

House of Delegates Backgrounder Fall 2020

A Systems Approach to Accelerating Nutrition and Health Equity



The topic of Diversity and inclusion is a complex and multifaceted critical issue that needs to be addressed by our profession. To that end, the House of Delegates (HOD) will be devoting the 2020-21 program year to dialogue and action addressing various aspects of this issue. In collaboration with the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee, the House Leadership Team identified Accelerating Nutrition and Health Equity as the focus for the Fall 2020 meeting. While the D&I Committee focuses on the Academy’s IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access) initiatives to support the nutrition and dietetics workforce, the HOD will address opportunities to advance nutrition and health equity in the individuals and populations we serve. The dialogue will explore three key impact areas: Communications /Advocacy, Grassroots Efforts/Community, and Research. This topic affects nutrition and dietetics practitioners across all practice areas; we must maximize and leverage opportunities to accelerate nutrition and health equity through a systems approach. A goal of the meeting is to develop a list of feasible actions and tools that meeting participants can become involved in and share with their organizational units and membership to promote grassroots efforts that will continue throughout the year ahead. Outcomes from the HOD meeting will be shared with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to inform any future work.

Background Materials:	
Please review the following information to prepare for the Fall HOD dialogue. This information is not repeated in the Backgrounder.	
Required	Optional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combatting Unconscious Bias and Preventing Microaggressions: A Professional Duty • Understanding and Promoting Nutrition and Health Equity • Practicing Cultural Competence and Cultural Humility in the Care of Diverse Patients • Inequity and the Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on Communities of Color in the United States: The Need for a Trauma-Informed Social Justice Response • Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Strategic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academy's Second Annual Nutrition and Health Equity Summit recording • Health Equity, Food Security, and Malnutrition webinar recording

Terminology

Health Equity: Per the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “[Health equity](#) is achieved when every person has the opportunity to ‘attain his or her full health potential’ and no one is ‘disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances.’”¹ Access to healthy foods and health care are important areas of health equity.

- View [the video](#) by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Equity (fair): The [World Health Organization](#) defines equity as "the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically."²

Equality (same): [Miriam Webster Online](#) defines equality "as the quality or state of being equal."³

Cultural Humility: Coined by [Tervalon and Murry-Garcia in 1998](#), "Cultural humility is a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities."⁴

Cultural Competence: The [American Hospital Association states](#) "Cultural competence in health care describes the ability of systems to provide care to patients with diverse values, beliefs and behaviors, including the tailoring of health care delivery to meet patients' social, cultural and linguistic needs."⁵

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH): [Health.gov](#) notes "Social determinants of health are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks."⁶

Implicit Bias: [Dictionary.com](#) notes "Bias results from the tendency to process information based on unconscious associations and feelings, even when these are contrary to one's conscious or declared beliefs."⁷

Critical Issue Question:
How can the Academy and its members accelerate nutrition and health equity?

HOD Meeting Objectives

1. Recognize the impact of racial and social injustices on the health choices made by the Black, Latinx, and Native American communities.
2. Review nutrition equity framework and identify any gaps.
3. Discuss potential roles for the HOD, in the critical issue plan, to address social determinants of health and accelerate health equity.
4. Assess individual cultural humility to establish baseline and determine opportunities for self-improvement.
5. Formulate actions for the Academy and their members to address the key impact areas of nutrition and health disparities- individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, public policy.
 - a. Delegates will select an area of interest for dialogue, deliberation, and action planning in the impact areas of Communications/Advocacy, Grassroots Efforts/Community, and Research.
6. Develop a list of feasible actions and tools that meeting participants can become involved in and share with their organizational units and membership to promote grassroots efforts.

What do we know about our stakeholders' needs, wants, and preferences that are relevant to this decision?

- Members have contacted their delegate(s), written emails and letters, and shared thoughts via social media.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that people from racial and ethnic minority groups are being hospitalized and dying from the COVID-19 at much higher rates. This is in keeping with longstanding patterns of minority communities experiencing lack of access to high-quality, affordable health care; disparities in educational and employment opportunities; income inequality; inequalities in law enforcement; poor housing conditions and inequitable access to healthful foods. This is unacceptable.

