



# National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health (NASDOH)

## 2021 Year in Review

*This report provides a summary of the work of the National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health (NASDOH) in 2021, which was made possible by the support and engagement of each NASDOH member.*

## ABOUT NASDOH'S 2021 PRIORITIES

NASDOH was established in January 2018 to systematically and pragmatically build a common understanding of the importance of addressing social determinants of health (SDOH) as part of an overall approach to improve the health and economic vitality of families and communities. The work of NASDOH is guided by a set of [principles](#), which were updated in the Spring of 2021 to reflect the evolving SDOH federal landscape and NASDOH members' interests.

In 2021, NASDOH prioritized activities related to our core workstreams while continuing to adapt and evolve our work plan in recognition of the relevance of social needs and social determinants of health to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and advancing health equity. NASDOH's work in 2021 focused on the following priority areas:

1. **Supportive Federal Policy Environment:** Advocating for federal action on SDOH and federal policy that facilitates state and local action to address SDOH.
2. **Cross-Sector Collaboration and Learning:** Facilitating shared learning among our members, who are already leaders in the field, and advancing wider action through collaboration and coordination across sectors and with nontraditional stakeholders.
3. **SDOH Thought Leadership:** Providing expertise and insight on SDOH to the public and private sectors on the intersection of social and economic conditions and COVID-19, and SDOH and equity.

## KEY ACTIVITIES IN 2021:

Each year, NASDOH defines a work plan that establishes specific goals and deliverables, which align with our priority areas. In 2021, NASDOH made progress towards our three strategic priorities and advanced work in each of our key workstreams, positioning us well for progress in 2022.

### 1. SUPPORTIVE FEDERAL POLICY ENVIRONMENT

At the end of 2020, NASDOH developed a federal policy and advocacy agenda to guide our efforts in 2021. We developed a set of 8 policy recommendations ripe for engagement with the legislative and executive branches of government. Our recommendations called for action to address SDOH in the context of a broader goal to advance health equity, including outlining policies to better align and integrate available SDOH resources, advance value-based health care, and support federal, state, and local action to address SDOH in a sustainable manner.

NASDOH published a letter to the Biden Administration team in December 2020, featuring the [eight policy recommendations](#) developed by NASDOH members and informed by their organizational strategic priorities and needs. Throughout Q1 and Q2 of 2021, NASDOH engaged widely with key stakeholders in the Administration and Congress, calling for action on our policy priorities, and advocating for key issues where we authored position statements. This led to new intelligence, informed our thought leadership, and offered learning opportunities.

### NASDOH WHITE PAPERS, LETTERS, AND PUBLICATIONS TO THE ADMINISTRATION AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

Capitalizing on the emerging attention toward and prioritization of social needs, SDOH, and health equity from the White House, and federal agencies, NASDOH developed publications and responded to key federal policies. We engaged with the executive branch on these issues:

- [Responding](#) to a notice of public rulemaking (NPRM) on issues related to HIPAA and social needs information;
- Releasing a [commentary](#) on equity and the COVID vaccine;
- Sending a [response](#) to an ASPE letter to encourage building the evidence base for SDOH;
- [Commenting](#) on an OMB Request for Information (RFI) on Advancing Equity for Underserved Communities;
- Sending a [letter](#) to HHS and the Domestic Policy Council to encourage appropriated federal funding to address SDOH and support multisector partnerships;
- Issuing an [advisory](#) to states encouraging them to leverage public health and social service-related funding to advance data modernization and interoperability;
- Releasing an [issue brief](#) on strategies to address social needs in the Medicaid program; and
- Developing and releasing a multi-sectoral alliance [resource compendium](#) with materials to assist in developing and optimizing alliances and their impact in the community.

