

## *Affordable Care Act & Racial and Ethnic Health Equity Series*

### **Series Background and Context**

We have been monitoring and analyzing the evolution of health care reform and its implications for reducing disparities and improving equity since shortly after the inauguration of President Obama in 2009. With support from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C., the project team tracked major House and Senate health care reform bills, identifying and reviewing dozens of provisions with implications for racially and ethnically diverse communities. A series of reports and issue briefs were released, providing a resource for community advocates, researchers, and policymakers seeking to understand and compare the significance and implications of these provisions. Following the enactment of the ACA, a major, comprehensive report--entitled *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act: Implications for Racially and Ethnically Diverse Populations*<sup>1</sup>--was developed and released in July 2010 describing nearly six dozen provisions in the law core to advancing health equity. The report covered ACA's opportunities and new requirements related to health insurance, the safety net and other points of health care access, workforce diversity and cultural competence, health disparities research, prevention and public health, and quality improvement.

### **Series Purpose and Objectives**

The overall purpose of the *Affordable Care Act and Health Equity Series* is to provide an informative, timely, user-friendly set of reports as a resource for use by health care organizations, community-based organizations, health advocates, public health professionals, policymakers, and others seeking to implement or take advantage of the ACA to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities, advance equity, and promote healthy communities. The *Series* is funded by W. K. Kellogg Foundation and The California Endowment. The *Series* is intended to:

- Provide a point-in-time snapshot of implementation progress—or lack thereof—of over 60 provisions in the ACA with implications for advancing racial and ethnic health equity, detailing their funding status, actions to date, and how they are moving forward;
- Showcase concrete opportunities presented by the ACA for advancing racial and ethnic health equity, such as funding, collaborative efforts, and innovation that organizations can take advantage of;
- Highlight any threats, challenges, or adverse implications of the law for diverse communities to inform related advocacy and policy efforts; and
- Provide practical guidance and recommendations for audiences working to implement these provisions at the federal, state, and local levels, by documenting model programs, best practices, and lessons learned.

## **Series Design and Methodology**

The project team utilized a multi-pronged, qualitative approach to monitor and assess the implementation progress, opportunities, and challenges of roughly 60 provisions in the ACA across five topic areas:

- Health insurance exchanges;
- Health care safety net;
- Workforce support and diversity;
- Data, research and quality; and
- Public health and prevention.

For each topic area, the project team conducted a comprehensive review of literature and reports, along with an in-depth assessment of the legislation, emerging federal rules, regulations, and funding opportunities; state models and innovations; and community and local programs and policies. To complement research, programs, and policies identified through this review, the team conducted telephone-based interviews with nearly 70 national experts and advocates, federal and state government representatives, health care providers, health plans, community organizations, and researchers in the field. A full list of participants and contributors can be found in Appendix A. Interview questions were tailored to the sectors that respondents presented (e.g., state agencies, hospitals, health plans, community organizations, and others) and were intended to fill important information gaps as well as reinforce themes around emerging progress, opportunities, challenges, and actions not otherwise discussed in written sources. Findings from the literature review, policy analyses, and interviews were synthesized into five topic-specific reports.

Given each report is topic-specific and part of a larger *Series*, every attempt was made to cross-reference subtopics across the *Series*. For example, support for the National Health Services Corps is highlighted under the “Workforce” topic, although it has direct relevance for the “Safety Net” report. Organizing and cross-referencing the reports in this manner was important to streamlining the large amounts of information and ensuring the reports remained user-friendly.

## **Series Audience and Use**

With the latest policy updates and research, complemented by voices and perspectives from a range of sectors and players in the field, the goal of this *Series* is to offer a unique resource and reference guide on the implementation status of the ACA’s diversity and equity provisions along with emerging opportunities and actions to reduce disparities. However, given the health care arena is rapidly evolving and expanding, with new guidance, policies, and actions emerging almost daily at all levels, this *Series* offers a point-in-time snapshot of information, perspectives, and resources that were readily available and accessible during the time this project was undertaken.

Reports issued as part of this *Series* are intended for broad audiences and use. For example, federal government agencies may utilize information on best practices, resources, and concerns in the field to inform the development of ACA-related rules and regulations addressing equity, diversity, language, and culture. Nonprofit and community organizations may look to the reports for concrete opportunities for involvement, collaboration, or funding. Health care providers, public health agencies, state exchanges, and health plans may draw on models, best practices, and resources to enhance their own efforts to tailor and ensure racial and ethnic equity and diversity are core to their actions and plans.