



Delaware Health
Empowerment Coalition

RESTORING TRUST IN HEALTHCARE

Health Without Boundaries

*Educating, Empowering, and
Engaging Our Communities*

2025
Impact Report

IMPACT REPORT 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The birth of the Delaware Health Empowerment Coalition (DHEC) was a response to a stark and urgent reality: a person's zip code can determine their health destiny in Wilmington, Delaware. In neighborhoods just blocks apart, life expectancy can differ by nearly a decade, chronic disease rates vary dramatically, and access to quality healthcare remains profoundly unequal. These disparities aren't random; they reflect generations of systemic inequities that have created entirely different health trajectories for communities of color. The urgency of this situation cannot be overstated.

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhumane."

– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Our 'Restoring Trust in Healthcare' initiative represents a bold and comprehensive response to this challenge. Launched with a focus on Wilmington's 19801 and 19802 zip codes—areas where

62% of the city's population resides and health outcomes lag significantly behind neighboring communities—our approach acknowledges that medical care alone cannot address the complex factors affecting health in marginalized communities. This initiative leaves no stone unturned in restoring trust and improving health outcomes.

Trust in healthcare systems has eroded in many communities of color due to historical injustices, continued experiences of discrimination, and persistent barriers to quality care. At DHEC, we recognize that restoring this trust requires more than clinical expertise; it demands cultural competence, community engagement, and a holistic understanding of each patient's lived experience.

Led by a team of culturally diverse healthcare professionals, including Dr. Joan Coker, Dr. Velma Scantlebury, Dr. Felicia Stallings, and Dr. Cydney Teal, our practice has embraced an integrated care model that addresses both medical needs and social determinants of health. We've built an environment where patients feel safe, respected, and empowered to participate in their healthcare journeys actively.

Since our launch, we've welcomed over 1,100 patients through our doors. The demographics of our patient population—81% Black/African American, predominantly working-age adults, with significant rates of chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and obesity—reflect our success in reaching those most affected by health disparities. Beyond clinical care, we've extended our impact through community education events and vaccination clinics, reaching over 400 community members.

The data presented in this report tells a story of progress but also illuminates the depth of the challenge before us. Each statistic represents real lives—parents struggling to manage chronic conditions while working multiple jobs, children facing environmental health hazards in their neighborhoods, and families navigating complex healthcare systems with limited resources.

As we move forward, DHEC remains committed to our vision: eradicating health and social disparities in underserved and vulnerable communities of Delaware. Everyone deserves equitable access to compassionate, culturally responsive healthcare of the highest quality. Through continued innovation, community partnership, and unwavering advocacy, we are working to create a healthcare system that truly works for all Delawareans, regardless of race, income, or zip code.

This impact report documents our journey, celebrates our early successes, and outlines the road ahead. It is a testament to what becomes possible when healthcare providers, community members, and institutional partners unite around a shared commitment to health equity.

