

# EAST PROVIDENCE HEALTH EQUITY ZONE

## END OF YEAR REPORT



**July 2021-  
June  
2022**

In the summer of 2019 East Bay Community Action Program(EBCAP) became the backbone agency for one of the Health Equity Zones (HEZ) with support from grants from the RI Department of Health (RIDOH). The East Providence Health Equity Zone project is a place-based initiative created to reduce and eliminate current health disparities and barriers to wellness. Through collaboration we work to empower residents with the skills needed to create community change.



# Executive Summary

The East Providence Health Equity Zone (EPHEZ) is deeply committed to maintaining an approach to community health and wellness that is rooted in collective impact, best practices, equity, and a collaborative governance model that integrates persons with lived experience in identifying barriers, creating solutions, and delivering services. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Rhode Island in March of 2020, the newly formed EPHEZ Steering Committee quickly came together to focus on addressing the immediate needs of the community. EPHEZ built a relationship with residents while distributing essential supplies, masks, sanitizer, resource packets, and testing information, and introduced themselves to local organizations by assisting with program and event promotion, connecting residents with their services, and relaying concerns and questions to the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH). However, this quick response to the pandemic so early in the development of EPHEZ meant delaying the creation and implementation of a formal governance structure and internal policies and procedures. As EPHEZ entered Year 3 in July 2021, the Steering Committee focused on developing these structures, while solidifying quick, thoughtful responses to community needs as an integral part of our approach to building health equity.

EPHEZ remains fortunate to have a diverse group of residents and professionals serving as the Steering Committee and has expanded the larger Collaborative to include more residents, faith-based leaders, community organizations, and statewide advocacy coalitions. Beyond retaining original members such as the East Providence Senior Center, the East Providence Area Chamber of Commerce, the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN), the Cape Verdean Progressive Center, Jules Hope Chest, and the Community Development Office of the City of East Providence, EPHEZ has developed and strengthened partnerships with the East Providence School System, Good Neighbors RI, the RI Elder Minority Taskforce, PACE-RI, and the University of Rhode Island's SNAP Education program. EPHEZ's approach to collaboration remains grounded in a recognition of the expertise of our partners and a commitment to uplifting and supporting existing programming. This approach, combined with our ability to provide staff support, community connections, and thoughtful feedback has led to a steady increase in interest in the EPHEZ from residents and organizations alike.

As we entered Year 3 the EPHEZ Steering Committee committed to creating a governance structure, empowering workgroups, and utilizing the increase in funding opportunities to increase staffing support for all EPHEZ programming. By the end of 2021, the EPHEZ Steering Committee, following months of revisions and input from the Steering Committee and workgroups, had ratified an official governance structure. This document details the roles and responsibilities of all workgroups and the Steering Committee, the overarching mission of

