



POLICY FORUM

A Play in Five Acts: Bringing Healthy NC 2030 Into Focus

Introduction

So far in 2022, through five focus areas, 21 indicators, multiple evidence-based strategies, lived experiences, and personal interviews, nearly 60 authors have underscored Healthy North Carolina 2030's hopes and dreams for North Carolinians.

We've heard from academics, providers, leaders, and people affected by the diseases, conditions, and behaviors that have and will continue to shape our health outcomes for the next decade. Some of what we've learned is sobering—figuratively and literally. The biochemistry of stress weighs heavily on us all, and the data show that when access to care is scarce, we will self-medicate with drugs or alcohol and self-isolate in ways that are transiently soothing, but ultimately detrimental to our health.

Through our journey across our state, we have also been inspired by the creativity of responses in clinical practice and public policy that raise our spirit and ease our pain, and show promise for a better future for all of us.

The 21 indicators of Healthy North Carolina 2030 represent a major challenge and opportunity. And, too, for the first time in the history of these decennial goals, they cite, quote, and display sobering ethnic and racial disparities. What have we learned? Race matters. Place matters. Economic vulnerability matters. These acknowledgments alone are giant steps toward addressing both equity and outcomes.

As we take those steps, we also must remember: creativity, opportunity, engagement—and yes, public policy—matter too. NCMJ

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