Our Founders

Dr. Velma Scantlebury

Dr. Joan Coker

Felicia Stallings, AuD

Dr. Cydney Teal

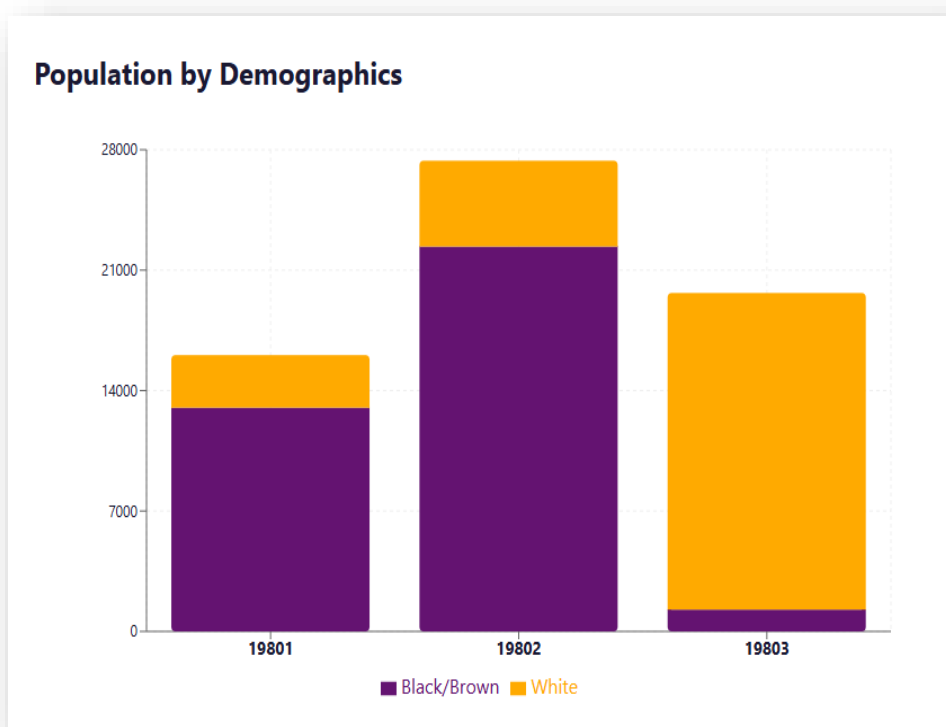


THE CHALLENGE: PLACE MATTERS IN HEALTH OUTCOMES

The stark reality of health inequity in Wilmington, Delaware, is not merely a matter of individual choices but is deeply rooted in historical and systematic disparities that have created radically different health outcomes across neighboring zip codes.

A Tale of Three Zip Codes

Wilmington, Delaware's largest city with over 70,000 residents, is a microcosm of racial inequality in larger cities across the United States. While Delaware has a white racial majority, Wilmington's racial makeup tells a different story, with Black residents forming most of the population.



19801:

16,061 residents
81% black/brown,
19% white

19802:

27,363 residents
82% black/brown,
19% white

19803:

21,154 residents
6% black/brown,
87% white

These geographic boundaries represent more than just lines on a map—they delineate dramatic differences in economic opportunity, living conditions, and health outcomes.

Economic Disparities as Health Determinants

Economic indicators reveal the foundation of health disparities in these communities:

	Delaware State Average	19801	19802	19803
Median Household Income	\$69,110 Wilmington: \$45,139	\$33,410	\$47,258	\$112,108
Poverty Rates	11%	26%	24%	3%
Child Poverty Rates	17%	43%	37%	1%

These economic factors directly impact health by affecting access to nutritious food, safe housing, quality education, and preventive healthcare. The impact of these disparities on health outcomes is measurable and profound.

Life Expectancy: What These Numbers Really Mean

Between the highest-income zip code (19803) and the lowest-income zip code (19801) represents more than statistics—it represents lost time with family, missed milestones, and entire life chapters that residents in underserved communities will never experience.

These three zip codes exist within the same city, often just miles or even blocks apart.

Yet residents of 19803 can expect to live more than 8 years longer than their neighbors in 19801, a difference equivalent to missing your grandchildren's elementary school years, or not seeing your children graduate from college.

The 8.4-Year Life Expectancy Gap

19801: **72.8 years**

19802: **74.98 years**

19803: **81.2 years**

The fundamental injustice: *Where you live in Wilmington, determined largely by factors beyond individual control, can predict how long you'll live with devastating accuracy.*

Chronic Disease Rates (compared to state average):

Chronic Disease[**]	Delaware	19801	19802	19803
Heart Disease Adults 18 or Over	4%	7%	6%	6%
Diabetes Adults 18 or Over	13%	17%	16%	10%
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)	9%	10%	9%	6%
Stroke Adults 18 or Over	4%	6%	5%	3%
Asthma Emerg Dept Visits Rate per 10,000 people	41	225	125	n/a

** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013-2019

Particularly alarming is the disparity in preventable deaths, with Black patients experiencing preventable mortality at nearly double the rate of white patients (130.1 per 100,000 compared to 74.5 per 100,000).

