



## Health Equity Action Plan Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Health Equity Action Plan (HEAP)?
2. Has VHA ever had a HEAP?
3. What is the goal of the HEAP?
4. What Strategic Goals does the HEAP support?
5. Does the HEAP align with other national initiatives in the area of health equity?
6. What is Health Equity?
7. What vulnerable populations do health disparities affect?
8. Who created the HEAP?
9. What offices make up the Health Equity Coalition?
10. Where can I find related information about the HEAP?
11. How can I publicize the HEAP?

### **What is the Health Equity Action Plan (HEAP)?**

The Health Equity Action Plan is a plan of action to eliminate health disparities and assure health equity for all Veterans.

### **Has VHA ever had a HEAP?**

No, this VHA's first ever Health Equity Action Plan.

### **What is the goal of the HEAP?**

Provide appropriate individualized, pro-active and patient-driven health care in a way that eliminates health disparities and assures health equity.

### **What Strategic Goals does the HEAP support?**

The HEAP supports the goals of I CARE core values, Blueprint for Excellence and VHA Strategic Plan Objective 1(e)—Quality & Equity. The HEAP embraces the I CARE core values and characteristics by coordinating VHA programs, projects, and initiatives to effectively identify, understand, seek and implement solutions to diminish and where possible eliminate health disparities. These united values reflect our commitment to Veterans and their families. Please see the cross walk table below:



<b>Health Equity Action Plan</b>	<b>VA Strategic Plan 2013-2018</b>	<b>Blueprint for Excellence</b>	<b>VHA Strategic Plan</b>	<b>National Partnership for Action &amp; National Stakeholder Strategy</b>
<b>1. Awareness</b>	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Objective 1.1; Strategic Goal 2: Strategic Objective 2.1, 2.2 & 2.3	Strategy 6.2.e, 8.2.d & 8.2.f	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Goal 1b, 1e & 1g	Strategy 2 & 4
<b>2. Leadership</b>	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Objective 1.1	Strategy 6.2d & 9.2.c	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Goal 1e	Strategy 5 & 6
<b>3. Health System Life Experiences</b>	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Objective 1.1 & 1.2	Strategy 1.2.c, 2.2a, 3.2a & 6.2.e	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Goal 1b & 1e	Strategy 8 & 11
<b>4. Cultural &amp; Linguistic Competency</b>	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Objective 1.2; Strategic Goal 3: Strategic Objective 3.1	Strategy 2.2a & 6.2d	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Goal 1b & 1e	Strategy 14, 15 & 16
<b>5. Data Research &amp; Evaluation</b>	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Objective 1.1 & 1.2	Strategy 3.2a, 7.2b & 7.2h	Strategic Goal 1: Strategic Goal 1e	Strategy 17, 19 & 20

Click on the links below for a full description of the strategies outlined above:

- [Blueprint for Excellence](#)
- [VA Fiscal Year 2014-2020 Strategic Plan](#)
- [VHA Strategic Plan FY 2013-2018](#)

The HEAP is developed to align with VHA Strategic Plan Objective 1(e)—Quality & Equity: Veterans will receive timely, high quality, personalized, safe, effective and equitable health care, irrespective of geography, gender, race, age, culture or sexual orientation. The HEAP also impacts VHA Strategic Plan Objectives 1(b)—Communication and 1(g)—Collaboration.



## **Does the HEAP align with other national initiatives in the area of health equity?**

The implementation activities of the HEAP are modeled after the five goal framework of the [National Partnership for Action's National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity](#) sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services. These goals are reflected within the HEAP as the following focus areas:

- Awareness
- Leadership
- Health system and life experience
- Cultural and linguistic competency
- Data, research, and evaluation

## **What is Health Equity?**

Health equity\* is the attainment of the highest level of health for all people, a health disparity is a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social or economic disadvantage. \*Definition adopted from Healthy People 2020.

## **What vulnerable populations do health disparities affect?**

Health disparities tend to adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater social and/or economic obstacles to health and/or safe environment based on the following characteristics: racial or ethnic group, gender, age, geographic location, religion, socio-economic status, military era, sexual orientation, mental health, disability (cognitive, sensory, physical) and other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion. As stated in the Blueprint for Excellence Fact Sheet, we must operate a healthcare network that anticipates and meets the unique needs of enrolled Veterans, in general, and the service disabled and most vulnerable Veterans, in particular.

## **Who created the HEAP?**

The Health Equity Coalition, a VA-wide steering committee, created VHA's first HEAP.

## **What offices make up the Health Equity Coalition?**

Over 14 different program offices and VISNs are involved in the Health Equity Coalition. The Coalition works collaboratively with executive members across VHA and VA. Please visit the Health Equity Coalition Intranet page for a complete list of Coalition members and the offices they represent. Please visit [http://www.va.gov/HEALTHEQUITY/Health\\_Equity\\_Coalition.asp](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHEQUITY/Health_Equity_Coalition.asp) for more information.

## **Where can I find related information about the HEAP?**

Please visit [http://www.va.gov/HEALTHEQUITY/Health\\_Equity\\_Action\\_Plan.asp](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHEQUITY/Health_Equity_Action_Plan.asp) for more information.



Veterans Health  
Administration  
Office of Health Equity

## **How can I publicize the HEAP?**

The HEAP has a dedicated webpage maintained by the Office of Health Equity. This site contains resources that can assist you in understanding and publicizing the HEAP. Please [http://www.va.gov/HEALTHEQUITY/Health\\_Equity\\_Action\\_Plan.asp](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHEQUITY/Health_Equity_Action_Plan.asp) for more information.