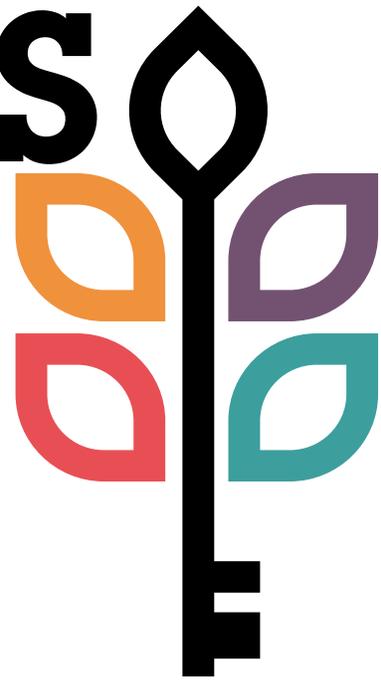




BUSINESS
EQUITY
for **INDY**



Impediments to Health
Playbook

A Letter From Our Chairs

In 2020, communities across the nation grappled with the pandemic, resulting economic impact, and a summer of social unrest. At that time, business and community leaders in Indianapolis rallied around a singular question: How do we better align our own operations to advance racial equity?

This led to the creation of the Business Equity for Indy (BEI), an effort guided by Indianapolis business and community leaders to grow a more inclusive business climate and build greater equity and economic opportunity for the Indy region's Black residents and people of color. BEI identified five pillars to advancing racial equity: public policy, learning and talent, procurement and participation, hiring and promotion, and impediments to health.

From the outset, BEI's health efforts aimed to address disparities in healthcare access, public health funding, and community health that disproportionately affect Black populations and other people of color. We focused these efforts on four drivers of health outcomes: vaccinations, healthy food, infant and maternal health, and mental health.

In our community, COVID-19 vaccination rates for Black residents of Indianapolis/Marion County have persistently lagged 15 points behind the overall county population throughout the pandemic. Also, 32 percent of Black Marion County residents live in a food desert, and Black residents face a hunger rate 50 percent higher than the city's general population.

Despite historic improvements in recent years, Marion County's Black infant mortality rate is 10.9 deaths per 1,000 births—compared to 7.5 for White infants and nearly double the national rate of 5.66. Additionally, symptoms of depression are reported up to 59 percent more frequently among Black and Hispanic/Latino persons than Whites.

We have an important responsibility to help shape stronger, healthier and more inclusive communities. To do so, companies engaged with equity work need tangible strategies, a clearly defined scope of action, and an evidence-based guide to respond and begin to close these gaps—particularly for the populations they interact with every day: their employees.

The BEI Health Playbooks provide just that—roadmaps for targeted interventions to support equitable outcomes, improve employee health, and benefit business operations.

These strategies are distilled from proven practices of some of the most innovative companies in the world, which other companies can leverage to help enhance their own workforce outcomes. These playbooks start companies on a journey to elevate the way they operate and to be part of the solution to advance racial equity.

We believe these playbooks have something for every kind of company—regardless of your location, size, industry, or level of resources. Racial inequity cannot be solved overnight, but there's a role for every organization in the effort. As we continue to advance this critical work, we will focus on identifying gaps and strategies that BEI can pilot and test with participating companies to measure our effectiveness and enhance our approach.

By building new relationships between business and community leaders, engaging the business community with tactical steps to implement best practices, and ensuring a focus on the people with which our companies interact every day, we can take meaningful steps to advance racial equity here in Central Indiana and set an example for communities around the country and the world.



Gail Boudreaux
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Dennis Murphy
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VACCINATIONS

Background

Safe and effective vaccinations are available to prevent several common diseases that affect adults including influenza (seasonal flu), COVID-19, pneumococcal disease, mumps, invasive meningococcal disease, and varicella. Many of these vaccine-preventable diseases result in missed work and increased use of medical care among employees.

Vaccinations for influenza and COVID-19 have received significantly more attention in the literature. As such, more detailed information, including a greater number of interventions pursued by employers, was available for these two diseases compared to the others.

