

# Leveraging Community Engagement

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FUND (DREDF)

**HEALTH**  
**EQUITY**  
**SOLUTIONS**

**DREDF**

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

# Health Equity Solutions

## ***VISION***

For every Connecticut resident to obtain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

## ***MISSION***

To promote policies, programs, and practices that result in equitable health care access, delivery, and outcomes for all people in Connecticut

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# Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)



## ***VISION***

A just world where all people, with and without disabilities, live full and independent lives free of discrimination.

## ***MISSION***

To advance the civil and human rights of people with disabilities through legal advocacy, training, education, and public policy and legislative development.

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# Defining Community Engagement

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*Community Engagement is a collaborative processes between organizations/institutions and communities impacted by their policies, programs, or practices to influence decisions and actions through the mutually beneficial and bidirectional exchange of resources, expertise, and information.*

- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Multi-directional
- ✗ Outreach
- ✗ Education
- ✗ Communication
- ✗ Customer support

# Community Engagement & Equity

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- Means of identifying and addressing barriers
- Builds trust
- Exposes bias in "the way things are done"
- Exposes unintended consequences of policies
- Requires:
  - Diversity of participants
  - Addressing power dynamics

# Best Practices: When to Engage

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- Long-term/ongoing engagements are likely best for building trust
- When surveying, interviewing, or holding focus groups be clear about the goals of engagement and follow up with participants
- Leverage complaint systems to engage enrollees in targeted discussion about specific policies (e.g. MHPAEA, preventive services, standard plan designs, etc.)
- From planning through evaluation—share power to increase effectiveness

# Best Practices: How to engage

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- ❑ Structure engagement opportunities to address power differences
- ❑ When events include enrollees with other stakeholders, ensure enrollees have the information & space needed to actively participate
- ❑ Create inclusive engagement opportunities by addressing accessibility—address linguistic, financial, communication, and physical barriers

# Engaging People with Disabilities

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- “Nothing About Us Without Us”
- Parents, Family Members, Care Providers & Advocates are invaluable allies, but they are not necessarily disabled or reflect a disabled person’s own wishes
- Broader understanding of health, independence, and well-being
- Communication supports are essential: captioning, sign language, accessible document formats, time/space for use of communication devices
- Supported Decision-Making
- Consider intersection between disability and other underserved groups:
  - Racial/ethnic groups, particularly AI/AN groups – disability prevalence, implicit bias
  - LGBTQI+ - disability prevalence, mental health needs
  - LEP populations – overlapping communication needs
  - Older adults – health coverage needs
- Practical barriers to participation: transportation, physical accessibility, time
- Mixed health insurance sources within the same household



# Recommendations

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1. Leverage Medicaid consumer advisory councils and SBM market research
2. Engage enrollees in plans regulated by the DOI to refine messaging, improve outreach & education efforts, and assess gaps in enforcement
3. Contract or collaborate with CBOs to engage enrollees
4. Create engagement opportunities to assess policies and course-correct; choose issues in collaboration with community, ensure engagement in ongoing evaluation cycles
5. Link to Medicaid, Marketplace, navigators, AIDS Drug Assistance Programs, legal services
6. Educate consumers on steps they can take to avoid disruptions in care (e.g., prescription refills)

## Contact us

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Questions?  
Comments?