Florida
State and Local Health Equity Policy Checklist

MAY 2021

Legislative Reform

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Implement Racial Equity Impact Statements for legislation at the state or local levels, including environmental, health and criminal justice areas.	✓	A 2019 rule approved by the state **Senate President** created a pilot program partnership between the Florida State University (FSU) College of Criminology & Criminal Justice and the state Senate.[1] Beginning in 2020, FSU will analyze evidence-based racial and ethnic impact data in assessing proposed criminal justice legislation.
Expand Health Impact Assessments attached to state and local legislation to include equity considerations.	☒	The Florida **Department of Health** and county governments perform Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) for different projects, but there are no requirements attached to legislation.[2] Health planners in Pinellas Park, Pinellas County and St. Petersburg work with decisionmakers to screen which policies or programs would benefit from a health analysis, identify which health impacts to consider, **assess the risks** and benefits of the policy or program, recommend changes to maximize the health benefits and minimize the health risks, and monitor and evaluate the policy or program's overall health impact. However, these are not attached to legislation.[3]

State Health Planning & Programs

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Declare racism a public health crisis and implement steps to address it.	⊖	**Manatee County** declared racism a public health crisis and set goals to promote racial equity training to reach all county commissioners, leadership and staff.[4] They also aim to identify clear goals and objectives, including periodic reports to the Board of County Commissioners assessing progress and capitalizing on opportunities to advance racial equity. **Hillsborough County** also issued a declaration and vowed to promote racial equity training among all community partners, grantees, vendors and contractors, as well as also identify clear goals and objectives, including periodic reports to the Board of County Commissioners, to assess progress.[5]

Summary and scoring methodology reports are available at
www.HealthValueHub.org/Health-Equity-Checklist.

If you know of a policy we overlooked, please contact **hubinfo@altarum.org**.

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State Health Planning & Programs *(continued)*

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Develop a 'Health in All Policies' strategy at the state or local level.	⊖	Health planners in **Pinellas Park**, Pinellas County and St. Petersburg are trained in the Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach and serve as internal content experts for health planning consultations.[6] They work with decisionmakers to screen which policies or programs would benefit from a health analysis, identify which health impacts to consider, **assess the risks** and benefits of the policy or program, recommend changes to maximize the health benefits and minimize the health risks, and monitor and evaluate the policy or program's overall health impact.[7] In addition, Hillsborough County's Office of Health Equity embraces an HiAP strategy and has performed HiAP projects, including a 2019 Transportation Planning and Prioritization Matrix (a walkability study in the university area community.) This study was featured by the **National Association of County & City Health Officials** in 2019.[8] The county's health department's goals include increasing local awareness of what creates a healthy environment and to use an HiAP approach to improve community livability and the regional economy. approach to improve community livability and the regional economy. The Florida **Department of Health** recognizes and assists communities making HiAP an integral part of their comprehensive planning by inviting them to share their stories and best practices for a chance to be honored through the Healthy Community Champions Recognition Program, which offers technical assistance to communities to further the adoption and implementation of local programs.[9]
Establish Health Equity Zones to better address social determinants of health.	⊖ *One or more cities/counties within a state established Health Equity Zones (or something similar) to better address social determinants of health and the program is either currently or no longer active.*	AdventHealth's 2020-2022 **Community Health Plan** outlines a strategy to develop a Health Equity Zone in the Spring Hill neighborhood of Deland.[10] Health Equity Zone partners include the Department of Health in Volusia County, the City of Deland, the County of Volusia, Healthy Start of Flagler and Volusia Counties, and Volusia County Schools. In addition, this initiative is mentioned in the Volusia County Community **Health Improvement Plan 2020-2022**.[11]
Create an Equity Strategic Plan to lay out how the state (or local entity within the state) will reduce health disparities.	⊖	Gainesville**'s 2020 Strategic Plan** focuses heavily on equity and articulates top policy action priorities that include developing an equity policy and plan for the city, as well as a strategic health action plan that incorporates a "Budget Equity Tool" (currently in development).[12] In addition, Hillsborough **County has a Health Equity Profile**, though not an Equity Strategic Plan, explains the inequities within their county, ways people can get involved and policies they can support.[13]
Fund community-driven health equity action plans.	⊗	