15

COVID-19 vaccinations rates for Black residents of Marion County have persistently lagged 15 points behind the rate of the overall county population.

35%

Latest data shows 35% of the Marion County Black population has been vaccinated for COVID.

Key Strategies

Indiana employers wanting to improve vaccination rates among their employees can consider the following options:

Level of Activities	Actions
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide educational campaigns on the importance of getting vaccinated.• Link employees to community-based resources and services that provide free or low-cost vaccinations.
Very Good	Everything from “good” plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner with health organizations to provide one or more onsite vaccination clinics.• Provide incentives (e.g., cash, paid time off to get vaccinated or to deal with side-effects) to employees to get vaccinated.
Great	Everything from “very good” and “good” plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mandate vaccinations or strongly incentivize uptake<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Cash incentives for vaccinations◦ Health insurance premium penalties.• Provide paid time off to get vaccinated.• Provide paid time off to recover from potential side-effects if needed.

Strategy Spotlight



On-site, or easily accessible, vaccination clinic.

Bolthouse Farms, a company specializing in refrigerated beverages based in Bakersfield, CA, reported that it has vaccinated more than 1,000 of its 1,800 older employees (65+ years old) since launching their vaccination clinic. The company also reported holding weekly vaccination clinics leading to over 65% of all employees being vaccinated.



Mandating COVID vaccinations.

Indiana University required faculty, staff, and students to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and reported a vaccination rate of more than 90% among constituents.



Offering incentives for vaccinations.

Bright Horizons, a child-care provider based in Newton, MA offered customers free childcare while they receive their first dose, second dose, or if they need time to recover from side effects of the vaccination.

How Businesses Benefit

Efforts to improve influenza (seasonal flu) and/or COVID-19 vaccination rates could benefit businesses in the following ways:

1. Reduce absenteeism due to illness and/or use of health services.
2. Reduce overall health care costs (especially salient for self-insured employers).

Community Perspective

Access to trusted education and experts that can provide accurate information about vaccines could be helpful to businesses. To address disparities affecting Black communities:



On-site or mobile vaccine clinics, with appropriate messaging and messengers can improve vaccine uptake.



Create benefits structure to allow time off to get vaccinated.



Socially normalize talking about vaccinations (e.g., at barber shops).

Strategy in Action

IndyGo, a municipal corporation operating the public bus transit system in Indianapolis, IN, worked with partners to host a pop-up vaccination clinic at the centrally located transit center. Patrons receiving free COVID-19 vaccinations received a 31-day pass to ride the bus system free of charge. Based on the uptake of vaccines at the pop-up clinic, IndyGo extended the number of clinics offered at this convenient location.

Local Resources

- [Red Cross of Indiana](#)
- [It's our Shot Hoosiers](#)
- [Indiana Immunization Coalition](#)



MENTAL
HEALTH
MATTERS

MENTAL HEALTH

Background

Mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety disorders, and mood disorders, have a significant impact on the workforce and the bottom line of businesses. Mental health conditions are highly prevalent in society and thus the workplace.

The most common mental health conditions are depression, anxiety, and mood disorders, such as bipolar disorder. Thus, given the high prevalence of these conditions in the workplace, we will focus our review on the impact of these three conditions on businesses.

59%

Symptoms of depression are being reported up to 59% more frequently among Black and Hispanic/Latino persons than Whites. Similar trends are seen in the number of drug overdose deaths.

Key Strategies

Indiana employers wanting to improve mental health among their employees can consider the following options:

Level of Activities	Actions
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educate and inform employees about mental health, stigma, self-care strategies and techniques.• Link employees to community resources that assist with mental health conditions.• Train organizational leaders to model self-care and healthy behaviors.
Very Good	<p>Everything from “good” plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Train managers to identify mental health symptoms and empower them to offer relief.• Provide an employee assistance program.• Encourage employees to seek early treatment for mental health conditions.• Provide resiliency training to reduce employee burnout.• Provide training to increase empathy and compassion.• Provide lunchtime learning sessions regarding mental health and available services (at the organization and in the community).• Dedicate a quiet room for employees to recharge.• Provide flexible work schedules to accommodate employees’ personal needs.
Great	<p>Everything from “very good” and “good” plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a robust employee assistance program including 24-hour access to counseling, wellness consultations during company time, comprehensive training in life skills that build resiliency, and onsite mental health specialist.• Create a supportive organizational culture that reduces mental health stigma.• Anonymously assess employee mental health symptoms to identify problems and monitor improvements on an annual basis.• Train and educate employees on how to self-assess mental health symptoms and how to access relevant resources.• Assure that mental health care services are covered with parity to medical/physical services including generosity of benefits, equivalent out-of-pocket costs, effect on deductibles, etc.• Provide workout facilities/showers to help employees stay active and reduce stress.

Strategy Spotlight



Employee assistance programs (EAPs).

The Houston Texans organization is dedicated to ensuring mental health parity, meaning that mental health needs are covered at the same level as other medical conditions. Their employee assistance program offers 24-hour access to counseling by phone, assessment, brief treatment, and referrals. Employees are encouraged to seek early treatment for mental health concerns rather than concealing them. The Texans sought an insurance carrier to work with them in designing a plan with equal co-pays and deductibles across mental and physical health areas. Despite increased utilization of mental health services as people took advantage of their additional benefits, the Houston Texans' total healthcare costs did not increase.



Awareness campaigns.

TiER 1 Performance Solutions a strategic management company based in Covington, KY, provides resources to assess risk, find information, and get help or support to employees. After finding that over 90% of employees reported having someone in their life struggling with mental health, the company launched an awareness campaign to educate about depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. The company created a 12step process to reach employees, which they now also offer to other organizations free of charge.²⁹ The program strengthened the company's culture of trust and support, with nearly 50% of employees reporting that they talked to someone about their mental health after completing the program.



Resilience training & wellness infrastructure.

Beehive PR, a public relations firm in St. Paul, MN, launched a professional development program known as SHARP, which incorporates life skills including positivity, accountability, and energy management. The firm offers free access to a workout room, shower facility, and dedicated quiet room for employees to recharge. These amenities generate positive energy and enhance the company culture, increasing employee confidence, creativity, and accomplishments. When the firm conducted a survey, employees reported a 92% satisfaction rate.³³ Keeping employees happy and healthy helps the firm retain clients; nearly half of their clients have been with them for five years or longer. Beehive PR also offers flexible work schedules to accommodate employees' personal needs, including generous paid time off benefits and a four-day workweek option. A healthy work-life balance means employees are more engaged and contributes to the firm's low turnover rate of only three separations in a 36month period, significantly less than the industry average of 30% annual turnover.

How Businesses Benefit

Efforts to improve mental health conditions could benefit businesses in the following ways:

1. Increased employee productivity.
2. Reduced overall employee health care costs.
3. Reduced absenteeism and presenteeism.
4. Reduced turnover and the related training costs for replacing workers.
5. Reduced workplace injuries and disability claims.

Community Perspective

Access to mental health services must come first—then work on the message.



Be sure employees are aware of the help that is available and often free. Competently direct people to appropriate resources.



Educate leaders and managers on how to identify mental health symptoms, what resources are available, and how to understand that mental health is often circular and feeds on and fuels other issues.

Strategy in Action

The Irsay Family has launched Kicking the Stigma, a comprehensive initiative to raise awareness about mental health disorders and remove the shame and stigma too often associated with these illnesses. Since its founding, the initiative has awarded \$2.9 in grants to mental health service organizations.

Local Resources

 [Kicking the Stigma](#)



MATERNAL & INFANT HEALTH

Background

A focus on infant and maternal health helps assure healthy communities and can be associated with a positive return on investment for businesses. Opportunities to improve infant and maternal health exist across multiple pregnancy-related periods including: preconception, pregnancy including labor and delivery, and postpartum.

10.9

Despite historic improvements in recent years, Marion County's Black infant mortality rate is still 10.9 deaths per 1,000 births— compared to 7.5 for White infants. That's nearly double the national rate of 5.66.

