

2023 CAROLYN BOONE LEWIS EQUITY OF CARE AWARD WINNER (Transforming)
Meritus Health | Hagerstown, Md.



Meritus staff members attend an unconscious bias training session.

Overview

Meritus Health's commitment to eliminating disparities and inequities within the community it serves has earned the health system national recognition, being awarded with AHA's 2023 Carolyn Boone Lewis Equity of Care Award in the Transforming category. Hospitals and health systems in this category are recognized for implementing strategies to advance equity in their surrounding communities. Maulik Joshi, Dr.Ph., president and CEO, has worked to ensure his leadership teams, governance board and others are aligned on the goals of the organization to improve population health, elevate the patient experience while reducing the cost of care and improving work-force well-being.

Meritus Health is dedicated to educating its team members on unconscious bias and developing an approach to diversity, health equity and inclusion. The western Maryland health system prioritizes data transparency; socio-demographic data of patients served by the organization are regularly updated to be as accurate as possible to meet patient-centered health needs.

Impact

In recent years, Meritus Health has demonstrated its commitment to advancing health equity by implementing various practices in its patient populations such as its Leadership in Equity and Diversity (LEAD) council. Meritus Health's LEAD council was created to ensure that the diversity of its leadership and staff is representative of its community. The council implements innovative unconscious bias training for all staff members by working with an acting group to provide interactive theater. The training presents scenarios that consider how people interact with diversity, race, gender identity, sexual orientation and ethnicity.

Meritus Health has also implemented a strategy to diversify its workforce by increasing the number of racially diverse candidates who are interviewed for leadership positions.

Meritus Health's Statement on Racism and Values of Diversity and Inclusion sets expectations for all team members and provides a roadmap for the long-term commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion that is fostered within the health system and

community. To measure advances, Meritus provides team members with surveys to determine if they feel welcome, heard and valued. From 2021-2022, the survey showed promising improvement, with the satisfaction rate from team members rising from 63% satisfied to 80%.

In 2021, Meritus Health implemented a data discovery platform, offering transparent information sharing by providing access to data stratified by race, ethnicity and language. The data includes health equity outcomes related to diabetes, sepsis, pre-term births and c-sections.

The data is used to set goals for improvement assigned to multidisciplinary action teams to help remediate disparities in care. Each year, an annual

Health Equity Report is published publicly, and summarizes the outcomes and progress of the health system's initiatives. Since the inception of this practice, Meritus teams have worked to eliminate a disparity between white and non-white patients related to sepsis and have significantly reduced the pre-term birth difference between black and white patients.

Finally, Meritus Health strives to create a diverse leadership and governance board. The organization believes that a diverse group of board members will lend their voices and promote advocacy for the marginal-

ized groups within their community.

To learn more about Meritus Health's efforts, visit meritushealth.com.



Meritus Mobile health clinic that provides primary care services to underserved neighborhoods throughout Washington County, Maryland.