



# Health Disparities

## Discussion Guide

### Let's review

*At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room. And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.*

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

**The "Table-it" Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

### Let's begin

- Take five minutes to walk through the brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
  - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
  - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

### Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- The CDC estimates 60% [of premature deaths](#) in the U.S. can be associated with nonmedical factors - the social, environmental, and behavioral influences known as the social determinants of health.
- The 2020 fiscal year budget allocated over [\\$1.3 billion](#) to treating chronic disease and addressing health disparities.
- [By one estimate from the Kaiser Family Foundation](#), "disparities amount to approximately \$93 billion in excess medical care costs and \$42 billion in lost productivity per year as well as economic losses due to premature deaths."

## Let's discuss

Below are 3 questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** What are the fundamental causes of health inequities? What perpetuates these?
- **Local, State or Federal Government:** When it comes to making decisions that address health equity, who should be at the decision-making table? How connected are decision-makers to affected communities?
- **Business:** How can businesses and employers address health inequities among employees?

## Let's act

1. **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** to identify the status of health disparities in your community. Identify the opportunities to work with other community members in your area. See how your community ranks on the [County Health Rankings](#).
2. **Explore the impact of health equity policies in your community.** Reach out to your [State's Minority Health Contact](#).
3. **Investigate community programs in your state or municipality.** Explore the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services [Innovation Models map](#) to see endeavors in your state and community facilities.
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on health equity, and their vision for how to tackle the challenges of health disparities facing Americans and your community. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on the health disparities in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

## Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
  - [Aging in the 21st Century](#)
  - [The Affordable Care Act](#)
  - [The Opioid Epidemic](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.