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Case Study

Achieving Health Equity Accreditation

Lessons from Community
Care Cooperative



Overview

With only **10% of required documentation** in place and a looming deadline, **Community Care Cooperative (C3)** faced a major challenge: meeting **NCQA Health Equity Accreditation** standards within one year. Health equity was not just a moral imperative—it had become a **business necessity**, driven by regulatory requirements and a commitment to addressing health disparities.

By partnering with **Connected Consultants**, C3 developed a structured strategy to bridge critical gaps, train its workforce, and embed sustainable equity practices across **23 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)**. The result? **NCQA accreditation with a 96.6% score and a lasting transformation in health equity operations.**



Challenges

At the outset of the accreditation process in February 2024, C3 faced three key barriers:

- **Inconsistent REAL & SOGI Data Collection:** Without standardized collection of Race, Ethnicity, and Language (REAL) and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) data, the organization struggled to measure and address health disparities effectively.
- **Workforce Gaps in Cultural Competency & Implicit Bias Training:** Staff lacked consistent training on health equity, leaving them unprepared to provide equitable care.
- **Lack of Oversight for Delegated Health Equity Activities:** No formal systems existed to monitor delegated health equity initiatives, making compliance a significant challenge.
- **Limited Language Access Services:** Many Medicaid patients faced **barriers to care** due to inadequate language services, compounding health disparities.
- **Regulatory Pressures:** MassHealth Medicaid compliance requirements added urgency, requiring **Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs)** to show measurable progress toward health equity accreditation.

Without a clear action plan, C3 risked missing the December deadline.



Solutions

To turn things around, Connected Consultants developed a customized roadmap to accreditation. Key actions included:

✔ **Comprehensive Gap Analysis:**

We diagnosed accreditation readiness and identified priority areas for intervention.

✔ **Strategic Action Plan with Milestones & Accountability:**

We aligned accreditation goals with C3's broader strategic initiatives to secure leadership buy-in.

✔ **Targeted Workforce Training:**

We conducted 30+ training sessions on implicit bias, SOGI data collection, and disability-competent care, ensuring staff had the necessary knowledge and skills.

✔ **Standardized REAL & SOGI Data Collection:**

We developed EHR-compatible data templates and privacy protocols, enabling all 23 FQHCs to implement direct data collection by December 2024.

✔ **Mock Accreditation Simulations:**

We conducted three full-scale scoring simulations to prepare for the NCQA survey and ensure compliance.

✔ **Enhanced Language Access Services:**

We worked with C3 leadership to expand interpreter services and multilingual patient materials, improving accessibility for Medicaid populations.

By embedding equity-focused policies into governance structures, workforce training, and clinical workflows, C3 successfully operationalized health equity as a core business function.





Results

By **February 2025**, C3 achieved **NCQA Health Equity Accreditation** with a **96.6% score** (28 out of 29 possible points). The only deduction was due to **limited access to CAHPS patient experience survey results**, which was beyond C3's control.

More importantly, the **organizational impact was transformative**:

- ✔ **100% Implementation** of REAL & SOGI data collection across all **23 health centers**
- ✔ **Workforce competency** in health equity improved significantly
- ✔ **Expanded language access services**, ensuring Medicaid patients received culturally responsive care
- ✔ **C3 positioned as a national leader** in advancing equity within the ACO model

Long-Term Impact

Achieving accreditation was **only the beginning**. With sustainable equity-driven policies in place, **C3 is now a model for other Medicaid ACOs** striving to meet health equity standards. Their next steps include:

Helping Healthcare Organizations Push Past the Performative

We support healthcare organizations in achieving health equity accreditation, strengthening compliance, and reducing disparities through expert consulting, assessments, and training.

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