Key Strategies

Indiana employers wanting to improve infant and maternal health can consider the following options which are grouped based on the resources needed to implement:

Level of Activities	Actions
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate employees about the importance of prenatal care, prenatal vitamins, and other infant and maternal health issues. Link employees to community resources and information, including what to anticipate during and after pregnancy, to assure a successful transition back to work.
Very Good	<p>Everything from “good” plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide on-demand hotline support for pregnant employees and covered dependents to address an array of pregnancy- and post-partum topics. Dedicate a private lactation room for expressing breastmilk and refrigeration for expressed milk (rooms can be as small as 4' x 5' and only require a comfortable chair and small table or shelf for breast pump). Provide flexible work schedules for pregnant and postpartum mothers to facilitate prenatal care, breastfeeding, etc. Educate employees about sick childcare resources and referrals.
Great	<p>Everything from “very good” and “good” plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive prenatal program with incentives for initiating and maintaining prenatal and post-partum care. Provide a robust lactation support program that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational resources about breastfeeding. Ongoing access to lactation consultants. Ongoing access to breast pumps, and refrigeration for expressed milk. Provide on-site childcare or assistance finding childcare. Provide on-site day care for mildly ill children.

Strategy Spotlight



Prenatal programs.

100 Fortune 500 companies across the country implemented Health Time- a prenatal program providing preconception health risk appraisals, education, support, and behavior modifications. The program was associated with fewer maternal deaths (53 vs. 126 per 100,000 in participating companies compared to the national average) and an estimated cost savings of \$468,000.



Breastfeeding programs.

Mutual of Omaha, an insurance and financial services company located in Omaha, NE, implemented a lactation program consisting of private lactation rooms, breastfeeding equipment (hospital-grade electric pump), milk expression scheduling, lactation education, and ongoing access to onsite nurses and lactation consultants. Healthcare costs for newborns of participating employees were \$1,269 compared to \$3,415 for non-participating employees. The company was named one of the “100 Best Companies for Working Women” by Working Mother magazine and reported high rates of employee satisfaction.



Onsite childcare.

Fifth Third Bank, one of the largest consumer banks in the Midwest, offered maternity concierge services including assistance finding childcare. The program reported increased retention of working mothers by 25%.

How Businesses Benefit

Efforts to improve maternal and infant health could benefit businesses in the following ways:

1. Reduction in preventable health care costs (especially salient for self-insured employers).
2. Increase in employee job satisfaction.
3. Better employee retention after pregnancy and lower turnover costs.

How Businesses Benefit (cont.)

4. Increase in employee engagement and loyalty.
5. Organizational attractiveness as a potential employer.
6. Reduced absenteeism and increased employee productivity.

Community Perspective

Access to first trimester care, prenatal vitamins is essential. Consider reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers:



Adequate time off to attend appointments and support groups both pre- and postnatal.



Information about insurance coverage and how to access available resources (including Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, immunization).



Safe spaces for breastfeeding and pumping.

Strategy in Action

The Milk Bank was established to improve health outcomes for premature and ill infants, foster better health for children and decrease health care expenditures. The Milk Bank receives human milk from carefully screened donors, pasteurizes, freezes and distributes it throughout the United States. Since opening the doors in 2005, The Milk Bank has screened potential milk donors in 48 states. In that time, almost 7,000 approved Milk Donors generously gave over 5.2 million ounces of donor milk.

Local Resources

 [Milk Bank](#)



HEALTHY
LIVING IS
WEALTHY
LIVING

HEALTHY FOOD

Background

Lack of access to healthy foods increases one’s risk for several diseases, including heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), stroke, diabetes, and cancer.¹ Forty percent of deaths attributed to these diseases are linked to food consumption practices. These practices include, but are not limited to, under consumption of fruits and vegetables and overconsumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, foods high in sodium, saturated fats, or trans-fatty acids.¹ Unfortunately, many Hoosiers do not regularly consume healthy foods, which contributes to a higher prevalence of preventable diseases and overall poorer health in Indiana. Experts recommend that improving food consumption practices requires increased access to healthy foods, better exposure to healthy foods, and improved knowledge of appropriate food preparation techniques.