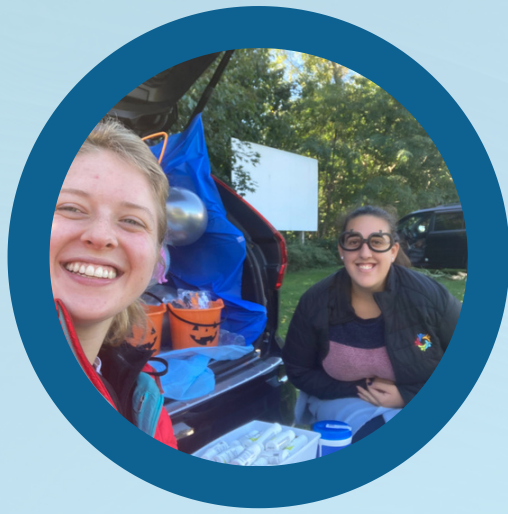


# Executive Summary

EPHEZ, the roles and responsibilities of EPHEZ staff, voting and recusal procedures, membership guidelines, and the process for revision. All workgroups committed to carrying out programming, identifying opportunities for systems change, and expanding membership. All workgroups consistently meet every 1-2 months, discuss potential programming, collaborate with staff to ensure sufficient staffing, marketing, and funding, and share this information with residents. By the end of 2021 staffing levels had also increased, from one full-time and five part-time staff to 4 full-time and 3 part-time staff. These numbers continued to increase over the second half of the grant cycle, with three additional part-time staff added as of June 2022, and four additional full-time positions posted for Year 4. Of the three part-time positions added in 2022, two are administrative support positions (Finance and Communications), who support the work of the East Providence, Warren, and Bristol Health Equity Zones. This sharing of resources is an example of another priority area over the last year, of partnering with the Bristol and Warren HEZs to ensure the efficient use of resources. Leaning on the support of EBCAP as the backbone organization for all three HEZs, we have partnered over the last year to not only share support resources, but to also begin developing a regional strategy to address overarching health equity barriers, including access to healthy, affordable food; services for families with young children; and substance use disorders. A highlight of this partnership was the development of a Food Access Report, in partnership with RIDOH's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) department and a graduate student from Tufts University. This report utilized a mixture of geographic information mapping, in-depth survey responses from providers and residents, and an analysis of the food and transportation options within the area to identify the primary barriers to food access and suggestions on addressing these issues. This report has already been utilized by the Rhode Island Food Policy Council during a meeting with Senators Reed and Whitehouse and will be an integral part of our food systems work in Year 4.

Following the adoption of the Governance structure in December 2021, the EPHEZ Steering Committee was able to begin meeting on a monthly basis, after nearly two years of meeting weekly, and to integrate presentations from outside organizations into these monthly calls. This has allowed for more meaningful collaboration with other organizations, and an increased interest in joining the EPHEZ Collaborative from both local and statewide organizations. An exciting aspect of this is how frequently we are contacted by East Providence residents on behalf of their organization; we consistently hear that they are interested in supporting our work not only on a professional level, but on a personal level as a resident of the city. They are appreciative of the approach we have taken over the last three years, of remaining deeply committed to creating the right process for the work, rather than rushing forward during a





# Executive Summary

time of great stress. This approach has been based in the understanding that the work of collective impact, community engagement, and equity and inclusion takes more time than standard collaboration, in order to ensure an impactful outcome.

In addition to the development of an infrastructure and deeper relationships with Collaborative members, over the past year EPHEZ has also leaned on the resources provided by EBCAP, and the natural strengths created by having a backbone organization with such a deep bench of programming and services. Through the work of the Rhode to Equity team, we have continued and deepened our relationship with the EBCAP Food Pantry, including identifying produce donation partners, EPHEZ Community Health Workers (CHWs) providing staff support and interacting with clients in the pantry, and expanding programming to include an increased focus on nutrition, budgeting, and food preservation. We continue to work with the EBCAP Community Health Team (CHT), meeting monthly to discuss community needs, training and professional development opportunities, and implementing needs assessments such as Cantril's Ladder into everyday resident interactions. Our Pre-School Development Grant (PDG) has partnered with Head Start and Early Head Start to offer trainings on Safe Sleep and the Rite-Smiles program; evidence-based Family Visiting programs in both our partnership with the RI Philharmonic Music School and new East Providence Play-and-Learn groups, and the WIC department to increase enrollment and general awareness. The East Bay Recovery Center continues to be a valuable partner, partnering to educate on substance use, provide resources and assistance with SNAP and Rent Relief RI applications to the residents of the Rumford Motor Inn, and to schedule trainings on administering Narcan to East Providence school employees, from teachers to administrative support personnel.

