



## Health Equity & ESSB 5229

### What is Health Equity?

For the Washington State Department of Health (department), health equity exists when all people can attain their full health potential. That means people are not disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of the color of their skin, ancestry, level of education, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, socioeconomic status, the job they have, the neighborhood they live in, or whether they have a disability.

### Why do we need Health Equity?

Equity and equality are not the same. Equality gives everyone the same resources. Equity gives people the resources they need. With equity, everyone has the same opportunities as others. Research shows that inequities are part of the health care system. These have always existed. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the different affects that people experience. This is because of discrimination and bias in the health care system. Access to health services and health care allows all families to enjoy productive and satisfying lives. Healthier Washingtonians lead to healthier, happier families and communities.

#### Contact Name

Ashley Bell

5229 Implementation Lead

Washington State Department of Health

healthequityimplementation@doh.wa.gov | 360-236-2961

# What does Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5229 (ESSB 5229) do?

Providers – like doctors, nurses, and therapists – must take regular trainings called “continuing education.” They take these to stay up to date in their field and learn about important and new topics relevant to their job. In 2021, the legislature passed a law that tells providers they must take continuing education courses on health equity. The training must teach about individual issues, system issues, and self-reflection. The goal is to help providers think about their own impact on the others. This can change how providers work with others and help reduce inequities.

## How can you help?

We are reaching out to anyone who has experienced health inequities or racism in the health care system. The department will need help in the following ways:

**Listening sessions** – We will hold listening sessions with individuals and communities. We want to learn about your experiences with health inequities. We want to better understand how it harms individuals and be aware of its role in the health system. We need to recognize where the health system can transform. These sessions will be opportunities for us to hear from you.

**Rule workshops** – We will use what we hear in our listening sessions to lead our rules workshops. Workshops are where everyone comes together to create standards for health equity trainings. We will be working on draft language for the rules before we move into the formal comment period.

We value your input and want to listen to your experiences if you are willing to share. If you want to take or send us your stories, please email [healthequityimplementation@doh.wa.gov](mailto:healthequityimplementation@doh.wa.gov).