



HEALTH EQUITY ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Letter from the Chief Health Equity Officer



Grady Hospital established its Office of Health Equity (OHE) in October of 2021, dedicated specifically to investigating health disparities at Grady Hospital and in the communities Grady serves. Committed to its mission, I am honored to serve as the Inaugural Chief Health Equity Officer for Grady's Office of Health Equity. As a pediatrician and Adolescent Medicine specialist, I have served for 25 years as a leader and advocate for members of underserved communities in Atlanta and across Georgia.

Health disparities disproportionately affect African Americans. Given that 75% of patients served at Grady Health System identify as Black/African American, it is crucial that Grady Health System take the lead in identifying issues around health disparity, analyzing the accompanying data, and developing effective action plans to close the health disparity gaps that exist.

Health disparities cause inequities in health care—this is a long-standing fact. The approaches from which to address health disparity and health equity are varied. They involve a significant number of challenges and a variety of concerns. Exploring the many aspects of these challenges, the Office of Health Equity (OHE) has chosen life expectancy as the vantage point to address the causes and repercussions of health disparity and health equity. Using the analysis of life expectancy in ZIP Codes across Fulton and DeKalb counties, the OHE identified neighborhoods with the lowest life expectancy rates. We then compared the health outcomes within those ZIP Codes with the outcomes from other neighborhoods. With this data, we identified a pattern of higher rates of chronic illness, significant challenges with social determinates of health, and lower rates of preventive care and screening. Access to preventive services and primary care in ZIP Codes with low life-expectancy is the lens through which the OHE decided to focus its efforts.

Increasing access to preventive services, primary care, and health awareness can make a significant impact on improving health equity. Armed with this information, we have been intentional in instituting community outreach programs. These efforts include mobile mammogram van services, fairs for health care education and health screening, back-to-school "bashes," community presentations, and town halls. The Office of Health Equity has partnered with 12 departments at Grady to assist in achieving the goal to significantly increase access to services for our patients.

Commissioning Health Equity Access Coordinators (HEAC), the OHE has led seven major access-improvement projects in which HEACs provide a variety of services directly to patients. Having completed a care gap analysis, the HEACs' work can target patients to be contacted to schedule follow up and screening appointments for them. From September 2022 to April 2024, five HEACs have made over 23,000 calls and scheduled approximately 7,500 patient visits.

Grady Health System's Office of Health Equity has participated in 127 community engagement activities in over 20 Fulton and DeKalb county ZIP Codes. Partnering with 32 organizations, the OHE has engaged religious groups, fraternities and sororities, middle and high schools, grass roots organizations, senior living centers, and apartment complexes, among others, to fulfill its mission. Important supplementary benefits of the OHE's work have been an increase in the visibility of Grady Health System in the community and in our ability to identify, first-hand, both the evident and latent needs in the communities we serve.

One characteristic success of the Office of Health Equity's work is the Teen Experience and Leadership Program (TELP) begun in 2022. TELP engages high school teens who are interested in learning about and gaining experience in the health care field. TELP is a seven-week program in which teens can shadow on clinical and non-clinical units at Grady Hospital. In this, the participants gain exposure to and experience with the activities and skills involved in a health care worker's daily schedule. Grady Hospital also hosts work-based learning experiences in partnership with Westlake High School and the Atlanta Public School's Atlanta College and Career Academy for its patient care tech program.

To enhance Grady Health System's national health equity leadership status, I have represented the OHE in my national presentations about our health equity journey for the American College of Healthcare Executives, the American Hospital Association, and America's Essential Hospitals, among others. In addition to national presentations, the OHE has published articles in peer reviewed journals about health equity, as well. We are committed to maintaining our national leadership status in health equity by leading with innovation and creativity, ensuring that we continue our successful work in bringing positive changes in health outcomes for the patients we are privileged to serve.

Health equity is now the fifth pillar in our institutional strategic plan. As a result, Grady Hospital's Board of Directors has created a board-level Health Equity Committee which is especially significant because, nationally, less than 5% of health system boards have such a committee. Our commitment to health equity is further demonstrated by our attention to accountability and resource allocation, resulting in a vibrant sustainability.