32% 32% of Black Marion County residents live in a food desert, compared to 21% of Latinx residents and 17% of Whites.

25% Over 25% of Marion County residents are struggling to put meals on their tables, and Black residents face a hunger rate 50% higher than the city’s general population.

Key Strategies

Indiana employers wanting to improve healthy food consumption among their employees can consider the following options:

Level of Activities	Actions
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and promote local community-based interventions aimed at improving health food consumptions. • Provide nutritional education and seminars that are sensitive the cultural expectations of their employees. • Refer employees to local nutritional programs and services including Women and Infant Children (WIC) program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
Very Good	<p>Everything from “good” plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move sweets further down line and offer healthy options first in cafeterias. • Partner with a farm-to-worksite program that delivers fresh produce to paying employees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair with healthy eating education and recipes. • Consider using point system where employees earn ability to take-home free or discounted food. • Subsidize program for low-wage earners. • Utilize nutritional consultant to overhaul cafeteria offerings.
Great	<p>Everything from “very good” and “good” plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide free healthy food paired with education about healthy eating and its benefits. • Provide cooking demonstrations with interactive learning about healthy eating. • Dedicate a corporate garden and empower employees to share in the responsibility to increase social interaction and physical activity. Allow employees to take home food from harvest. • Stock fridge in breakroom with fresh produce and encourage consumption. • Provide nutritional and weight-control counseling, especially for those with chronic disease. • Provide personalized coaching for those at elevated risk.

Strategy Spotlight



Employee meals.

CoverMyMeds, a healthcare tech company based in Columbus, OH, provides in-house lunch to employees. The company employs a culinary team including a nutritionist responsible for preparing healthy, exciting meals which keep employees fueled and energized so they can do their best work.



Corporate gardens and farm-to-worksite.

Haberman, a public relations company in Minneapolis, MN, set up an off-site garden that is used to stock a refrigerator in the break area with fresh produce. Employees and their family members are welcome to tend to the garden and take home their harvest. Additionally, the company creates team-building experiences around the garden and credits it as a source of camaraderie. In 2010, the Haberman garden was named among the top 5 benefit ideas in Human Resource Executive magazine.



Nutrition counseling and employee wellness programs.

GEICO, a private auto insurance company headquartered in Chevy Chase, MD, participated in a pilot study known as Food for Life. This employee wellness program offers employees a low-fat, plant-based diet and weekly sessions consisting of nutrition education, cooking demonstrations, food samples, and support groups. Employees from 10 GEICO sites across the country were randomly selected to participate in the pilot program. Employees who followed the recommended plant-based diet lost an average of nearly 10 pounds and significantly decreased their cholesterol. Additionally, individuals with diabetes decreased their estimated average blood sugar.

How Businesses Benefit

Efforts to improve healthy food consumption could benefit businesses in the following ways:

1. Increase employee productivity.
2. Increase employee job satisfaction.

How Businesses Benefit (cont.)

3. Increase employee commitment to the organization.
4. Reduce absenteeism and presenteeism.
5. Reduce healthcare costs related to several nutrition-sensitive chronic health conditions.
6. Reduce disability costs.

Community Perspective

There is a need to change the narrative from “food access & food security” to “nutrition security.”



Businesses can ask their employees what they want to see.



Ask employees to get involved.



Equity is realized when everyone is at the table.

Strategy in Action

Northeast Indianapolis has neighborhoods with some of the highest levels of unemployment and poverty in the state. To help address some of the challenges this community is facing, Cook Medical, Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana, The Indianapolis Foundation, IMPACT Central Indiana, and the United Northeast Community Development Corporation have partnered on a unique project to bring opportunity back to the neighborhood. The project began with the announcement of a Cook Medical/Goodwill medical device manufacturing facility that will be built in the neighborhood at 38th Street and Sheridan Avenue. To expand this project, a new full-service grocery store will also be constructed near the manufacturing facility. Not only will the store provide additional jobs and future educational opportunities for residents, it will also bring a much-needed food source to the community. Learn more [here](#).

Local Resources

- [Indy Hunger Network](#)
- [Food Access Commission](#)
- [Equitable Food Access Initiative](#)

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