The East Providence HEZ remains proud of the continued success of programming initiatives, including the work of the Rhode to Equity team on our Produce to People initiative; the early practice of family support goals through the implementation of Safe Sleep, Incredible Years, and Parents as Teachers curriculum; and a series of virtual town halls co-hosted with the East Providence Mayor Bob DaSilva around resources available from faith-based leaders. The highlighted activities below are snapshots of our work throughout the year, and are a response to both the needs identified by residents during the initial 2019 Community Needs Assessment, and those identified by outreach staff and Collaborative members over the course of the year. They address the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) identified by the Rhode Island Department of Health, and have solidified EPHEZ's position in the community as a trusted resource and bridge between organizations and the communities they serve:



# COVID-19 Response

The EPHEZ Community Health Workers and Community Outreach Specialists were able to continue distributing masks, sanitizer, wipes, and resource packets to residents throughout the year. Following the provision of at-home test kits from RIDOH, EPHEZ distributed 2,142 kits to residents and community organizations. We partnered with several organizations throughout the year to provide targeted outreach, including regular attendance at the Good Neighbor's RI Food Pantry, the Weaver Library Farmer's Market, and the mobile food pantry and outreach at the Rumford Motor Inn, led by the East Bay Recovery Center and Gate of Hope. EPHEZ continued to provide street outreach, setting up outreach tables and assisting with SNAP applications at community locations, including supermarkets, laundromats, gas stations and convenience stores, in what has become a hallmark feature of EPHEZ's work-meeting residents where they are. This consistent visibility in the community has led to an increase in resident contact over the year-so much so that our newest outreach employee is an East Providence resident, who reached out to learn more about getting involved after speaking with our staff while running errands.



We reached approximately 15,274 individuals through our COVID-19 response efforts over the last year, and they received a mixture of resource referral/connection, virus testing and vaccination support, masks and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and SDOH and basic needs assistance.

Outreach staff completed the Community Health Worker training that was offered by the Community Health Worker Association of Rhode Island (CHWARI) in conjunction with RIDOH, with two staff receiving their certifications in March 2022, a third completing their classes in May 2022, and one of them currently enrolled in the CHW Supervisor training.



Staff were trained in assisting with the completion of SNAP and Rent Relief RI applications, allowing for immediate, on-site assistance for residents.

The relationship they were able to build with the East Providence Emergency Management Agency (EP EMA) over the last two years has led to partnerships in hosting vaccination events, addressing community concerns, and working together to create a food insecurity assessment. This will be implemented by EP EMA and will allow them to identify and connect residents at need with EPHEZ and EBCAP's Food Pantry.



# Rhode to Equity



EPHEZ served as the team lead for the East Providence Rhode to Equity (R2E) team, who continued the programmatic and systems work that began during the Diabetes Health Equity Challenge. This initiative promotes the integration of clinical and population health, centering people with lived experience to address health equity barriers and food insecurity for residents with diabetes or that are pre-diabetic.

## Our Staff

One of our Health Disparities CHWs transitioned to the full-time Rhode to Equity Coordinator role, bringing a background in both public health and kinesiology, and a connection to the URI SNAP Education program, local farms, and peer education programming.

## Our Community

Continuing our support of the Produce to People program, we implemented a monthly mini-assessment, building a strong enough relationship with existing clients that they will serve as the initial members of next year's PLE Advisory Board.

## Our Achievement

We also brought on an additional 12 clients, and with the support of a volunteer Registered Dietician Nutritionist (RDN) began integrating health education into the produce bags provided each month.

## Our Partners

We hosted a successful virtual cooking demonstration in November 2021, partnered with URI SNAP-Ed to offer the six-week "Eat Well, Spend Less" class, and once again partnered our volunteer RDN to offer free 1:1 sessions to all class attendees after every other class.

# Pre-School Development Grant



EPHEZ has continued to connect families with young children and expectant parents to an array of integrated early childhood and parenting supports. A full-time Family Navigator began in September 2021, and immediately focused on learning about resources available, introducing herself to residents, and asking what they needed for support. This initial focus on learning about resources led to the creation of an easily adaptable database (LINK), which is utilized internally and will be shared with Collaborative members in July 2022. This upcoming resource has been well-received by providers, municipal leaders, and residents alike, who view this as another example of EPHEZ working to provide community members with the resources they have requested.

