes, relationships, and neighborhoods; and where health-supportive connections have already been made, eviction can disrupt the fabric of entire communities. Nationwide, Black and Hispanic renters in general, and women in particular, are disproportionately threatened with eviction and disproportionately evicted from their homes. This fact sheet discusses housing as a community health and health equity problem and illustrates why legal and policy innovations are needed to address the issue of housing instability.
	Public Health Impacts of Housing Policies in the United States	Video	Racially restrictive housing policies have significantly contributed to health disparities in the 21st century. Housing is a fundamental driver of population health, and unjust housing policies have perpetuated disproportionate health outcomes – including access to health care, healthy food, and proper sanitation. In this video, public health, legal and housing experts share their insights on housing inequities and the racist laws and policies that enabled segregation and steered resources away from poor neighborhoods, and how these factors contribute today to poor health outcomes for people of color.
	Community Land Trusts	Fact Sheet	Safe, stable housing can contribute to improvements in mental and physical health, civic engagement, social skills, educational and professional achievement, and can decrease use of emergency services. When housing is affordable, it can prevent stunted growth in children and decrease hospitalizations. Unfortunately, safe and stable housing via ownership is not attainable for everyone. A system of "shared ownership" called a community land trust offers a possible solution, especially in areas facing rapid economic change and appreciating land values. This fact sheet offers a comparison of Community Land Trusts and traditional homeownership.
	Public Housing: Law and Policy Changes Needed to Improve This Determinant of Health	Fact Sheet	Public housing is one of three forms of rental assistance programs used in the U.S. and has the potential to improve public health by addressing the need for quality affordable housing. However, significant changes are needed to match the successes seen in other countries. This resource examines public housing programs in other countries, the current state of public housing in the U.S., and the need for federal policy changes and increased investment in public housing.

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	Law and Policy Pathways to Increase Affordable Housing	Fact Sheet	Studies have shown that when families gain access to affordable housing, whether rented or owned, their health and quality of life improve. This resource outlines laws and policies, including investing in public housing, mortgage and homeownership assistance, and zoning law reforms that have shown a proven track record of success.
	Rent Control and Stabilization	Fact Sheet	This fact sheet examines the use of rent control and rent stabilization policies to stop or slow increases in the price of rent, and whether they, or alternative approaches, are more effective at reducing the number of people considered to be cost burdened.
Zoning	Zoning Reform	Fact Sheet	The U.S. severely lacks affordable housing. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, in 2023, there were only 33 affordable rental homes available for every 100 extremely low-income renter households in the country. As the gap between supply and demand for affordable housing grows, the problem becomes more difficult to solve. Countless government and non-profit sponsored programs aiming to increase the supply of affordable housing have been established around the country, but for them to operate effectively, zoning laws must first allow the development of affordable housing units. This fact sheet explores zoning reform law and policy options to increase affordable housing development.

4. Education Access and Quality

Those who are provided with a meaningful opportunity to attain higher levels of education are more likely to have better health outcomes. Children who face financial hardship, discrimination, or other circumstances, like disability, may face additional barriers to excelling in the classroom. These barriers may lead to low high school graduation and college attendance rates, which, ultimately, results in those children being less likely to attain economic stability and the better health outcomes associated with economic stability. The resources below may be helpful for those looking to study and improve this SDOH.

TOPIC	NAME AND LINK	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Curriculum	Implementing Law and Policy to Support Literacy and Reading Proficiency	Fact sheet	Education has been identified as a social determinant of health. This fact sheet focuses on legal and policy interventions to support literacy and reading proficiency.

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	Policy Surveillance: Preschool Social and Emotional Learning	Fact sheet	Social and emotional learning (SEL) has a strong association with outcomes important to public health, from increased high school graduation rates to reduced drug use. This resource outlines the Network's project to review policies and laws related to SEL.
General	Making Sure Kids are Healthy Enough to Learn: Innovations in Education Law and Policy	Webinar	This webinar covers critical issues in public education affecting child and adolescent health, including access to school nursing services; restorative justice and school discipline reform; and laws that ensure that children don't go hungry at school.
Health Services	School Nursing Scope of Practice	State Survey	Registered professional school nurses are uniquely positioned at the intersection of student health and education; they are trained to understand the complexity of the relationship between physical and mental wellbeing and academic achievement. This survey details the services, by state, that school nurses are permitted to provide.
	Legal Issues in School Health: Scope of Practice, Standardized Data, and Special Topics	Webinar	This webinar explores some of the legal issues that impact school nursing today. School nurses—licensed nurses who work in public, private, and charter schools—are uniquely positioned and trained to understand the relationship between physical and mental wellbeing and academic achievement. School nurses use evidence-based practice to promote individual and population-based student health, coordinate and advocate for quality student-centered care, and advance students' academic success. School nurses are also integral members of the larger health care system, keeping individuals out of the hospital and building healthy communities. The webinar also includes a discussion of the areas in which public health law can facilitate the important work the school nurses do at the intersection of health care and education.
Nutrition	Key Federal Programs to Address Student Food Insecurity When School is out of Session	Issue Brief	In 2020, 1 in 7 children within the United States struggled with hunger. Food insecure children do not have enough food to live healthy and active lives. The repercussions of food insecurity are severe including an increased risk of anemia, lower nutrient intake, cognitive problems, aggression, anxiety, asthma, depression, suicidal ideation, and a higher risk of hospitalization, along with poorer general health. These outcomes do not cease following adolescence but span into adulthood. Food security status is a strong predictor of chronic illness in adulthood, in some cases more than income. This issue brief examines federal

