

# Health Circle

## **Background**

Health Equity Circle (HEC) was founded in Seattle in 2009 by students and faculty who recognized that the medical curriculum taught students to recognize social determinants of health, but not how to treat them – this is still true today. They believed the skills of community organizing were an essential missing link to the development of physicians who were prepared to treat both biological and social causes of disease. Today, HEC is a network of cooperative but independent student organizations across 6 states supported by the HEC non-profit. Many chapters partner with the Industrial Areas Foundation, the nation's oldest and largest community organizing network, to collaborate with community groups who share the goal of advancing health equity.

## **Mission**

When we talk about health, we recognize that this means more than just health care.

When we talk about equity, we mean a society that assures the conditions of health for all.

We understand that in the "world as it is" systems of oppression, historically and continuing today, create inequities in health that are avoidable, unjust, and deadly. Therefore, it is Health Equity Circle's mission to educate, organize, and act to build health equity by developing and supporting health equity leaders.

## **Values**

- Interprofessional Membership – our chapters include undergrads, graduate students, and alumni because we know that health equity is a shared responsibility.
- Community Partnership – we use relational meetings to build trust and common ground without preconceived or paternalistic agenda.
- Education – we offer a for credit course in community organizing taught by a professional organizer to fill the curricular gap between knowledge and action.

## **Current and Past Campaigns**

Health Equity Circle is built on the foundation of community partnerships and the traditional organizing cycle, with campaigns spanning multiple years.

Best Starts for Kids (2013-2015) – Levy passed in 2015 to support health development of all children.

Clinic Based Organizing (2017-2020) – Secured \$67 million in state tax revenue for affordable housing.

Lobby Day (2017 – current, annually) – Meet with representatives to advocate for health-related bills.

Language Access (2021, current) – Pharmacies must be able to print prescriptions in top 15 languages.