Academy President, Linda T. Farr, RDN, CSOWM, LD, FAND

What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of our environment that are relevant to this decision?

- When providing dietary guidance, Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs), Nutrition and Dietetic Technicians, Registered (NDTRs), and students must consider their practice and education through the lens of health equity, diversity, and inclusion to reduce health disparities.
- The Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ) produces the Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report, mandated by Congress, to provide a comprehensive overview of the quality of healthcare received by the general U.S. population and disparities in care experienced by different racial and socioeconomic groups.⁸
- During the past two decades, one of [Healthy People's](#) overarching goals has focused on disparities. Initially the goal was to reduce health disparities among Americans, and then it moved to eliminate health disparities. The 2020 Healthy People's goal is to achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups.⁹
- COVID-19 has underscored existing disparities. People of color are experiencing a disproportionate burden of COVID-19 cases and deaths. There are larger disparities in cases and deaths for Black, Latinx, and Native American people.¹⁰
 - See the [Racial Data Dashboard](#) from The COVID Tracking Project
 - See the [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#)
- The *Health Disparities By Race And Class: Why Both Matter* article states “Racial disparities in health have been interpreted in three distinct ways, which may be characterized (in a somewhat stylized fashion) as follows: (1) racial disparities reflect biological (that is, inherited) differences in susceptibility to disease; (2) race is a proxy for class, or racial disparities are confounded by class; and (3) racial and class disparities exist independently within the United States, and both matter.”¹¹
- Community Engagement is “the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the wellbeing of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices (CDC, 1997, p. 9).”¹² Engage for Equity is a program that uses Community-based participatory research and community-engaged research projects to reach health and social equity outcomes.¹³

What do we know about the “capacity” and “strategic position” of our organization that are relevant to this decision?

- The topic of nutrition and health equity is not new to the Academy; however, now is the time to build on initiatives to accelerate progress toward achieving equity.
- The [Academy’s Strategic Plan](#) includes three focus areas and impact goals in (1) Prevention and Well-being, (2) Health Care and Health Systems, and (3) Food and Nutrition Safety and Security, as well as strategy areas. These focus areas, impact goals, and strategy areas include items designed to reduce nutrition and health disparities.¹⁴
- The Diversity and Inclusion Committee is working to design action plans that stimulate ongoing, wide-reaching organizational strategies that produce positive movement in inclusion, diversity, equity, and access. The draft action plan will be finalized by the D&I Committee and presented to the Academy Board of Directors in the third quarter of fiscal year 2021 (2020-2021). Once approved, the action plan’s broad, overarching goals will be detailed, with input from appropriate Academy organizational units, to include tactics and metrics. The final plan, with tactics and metrics, is anticipated in time for resources to be included in the fiscal year 2022 (2021-2022) budget.
- There is a [D&I page](#) on the Academy website, with some topics/resources on health equity.¹⁵
- In collaboration with the Academy, the Academy Foundation began a new project in 2019 titled the *State of Food and Nutrition Series: The Impact of RDNs on Non-Communicable Diseases*. The project includes a focus on health inequity and improving access to care for marginalized populations.
- In September, the Academy Board of Directors approved the 2020-2025 Research Priorities. With regards to the targeted population for our discussion, e.g., Black, Latinx, and Native American communities, the applicable Academy’s research priorities include:
 - Clinical Nutrition Research
 - Implementation Science
 - Public Health
- The Research, International and Scientific Affairs (RISA) Team has two active projects:
 - [Food Security Solutions Project](#) is a collaboration between the Foundation and Academy where a toolkit was developed to help prioritize food security interventions in the community. The toolkit contains a webinar, case study examples and more.¹⁶
 - AUGmeNt (Assessing Uptake and Impact of Guidelines for Clinical Practice in Renal Nutrition) Study: an evidence-based nutrition practice guideline implementation study focused on renal nutrition care for RDNs working in hemodialysis centers. One of our aims is to determine feasibility of estimating the impact of guideline uptake on nutrition-related outcomes for patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD), overall and for specific health disparity populations. This study is in the planning phase and is looking to begin in October-November 2020.
- The Council on Research is in the early stages of planning a Nutrition Research Spotlight Podcast Series which will include episodes that specifically touch on issues related to diversity and inclusion in the research space- such as racial/ethnic diversity of researchers and implicit bias in research.
- The Policy Initiatives and Advocacy Team has been addressing Diversity and Health Equity through its work:
 - Emphasize at all Senate and House lobby visits, the Academy’s concern of how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted communities of color and exacerbated health disparities and the relationship between access to food and medical nutrition therapy.

