



A Healthy Community Is Good For All

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Does everyone have an equal shot at being the healthiest person they can be? Is it enough to want to be healthy? Is it more challenging for some people to make healthy choices than others? Think of a healthy community. What are signs of healthy people and healthy communities?

Health goes beyond a doctor's visit. Health is influenced by many factors, some in our control and some outside of our control. Health is living long and well. It's where we live, work, learn, and play. It's opportunity—for all of us—to strive and thrive. Depending on your surroundings and economic situations, you may have many opportunities to be healthy or have few or no options to choose from.

Those with low incomes are more likely to live in unsafe homes and neighborhoods, often with limited access to healthy foods, employment options, and quality schools.

Income is a factor that has shown to impact health of individuals and families. Income provides economic resources that shape choices about housing, education, childcare, food, medical care, and more. Those with low incomes are more likely to live in unsafe homes and neighborhoods, often with limited access to healthy foods, employment options, and quality schools. Research has shown that adults in the highest income brackets are healthier than those in the middle class and will live, on average, more than six years longer than those with the lowest incomes.

Individuals do not make decisions in isolation. The social-ecological model acknowledges that people, organizations, community, and policies effect individual behaviors. Let's look at a person and their decisions around health care. If their friends and family do not get annual physicals, their workplace does not offer health insurance, and the nearest health care clinic is an hour away, the decision to get an annual physical seems more difficult. While the levels can make it harder to be healthy, they can also impact individuals positively, making the healthy choice the easy choice. If friends exercise regularly, your employer encourages walking during breaks, and the community has safe walking spaces, the likeliness of a person being active increases.

Health Equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care. When communities identify gaps in equity and work on giving all a fair playing ground, this can lead to an improved culture of health.

Let's look closer at how health equity can impact individuals. Eating fruits and vegetables daily is a well-established healthy behavior that leads to better health. This behavior can be more challenging if:

- The local store sells a limited variety of fruits and vegetables that is often poor quality.
- Transportation is unreliable and the nearest store is 30 miles away.
- No access to appropriate tools to prepare and store fruits and vegetables.
- Food budget is limited and you can get a larger quantity of other foods for the same price.

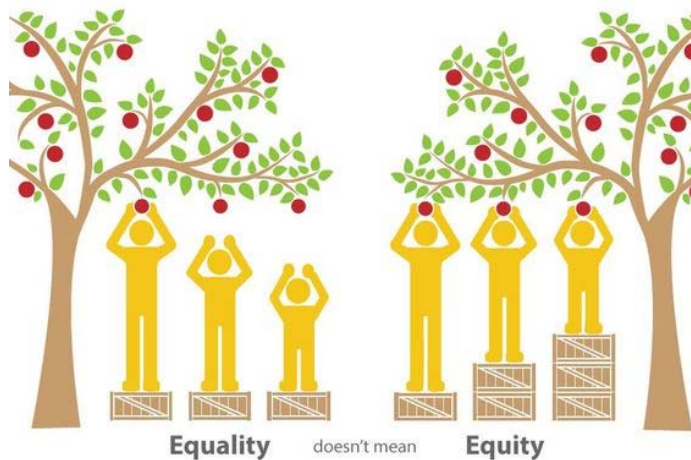
Social-Ecological Model



It is important to keep in mind that equality and equity are different. The picture to the right illustrates the difference. While the apple is available for all, it is more challenging for some to reach.

When creating a community that supports good health for all members it takes looking beyond individual choices and looking for areas that community can improve to make those choices not as difficult. Individuals, groups, organizations, and decision makers can work together to identify gaps and work toward eliminating the gaps to make it easier for all to thrive.

Poverty creates, and is created by, gaps that prevent health equity. When our neighbors can find, get to, and work at good paying jobs, live in safe homes, provide basic needs, contribute to the local economy and enjoy life, the whole community benefits and equity may be realized.



Couleecap is a leader in the community at addressing gaps that impact health in the following ways:

Food Access:

Healthy eating is key to healthy living, yet in the United States, 40 million people lived in food-insecure households in 2017, meaning they're not always sure where their next meal is coming from. Couleecap works to ensure food is accessible to families in our area by operating food pantries and acting as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) coordinator for the Couleecap region. TEFAP is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with emergency food and nutrition assistance at no cost. In 2017, 1,816,732 pounds of food were collected and distributed to 15,774 people in partnership with these local TEFAP supported food pantries. TEFAP program numbers are projected to be similar in 2018.

Safe Homes:

Healthy homes promote good physical and mental health. Good health depends on having homes that are safe and free from physical hazards. Couleecap works to ensure households with low incomes live in homes that are safe by providing home rehabilitation services that address needed home repairs and/or unhealthy living environments, due to a variety of reasons including poor design, lead and asbestos, mold, rodent infestation, poor indoor air quality, and maintenance issues. In 2017, 86 households receive home rehabilitation assistance through Couleecap.

Good Paying Jobs:

It's hard to be healthy without a good job. Having an income that can cover the basic needs of an individual or family is a crucial component of health. Couleecap works to increase the income and economic self-sufficiency of people with low incomes by helping them acquire additional skills and training. In 2017, 15 people with low incomes received education and training assistance and 81 entrepreneurs with low incomes received business development assistance and services through Couleecap.

Couleecap partners with organizations that link residents to producers of fresh, nutritious food, and advocates for health and economic equity for all Wisconsinites. To learn more about these programs and other efforts to expand access to nutrition in our region, visit <http://www.couleecap.org/> and <https://fyi.uwex.edu/foodwise/>.

Sources: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, County Health Rankings, CDC, Healthy People 2020

Special thanks to our guest author Sonya Lenzendorf, Couleecap Board of Directors and FoodWise Nutrition Coordinator Crawford, Richland & Vernon County UW-Extension

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