State Health Planning & Programs *(continued)*

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Implement participatory budgeting at the state and/or local level for initiatives that focus on health and social determinants of health.	☒	
Emphasize health disparities and equity when developing State Health Assessments & State Health Improvement Plans	✓	Florida's **State Health Assessment** for 2017-2021 emphasizes the existing health inequities within the state, particularly in populations with certain chronic conditions and health concerns.[14] The state's **Health Improvement Plan** for 2017-2021 names health equity as their first priority area.[15]
Fund community-based organizations operating in the state to reduce disparities and/or provide culturally competent health-related supports.	✓	Florida created the **Reducing Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities 'Closing the Gap'** grant program in 2000.[16] These grants stimulate the development of community and neighborhood-based organizations that work to improve health outcomes of certain racial and ethnic communities and promote prevention activities. This program funds projects focused on building partnerships between local governments, community groups and private sector healthcare organizations. These projects also aimed to help communities address pressing health needs with targeted health screenings, education and awareness programs, as well as better understand the nature of health disparities among ethnic and racial groups.
Implement strategies to address specific health outcomes related to inequality in social determinants of health, such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease and maternal mortality, among others.	✓	The **Florida Asthma Program** coordinates statewide efforts to reduce asthma disparities and hospitalization rates, and to increase the number of people with asthma who receive self-management education.[17] Additionally, the state has **diabetes prevention programs,** which aim to educate participants about the healthy habits that can prevent type-2 diabetes.[18] Florida also has a **Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review** process, which is used to issue annual reports that highlight disparities and provide recommendations to reduce maternal mortality rates.[19]
Participate in the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE), a national network of local and regional governments to address racial equity.	✓	The cities of Gainesville, Hallandale Beach and Palm Beach County **participate in GARE**.[20]

Data & Reporting

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Create equity reporting requirements for state and local government agencies.	☒	

Data & Reporting

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Use the state's Office of Health Equity/Disparities/Minority Health to analyze and report on existing health disparities and/or equity concerns within the state.	✅	The Florida Department of Health creates **health equity profiles** for each county that break down various health indicators by racial and ethnic group, highlighting disparities and inequities.[21] However, there are no publicly accessible reports on existing disparities at the state level, except for mentions of existing disparities in Florida's **State Health Assessment**.[22]
Require nonprofit hospitals to incorporate an equity component into their community health needs assessments and community health improvement plans and/or establish a minimum percentage of non-profit hospitals' Community Benefit that must be invested in programs targeted at reducing health disparities by addressing root causes.	❌	Florida has an **unconditional** community benefit requirement, requiring nonprofit hospitals to provide charity care with no other requirements, and sets no **minimum** community benefit requirement.[23,24] Outside of federal requirements, there are no additional Community Health Needs Assessment requirements related to equity in Florida.
Increase the validity, use and standardization of data on race, ethnicity and/or languages spoken for state reporting requirements.	❌	
Include socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity and/or languages spoken in All-Payer Claims Database data.	❌	Florida has had an **all-payer claims database** since 2016 and requires insurance companies participating in Medicaid or the state employee health insurance program to submit data to the state.[25] Though the claims data provided includes member eligibility data, member claims data and pharmacy claims data, the **Florida Claims Submission Guide** makes no mention of race, ethnicity or languages spoken.[26]

Health Reform – Coverage

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Expand Medicaid eligibility requirements to include all adults with incomes at or below 138 percent of the federal poverty level.	❌	In 2020, **Florida passed a law** that allows the state to access Medicaid dollars to support healthcare services in schools provided through the Florida Medicaid Certified School Match Program.[27] These services include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy services, behavioral health services, mental health services and transportation services. Legislators **introduced five bills** focused on Medicaid expansion during the 2021 legislative session.[28] For example, **Senate Joint Resolution 276** would put Medicaid expansion on the 2022 ballot.[29] The Florida House debated an amendment to the proposed healthcare budget, **House Bill 5201**, that would have expanded Medicaid eligibility to Floridians making less than 138% of the federal poverty level. As of April 2021, the amendment had been withdrawn.[30]