This year, we expanded our federal SDOH policy activities to include direct public support for Congressional action and SDOH-related legislative proposals. We supported the creation of the Congressional SDOH Caucus and responded to the caucus request for information (RFI) to highlight key areas for action. We followed bills introduced in Congress that are relevant to SDOH and, upon consultation with members, we sent letters of support for select SDOH-related legislative proposals, including:

- **H.R. 379 and S. 104:** *The Improving Social Determinants Act of 2021*;
- **H.R. 2503:** *The Social Determinants Accelerator Act of 2021*;
- **S. 509:** *The Leveraging Integrated Networks in Communities (LINC) to Address Social Needs Act of 2021*;
- **S. 674:** *The Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act (PHISLA)*; and

- **H.R. 959 and S. 346:** *The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021.*

We connected with Congressional offices, forged deeper relationships with staff at key Congressional offices, and offered the Alliance's perspective on the importance of addressing SDOH to drive overall health and wellbeing.

### FEDERAL POLICY STAKEHOLDERS NASDOH ENGAGED IN 2021

- **Staff of the Senate HELP committee majority and minority:** NASDOH elevated SDOH as a key priority for the Committee to consider in the context of the Committee's pandemic preparedness package.
- **Senators Tina Smith (D-MN) and Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Rep. Nanette Diaz-Barragan (D-CA):** NASDOH voiced its support for the cosponsors' *Improving Social Determinants of Health Act of 2021* and offered to serve as a resource on SDOH issues for the staff.
- **Staff of Rep. Cheri Bustos (D-IL), Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK), Rep. Markwayne Mullin (R-OK):** NASDOH voiced its support for the cosponsors' *Social Determinants of Health Accelerator Act of 2021* and offered to serve as a resource on SDOH issues for the staff.
- **Staff of the majority and minority House Energy and Commerce Committee:** NASDOH shared our issue brief on addressing social needs in Medicaid.
- **Staff of the majority Ways and Means Committee:** NASDOH discussed how addressing social needs and social determinants fits in with the Committee's racial equity initiative.
- NASDOH sent background info on SDOH and posed questions to members of the **Senate HELP Committee and Finance Committee** in advance of the confirmation hearing for Sec. Xavier Becerra.

In addition to promoting our policy recommendations to the policymakers directly, NASDOH strengthened and expanded tracking of initiatives and activities to address SDOH and social needs across the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and at its member agencies and other departments, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). NASDOH's policy activity tracker was a valuable resource for our members, as well as for a wider audience, in promoting awareness of what is happening across HHS and other departments. NASDOH members were updated on developments twice monthly in the member newsletter, as well as during our monthly Policy Committee and Full Alliance meetings.

NASDOH also spoke about SDOH supportive policy developments and opportunities, offering recommendations to a variety of stakeholders through panels, webinars, and direct presentations. Presentations included addresses to the Population Health Alliance, Washington Health Alliance, Google Health Equity Research Summit, and Medicaid Enterprise Systems Conference.

### FEDERAL SDOH POLICY WINS IN 2021

Over the course of 2021, NASDOH was encouraged to see a number of federal policy developments and achievements related to SDOH, the result of strong advocacy and increasing federal prioritization of social needs, social determinants of health, and health equity. Accomplishments included:

- Creation of the White House COVID-19 Health Equity Taskforce.
- Creation of the House Ways and Means Committee Legislative [Framework and Priority Achieving Health and Economic Prosperity](#).
- Launch of the bipartisan Congressional SDOH Caucus.
- In Congress, increased understanding from both sides of the aisle that SDOH and social needs must be addressed both as a public health measure and in prevention efforts.
- The release of several SDOH-related reports from federal agencies including the Surgeon General's Report on Community Health and Economic Prosperity, an ASPE report on Social Determinants of Health Data Sharing at the Community Level, and an ASPE report on the Evidence Base for SDOH.
- The inclusion of social needs, SDOH, and health equity provisions throughout COVID-19-related fiscal relief packages.

### 2. CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION AND LEARNING

In 2021, NASDOH actively supported cross-sector collaboration. NASDOH members met monthly to share, among other topics, promising practices for addressing SDOH that have been used across member organizations. Additionally, NASDOH welcomed members and several Administration officials to discuss SDOH-related initiatives and priorities, creating an opportunity for NASDOH members to share their perspectives and pose questions to those external speakers. Over the course of 2021, NASDOH focused on sharing learnings on topics including:

#### [Working Together with Public Health to Address Social Needs and SDOH](#)

In 2021, NASDOH members discussed existing strategies and efforts to address social needs and SDOH. NASDOH invited guest speaker Karen Hacker, M.D., M.P.H., Director of CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) to share insights on public health's role in addressing the social determinants of health and CDC's work in this area to date. NASDOH Member Emily Yu of de Beaumont's BUILD Health Challenge reviewed her organization's [report](#) on "Seven Ways Businesses Can Align with Public Health for Bold Action and Innovation."