Barriers to Care and Health Behaviors

While approximately 94% of residents in 19801 and 91.5% in 19802 have health insurance (57% and 51.2% on public health insurance, respectively), insurance coverage alone doesn't eliminate barriers to quality care. Health behaviors that impact outcomes show significant disparities:

	19801	19802	19803
Current Smokers	26%	21%	11%
Residents reporting poor mental health	20%	17%	10%
No leisure time physical activity	41%	36%	21%
Annual dental visits	45%	54.5%	77%

Early Life Impacts

The disparities begin early in life, with children in these underserved communities facing what Delaware Health and Social Services identifies as a 'triple threat'. This term refers to a combination of biological risk factors, learned behaviors, and environmental factors that significantly increase the health risks for these children.

Childhood Health Indicators[***]	Delaware	Wilmington	19801	19802	19803
Pre-Term Births, per 1000	103	113	144	136	66
Teen Pregnancy, per 1000	15	31	50	21	n/a
Lead, Rate per 10,000 children tested	171	429	n/a	n/a	n/a

[***] Department of Delaware Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Delaware Health Statistics Center

The Call to Action

As noted by Prosperity Now in their 2019 'Racial Wealth Divide' report, which examines the economic disparities between racial groups in the United States: 'The challenge for Wilmington, along with many majority-minority cities across the country, is as the population becomes majority Black and Latino the effects of deep racial economic inequality are more profound for the local economy.

These systemic disparities, deeply entrenched over generations, require a comprehensive, culturally competent approach to healthcare that addresses immediate medical needs and the underlying social determinants of health. This is where the Delaware Health Equity Coalition's "Restoring Trust in Healthcare" initiative steps in—providing a model for how targeted, community-focused interventions can begin to close these gaps and create more equitable health outcomes for all Delaware residents.

PATIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Our practice has successfully reached those most affected by health disparities:

- 81% Black/African American patients
- 74% of adults aged 18-64
- 69% female patients
- 10% Hispanic patients

OUR APPROACH

Targeted Geographic Focus:

Serving 19801 and 19802, reaching 62% of
Wilmington's population

Culturally Competent Care Model:

Creating a healthcare environment that fosters trust

Integrated Care Team:

Providing comprehensive, multidisciplinary services

Community Education:

- Conducting outreach and health education events

OUR IMPACT: MEANINGFUL CHANGE IN NUMBERS AND LIVES



The Delaware Health Equity Coalition's "Restoring Trust in Healthcare" initiative has significantly addressed health disparities in Wilmington's most vulnerable communities. While statistics help quantify our reach, behind each number is a story of improved health, increased trust, and strengthened community connections.

Reaching Those Most Affected by Health Disparities

Since establishing our practice in zip code 19802 to serve residents of both 19801 and 19802, we have welcomed over 1,100 patients through our doors. Our patient demographics reflect our success in reaching those who have historically faced barriers to quality healthcare:

- **Racial and Ethnic Representation:** 81% of our patients identify as Black/African American, 11% as White, and 8% as other racial groups, including Asian and Indigenous populations. Additionally, 10% of our patients identify as Hispanic, ensuring we serve the diversity of our target communities.
- **Age Distribution:** Our services reach across generations, with 74% of patients aged 18-64, 22% over 65, and 4% under 18. This distribution allows us to address health needs throughout the lifespan while focusing on working-age adults who often face challenges accessing care due to work schedules and economic constraints.



- **Gender Balance:** While 69% of our patients identify as female at birth and 21% as male, we remain committed to creating welcoming spaces for all gender identities and addressing the unique health needs across the gender spectrum.