Health Reform – Coverage

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Expand Medicaid eligibility requirements to include all adults with incomes at or below 138 percent of the federal poverty level. *(continued)*	☒	In addition, there is a state budget effort in the **2021 Florida legislature** to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage to a full year for women with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.[31]
Provide high-quality, affordable coverage options for people whose incomes are too high to qualify for Medicaid, e.g., Basic Health Plan, reinsurance or augmented premium subsidies.	☒	
Provide one-year continuous eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP.	⊖ *The state provides one-year continuous eligibility for Medicaid or CHIP, but not both.*	Florida **gives children enrolled in Medicaid** under the age of five 12-month continuous eligibility and children five and older 6-month continuous eligibility.[32] There is no **continuous eligibility** for other age groups.[33]
Provide coverage options to undocumented and recent immigrants.	✔ *The state provides coverage options for recent documented immigrants, for example, enrollment in Medicaid or CHIP without a five-year wait.*	**Lawfully residing children** may enroll in Medicaid/CHIP without a 5-year wait.[34] There are no coverage options for **pregnant immigrant women** or **undocumented adults** outside of Emergency Medicaid.[35,36]

Health Reform – Delivery

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Develop Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO) contract options for advancing health equity and recommend or require MCOs to complete specific health equity responsibilities.	☒	**Florida requires MCOs** to offer 'Healthy Start' services.[37] Through 'Mom Care' and 'Healthy Start Coordinated System of Care' programs, **MCOs provide connections to community resources**, including resources related to nutrition, e.g., assistance with benefits under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and nutritional counseling.[38] Florida also **requires all managed care plans** to have a Healthy Behavior program that addresses smoking cessation, medically directed weight loss and substance use treatment. In addition, **Florida requires MCOs** to have procedures for identifying available community support services and facilitating referrals to community support providers.[39]

Health Reform – Delivery *(continued)*

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Encourage or require Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) and/or Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) to collect equity-focused data, adopt culturally appropriate programs, implement partnerships with community-based organizations in areas with larger minority populations and/or focus on addressing social determinants of health.	▪▪▪	Florida does not have any ACOs in the Medicaid program.
Employ Medicaid 1115 and/or 1915 waivers to better address the social determinants of health.	✓	**Florida's 1115 Managed Medical Assistance** (MMA) program is one component of the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care (SMMC) program.[40] The MMA program works to improve health outcomes through care coordination, patient engagement, fiscal predictability and financial management. Some plans offer expanded benefits, such as transportation services, home delivered meals, and housing assistance. MMA plans are required to include Health Behavior Programs, specifically those aimed at smoking cessation, weight loss and alcohol or substance abuse treatment. In 2019, Florida began the Behavioral Health and Supportive Housing Assistance pilot program to provide housing support services to recipients with severe mental illnesses, substance use disorder or a combination, and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In addition, Florida implemented the **non-emergency transportation (NET) program** through their 1915(b) waiver, which provides transportation services to eligible Medicaid populations.[41]
Require or incentivize providers participating in Medicaid value-based programs to report on measures related to health equity/disparities.	✗	Though **Florida's Medicaid managed care plans** are required to collect and report data on specific performance measures in their Quality Improvement Plans, none of the performance measures specifically relate to health equity or disparities or are used to demonstrate disparities reductions.[42]
Hold providers participating in Medicaid value-based programs responsible for reducing health disparities by evaluating/scoring performance in this area.	✗	
Create or expand Accountable Communities for Health with a focus on increasing health equity.	✗	