As you can see, we have been quite busy these past two years. Topmost in our work is to integrate health equity into everything we do. We are off to a great start.

Yolanda Wimberly, MD, MSc
SVP, Chief Health Equity Officer
Grady Health System



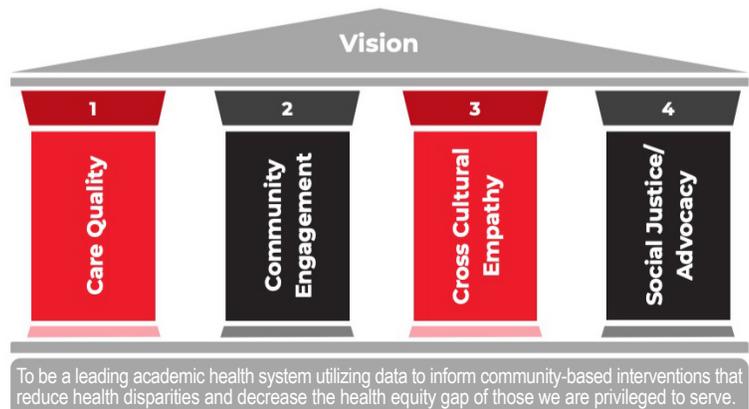
Grady Board of Directors' Health Equity Committee

High-performing, impactful governance requires motivated, knowledgeable board members who understand how to think and lead, strategically and equitably, in today's rapidly changing health care environment.

Significant disparities in health outcomes across our nation have led boards and senior leaders to focus on health equity as a strategic priority. The challenge of delivering high-quality, compassionate health care to all patients and communities should be a consistent goal for health care leaders and their governing boards. Beyond ethical considerations, it has been established in numerous studies that the relationship between health inequities and the higher cost and lower quality of care has a significant impact on health outcomes.

The aim of establishing a board-level committee was to further promote and advance Grady's health equity agenda and establish priorities in a way that aligns with its mission and enterprise-wide strategies. Grady's Office of Health Equity developed a strategic plan with four pillars: care quality, community engagement, cross-cultural empathy, and social justice/advocacy. From a governance perspective, these strategic pillars are foundational to creating the charter for the Health Equity Committee. Consequently, Grady has now added a fifth pillar to its institutional strategic plan: health equity.

The purpose of the Board of Directors' Health Equity Committee is to assist the Board in the oversight of Grady Health System's policies, procedures, and operations relating to health equity, care quality, community engagement, cross-cultural empathy, and social justice/advocacy. The committee's members are charged with providing guidance, leadership, accountability, and coordination in Grady's efforts to achieve equity in patient care and with helping to reduce health disparities in the communities Grady serves.



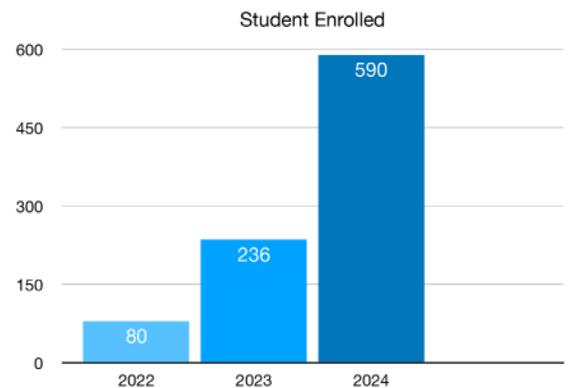
Teen Experience and Leadership Program (TELP)

The Teen Experience and Leadership Program (TELP) is a groundbreaking initiative aimed at fostering community partnerships and offering teenagers unique opportunities to delve into the world of health care. TELP provides an immersive experience, offering participants exposure to various health occupations and equipping them with essential leadership skills. By nurturing this pipeline, the program aims to bolster the workforce while empowering employee-mentors to serve as role models and to deepen their community engagement.

TELP has become a marquee workforce pipeline program at Grady. Housed in the Office of Health Equity, this seven-week summer leadership experience allows teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19 who attend high school, to gain exposure to various health occupations. During the summer program, participants engage not only in shadowing experience in over 60 clinical and nonclinical areas, but they also attend leadership workshops, can become CPR certified, and gain access to professionals at colleges and universities for career planning.