- COVID-19 advocacy for increased access to Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) to address chronic disease which has disproportionately impacted seniors and communities of color.
- Advocate for the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommendations to be appropriate for all Americans, which requires the inclusion of research specific to racial and ethnic populations and those impacted by chronic disease.
 - Co-founded the Food4Health Alliance to advocate for inclusivity and evidence-based dietary guidelines for all Americans.
- Support legislation and regulatory comments to reduce maternal and infant mortality and increase breastfeeding initiation and duration for women of color.
- Ongoing advocacy for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and feeding assistance program language and regulations that support food security which disproportionately impacts communities of color.
- Partner with the American Medical Association to draft an Op-Ed calling for strengthening and protecting the SNAP funding to address health disparities.
- Develop a Letter to the Editor template for members to call for increase in SNAP funding to address health disparities.
- Equity Issue Brief and leave-behind documents have been drafted for use in all the Academy's advocacy efforts to demonstrate the relationship between access to healthy food, preventative services, and health care for nutrition-related chronic diseases.
- Participate in the development of the COVID-19 United States Breastfeeding Committee statement on access to banked human milk which addresses structural racism.
- Incorporate healthy equity, food security and malnutrition into the September Spotlight on Malnutrition webinar series.
- Host a dialogue at FNCE® 2019 with policymakers and Academy members to discuss food security and minority populations.
- Host the Women's Health Roundtable with Representative Robin Kelly (Illinois) in 2019 to discuss nutrition solutions for health disparities among African American women.
- Convene the first Nutrition and Health Equity Summit in 2019 and held the second summit in 2020 in partnership with the Congressional Black Caucus.
- Many of the Academy organizational units are hosting Continuing Professional Education events on health equity and diversity. Several products and services on the topic such as FNCE® sessions and Quality Management case studies and practice tips are in the [EatrightSTORE](#).¹⁷
- The Academy has created the [COVID-19 Professional Resource Hub](#) with some topics/resources on health equity.¹⁸
- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics forms [alliances](#) and collaborates with organizations and companies to support the Academy's vision and mission: optimizing health through food and nutrition, and empowering members to be food and nutrition leaders. Some of these include The United States Breastfeeding Committee, Alliance for a Healthier Generation, and the Malnutrition Task Force.¹⁹
 - Affiliates and networking groups of the Academy (DPGs and MIGs) may engage in informal networking with organizations related to their special areas of interest that, while not official Academy alliances, may provide a value for those involved.
- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation started the Future of Food initiative in 2012 with support from National Dairy Council and Feeding America.²⁰

- The [House of Delegates](#) addressed Food and Nutrition Insecurity in 2013.²¹
- Through its visioning process, the Council on Future Practice (CFP) released [the Change Drivers and Trends Driving the Profession: A Prelude to the Visioning Report 2017](#).²² Embracing America's Diversity and Population Health and Health Promotion Become Priorities are current change drivers.
- The Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics' (ACEND) accreditation standards for Dietetic Internship Programs (DI) and nutrition and Dietetics Coordinated Programs (CP) include competencies relevant to the topic. CRDN 2.11, 3.5 and 3.10.²³⁻²⁴ The Required Elements of the Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) are 5.1.a.12, 5.1.a.14, and 5.3.b.²⁵
- Spheres 1, 3 and 9 of the Commission on Dietetic Registration Essential Practice Competencies include those relevant to the topic.²⁶

What are the ethical implications?

- Any solutions to the critical issue question should follow the [Code of Ethics for the Nutrition and Dietetics Profession](#).²⁷

Efforts across the Academy to advance the Strategic Plan have laid a foundation for achieving nutrition and health equity. The HOD will consider a systems approach looking at Communications/Advocacy, Grassroots Efforts/Community, and Research to build on these efforts and identify actions to accelerate nutrition and health equity.