#### [The Intersection of Social Care and Health Care](#)

NASDOH members also offered learnings from their own organizations related to addressing social needs and SDOH. For example, Marisa Scala-Foley of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A) presented to NASDOH members on N4A's efforts working across social care and health care, highlighting policy levers that could be used to improve social services' ability to address social need and SDOH.

In addition, Kelly Cronin, Deputy Administrator of the Center for Innovation and Partnership's Administration for Community Living (ACL), shared ACL's work on addressing social needs and social determinants and shared what the agency has been working on with a variety of stakeholders.

#### [Efforts for Addressing Community Health and Economic Prosperity](#)

Following the Trump Administration's release of the Surgeon General's Community Health and Economic Prosperity [report](#), NASDOH Member Doug Jutte of Build Healthy Places Network shared an overview of the development report, focusing on the implications for stakeholders addressing SDOH. Following that discussion, Doug Jutte and Colleen Flynn of Build Healthy Places Network shared with NASDOH members their organization's activities to address social determinants of health via community development.

NASDOH also engaged in dialogue and shared learning from efforts and investments in community health. NASDOH member Robin Hacke of the Center for Community Investment (CCI) presented on CCI's community investment strategies and activities and the social determinants of health. Additionally, NASDOH Member John Banta of Blue Venture Fund offered venture capital and

private equity perspectives on SDOH investment. NASDOH member Kaiser Permanente shared insights with members on their recently launched initiative to combat racial disparities in access to economic opportunity.

### **Strategies and Lessons Learned for Addressing Health Equity and Structural Racism**

Taking full advantage of the Biden Administration's commitment to advance and promote health equity, NASDOH members followed suit in sharing their priorities and strategies related to health equity and structural racism. Jean Moody-Williams, Deputy Director for Clinical Standards and Quality at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), shared CMS' work on health equity and engagement with community organizations. Dr. Fernando De Maio, Melanie Ward, and Emily Laflamme of the American Medical Association (AMA) discussed AMA's Center for Health Equity priorities and activities. Roberta Downing of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis discussed the Reserve Bank's ongoing series of virtual events examining the ways in which structural racism manifests itself in America and their efforts to dismantle structural racism and build a more inclusive economy. NASDOH member National Partnership for Women & Families also shared their recently released Choosing Health Equity [suite of resources](#).

Across all topic areas, NASDOH members engaged with each other and with guest speakers in rich, generative dialogue that allowed members to showcase emerging efforts and best practices in the SDOH space and discuss challenges and opportunities that those who are engaged in SDOH work have faced. In several cases, members were invited to follow up with federal representatives and guest speakers directly to discuss issues and opportunities further.

We continued to assemble and publish a biweekly member newsletter, which highlighted and explored NASDOH members' SDOH news and initiatives, federal policy updates in the SDOH space, and resources and events related to SDOH and health equity. NASDOH invites members to share their organizational updates for discussion at member meetings and in our biweekly member newsletters. We also issued a regular newsletter to non-NASDOH external stakeholders to publicize NASDOH activities and NASDOH members' SDOH-related initiatives to a wider pool of public and private stakeholders interested in SDOH. The external newsletters are disseminated among about 150 individuals representing health care organizations, public health organizations, community-based organizations, academic institutions, and other entities. The newsletter content is often cross-listed in other members' newsletters and webinars, and highlighted in advocacy discussion with policymakers.

Importantly, we also released the Multi-Sector Alliance Resource Compendium. The Compendium aims to support multi-sectoral alliances focused on the social determinants of health (SDOH). It contains resources like guidance documents, best practices, case studies, and tools to assist in developing and optimizing alliances and their impact in the community.