The East Providence Health Equity Zone continues to strengthen its relationship with the East Providence School Department, particularly with the Agnes B. Hennessey Elementary School. Identified as the highest need elementary school within the city, Hennessey is the initial school to engage with in creating new programs. Over the last year, the East Providence School Department began participating in the “First Ten/Community Schools” initiative, which is grounded in the understanding of schools as community hubs. The School Department approached EPHEZ at the beginning of the school year, recognizing the impact we are having on the community, about collaborating to expand the resources available to families within schools.

## Family Music Time

We continued to partner with the Rhode Island Philharmonic School and the EBCAP Family Visiting program, offering an 18 week class that combined music education for toddlers, infants, and pre-k children with the Parents as Teachers evidence-based curriculum for parents.

## Incredible Years

Twelve sessions of Incredible Years ran from February-April, with six families that participated in each session.

## Safe Sleep

Through a growing relationship with EBCAP's Head Start program, we collaborated during the monthly “Head Start Talks” sessions for parents to offer a culturally sensitive Safe Sleep program.

## In the Classroom

In cross-grant programming, the R2E team and our Family Navigator placed hydroponic systems within ten classrooms. These hydroponic systems allow students to grow fresh produce in the classroom, which they are then able to take home to share with their families.

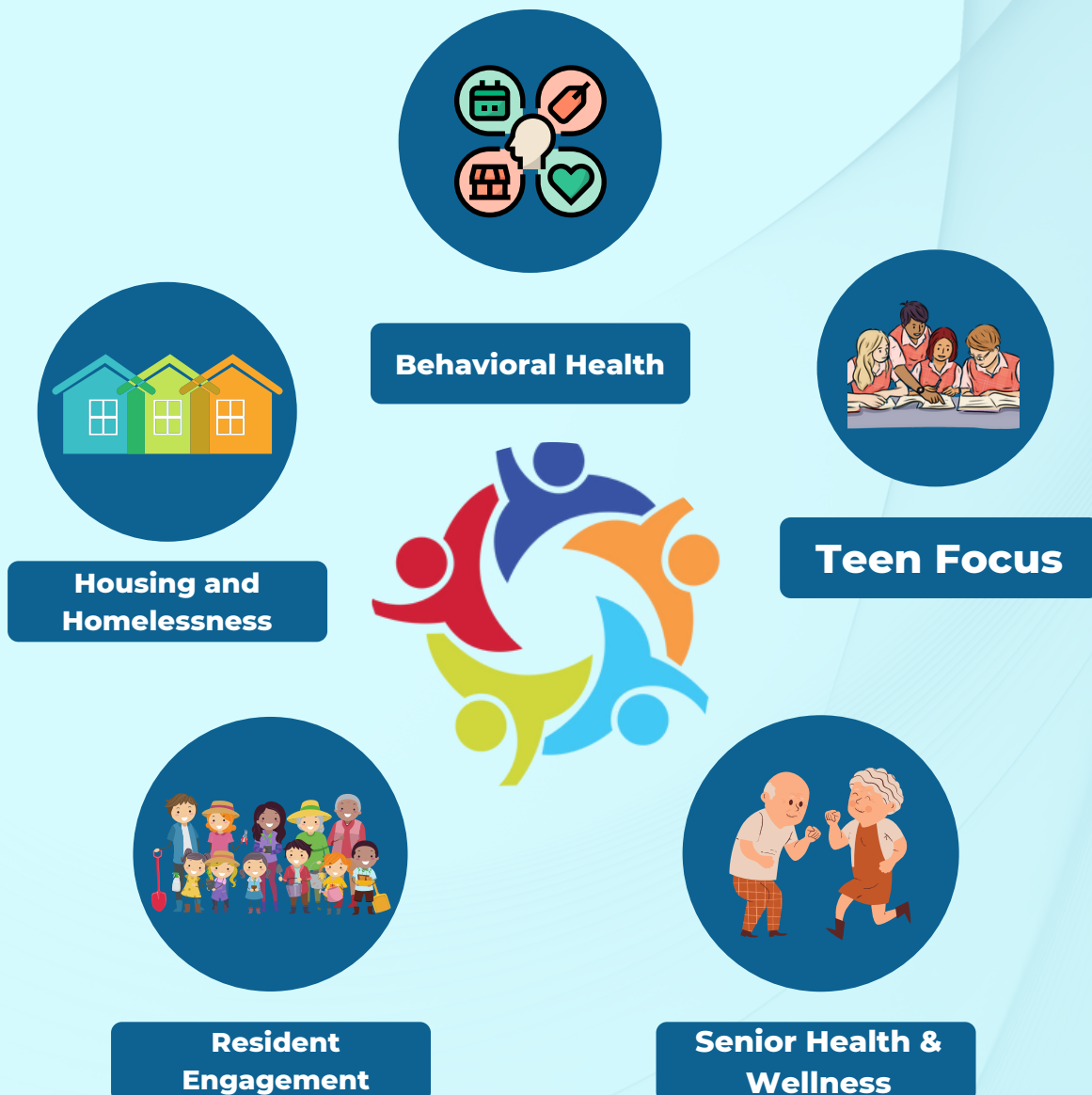
The EPHEZ Family Navigator became embedded within Hennessey, and is available to parents as a resource one day each week. She has been able to connect families with WIC, SNAP, LIHEAP, VOCA, and more. This relationship has continued to grow throughout the year, and this spring we were able to co-present two well-attended Play-and-Learn groups.





