

Community Health and Civic Engagement



When some communities suffer from health disparities, it is often due to the living conditions and environment in which they live. These conditions are also known as social determinants of health.

Factors like economic opportunity, access to parks and green space, education, safe housing, and reliable transportation all affect the health of a community. When any of these factors are lacking, they can be changed with advocacy and action.

Addressing these social determinants of health is essential to promoting health equity, tackling health disparities, and ensuring healthy and vibrant communities. Civic engagement is one key tool we can use to address the social determinants of health.

Civic engagement involves developing the knowledge, skills, and tools required to educate others and make a difference in one's community. In short, civic engagement is any activity that involves promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. It includes both paid and unpaid forms of political activism, voting, volunteering, participating in group activities, and community and national service.

Health Centers and Civic Engagement

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) with a 501(c)(3) tax exemption are allowed to conduct activities that promote voter participation, educate voters, or connect with candidates as long as the activities are non-partisan.

Health Center Civic Engagement Dos

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- Participate in non-partisan activities
 - Conduct or promote voter registration, including Vote by Mail (VBM) registration
 - Educate voters on the voting process
 - Distribute non-partisan sample ballots, candidate questionnaires, or voter guides
 - Organize get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activities
 - Encourage others to vote and help them make it to the polls
 - Host or co-sponsor candidate forums
 - Educate candidates on what the issues are and how they affect the community
 - Continue to advocate on non-partisan issues during the election

Health Center Civic Engagement Don'ts

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- Endorse or oppose any single party or candidate (partisan politics)
 - Allow candidates to use the organization's facilities or resources for political purposes

*We're not telling people who to vote for –
we're making sure they vote!*