



Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance

Contact:

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Description

The Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance (LBHEA) is a program of Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services (WNHS) and also one of four (4) Regional Health Equity Coalitions in the state of Oregon. LBHEA was originally formed in 2008 to address the social determinants of health and promote policy, system, and environmental change in partnership with member individuals and organizations, with an emphasis on supporting the needs of culturally-specific and rural communities, and with a specific focus on communities of color. The coalition has been funded through the Oregon Health Authority for the last seven (7) years and has had a recognized impact on policy-making at the local level.

The housing crisis and the challenges that it created across the Corvallis and Albany communities have led to an increasing need and desire for additional community engagement. Over the last five (5) years, the Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance has been working on building capacity for advocacy at the community level, first through the efforts to implement the property maintenance code in Corvallis, the through the efforts to strengthen the Corvallis Tobacco Retail License language, and most recently through the efforts to organize and develop the Benton County Housing Matters network of trained community advocates with support from a grant from the Meyer Memorial Foundation. Our lessons learned through these successful efforts show that it is possible and advantageous to harness the voices of the individuals and communities most affected by housing and health challenges if support of long-term policy changes that lead to true systems and environmental changes. We have also noted the continued interest for engagement coming from these vulnerable communities and their desire for additional capacity building opportunities.

Timeframe

Continuous, ongoing.

Funding

LBHEA has been funded by the Oregon Health Authority (through the Office of Equity and Inclusion and the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Section) for the last 7 years. In addition to the ongoing support through state funds, we have also been recently granted funds from the Meyer Memorial Foundation and Intercommunity Health Network Coordinated Care Organization.

Equity and Accessibility

The Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance (HEA) is a program of WNHS that has become a regional leader in cross-sector initiatives focused on health equity and healthy communities. With support from the Oregon Health Authority, over 300 individuals and organizations have been involved with

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the HEA in working to address the social determinants of health, including access to decent housing and healthcare. Two-thirds of the LBHEA Leadership Team is composed of people who identify as “people of color”, and this year the program is providing \$108,000 in grant support to member organizations to help with capacity-building and systems change initiatives. Almost three-quarters of these funds go to culturally-specific and rural organizations or programs. LBHEA member meetings address topics such as healthy housing, transportation, racism, aging, Latino and other ethnic minority community needs, issues affecting the LGBT+ community, rural health, education, and food insecurity. Meetings and events are free and open to the public; childcare and food is usually provided; and all meetings have simultaneous interpretation for Spanish-speaking participants.

Among its successes, LBHEA has:

- Successfully working to change the City of Corvallis Property Maintenance Code to provide healthier living conditions.
- Helped to change the Corvallis Tobacco Retail License requirements to include vaping and e-cigarettes and to prohibit sales within 1000 feet of a school or an existing tobacco retailer.
- Used small grants to reduce barriers to participation in LBHEA by small grassroots volunteer organizations.
- Established a strong collaborative relationship with IHN-CCO that includes Alliance participation in the CCO’s Health Equity workgroup and on the Delivery System Transformation Committee.
- Partnered with the NAACP and other social justice organizations on educational programming to address implicit bias and address systematic and institutional racism with commitment to change.
- Changed the community dialogue and focus around health and health equity.

Approvals

N/A

Community Action Plan (CAP) Objectives

LT1: Equitable, Accessible Health Care & Education

ES1: Wellbeing & Basic Needs

Partners

Linn and Benton County Health Departments

OSU Extension

Early Learning Hub

Samaritan Health Services

Intercommunity Health Network

Casa Latinos Unidos

NAACP – Corvallis Chapter

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