



# Community Health Equity Convening Series: **Boston**

## SUMMARY

DECEMBER 14 - 15, 2022  
NEW ACADEMY ESTATES  
ROXBURY, BOSTON



Children's Health Fund  
in collaboration with  
The Dimock Center

With support from  
Sanofi US

# Summary

## Overview

Children's Health Fund partnered with new collaborators at The Dimock Center and New Academy Estates to host a Community Health Equity Convening in Boston, Massachusetts on December 14 and 15, 2022. Residents of all ages from the New Academy Estates apartments participated in two evenings of discussion and learning on the topic of heart health. Prior to the convening, The Dimock Center identified heart health as a primary concern within the community, exacerbated by declining trust and engagement with healthcare as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Children's Health Fund and The Dimock Center guided convening participants through engaging discussion and activities to develop a street teams project model to engage local residents around heart health.

## Focus Group

The Dimock Center hosted a pre-convening focus group on October 11 to identify emerging themes surrounding the community's barriers to heart health.

### *Focus Group Key Findings:*

- Lack of reliable, relatable, and readily available information contributes to a lack of trust, fear, and lower levels of satisfactory engagement with health providers
- Nutrition, exercise, mental health, and routine screenings were identified as known factors that can improve heart health
- Barriers included lack of information and understanding of issues and treatments and feelings of racial discrimination when dealing with the health system
- Not knowing what questions to ask providers
- Reliance on traditional/family remedies given distrust and lack of understanding
- COVID-19 made connecting with providers more difficult, especially for those who were already experiencing challenges feeling seen
- Telehealth was challenging and for many did not function properly

# Summary

## Convening Discussion Questions

The following questions were posed by Children's Health Fund facilitators to convening participants on Day 1.

*What factors or actions inhibit good heart health?*

Participant responses:

- “The stress of life”: not enough time or energy to devote to healthy heart habits
  - Competing priorities: school, work, parenting duties, etc.
- Fatigue: low energy and lack of motivation to exercise
- Depression and other mental health challenges
  - Judgment and stigma seeking mental health care
- Healthy food is expensive and less accessible
  - Unhealthy food is cheaper and more plentiful in the community leading to cravings
- Information about nutrition and healthy eating can be difficult to interpret or access
- Lack of stress management tools
- Heart health medications can be expensive and inaccessible
- Fear and lack of trust seeing doctors
  - Long wait times discourage scheduling an appointment

*What factors or actions contribute to good heart health and how can you engage family, friends, or community members in discussions about good heart health?*

Participant responses:

- Taking breaks and time for relaxation
- Engaging with one’s own spirituality/faith community to reduce stress and develop a support system
- Healthy eating and “balance” between cravings and nutritious foods
- Nagging friends is ineffective
  - More trust when talking to close friends or family about heart health
- Sharing information/resources at school or community spaces (such as church, parks, etc.) promotes awareness
- Calling family members to remind them of appointments
  - Helping friends and family schedule doctor appointments

# Convening Summary

## Emerging Themes

The convening's discussion led to the emergence of three key themes:

- Effects of stress and mental health on heart health
- Accessibility of healthy food and medications
- Engaging people with whom you have a personal relationship around heart health is more effective and promotes greater trust

## Conclusion

The Community Health Equity Convening resulted in an enhanced project model for a heart health street teams initiative that will be implemented by The Dimock Center in 2023 with the support of the community. The initiative will employ local youth to perform community outreach to engage local residents around heart health and connect them to care. Participants including youth and their parents expressed interest in being involved with the project, as was indicated in an exit survey. The survey also showed that convening participants developed new connections to community members and gained increased confidence around the key aspects of heart health, as well as available care and resources. The Dimock Center will integrate the convening's findings into the final stages of project planning. The Community Health Equity Convening generated both constructive feedback and enthusiasm for the heart health street teams initiative, ensuring that the project is community-driven and addresses the community's unique needs, challenges, and priorities.