Addressing Critical Health Conditions

Our integrated care approach has allowed us to identify and address prevalent chronic conditions that disproportionately affect our communities:

- **Hypertension Management:** 33% of our patients receive care for hypertension. This condition affects Black Americans at higher rates and earlier ages than other populations, contributing significantly to disparities in heart disease and stroke outcomes.



- **Respiratory Health:** 8% of our patients receive care for asthma or COPD, conditions exacerbated by environmental factors, which are often more prevalent in under-resourced communities.
- **Diabetes Care:** 20% of our patients receive support for diabetes or pre-diabetes, conditions that, when poorly managed, can lead to severe complications, including heart disease, kidney failure, and limb amputations—all outcomes that occur at higher rates in communities of color.
- **Obesity Treatment and Prevention:** 31% of our patients work with our team on obesity management, addressing conditions that intersect with numerous other

health challenges and are influenced by neighborhood factors like food access and safe spaces for physical activity.



- **Cancer Screening and Treatment:** We've identified and provided care for cancer in 4% of our patients, with a concerning upward trend in breast cancer diagnoses (14 patients to date), highlighting the critical importance of our screening and early detection efforts.
- **Mental Health Support:** We've facilitated 24 referrals for mood disorders and substance use treatment, addressing a critical component of overall health that has historically been stigmatized and under-addressed in many communities of color.

Extending Our Reach Through Community Engagement

Our impact extends beyond the walls of our practice through community-based education and vaccination events:

- **Community Education:** Between November 2024 and March 2025, we conducted 11 community events that reached over 400 attendees, creating opportunities for health education in familiar, non-clinical settings.
- **Critical Health Education:** 265 community members participated in educational sessions covering various health topics, including the Narcan administration for opioid overdose prevention, addressing a crisis that has devastated many communities.



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- **Vaccination Access:** We've administered 302 vaccinations, including 120 COVID-19 vaccines, 80 RSV vaccines, 61 influenza vaccines, and 41 shingles vaccines, helping protect our community from preventable infectious diseases that can be particularly dangerous for those with underlying chronic conditions.

The Human Impact Behind the Numbers

While quantitative measures help track our progress, the actual impact of our work is best understood through the experiences of our patients:

"The DHEC office staff and medical team have elevated patient care to an exceptional standard that truly builds trust. Every staff member is courteous and professional, creating a welcoming environment from the moment you walk in. What I especially value about Dr. Teal is her genuine commitment to listening—she takes time with each patient, never rushing appointments, and explains treatment plans, prescriptions, and medical information in ways that are clear and easy to understand. I also appreciate that she recognizes the connection between mental and physical health, ensuring that both aspects of my wellbeing are addressed with equal care and attention."

"DHEC consistently delivers outstanding patient care that goes beyond expectations. The support staff maintains a professional yet warm approach that makes every visit pleasant. Dr. Teal exemplifies what compassionate primary care should be—she truly listens without being dismissive and has earned my complete trust as a physician. After each visit, I feel valued as a person, not just another appointment on the schedule."

Dr. Teal excels at communicating complex medical information in understandable terms, thoroughly addressing all concerns and questions during our time together. The practice's efficiency is remarkable: the patient portal is updated promptly, prescription pre-authorizations are handled swiftly, and after-hours support is excellent when needed. The integrated approach to mental health care is particularly valuable—having access to mental health services within a familiar practice setting is both convenient and reassuring. DHEC's location within the city demonstrates their genuine commitment to providing equitable, quality healthcare to our community. This practice serves as a model for what healthcare should be, and I am deeply grateful for the care I receive here."

These stories represent the human reality behind our statistics—individuals and families experiencing better health outcomes, greater dignity in their healthcare experiences, and renewed trust in a system that has historically underserved their communities.

As we continue our work, we remain committed to expanding our reach and deepening our impact, recognizing that meaningful change requires both breadth of service and depth of relationship. The trust we've begun to rebuild is the foundation upon which lasting health equity can be achieved.



