

HEALTH

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Introduction

The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley's (Partnership) vision seeks “*a prosperous economy, quality environment, and social and health equity throughout the San Joaquin Valley.*” Without question this vision cannot be achieved without a healthy and productive population. Health permeates all aspects of our ability to be prosperous and requires that we exam opportunities to foster good health and ensure appropriate access to health care services within the region.

“Health,” while a seemingly simple idea, is complex and represents the convergence of a number of factors, ranging from personal well-being, prevention, chronic disease management, and access to health care to adequate housing, safe neighborhoods, and clean drinking water. As a region, the Valley ranks near the bottom of nearly every health measure (www.countyhealthrankings.org). The Partnership is in a unique position to more clearly and collectively advocate for policies and initiatives that can influence the health of our Valley residents, particularly those who experience the greatest degree of health disparities.

Background

The San Joaquin Valley benefits when everyone has the opportunity to live a long, healthy, and productive life, yet health disparities persist. By definition, a *health disparity* is a difference in health outcomes across subgroups of the population, often linked to social, economic, or environmental disadvantages (e.g., less access to good jobs, unsafe neighborhoods, and lack of affordable transportation options). Health disparities affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater challenges to health on the basis of their race, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, age, mental health, physical disability, sexual orientation, geographic location or other characteristics linked to discrimination or exclusion. Investments and interventions that promote health equity can counter the trend of disparities in health; however, the most promising interventions require coordination beyond our health care systems...or “upstream” of our traditional health care systems...across sectors such as land use planning, education, business, transportation, economic development and more.

The Valley is burdened by some of the most significant health disparities in our state and nation. Poor health outcomes are propagated by social determinants or community characteristics that inhibit good health. In the case of the Valley where many community members live in poverty, residents struggle with affording nutritious foods which are often more expensive than high calorie processed items. Many Valley residents live in impoverished communities, which often lack amenities such as sidewalks, bike lanes and parks that support active lifestyles. The concentration of poverty also affects the quality of public schools, access to quality health care and increases risks of exposure to environmental hazards. These conspiring factors profoundly influence

the current health of our population and compromise the future health of our children. As the health burdens on community residents are worse, they are likely to live substantially shorter lives. Without question we must work across sectors in order to foster better health outcomes in the San Joaquin Valley.

While we work to keep our population healthy, we cannot overlook or neglect the tremendous need to treat and care for those residents in our region who are currently struggling with health issues and chronic illnesses. Our efforts to advance health equity must encompass actions to ensure all residents have health insurance and access to high quality, affordable healthcare.

The Question

What roles should the Partnership take to help facilitate achieving improved health outcomes and greater health equity among residents of the San Joaquin Valley?

Partnership Involvement

The Partnership can play a great role in connecting resources, fostering collaboration and advocating for policy, system and environmental changes region-wide that promote health and improve access to healthcare. Educating and information local decision makers on a *Health in All Policies* approach would be advantageous in both supporting public health efforts and connecting other vital sectors such as education, business and government to also advancing greater health equity.

1. Is the priority compatible with the Partnership's Mission to "Connect, Collaborate and Advocate"?

Prioritizing the health of residents and advancing health equity in the San Joaquin Valley is fundamentally compatible with the Partnership's Mission.

2. What is the appropriate level Partnership engagement? Should it lead, partner or support the priority?

The Partnership has an opportunity to support health in the region as a leader, partner and advocate.

3. Who else is working on or interested in the priority?

The San Joaquin Valley Public Health Consortium is a forum for County Public Health Directors, Health Officers, and invited members to explore and exchange ideas and information and to develop strategies for addressing pressing public health issues faced by the counties and the region. The Consortium engages in strategic planning, training, action oriented policy development and research to improve the quality and responsiveness of public health programs in the Central California region. The vision of the Consortium is to achieve health equity for all residents in the San Joaquin Valley and the mission is to provide leadership for a regional health agenda that addresses the social determinants of health in the San Joaquin Valley.

Similarly, health care consortiums are San Joaquin Community Health Forum, Stanislaus County Homeless Task Force, and Fresno County Health Improvement Partnership (FCHIP).

4. What will the Partnership actually do?

The Partnership can convene relevant stakeholders for greater coordination across sectors within the region; foster strategic planning within the region, increase understanding and application of the health in all policies approach among decision makers.

5. What resources, financial and administrative, are necessary to implement the Partnership's chosen level of engagement?

Continue to identify and drawdown grant resources to support efforts to promote health and health equity regionwide.

6. Who will be responsible for implementation, both from a standpoint of oversight and administration?

As the Secretariat of the Partnership, the Office of Community and Economic Development at Fresno State (OCED) will provide administrative duties and responsibilities in carrying out the tasks of this objective. OCED in coordination with the assistance of the Health Care Cluster grant funding to help pay for this administrative work, as well as provide funds for previously mentioned projects.

7. What are the most appropriate measurements of the Partnership's impact, progress or success?

- Number of facilitated sessions or trainings on health in all policies between decision makers and public health professionals.
- Number of communications or training on best practices for local city and county officials on smart and equitable growth. Including advocacy on investments for underserved and disadvantage places related to active transportation and parks.
- Number of communications, publications or training on best practices for local unincorporated communities, city or county officials on increasing access to potable water.
- Number of communications, publications or training on best practices in the region on promoting clean air.
- Number of communications, publications or training on best practices for local unincorporated communities, city or county officials on incentivizing health food retail and business promoting fitness and physical activity. Increase information related to dis-incentivizing unhealthy food retail.
- Increased collaborations to support workforce development and funding for public health.
- Increased collaborations to support an increase in the number of residents who have health insurance and access to health care.

Priorities

1. Adopt a *health in all policies* approach in regional and local decision-making. It is imperative to consider the health impacts of proposed actions on vulnerable populations in order not to further inequity. Conversely priority of investments and interventions should be targeted to ameliorate the documented health disparities that exist within the region.
2. Adopt land use policies that reflect an emphasis on smart and equitable growth. This should include considerations about equitable investments to support walking, biking and recreation through adequate park space.
3. Ensure that all communities, including those that are unincorporated, have access to safe drinking water.
4. Support the alignment of policies to ensure clean air. Focus increased attention on enforcing existing air quality standards and on helping individuals and communities understand and mitigate environmental risks.
5. Incentivize retail, public places (e.g., community centers, public library and sports complexes) and school environments that increase access to healthy foods and support fitness and active lifestyles.
6. Support and increase the capacity of our public health and health care workforce to identify and address disparities.
7. Support and increase enrollment in health insurance.
8. Support and align initiatives intended to improve health and reduce the incidence of chronic disease among Valley residents.

Submitted by Partnership staff representatives

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