

Health is a Human Right – Position Statement

Introduction and Background

When Caring for Colorado Foundation was formed, we adopted the World Health Organization’s definition of health, which states that “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Since the adoption of this definition, the foundation has deeply increased its understanding that improving health and achieving health equity requires broader approaches that address social, legal, economic and environmental factors that influence health. As such, we want to establish our position that health is a human right and that we must work with partners across sectors to see this right realized for all people living in Colorado. We specifically focus on children as they are often the most vulnerable and likely to experience adversity that dramatically impacts their life course and the realization of their potential.

Alignment with Caring for Colorado Foundation’s Purpose, Values and/or Focus Areas

Caring for Colorado’s vision is that Colorado’s children and families are happy, healthy and thriving. Our purpose is to create equity in health, well-being and opportunity for Colorado’s children and families. Recognizing health as a human right is foundational to achieving our vision.

Caring for Colorado Foundation’s Position

Caring for Colorado Foundation aligns itself with the position of the World Health Organization, which deems “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.”

Further, we align with the statements clarifying this position, as stated by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, in 2017:

- The right to health for all people means that everyone should have access to the health services they need, when and where they need them, without suffering financial hardship.
- No one should get sick and die just because they are poor, or because they cannot access the health services they need.
- Good health is also clearly determined by other basic human rights including access to safe drinking water and sanitation, nutritious foods, adequate housing, education and safe working conditions.
- The right to health also means that everyone should be entitled to control their own health and body, including having access to sexual and reproductive information and services, free from violence and discrimination.
- Everyone has the right to privacy and to be treated with respect and dignity. Nobody should be subjected to medical experimentation, forced medical examination, or given treatment without informed consent.

- We must all work together to combat inequalities and discriminatory practices so that **everyone** can enjoy the benefits of good health no matter their age, sex, race, religion, health status, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, criminal justice involvement or migration status.

Potential Use of this Statement

Identifying health as a human right dictates that health policy, strategies and programs be designed explicitly to improve health, with a focus on those facing the greatest barriers to health first. The foundation will recognize this right in public comments and factor this right into decisions to join partnerships and/or collective actions, when weighing in on public policy, when making investment decisions and when developing strategies.

References

Human Rights and Health (August 24, 2019) Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-rights-and-health>,

Health is a fundamental human right (August 24, 2019) Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/fundamental-human-right/en/>