

# Pine County Public Health: Starting Small on Big Health Equity Work

Pine County Public Health began operating in 2017, and took advantage of a rare opportunity to embed health equity into its work from the very beginning.

Staff and elected officials were enthusiastic and committed: They made up for a lack of experience in health equity and a limited budget by maximizing relationships within the community, pursuing outside resources and assistance, and encouraging staff to grow as individuals and as a team.

To integrate health equity across the department, Pine County Public Health:

- Established a Public Health Advisory Committee with equity as a primary consideration and authentic engagement as a key goal,
- Incorporated equity into hiring, including a question about health equity asked during interviews and increasing job posting outreach to diverse local partners, and
- Includes health equity as a standing agenda item at staff meetings and Advisory Committee meetings.

Said a public health staffer, “We are very proud of the work that we have accomplished so far. We are excited about the work we are doing now and the work that is to come.”

“It was wonderful to have Advisory Committee members discussing data, the inequities tied to that data, and questioning how and why those inequities got there in the first place.”



Pine County Health Equity Learning Community Team, 2018

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

- **Start small.** Educate staff on the basics, and watch them grow. Don't be intimidated by the size of the topic. Department meetings, for example, are a great opportunity for education.
- **Use outside resources.** MDH staff have a wealth of knowledge, and are connected to resources you might not otherwise find.
- **Build off current relationships** in your community and with community members.