



Association of Academic Health Centers®
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ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTERS AND THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH: CHALLENGES & BARRIERS, RESPONSES & SOLUTIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 9-11, 2014, the Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC) and partner organizations hosted a third national conference of selected leaders on *Academic Health Centers and the Social Determinants of Health*. The meeting was held in Washington, DC, and support for this conference was provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The meeting program examined the role of academic health centers in addressing the social determinants of health and convened an array of stakeholders to identify barriers to addressing the social determinants of health and propose constructive, collaborative solutions.

The report, *Academic Health Centers and the Social Determinants of Health: Challenges & Barriers, Responses & Solutions*, summarizes the conference's small-group breakout sessions, as well as relevant portions of plenary sessions, and synthesizes the discussion to identify consensus challenges and barriers to addressing the social determinants of health and propose vs. proposed responses and solutions. It focuses, in particular, on the role of academic health centers working in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Challenges and barriers to addressing the social determinants of health include:

- Persistent Income and Wealth Disparities
- Low levels of Social Service Spending in relation to Healthcare Spending
- Siloed Responsibilities and Resources, Lack of Cooperation and Planning
- Insufficient Workforce Development
- Obstacles to Interprofessional and Interdisciplinary Collaborative Practice
- Erosion of Public Health's Role, Status, and Resources
- Poorly Aligned Reimbursement Methods
- Lack of Investment in Community Infrastructure
- Inadequacy and Fragmentation of Needed Population Health Data
- Ineffective Communication, Messaging, and Advocacy
- Rigidity of Accreditation and Licensure Bodies
- Multiple Cumulative Impacts on Academic Health Centers

Responses and solutions for many of the challenges and barriers to addressing the social determinants of health include:

- **IMPROVED HEALTH DATA COLLECTION, SHARING, AND COORDINATION** – Collaboration is needed among all stakeholders, federal, state and local, public and private, which should include improved access and consensus outcomes measures.
- **REALIGNMENT OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REIMBURSEMENT METHODS** – In addition to rewarding value-based and population-based care, reimbursement models must incorporate life circumstance adjustments.
- **HARMONIZATION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENTS** – Consistency and coordination are needed in definitions, process, and results, as well as development of consensus measures, methods, and approaches.
- **EFFECTIVE AND IMPROVED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT** – Creating an appropriately sized and trained workforce is essential to addressing the social determinants of health.
- **IMPROVED SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE** – Stakeholders need to understand the impact that infrastructure (or the lack thereof) has on population health.

COLLABORATIVE RESPONSES AND SOLUTIONS FOR ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTERS

Focusing on responses and solutions that are best addressed by academic health centers, directly or in collaboration with other private and public stakeholders, conference participants proposed the formation of a formal, ongoing academic health center collaborative to:

- Develop models for academic health centers to establish community-based partnerships addressing the social determinants of health.
- Translate best practices into a common, strong, shared message that articulates what is effective and what can be accomplished within academic health centers.
- Work more closely with other major public and private stakeholders to identify common interests and objectives.
- Identify the lessons learned from new academic health centers that have been built from the ground up to address the social determinants of health.
- Articulate strategies to foster informed leadership that will make addressing the social determinants of health a core value of the academic health center community.
- Assume a leadership role in developing data sources, research tools, and performance measures.
- Develop common, cohesive, effective messages to increase awareness of the social determinants of health by the public, policy makers, and other stakeholders.

For more information on the
AAHC Social Determinants of Health Initiative,
please visit: www.wherehealthbegins.org

To learn more about the
Association of Academic Health Centers,
please visit: www.aahcdc.org