



Sonoma County Health Action Together

The California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative (CACHI) was established to spearhead efforts to modernize our health system and build a healthier California. To realize this vision, CACHI utilizes a model known as **Accountable Communities for Health (ACH)**, where multiple sectors—in collaboration with community residents—align goals and work together to address the leading health issues facing their communities.

Perhaps best known for its picturesque coastline and abundant wineries, Sonoma County is home to nearly a half-a-million people, a third of whom are Latinx. Health Action Together serves as the Accountable Community for Health (ACH) for the region, aspiring to ensure that a person's skin color, zip code or place of birth does not determine their health, education or income.

While formally created in 2022, Health Action Together has deep roots in the county. In 2008, healthcare system and local government leaders came together to form its predecessor, Health Action, which became part of CACHI's original 13 ACH cohort in 2016.

A need to rethink how that ACH functioned was brought to attention with the release of [Portrait of Sonoma County 2021 Update report](#), which revealed a deepening chasm between collaborative efforts to date and the magnitude of inequities in Sonoma County. Latinx community members have significantly lower educational attainment rates than whites and earn \$15,000 a year less. The lifespan of Black community members is 10 years shorter than any other racial group. And 69.3% of Black youth are enrolled in school compared to 77.1% of Latinx youth and 87.8% of Asian youth.

“That report showed us that, despite all of our great partnerships and initiatives, some of the fundamental disparities and inequities in our county have actually grown worse,” says Lori Houston, of the Sonoma County Department of Health Services, the former backbone for the prior ACH. “We needed to do things completely differently to really center our community in this work. That led to the idea of moving Health Action out of the County to establish it as an independent public-private entity.”

To that end, Health Action Together was formally established. Many previous partners are part of the new organization, but the ACH is now more determined to take a very intentional and strategic approach to centering the voices of people with lived experiences in all discussions and decision-making for the new ACH.

“How our society values experience is so unique and nuanced. It's important to center diverse voices and create space for belonging to truly understand the root causes of inequities. The more that we can include the communities who are most impacted by inequities in the design of our work, the more likely our outcomes will support the communities that designed it,” says Adriana Arrizon, the ACH's new executive director.

Being very intentional about this goal and growing the ACH without taking shortcuts demands great patience, but Arrizon and Houston agree it is critical. Fortunately, Health Action Together has garnered the support to move through a deliberate re-launch and planning phase. In addition to CACHI funding, Sonoma County's Board of Supervisors awarded the new ACH \$1.5 million over three years. Additionally, other private philanthropy organizations have also invested in Health Action Together.

That support is giving breathing space to the ACH to develop and launch an “Agenda for Action for Sonoma County,” which is being developed through an anti-racist, community-centered process to produce recommendations that will serve as a guide to direct institutional, political, philanthropic and community-based efforts and resources to address inequities.

In its next phase of development, Health Action Together will be creating a governance structure and accountability plan. “We aim to facilitate systems change efforts that lead to shared power and decision-making between institutional leaders and the people most impacted by inequities,” says Adriana.

Learn more at sonomahealthaction.org.