# HEALTH EQUITY AT THE GEORGIA HEALTH POLICY CENTER

"Health equity is achieved when every person has the opportunity to attain his or her full health potential and not one is disadvantaged from achieving it because of race, income, or other socially determined circumstances." — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>1</sup>

At the Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC), our dedicated staff are committed to a more equitable and healthier future, particularly for society's most vulnerable populations.

## How Do WE Do THIS?

The Georgia Health Policy Center has a reputation as the goto health policy research center for state and federal agencies and policymakers because we provide objective, credible, and timely health policy guidance and research.



We continually strengthen these partnerships based on the principles of trust, value, and support:

- Trust We work collaboratively as a reliable partner.
- Value We deliver excellence by providing timely research capacity, datadriven information, and responsive counsel for the benefit of our partners and community members.
- Support We facilitate important, strategic conversations to support effective policy development and decision-making.

# HEALTH AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL



GHPC's work has been built on improving access to health care, identifying the root causes of disparities, and addressing health from a systemic perspective.

Our mission is to integrate research, policy, and program development to advance health and well-being. We recognize that advancing health cannot happen in isolation and that it requires tackling entrenched, systemic barriers, including poverty, housing, and lack of educational and economic opportunity. We take a broad view of health, examining all systems, policies, and upstream factors influencing well-being, and looking for inclusive, cross-sector, and transformative solutions to achieve health equity.

# HOW WILL THE EVENTS OF 2020 SHAPE GHPC'S WORK?



For 25 years GHPC has remained a relevant and trusted partner. In the face of triple crises — the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting economic struggles, and heightened awareness of systemic inequities — GHPC remains steadfast in its approach to its work. We will continue to:

- Advocate for an approach to problems, rather than specific solutions
- Build and value relationships
- Create the right environment for important conversations
- Provide objective, relevant information
- Think systemically about tough problems

# **MOVING FORWARD**



Meaningful work toward achieving health equity requires a commitment to innovation. In June 2020, Ambassador Andrew Young charged staff at GHPC with thinking about what success looks like and working to achieve that desired vision.

GHPC's staff is committed to meeting this challenge. GHPC is examining the social, systemic, and structural challenges preventing individuals and communities from achieving their best health and supporting conversations. There is ongoing research and evaluation of policy and programs to address systemic inequities and the resulting disparities in health outcomes. This research, translation, and facilitation supports real-time understanding of the root causes of inequities and enables consensus building around sustainable, systemic solutions.

# <sup>1</sup> National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2020). Health Equity. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdis

ease/healthequity/index.htm

# A TIMELINE OF GHPC'S EQUITY WORK

## 1999

GHPC helps design the Children's Health Insurance Program, PeachCare for Kids, to ensure access to health care for low-income children.

## 2002

GHPC begins ongoing work with the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy to improve rural access to quality care across the nation.

GHPC estimates the number of uninsured in Georgia and develops a strategic plan to reduce disparities in uninsured rates.

#### 2004

GHPC honors a colleague with the Claudia Lacson Memorial Fund with a focus on defining, documenting, and addressing community-level health disparities.

GHPC launches its systems thinking work studying root causes of health disparities in the rural South, producing Social Determinants of Health: The Social System and Pathways Providing Access or Barriers to Health.

#### 2008

GHPC launches the Legislative Health Policy Certificate Program, helping Georgia legislators to explicitly think about equity through the Six-Question Framework.

GHPC establishes social determinants of health as a strategic priority.

#### 2010

GHPC initiates state surveillance for sickle cell disease and thalassemia, with data and insights applied to improve the quality of life and care.

GHPC conducts it first health impact assessment (HIA), the Fort McPherson Rapid HIA: Zoning for Health Benefit to Surrounding Communities During Interim Use, to assist an area facing significant inequities.

## 2012

GHPC begins work with the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Georgia Cancer Control Consortium to reduce cancer-related cases, deaths, and disparities.

GHPC helps Texas partners evaluate how a proposed "scattered-site" public housing approach impacts communities, developing scoring criteria to evaluate potential sites based on a social determinants of health index.

## 2014

GHPC continues its ongoing partnership with the Georgia Department of Community Health, helping to ensure access to quality health care for low-income families; foster and adoptive children; and eligible adults who are aged, blind, or living with disabilities.

GHPC establishes a partnership with the National Maternal Child Health Workforce Development Center to improve maternal health and eliminate maternal health inequities.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) names GHPC as its national coordinating center for the Bridging for Health Initiative to support upstream drivers of health and equity.

### 2016

In collaboration with 100 Million Healthier Lives and County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, GHPC develops the Assessment for Advancing Community Transformation tool, with equity explicitly identified as a core feature.

## 2018

GHPC assists the Healthcare Georgia Foundation with its strategic plan to operationalize its vision of health equity through its core strategies and future investments.

### 2020

As part of its COVID-19 work, GHPC examines disparities in infections and mortality in Georgia and how social determinants of health contribute to these disparities.

GHPC rededicates itself to center-directed work that addresses systemic inequities that are barriers to achieving health and well-being for all.

RWJF provides support for Leveraging Policy and Implementation Opportunities to Address a Triple Crisis Through Cross-Sector Alignment targeting the COVID-19 pandemic, the economy, and systemic inequities, in partnership with George Washington University.

## 1996

GHPC studies Medicaid reform on behalf of the governor and delivers recommendations for improving access to health care for Georgia's most vulnerable populations.

### 2000

GHPC expands its rural health work to 74 counties statewide.

## 2003

GHPC supports the Philanthropic Collaborative for a Healthy Georgia, a national model for public-private impact on health care programs, practice, and policy.

## 2005

GHPC convenes more than 800 Georgians at the Summit for a Healthy Georgia.

## 2007

GHPC collaborates with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to broaden the health reform conversation to include public health and Health in All Policies.

#### 2009

Informed by the work of GHPC, the Georgia legislature passes the SHAPE Act (HB 229) to reduce the rates of childhood obesity and give all of Georgia's children a healthier future.

GHPC begins its evaluation of Georgia's Money Follows the Person program, providing insights that enable people living in institutions to return to their communities.

GHPC begins conducting community health needs assessments on behalf of area health systems, using a health equity framework to guide the process.

#### 2011

The Atlanta Regional Collaborative for Health Improvement launches using a collectiveimpact approach to address the region's health disparities.

### 2013

The Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health (COE) provides ongoing research and support for Georgia's Interagency Directors Team's strategic roadmap for improving the public behavioral health system.

## 2015

GHPC conducts the first HIA of a qualified allocation plan for low-income housing tax credits, identifying how tax credits can support health-promoting affordable housing development.

COE partners with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to expand access to school-based mental health services, with emphasis on reaching schools with high eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches.

## 2017

GHPC begins a new phase of its blood disorders work — diversifying the nation's blood supply.

GHPC helps guide the Mississippi Health Department using an HIA to lead to new ways of telling the story of civil rights and its implications for community health.

### 2019

GHPC launches Aligning Systems for Health, with support from RWJF, to strengthen evidence for improving health and well-being, especially among populations most at risk of inequities.

GHPC builds on lessons learned from Bridging for Health, with continued support from RWJF, to advance the practice of local wellness funds, enabling communities to sustainably finance efforts that address drivers of health outside of the health care delivery system.

GHPC updates its Rural Health Learning Module with an equity lens.