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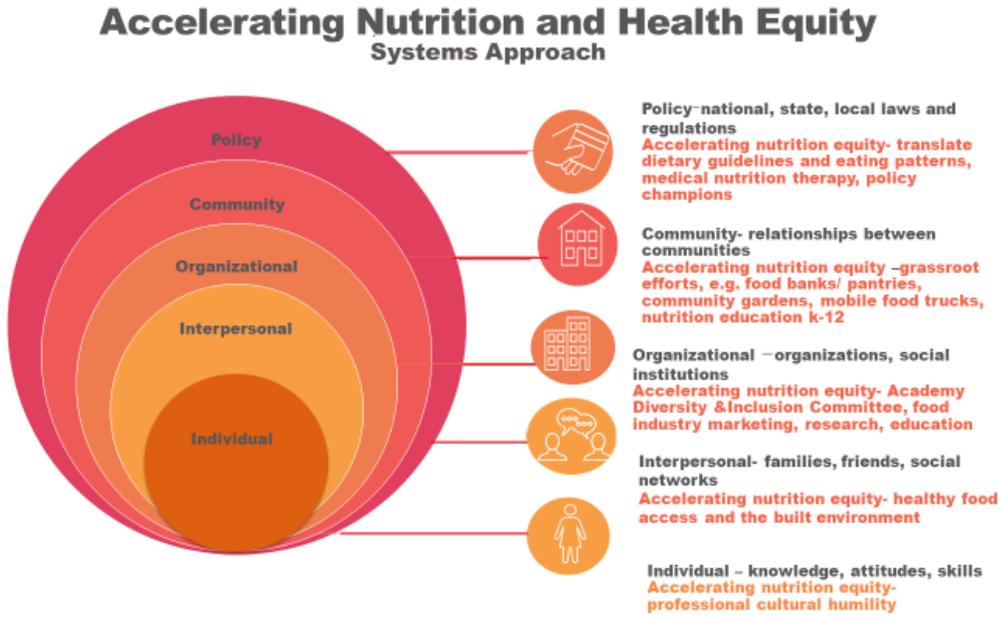
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Appendix A Nutrition Equity Model

The House Leadership Team explored a Systems Approach to Nutrition and Health Equity through the lens of the Social Ecological Model, the Academy Strategic Plan, and information from the Nutrition Equity Summits.

The five areas in the Social Ecological Model are individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and public policy. The overlapping rings in the model illustrate how factors at one level influence factors at another level. Besides helping to clarify these factors, the model also suggests that to accelerate nutrition equity, it is necessary to act across multiple levels of the model at the same time. This approach is more likely to sustain change efforts over time than any single intervention.



Keeping in mind the current Academy activities, the HOD will explore the impact areas of Communications/Advocacy, Grassroots Efforts/Community, and Research.

Impact Areas

Communications/Advocacy

Building on the strong public policy and advocacy program already in place, this area will explore opportunities to advance nutrition equity by leveraging advocacy skills, nutrition and dietetics practitioners’ unique expertise, and communication skills. Efforts will focus on ways to promote evidence-based practices and science-based resources to practitioners, the public, policy makers and all stakeholders.

Grassroots Efforts/Community

While traditionally considered unique (within the scope of practice) for RDNs and NDTRs working in public health/community nutrition, members across all areas of practice are becoming increasingly

engaged in activities and programs focused on the communities in which they work and the populations they serve.

- A grassroots approach to nutrition and health equity involves a range of organizations, strategies, and levels of empowerment that RDNs and NDTRs can lead and support.

Research

The 2020-2025 Research Priorities are considered areas that would have the greatest impact on human health and advance the field of nutrition and dietetics. These priorities are intended to identify opportunities for research conducted not only by the Academy, but by individual nutrition and dietetics practitioners and students.

- **Clinical Nutrition Research**
 - Clarify nutrient needs associated with optimal outcomes for special populations.
- **Implementation Science**
 - Evaluate best practices for translating, disseminating, and scaling nutrition and dietetics interventions across communities and clinical settings.
 - Advance our understanding of effective strategies for maintaining nutrition-related behavior changes in diverse populations.
- **Public Health**
 - Evaluate strategies to address current diet and health disparities and related chronic disease disparities among low-income and underrepresented groups.
 - Examine the impact of programs and policies that target social determinants of health on nutrition and nutrition-related outcomes.