# EPHEZ Infrastructure Development

The initial Community Needs Assessment showed that East Providence has many strengths, one of which is a strong, existing sense of community, followed closely by a strong emergency services system and a geographical proximity to many resource rich locations. EPHEZ has continued to build upon these strengths and to address community needs by supporting the growth of workgroups. While next year will see the planned expansion of new and existing workgroups, over the SFY22 grant cycle, a heavy emphasis was placed on empowering workgroup members to identify areas of need, potential partnerships, and programming opportunities. All of the workgroups identified above have identified their missions, goals for the year, and co-facilitators, and have provided a variety of community engagement and programming over the last year. They have begun developing a strategy to address systems change, as well as conversations with residents on how to continue improving resident engagement in and leadership of these workgroups. The Steering Committee drafted and finalized the Governance Structure for EPHEZ, in a collaborative and thoughtful process that encouraged feedback and participation. It is important to note that the development of this structure was lead by a Steering Committee member, who is also an East Providence resident. In June, the Steering Committee provided input in the annual performance evaluation of the EPHEZ Project Director, in alignment with the Governance Plan.



# Demographic Information of HEZ Community Served

<p>Geographic Area Served</p>	<p>The East Providence HEZ serves Central East Providence, Rumford, and Riverside. (See census tracts area map on attachment titled “EP HEZ Resident Needs Assessment). At the time of the attached assessment, East Providence (EP), the fifth largest city in RI, had the following demographics: a population of 47,618 persons; socioeconomically, a median income lower than the state median and approximately 11% of residents living in extreme poverty (100% or below FPL); 31% in poverty (138% or below) and 60% under 400% of the federal poverty guidelines. The service area population is predominantly white (non-Hispanic) with a growing ethnically diverse populations emerging: Black, Hispanic Latinx, Asian, and individuals who identify as two-or more ethnicities. According to the most recent UDS Mapper data (a national database administered by Health Resources Services Administration), between the years of 2012-2016, approximately 13,317 persons with low income resided in the city. Data supported the following identified health concerns: over 8% had been told they had diabetes; approximately 30% had been told they had high blood pressure; over 12% adults who have delayed/not sought care due to cost; and nearly 11% had no regular source of care.</p>
<p>Description of racial/ethnic groups served in area and estimated population reached</p>	<p>The EP HEZ service area is comprised of the following racial and ethnic groups and the EP HEZ seeks to serve each of these groups with an equity and inclusion lens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>82.6% White</li> <li>6.4% Black</li> <li>6.2% Hispanic</li> <li>5.2% Two or More Races</li> <li>5% Other</li> <li>2.9% Asian</li> </ul> <p>The estimated population reached during the last year through various COVID-19 support efforts including education (including through social media outreach and partnership with the City of East Providence), mask distribution, vaccine delivery and support, and testing delivery and support was approximately 10,742. The number supported with direct services through the pandemic via COVID-19 outreach to address a broad range of needs (food, housing, SDOH supports, etc.), as well as through Rhode to Equity, Safe Sleep, Parents as Teachers, Incredible Years Curriculum, and additional PDG programming was approximately 16,043. Through our work under the Health Disparities grant providing outreach and support to COVID-19 testing sites in the community, including the site staffed by the EBCAP Health Center, we reached an additional 30,945 individuals. Our social media reach also increased, as we reached an estimated 64,280 individuals via digital communication, including social media and email.</p>