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			programming geared toward filling nutrition gaps for low-income children that occur outside of the traditional school calendar.
	Survey of Laws Addressing the School Breakfast Gap	State Survey	There are millions of children who need a healthy breakfast but are not getting one. This resource surveys state policies regarding six critical interventions aimed at increasing the number of children receiving a healthy school breakfast.
	Addressing the School Breakfast Gap: State Interventions	Issue Brief	In the U.S., only half the students who eat school lunch also start their day with a healthy school breakfast. This resource examines the framework of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the school breakfast gap and its subsequent public health impacts, and the most prevalent state interventions to bridge the breakfast gap.
Sports	Trends in Legal Challenges to Anti-Transgender Youth Sports Bans	Fact Sheet	Since 2020, states across the country have introduced and passed bills that prohibit or significantly limit participation by students who are transgender. Curtailing participation in school sports restricts access not only to healthful activities, but also to the physical, psychological, and academic benefits associated with them. At least eight laws have been challenged in state or federal courts on constitutional grounds. This fact sheet provides an overview of key trends in legal challenges to states' restriction of transgender students' participation in sports.
Vaccination	Trends in Vaccination Law and Judicial Challenges	Webinar	In this webinar, Act for Public Health explores legislative and judicial trends related to vaccine law and policy, including the expansion of non-medical exemptions and shifts in the authority to impose vaccination requirements, especially for school attendance. Speakers will also discuss vaccination measures that have been enacted to slow the transmission of COVID-19, such as more equitable vaccine access through expanded scope of practice laws for qualified providers to administer vaccinations.

5. Health Care Access and Quality

Health care access and quality remains a significant determinant of health outcomes. In 2023, 92 percent of people in the United States had health insurance for either some of or the entire year.[8] About half of all children in the United States receive care through either Medicaid and/or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Children of African American/Black or Hispanic/Latino background, who represent only approximately 38 percent of children in the country, represent over 60 percent of children who receive services through Medicaid and/or CHIP.[9] The resources below may be helpful for those looking to study and improve this SDOH.

TOPIC	NAME AND LINK	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Medicaid	[Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Benefit](#)	Webinar	Medicaid covers an expansive and powerful benefit for children – Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Services (EPSDT). EPSDT requires states to perform outreach and screening, and to cover all necessary medical, vision, hearing, and dental services when children need them. This webinar provides an overview of EPSDT, summarizes developments in litigation, and explains federal implementation guidance.
	[Unwinding the Medicaid Continuous Coverage Provision: Risks to People with Disabilities and Limited English Proficiency](#)	Fact Sheet	The federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) implemented changes that enabled people to stay on Medicaid. Most significantly, in 2020, Congress enacted the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which required states to keep people continuously enrolled in Medicaid through the end of the month in which the PHE ended. This fact sheet outlines how the unwinding of the continuous coverage period has a high risk of discriminatory impact on certain populations which are often the same ones facing significant harm from coverage loss.
CLAS Standards	[National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services](#)	Fact Sheet	The United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health developed a set of 15 standards known as the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care (the "CLAS Standards"). First published in 2000, the CLAS Standards provide a framework to advance health equity, improve health care quality, and help reduce disparities with a whole-person approach that considers cultural background when attending to a person's health care needs. As of the date of publication, there is no federal legislation or administrative regulation that requires nationwide implementation of the CLAS Standards. Therefore, implementation of the CLAS Standards varies by state. This fact sheet provides an overview of state-level CLAS legislation introduced or enacted since 2016.
Data	[How Data and Data Modernization Are Essential to Reducing Health Disparities Rooted in Racism](#)	Fact Sheet	Data modernization initiatives hold the key, not just to better data infrastructure, but to identifying and reducing health disparities. This fact sheet highlights health disparities rooted in racism and explores how public health data modernization is crucial to reducing them.
	[Equitable and Effective Data](#)	Issue Brief	With recent changes to Medicaid and CHIP, as well as the approval of Medicaid section 1115 reentry waivers, states are working to mitigate the harms of incarceration by addressing the

