



Health Care Access Now seeks to end health disparities through voter engagement

Healthcare Access Now (HCAN) has initiated a campaign to eliminate health disparities by encouraging its clients to engage in their community by voting.

- HCAN's leadership and workforce believe that health inequality is a direct result of racial and socio-economic bias built into the healthcare system.
- HCAN acknowledges the link between health and other socio-economic factors, such as food and housing insecurity, education, and domestic violence.
- HCAN's Community Health Workers (CHWs) connect directly and share resources with clients so they may overcome obstacles to good health. Now, HCAN's CHWs have been charged with the responsibility of educating clients on the importance of voting for local, state, and federal representatives who can make positive changes to the issues that affect their health.

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Healthcare Access Now trains and employs Community Health Workers, who perform an essential role in many of Cincinnati's most vulnerable communities: They work directly with clients to identify and remove obstacles to good health. One example is HCAN's program that seeks to decrease low birth weight and infant mortality, an issue that disproportionately affects Black women. CHWs' early intervention during clients' early pregnancy stages is done in partnership with Cradle Cincinnati.

"HCAN's greatest contribution is addressing the social determinants of health, not just the interaction between hospital, patient, and doctor," says Dr. Robert Collins, President of HCAN's board of trustees.

HCAN's workforce is acutely aware that elected officials shape policy that affects their clients' socio-economic stability and thus their health. And, those who face health barriers also often face similar obstacles to voting.



CHWs have begun working to remove barriers to voter registration and the act of voting in much the same way they work to remove barriers to good health. This includes assisting clients with verification of registration or following up on absentee ballot voting.

“Everyone does not have equal access to the system. America is finally waking up and understanding that racism and economic inequalities are built into the system like toxins being dumped into a lake. What HCAN does is an attempt to take the poisons out of the groundwater,” says Dr. Collins.

HCAN hopes its new emphasis on mobilizing voters will empower its clients. Its ultimate goal is to empower clients to effect change on all levels of government to allow the entire community an equal chance at good health. While HCAN officials interact with city and state government to promote health policies that will benefit its clientele, HCAN’s CHWs have embraced this grass roots movement to make change by empowering clients to vote.

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