### 3. SDOH THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

NASDOH leveraged its status as a network of health care, public health, and social service expertise to advance public dialogue on SDOH-related topics. NASDOH released several policy documents demonstrating its contribution to thought leadership on SDOH, sharing valuable insights for others who have a vested interest in the federal SDOH policy environment.

#### Thought Leadership Related to COVID-19

NASDOH used its influence and reach to respond to key SDOH-related issues emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. NASDOH released an [issue brief](#) on equity and the COVID-19 vaccine, identifying short- and long-term challenges and other vaccine rollout implications related to SDOH and inequities that impact the country's most vulnerable populations. In it, we discussed concrete steps that federal and local governments should take to ensure that those at the highest risk for COVID-19 infection, serious illness, and death are prioritized during the COVID-19 vaccination rollout and we are taking every opportunity to meet their needs where they are. Additionally, NASDOH [commented](#) on an OMB request for information (RFI) on advancing equity for underserved communities, offering our perspectives on how the Administration's equity-related goals can be accomplished through federal programs.

NASDOH followed, shared, amplified, and advocated federal flexibilities or funding sources for SDOH-related programs amid the COVID-19 public health emergency. In a [letter](#) to HHS and OMB, NASDOH encouraged the federal government to take proactive steps to ensure that federal funding, such as that appropriated in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and other new funding initiatives, is prioritized toward long-term investment in public health, social determinants of health (SDOH), and equity. NASDOH also issued an [advisory to states](#) on using COVID-19-related fiscal relief funding, public health funding, and social care funding to advance data and tech modernization and interoperability for social needs and SDOH.

#### Thought Leadership Related to SDOH Research and Evidence

NASDOH is committed to both promoting shared learning to stimulate action on SDOH in the current environment and advocating for increased research and evidence to ensure that there is greater opportunity for expanded SDOH efforts and initiatives in the future. NASDOH published [a letter](#) to the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at HHS on growing the evidence base for SDOH interventions.

#### Thought Leadership Related to Data and Technology Interoperability

NASDOH saw a renewed interest from members in the data and technology space related to social needs and SDOH. Following NASDOH's 2020 [Social Determinants of Health Data Interoperability Concept Paper](#), NASDOH returned to its Data and Technology priority, convening members over the summer of 2021 for discussion on NASDOH's priorities and roles in the Data and Technology space. NASDOH wrote an [advisory to states](#) on prioritizing funding for data and tech modernization

and interoperability. In the letter, NASDOH encourages states to leverage federal fiscal relief funding made available during the COVID-19 emergency, and other recent public health and social care funding streams, to advance data modernization and interoperability between public health and social care, health care, and social service providers.

### Thought Leadership Related to Addressing Social Needs in the Medicaid Program

In addition to flexibilities made available through the COVID-19 pandemic, NASDOH used its influence to contribute to thought leadership on ways in which social needs can be addressed in the Medicaid program. In an [issue brief](#), we summarized select federal authorities that allow states to address social needs in the Medicaid program. We called on states and managed care organizations (MCOs) to leverage the available flexibilities to address social needs, and we made recommendations to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) about how they can support the states in their efforts.

## ABOUT US

The National Alliance to impact the Social Determinants of Health (NASDOH) is a group of stakeholders working to systematically and pragmatically build a common understanding of the importance of addressing social needs as part of an overall approach to health improvement and economic vitality of families and communities. The Alliance brings together health care, public health and social services expertise, local community experience, community-convening competence, business and financial insight, technology innovation, data and analytics competencies, and policy and advocacy acumen to assess and address current regulatory frameworks, funding environments and opportunities, and practical challenges to implementing and sustaining social determinants of health efforts.

We seek to make a material improvement in the health of individuals and communities and, through multi-sector partnerships within the national system of health, to advance holistic, value-based, person-centered health care that can successfully impact the social determinants of health. To learn more, visit us at [NASDOH.org](http://NASDOH.org).

## MEMBERSHIP

### Co-Founders

Dr. Karen DeSalvo  
Governor Michael O. Leavitt

### 2021 MEMBERS