An additional highlight to the TELP summer experience is the Health Equity Research Project teens develop on their own, which they present during a showcase at the end of the summer. The program serves as an opportunity for teen leaders to increase their knowledge and experience alongside subject matter experts. Additionally, TELP supports Grady Health System's strategy to increase its health care workforce.

When TELP was piloted in 2022, 80 students participated. In 2023, the program expanded to 236 teen-participants, of which, 127 became CPR certified. At this point, 2024 is on track to be a record-setting year. This summer, 590 students are enrolled in TELP, and those 590 students will gain exposure to 64 rotations at Grady and throughout the community. As a best practice model, Grady is well positioned to serve through its creative and practical approach to addressing workforce challenges in health care and increase the number of students in STEM.





Teen Experience and Leadership Day at the State Capitol

On March 11, 2024, the Office of Health Equity, in partnership with the Grady Chief Health Policy Officer, Ryan Loke, and Georgia State Representative Roger Bruce, participated in Grady TELP Day at the State Capitol. This was the first time Grady Health System invited TELP students to the State Capitol during the legislative session.

Over 40 students from local middle and high schools were introduced to health policy and the advocacy and general legislative processes, and the role local constituents play in influencing the passing of bills. Students had the opportunity to meet with their legislators, visit the general assembly in progress, and learn about key issues that impact Grady Health System. Before attending TELP Day at the Capitol, student leaders were encouraged to research who their legislators were, schedule a meeting with them, and collaborate with drafting a bill to present during TELP Day at the Capitol.

At the start of the session, TELP leaders were welcomed by Dr. Yolanda Wimberly. They met with Georgia State Representative Roger Bruce from District 61 and former Georgia State Representative and Grady Health System staff member, Howard Mosby and Ryan Loke, Grady Chief Health Policy Officer. Bruce, Loke, and Mosby enlightened the students on day-to-day operations in the State House and answered questions from TELP leaders. After the discussion, Katie Smith led TELP participants on a tour of the State Capitol, after which they were escorted to the chambers where they witnessed several bills brought to the floor for discussion and vote.

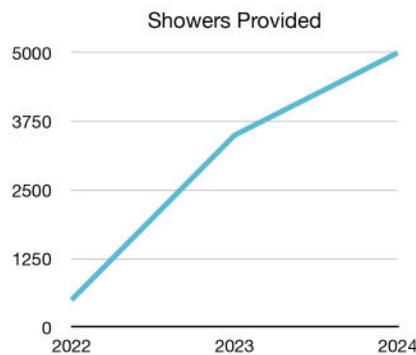
After taking a group photo on the steps of the historic State Capitol, students walked to Grady Health System and had a debriefing session. Feedback from the TELP students was especially positive. Each respondent said they would recommend attending TELP Day at the Capitol to others. They enjoyed the engaging talks by the legislators and hearing bills being introduced. One TELP leader said, "I enjoyed visiting the Capitol and learning about my local legislators!"

Flowing with Blessings—One Shower at a Time

Behind Grady Hospital on Tuesdays and Thursdays, you can find Clarenton “Nicky” Crawford and a team of volunteers providing hot showers for Atlanta’s unhoused population. Nicky and his wife Deborah founded Flowing with Blessings, Inc., a non-profit organization, to provide mobile showers for the unhoused. Their mission is rooted in the belief that every person deserves to “feel clean, comfortable, and valued.”

In March 2022, Flowing with Blessings began servicing the unhoused at Grady Hospital. Each week on Tuesday and Thursday, they serve those who need necessities such as a shower and clean clothes and shoes. In addition to the mobile showers, Flowing with Blessings offers additional outreach such as barbering services, providing hot meals, and offering connections to community resources. To date, they have provided over 5,000 showers at Grady hospital and have accumulated a regular cadre of clients, about 60 people with each session, half of whom have become regulars.

The vision of Flowing with Blessings is to restore dignity and offer hope through showers. In addition to donations and partnerships with community organizations, Nicky finances this labor of love out of his own pocket. Soon, Flowing with Blessings will launch additional services for clients: free washers and dryers using antibacterial laundry detergent. The blessings for the unhoused keep flowing with the help of Nicky, Deborah, their children, and countless volunteers.





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