LOOKING AHEAD:

BUILDING ON OUR FOUNDATION FOR LASTING CHANGE

As the Delaware Health Equity Coalition moves forward in our mission to eradicate health and social disparities in underserved communities, we recognize that our initial success represents the beginning of a longer journey toward true health equity. The path ahead requires sustained commitment, strategic growth, and system-level change. Our vision for the future encompasses several key priorities:

Deepening Our Reach Within Target Communities

While we've served over 1,100 patients, our data indicates significant unmet needs remain within the 19801 and 19802 zip codes, comprising more than 43,000 residents.

Our plans include:

Expanding Clinical Capacity:

Increasing our provider team to accommodate more patients while maintaining the personalized, culturally responsive care that has established trust in our communities.

Extending Hours of Operation:

Implementing evening and weekend availability to better serve working families who cannot access care during traditional business hours.

Mobile Health Services:

Developing mobile health units to reach community members with limited transportation access or mobility challenges, bringing preventive care directly to neighborhoods with the highest need.

Targeted Outreach:

Using our growing patient data to identify health condition clusters within specific neighborhood blocks, allowing for micro-targeted interventions that address the most prevalent health challenges in highly specific geographic areas.

Enhancing Community Education and Prevention

Our community education efforts have reached 265 participants, but true prevention requires broader and deeper engagement with health knowledge. Future initiatives include:

- **Expanded Health Literacy Programming:** Developing culturally tailored health education materials and workshops that address the specific health concerns most prevalent in our communities, with particular attention to translation and accessibility.
- **Youth Health Ambassadors:** Launching a program that trains young people from the community to serve as health ambassadors, creating peer-to-peer education opportunities, and developing the next generation of health advocates.
- **Digital Health Resources:** Creating accessible digital content, including short educational videos and interactive tools, that can reach community members beyond those who attend in-person events.
- **Chronic Disease Self-Management Support:** Implementing group-based programs that combine education with social support to help patients managing similar conditions share strategies and encourage one another.



Strengthening Cross-Sector Partnerships

Health equity cannot be achieved by healthcare providers alone. Our vision includes deeper collaboration with:

- **Education Institutions:** Collaborating with schools and early childhood centers to implement health education and screening programs that reach children and families in familiar, trusted settings.

- **Housing Organizations:** Partnering with affordable housing providers to address housing instability and environmental health hazards contributing to asthma and lead poisoning.

- **Food Security Initiatives:** Expanding relationships with food banks, urban farms, and nutrition programs to improve access to affordable, nutritious food options in neighborhoods classified as food deserts.



- **Workforce Development Programs:** Creating pathways for community members to enter healthcare careers through partnerships with training programs, community colleges, and apprenticeship initiatives.
- **Faith Communities:** Building on the trusted role of faith leaders to create health ministry programs that extend health education and support through existing community networks.

Developing the Healthcare Workforce Tomorrow

Our commitment to culturally competent care extends beyond our current practice to shaping the future healthcare workforce. Our strategies include:

- **Clinical Training Rotations:** Expanding opportunities for medical, nursing, and allied health students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, to complete rotations in our practice, learning firsthand about equitable care delivery.
- **Mentorship Pipeline:** Creating structured mentorship opportunities that connect experienced providers from diverse backgrounds with students and early-career professionals interested in serving underrepresented communities.

- **Cultural Competence Curriculum:** Developing and sharing educational materials on culturally responsive care that can be adopted by healthcare training programs throughout Delaware and beyond.
- **Research Opportunities:** Establishing community-based participatory research projects that engage healthcare trainees and community members in generating new knowledge about practical approaches to health equity.

Measuring Impact and Driving Systemic Change

As we expand our reach, we remain committed to rigorous measurement of our impact and advocacy for policy changes that address structural barriers to health equity:



- **Expanded Data Collection:** Enhancing our ability to track clinical outcomes and patient-reported measures of care experience, trust, and self-efficacy in health management.
- **Economic Impact Analysis:** Document the financial benefits of our approach, including reduced emergency department utilization, decreased hospitalizations, and improved workforce participation among patients with better-managed chronic

conditions.

