



Narratives for Health

In Action: Embed in Strategy

Since 2021, [Narratives for Health](#) has worked with hundreds of public health departments and nonprofits, advocacy organizations and others across the country. The goal is to develop a shared understanding around narrative to shift mindsets on what drives health and equity and to organize for and operationalize the changes we seek.

[Narratives for Health](#) has compiled more than 60 examples of ways narrative change has been implemented into health and equity work — examples that can inspire and advance your narrative efforts. This document highlights one of five categories. View the [full resource here](#).

What are narratives?

Narratives, or values-based themes of stories, help us understand our world and what is possible. They call attention to what Frederick W. Mayor states as “who we are, what we believe and what we value.” Narrative change is an organizing tool to see shared values actualized in our communities and in the decisions we make.

How does Narratives for Health support narrative change?

Regardless of where you are on your narrative change journey, Narratives for Health can support. After completion of a [Narratives for Health training](#), participants can join our monthly community of practice sessions. The community of practice is a space to share and learn from others on how to diffuse and deploy narratives and discuss how to lead with shared health equity values in conversation with others. Narratives for Health also offers paired support with narrative organizers and partners. [Contact us](#) to join a training or learn more about the support we offer.

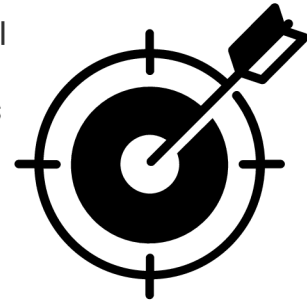
What are transformative narratives and the transformative narrative draft?

Through rounds of engagement within the train-the-facilitator series, Narratives for Health, along with over 300 organizations, created the Health Equity Transformative Narrative draft to elevate shared values that reflect a world where everyone can thrive and affect decision making. Because there are harmful narratives used in society that influence how we operate, the draft offers shared values that uplift health and equity to change what is possible.

Find that and more in our [Narratives for Health guide](#), which is a free, public resource that includes concepts, models, recommendations and tools to aid organizations delving into narrative change.

Embed in Strategy

Incorporating the words of transformative narratives alone will have limited results. The examples that follow show that organizations can embed the transformative narrative and its value statements into their health improvement planning process and documents, strategic plans, briefs and policies. Just like a strategic plan can be the beginning of putting strategy into action, embedding health equity values statements into guiding documents marks the beginning of operational, process and policy transformation.



Incorporate a health equity narrative into state and county planning processes and documents, such as a state or county health improvement plan, assessment or implementation plan. State health agencies have infused narrative into State Health Assessment (SHA), State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) and implementation plans. Consider:

1. Guiding the planning processes with health equity narrative values and statements.
2. Defining health and the ways to achieve better health.
3. Including narrative as a strategy and/or as part of a theory of change.
4. Selecting implementation actions and measures informed by narrative values.

Deploy narrative work as a strategy and infuse into strategic planning. A range of organization types — including an academic health sciences center, national population health technical assistance provider, and a national association — have used narrative value statements in strategic planning efforts.

Incorporate narratives in policy recommendations. State health agencies recommend policies and comment on other agencies' policies. An organization can incorporate narratives when making recommendations or comments to reflect what they value.

Incorporate narrative in identifying and shaping advocacy campaigns. An international policy organization used narratives and the values they embodied when crafting its approach to healthy housing. They emphasized that all people have a right to be treated with dignity and to live in safe and healthy homes. In a second example, they advocated for smoke-free laws by focusing on healing and dismantling systems of oppression, instead of on individual behaviors.

Incorporate narrative as part of equity, diversity and inclusion efforts. Because transformative narratives often elevate values like respect, deservedness, diverse leadership and connection that many people across identities share, the value statements can be applicable across disciplines. A local public health institute presented on narratives in a diversity, equity and inclusion service week and wove the transformative narrative into discussions about how they see health equity in their work, outputs, organization, and when working with external partners. And a national public health consultant uses the draft transformative narrative images and words as reflection activities in anti-racist and public health equity discussion groups to help operationalize values with the goal of shifting mindsets and systems.