



Rhode Island's Health Equity Zones:

Working Together to Build Healthy, Prosperous, Resilient Communities



Businesses and communities suffer from high healthcare spending that doesn't serve its purpose: to **keep people healthy**. The US spends much more than other developed countries on healthcare, yet life expectancy is declining. We need a new approach that solves these problems. And it starts with strengthening our local communities.

Healthy Communities, Healthy Economy

The strategies that work to create health and well-being are the same as those that build strong local economies. Research shows that conditions outside the doctor's office and inside our communities determine 80 percent of our health outcomes. Healthy, economically thriving communities have good schools, safe neighborhoods, clean and accessible sidewalks, bike lanes, green spaces, civic-minded residents, and vibrant local businesses. In short, they're places where people want to live, learn, work, shop, socialize, and play.

What are Health Equity Zones?

Rhode Island's Health Equity Zone initiative approach equips neighbors, community organizations, businesses, and institutions to collaborate to create healthy places for people to live, learn, work, shop, socialize, and play. In Health Equity Zones across Rhode Island, residents, business leaders, health professionals, educators, transportation experts, and people in many other fields come together to address factors that affect health and quality of life in their neighborhoods.

Rhode Island has developed a nationally recognized model to build healthy, resilient communities.

It's called **Health Equity Zones**.

How businesses can get involved

- Join your local Health Equity Zone to connect with people in your community and make your neighborhood a healthier place to live and work.
- Provide volunteer or in-kind support to your local Health Equity Zone.
- Engage your peers by sharing information about Health Equity Zones.
- Invest resources to support current efforts or create Health Equity Zones in new communities. Visit www.health.ri.gov/hez to learn more.

Benefits

By joining efforts to build healthy, resilient communities, you can:

- Create communities that attract more talented employees and a stronger customer base.
- Connect with residents, community organizations, and policy makers.
- Support initiatives that nurture a healthy, more productive workforce.
- Keep more money in your community.
- Accelerate collaboration and advance progress towards shared community goals.

Results

The Health Equity Zone model works. In just four years, Health Equity Zones have helped communities accomplish a wide range of initiatives that foster a stronger local economy.

44%

In Pawtucket, the local Health Equity Zone contributed to a 44 percent decrease in childhood lead poisoning from 2015 to 2017. Healthier children and families lead to a more productive workforce that generates lower healthcare costs for businesses.



In Central Falls, the local Health Equity Zone helped develop and pass a city ordinance to ensure streets are designed to be safe and accessible. Making it easier for residents and visitors to take transit, walk, or bike to their destinations can help stimulate the local economy.



Vocational training, such as that provided by the Harvest Kitchen program supported by the Pawtucket and Central Falls Health Equity Zone, helps community members gain job-specific skills and training.



Chronic disease is a big driver of healthcare costs. Health Equity Zones across the state have supported more than 1000 Rhode Islanders to graduate from evidence-based chronic disease self-management workshops.



Several Health Equity Zones significantly decreased student absenteeism by implementing a walking school bus program, fostering a more educated, prepared workforce pool and allowing parents to get to work on time.

Learn more

To learn more about how you can support Rhode Island Health Equity Zones, contact Christopher Ausura at christopher.ausura@health.ri.gov or Mia Patriarca at mia.patriarca@health.ri.gov.



We're fortunate to live and work in a state that actively supports healthy communities. The Health Equity Zone initiative is part of what makes Rhode Island a great place in which to live and work. By fostering collaboration that enables local communities to strengthen themselves, this effort contributes to an environment where talent and innovation flourish.

Stefan Pryor, Rhode Island Secretary of Commerce



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