- **Policy Advocacy:** Using our growing evidence base to advocate systemic changes in healthcare delivery, financing, and social support systems, enabling similar models to scale across Delaware.
- **Knowledge Dissemination:** Sharing our models, challenges, and successes through publications, presentations, and open-source resources that can inform health equity efforts in other communities.

Sustainable Funding for Lasting Impact

Recognizing that meaningful health equity work requires sustainable resources, we are pursuing diversified funding streams, including:

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- **Value-Based Care Arrangements:** Negotiating with insurers to implement payment models that reward improvements in health outcomes and reductions in disparities among our patient population.
 - **Philanthropic Partnerships:** Cultivating relationships with foundations committed to health equity and social justice to support innovative programming beyond clinical care.
 - **Public Funding:** Advocating for public investment in models like ours that effectively reduce costly health disparities.
 - **Community Investment:** Exploring community investment models that allow residents to participate in and benefit from the economic activity generated by healthcare services in their neighborhoods.

The road toward health equity is long, but we move forward with clarity of purpose, evidence of early impact, and the knowledge that each patient interaction represents progress toward our vision of a Delaware where everyone, regardless of zip code, race, or income, can achieve their full health potential. This commitment to immediate impact and long-term transformation will guide our work in the years ahead.

JOIN OUR MOVEMENT:

A CALL TO ACTION

The Delaware Health Equity Coalition's "Restoring Trust in Healthcare" initiative has demonstrated that targeted, culturally competent healthcare can begin to address generations of systemic health disparities. Our early successes in Wilmington's 19801 and 19802 zip codes represent promising steps toward a more equitable health landscape, but we cannot achieve lasting change alone.

Health equity is not merely a healthcare issue but a community imperative requiring collective action. As we continue this vital work, we invite you to join us as:

Partners in Care

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- **Healthcare Professionals:** Join our team or volunteer your expertise to expand our capacity to serve
 - **Community Health Workers:** Help us bridge clinical care and community needs through outreach and education
 - **Mental Health Providers:** Partner with us to address the critical need for culturally responsive mental health services

Advocates for Change

- **Community Members:** Share your experiences and insights to help shape our programs and approaches
- **Business Leaders:** Implement workplace policies that support employee health and reduce barriers to care
- **Faith Leaders:** Partner with us to deliver health messages through trusted community channels
- **Policy Makers:** Support legislation that addresses social determinants of health and healthcare access

Investors in Health Equity

- **Foundations and Philanthropists:** Invest in our model of care that addresses both immediate health needs and underlying social factors
- **Government Agencies:** Allocate resources to support and scale proven approaches to reducing health disparities
- **Healthcare Systems:** Implement value-based payment models that reward reductions in health disparities



Knowledge Builders

- **Researchers:** Collaborate with us on community-based participatory research that generates evidence for effective interventions
- **Educators:** Partner to develop a curriculum that prepares the next generation of healthcare providers to deliver equitable care
- **Community Organizations:** Share insights from your work that can inform our approaches

The path to health equity requires persistence, partnership, and a shared commitment to justice. Every step toward more equitable health outcomes strengthens individual lives and our entire community. Wilmington's economic vitality, social cohesion, and collective well-being depend on our success in ensuring that every resident, regardless of zip code, race, or income, can achieve their full health potential.

Join us in building a healthcare system worthy of our community's trust that acknowledges past injustices, addresses present disparities, and creates a more equitable future for all Delawareans.

Contact us today

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Benevolence Health

Innovate. Collaborate. Transform.

The Delaware Health Empowerment Coalition Thanks Benevolence Health for their vital contribution to this 2025 Impact Report, which showcases our collective commitment to Delaware's health outcomes.

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