Sports for Health Equity

A National Program by Health Equity Initiative

FACT SHEET

Building Awareness and Encouraging Community Action to Address Health Disparities

Issue:
- Health disparities (differences in health outcomes or diseases or health conditions that are either more common or more severe among disadvantaged groups) continue to undermine opportunities for social and economic development of too many U.S. communities.
- Disparities are linked to several factors, including socio-economic conditions, race, ethnicity and culture, as well as having access to health care services, a built environment that supports physical activity, neighborhoods with accessible and affordable nutritious food, health information that’s culturally appropriate and accurately reflects literacy levels, and caring and friendly clinical settings. In other words, the place where you work, live, age, or get care can affect your health!
- Communities with greater disparities experience higher rates of infant mortality, higher incidence of several diseases and health conditions, and lower life expectancy.
- Over one decade only a modest increase in awareness levels of health disparities (from 54.5% to 59%) among U.S. adults – and this includes the groups that are most affected by such disparities.
- Community engagement is key to devising community-specific solutions and/or to influence future health-related programs and policies – and this first requires increased awareness and participation in a national dialogue by communities and different sectors across the U.S.

Sport for Health Equity Goals:
- Increased public/community awareness and understanding of health equity.
- Increased community action and emphasis on partnerships across different sectors.

Sport for Health Equity Objectives:
- Raise awareness of health equity as an important issue that limits vulnerable and underserved populations’ ability to connect to socioeconomic opportunities among teens, their families, schools, and communities.
- Increase understanding of the many factors that contribute to health disparities.
- Encourage community action and multi-sectoral partnerships to devise sustainable community-specific solutions.
- Raise influence of community voices on health equity.
- Encourage healthy behaviors by increasing social support for long-term sustainability.

Main Program Elements:
- Focus on sports as a key community building activity:
  - Supports healthy lifestyles.
  - Grounded on key principles of teamwork, unity, and focus.
  - Brings together people from different ethnicities, socio-economic background, ages, etc. – just as we need to do for health equity!
  - Provides people with a sense of community belonging – especially important for the most disadvantaged!
• Program’s celebrity spokesperson: Essence Carson, WNBA All Star, NY Liberty Player, recording artist, writer and producer

Core activities
National media awareness campaign
• Educational video starring Essence Carson on HEI’s website, YouTube, etc.  
  http://www.healthequityinitiative.org/hei/programs/sports-for-health-equity/
• Pledge for Health Equity: Electronic Pledge on the Health Equity Initiative website:  
  http://www.healthequityinitiative.org/hei/programs/sports-for-health-equity/
• National Shoot-a-thon Program
• Health Equity Talks with Essence Carson  
  o Virtual or community-based town hall meetings including community members, local businesses, public health, healthcare, community development professionals, others