

Title: Clinical-community linkages to advance health equity: The National Institute of Nursing Research Bridge-to-Care Initiative

Background: The mission of the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) is to lead nursing research to solve pressing health challenges and inform practice and policy - optimizing health and advancing health equity into the future. Aligned with this mission, NINR's strategic plan recognizes that transformative models of care that consider the context of people's lives and living conditions are necessary to address longstanding inequities that limit the optimization of health for individuals, families, communities, and populations marginalized and minoritized by society.

Objective: To highlight NINR's strategic plan and showcase the Bridge-to-Care Initiative, a research effort in direct alignment with advancing the science of social-healthcare integration.

Methods: NINR launched the Bridge-to-Care Initiative to amplify research to advance health equity by addressing the healthcare-community service and resource integration gap. The goal of the Initiative is to support research that leverages healthcare-community partnerships to address unmet health-related social needs among individuals and families and improve adverse social determinants of health within communities.

Results: In 2023, NINR funded four grant applications under the Bridge-to-Care Initiative. The awarded projects engage multiple sectors, such as educational and justice systems, and utilize varied approaches, including intervention and evaluation research, and implementation science. Awarded projects focus on utilizing electronic health record-based functionality to support clinic-community linkages, connecting jails with referral clinics for opioid use disorders, leveraging community health workers to support academic achievement, and connecting educational and therapeutic services for pre-school age children with developmental delays and disabilities.

Conclusion: Healthcare-community partnerships offer a path for reducing health disparities by fostering the comprehensive care needed to achieve and maintain good health. Studies funded by NINR under the Bridge-to-Care Initiative have the potential to generate important advancements toward promoting practice and policy that ensures everyone has the opportunity to realize their full health potential.