Health Reform – Delivery *(continued)*

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Prioritize funding for communication infrastructure development, including broadband and cellular access, in underserved rural and urban areas.	✓	In 2020, Florida's governor signed the **Broadband Internet Service bill** which assigns broadband policy oversight to a new Florida Office of Broadband.[43] The bill allows Florida's Turnpike Enterprise to spend up to $5 million annually to assist in developing broadband infrastructure, with priority given to 'rural areas of opportunity.' **The Office is charged** with creating a strategic plan to increase use of broadband services in the state through grant programs, especially in underserved rural communities.[44]
Subsidize internet access to expand opportunities for telehealth.	✗	
Expand coverage for telehealth services.	✗	
Establish or strengthen telehealth reimbursement parity laws to incentivize providers to deliver these services.	⊖ *The state has temporary telehealth payment parity laws that expire after the current public health emergency.*	Florida **passed a law in 2019** that requires contracts between an insurer and telehealth provider to establish mutually acceptable payment rates for services provided through telehealth.[45] Any contract provision that distinguishes between rates for telehealth services and in-person services must be initialed by the telehealth provider, ensuring that both parties agree to different payment rates, if applicable. Though this is not explicitly reimbursement parity, this is the first time such language has appeared in telehealth private payer law in the U.S. For the duration of the **public health emergency**, Florida's Medicaid managed care plans must reimburse for services provided via telemedicine at the same rate as in-person services. In addition, a **FAQ statement** from early 2020 explained that in the fee-for-service Medicaid system, Medicaid will reimburse at the same rate listed on the early intervention service (EIS) schedule for telehealth sessions, and Medicaid plans are required to pay the same for telemedicine services as in-person services for the duration of the public health emergency.[46]
Waive/limit cost-sharing for telehealth services.	⊖	Florida has eliminated **copays for their Medicaid program**, but **has not issued guidance** to waive or lower telehealth copays.[47,48] Members of **Florida Healthy Kids** (part of the joint Medicaid and Children's Medical Services program, KidCare) had copays suspended for telehealth visits with "behavioral health or primary care providers or another service," until April 1, 2021.[49]

Health Reform – Delivery *(continued)*

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Adopt a global budget system for paying hospitals to better enable them to focus on prevention, care coordination, community-based integration and social determinants of health.	✖	
Require workplace-based cultural competency and implicit-bias training for clinicians and other providers.	⊖	Florida **requires community health workers** to have four hours of training in communication and education, including, "communication skills that are culturally and linguistically competent, including verbal, non-verbal communication and effective listening skills," as well as four hours of resources training, including, "differences between various cultural/ communities and health/social services systems."[50]

COVID-Specific Reforms

POLICY	SCORE	NOTES
Collect racial equity data to better understand the disparate impact of COVID-19.	✔	Florida reports **race and ethnicity data** for vaccine distribution and COVID-19 cases, but not for testing, hospitalizations, recoveries or mortality.[51]
Implement changes to Medicaid enrollment, including but not limited to presumptive eligibility, cost-sharing provisions, special enrollment periods, increased enrollment assistance and improvements to application processing in response to COVID-19.	✔	**Florida has not** extended presumptive eligibility, opened a special enrollment period, increased Medicaid enrollment assistance or changed the Medicaid application to make it easier.[52] However, the state has **extended the timeframe to complete Medicaid applications** and is permitting virtual evaluations, assessments and person-centered planning meetings in lieu of face-to-face meetings.[53] **Florida has** eliminated copays in their Medicaid program.[54]
Leverage the Emergency Medicaid program to extend COVID-19 testing, evaluation and treatment coverage to undocumented immigrants.	✖	
Waive or limit cost-sharing for COVID-19 testing and treatment by private insurers.	✖	Florida **directed health insurers** to consider all practicable options to reduce cost-sharing for COVID testing and treatment but has not issued any requirements on this.[55]
Provide COVID-19 testing to residents free of charge.	✔	Florida **provides COVID-19 testing** to residents free of charge.[56]

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ALTARUM HEALTHCARE VALUE HUB

ABOUT ALTARUM'S HEALTHCARE VALUE HUB

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Arnold Ventures, the Healthcare Value Hub provides free, timely information about the policies and practices that address high healthcare costs and poor quality, bringing better value to consumers. The Hub is part of Altarum, a nonprofit organization that creates and implements solutions to advance health among at-risk and disenfranchised populations.

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