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	Sharing to Support Healthy Transitions for Youth During Reentry		health and social needs of youth returning to their communities from confinement. This resource is intended to assist states navigating data sharing challenges that may arise in implementation of these reforms. It identifies the important role of data sharing in reentry services and highlights the different roadblocks that those engaged in data sharing may encounter. It then identifies legal, ethical, and practical considerations for designing equitable data sharing systems that center the voices of impacted youth and safeguard against harmful uses of data that reinforce injustice.
Gender Affirming Care; Reproductive Health	How Some States Are Protecting Access to Gender Affirming Care and Abortion in a Single Legislative Act	Fact Sheet	Many individuals with the potential for pregnancy now find themselves in a state with a partial or total abortion ban. At the same time, thirty-five percent of transgender youth find themselves in a state with laws banning gender affirming care. However, the Network has identified at least thirteen laws across ten states and the District of Columbia that seek to protect access to reproductive health care as well as gender-affirming care in the same act. This fact sheet takes a closer look at legislation that couples transgender rights with reproductive rights to advance access to both.
Harm Reduction	Harm Reduction Laws in the United States	State Survey	Drug overdose is a continuing epidemic that claimed the lives of over 106,000 Americans in 2021. Opioids were involved in approximately 70% of these deaths. Many of these lost lives and other opioid-related harms are preventable through the timely administration of the opioid reversal drug naloxone and, where appropriate, other follow-up care. Similarly, consistent access to new injection supplies is critical to prevent the transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis, and other bloodborne diseases among people who inject drugs, and to prevent subsequent infection of sexual partners, children, and others. Unfortunately, state laws and local rules can make it difficult for people who inject drugs to access these lifesaving supplies, and variations in laws among states can create confusion among both people who inject drugs and people and organizations working to ensure that they have the supplies they need to protect themselves and others. This survey covers laws related to syringe possession and distribution, naloxone access, statewide naloxone standing orders, and Good Samaritan overdose protections in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
	Legal Interventions to Reduce Overdose Mortality: Naloxone Access Laws	State Survey	Opioid overdoses are typically reversible through the timely administration of the drug naloxone and the provision of emergency care. Access to naloxone and emergency treatment, however, is often limited by laws that pre-date the overdose epidemic and were developed for other purposes. In an attempt to decrease preventable overdose deaths, many states have recently amended those laws to increase access to emergency care for opiate overdose. This resource summarizes the characteristics of naloxone access laws in 50 states and the District of Columbia.

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Immigrants	Immigrant Health: The Role and Impact of Medicaid, HIPAA, and the Public Charge Doctrine	Webinar	The high cost of health care and the increasing decline in health insurance coverage are a concern for all people living in America. But for immigrants, who have extremely low rates of insurance coverage compared to U.S.-born populations, the situation is even more precarious. Low incomes, lack of insurance, concern over immigration enforcement, and other barriers pose serious threats to immigrant health. That, in turn, poses a risk to the broader public health. Federal and state laws impact immigrants' access to care and, therefore, public health. This webinar examines a few of the laws and policies that create barriers to immigrants' access to care.
Pregnancy Care	The Positive Impact of Doula Care and State Regulation of Doulas and Doula Care	Issue Brief	Fewer than 10 percent of births in the United States involve a doula. Increasing access to safe and effective doula care could decrease the high maternal morbidity and mortality rates in the U.S. This issue brief examines the role of doulas, state regulation of doulas, and how to expand doula care access and coverage through policy.
	State Laws Addressing Doula Scope of Practice	State Survey	The lack of private and public health insurance coverage for doula services limits access to doula care principally to those who can afford to pay out-of-pocket. This 50-state survey outlines state laws regulating doula certification, care, and coverage, and sheds light on opportunities and challenges to using doulas to improve maternal health outcomes.
	It Takes a Village: Expanding the Types of Professionals Who Can Provide Reproductive Care for Improved Maternal Health Outcomes	Webinar	This webinar reviews the law and policy levers that can improve maternal health outcomes and increase access to reproductive health care and provides concrete examples that can be implemented in any jurisdiction, regardless of laws regulating abortion care. The webinar focuses on state laws regulating access to direct-entry midwives and doulas and how improved access supports maternal health. The webinar also describes an innovative state law designed to train and educate physician assistants and nurse practitioners who are permitted to provide sexual and reproductive health care.
	Direct Entry Midwives Across the Nation	State Survey	Midwives play a critical role in reducing maternal mortality and many states have made efforts to expand the number of midwives by allowing the licensure of "direct entry" midwives who may be credentialed despite not having a formal nursing education. This resource provides a summary of laws in all states and the District of Columbia regulating direct entry, including training requirements for licensure, the state regulatory body, and what medications midwives can administer while practicing.

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Reproductive Health	Medication Abortion: A Primer	Fact Sheet	The majority of abortions in the U.S. are medical abortions, a safe and effective method for early pregnancy, initiated by patients using a medication regimen. Medical abortions, also called chemical abortions or abortion pills, are one of the battlegrounds on which political and legal wars are being fought. This fact sheet provides information on the drug regimen for medication abortion and the current legal challenges to their use.
Tribal Health	Tribal Public Health Law Resource	Resource	Native American tribes have a unique relationship with State and Federal governments. The Tribal Public Health Law Resource Table was created to aid those who seek more information about this relationship.

For more resources from the Network for Public Health Law, please click here.

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