# Demographic Information of HEZ Community Served

## Key Areas of RI Statewide SDOH

The Community Needs Assessment (see attached EP HEZ Community Needs Assessment), along with RIDOH identified SDOH needs have determined the focus of the Steering Committee and Work Groups to date. This is a dynamic process as the EP HEZ is committed to a true collective impact approach that continuously incorporates a focus on equity and the voices of those with lived experience. The Steering Committee is strong, and the currently active Work Groups include:

- Resident Engagement
- Communications
- Behavioral Health
- Teen Focus
- Senior Services
- Housing and Homelessness
- Governance

When addressing RI Health Equity Measures, much of our work is accomplished through our partnerships within the community, and working together to create short- and long-term impacts, whether from limited time programming, such as the PAT/RI Philharmonic School music class, or behind the scenes changes, such as the implementation of Cantril's Ladder by the EBCAP Community Health Team (CHT) and Food Pantry during initial assessments. Internally, we also recognize the work we can do to address these measures; for example, staff participation in the employee-led EBCAP Taskforce for Justice and Equity (TFJE), which provided training on bystander intervention. Even for the areas that are not a specific focus for EP HEZ at the moment, we try to stay involved and informed, and prepared to move forward with partnerships and services should that focus change-an example is general community trauma, and our participation in the Ocean State Trauma Informed Care Coalition (OSTICC). Specific Statewide SDOH and RIDOH Health Equity Measures addressed this year include:

### Healthcare Access:

Partnership with RIDOH Dental Program, EBCAP Dental Clinic, and Rite-Smiles

Collaborating with RIDOH to create an assessment on oral health and access to oral health professionals in EP

Utilizing the strength of having EBCAP as a backbone-connection to EBCAP Health has allowed for increased outreach and connection to the community around COVID-19 testing and vaccination



# Demographic Information of HEZ Community Served

## Key Areas of RI Statewide SDOH

### Social Services:

EP HEZ outreach staff trained in completing SNAP and Rent Relief RI applications

Outreach Specialists stationed in the EBCAP Food Pantry 1x/week, and trained on completing Food Pantry needs assessment(s)

### Behavioral Health:

Collaborate with East Providence Prevention Coalition (EPPC), East Bay Recovery Center, EBCAP Behavioral Health, Bradley Hospital, and Family Care Community Partnership (FCCP)

BH Workgroup focused on interactive programming  
Senior Workgroup-focus on hoarding and social isolation; identified priority area for Year 4 of grief counseling and peer support

### Social Vulnerability:

Conscious of social vulnerability in program intake/assessments

Implementation of Cantril's Ladder by EPHEZ, Food Pantry and Community Health Team (CHT)

Staff Development: Scheduled trainings for next year on Mental Health First Aid and Motivational Interviewing

### Equity in Policy:

Housing and Homelessness workgroup is heavily focused on impacting policy; subcommittees for education, identifying development opportunities, and identifying regulations that should be changed

Participation in EP Comprehensive Planning Workshops, on RI Hunger Elimination Taskforce; participant in RIDOH Physical Activity and Nutrition Workgroups

Relationship with elected officials: participation and support from Representative Liana Cassar and Senator Valerie Lawson; co-hosted several events with East Providence Mayor Bob DaSilva

### Food Insecurity:

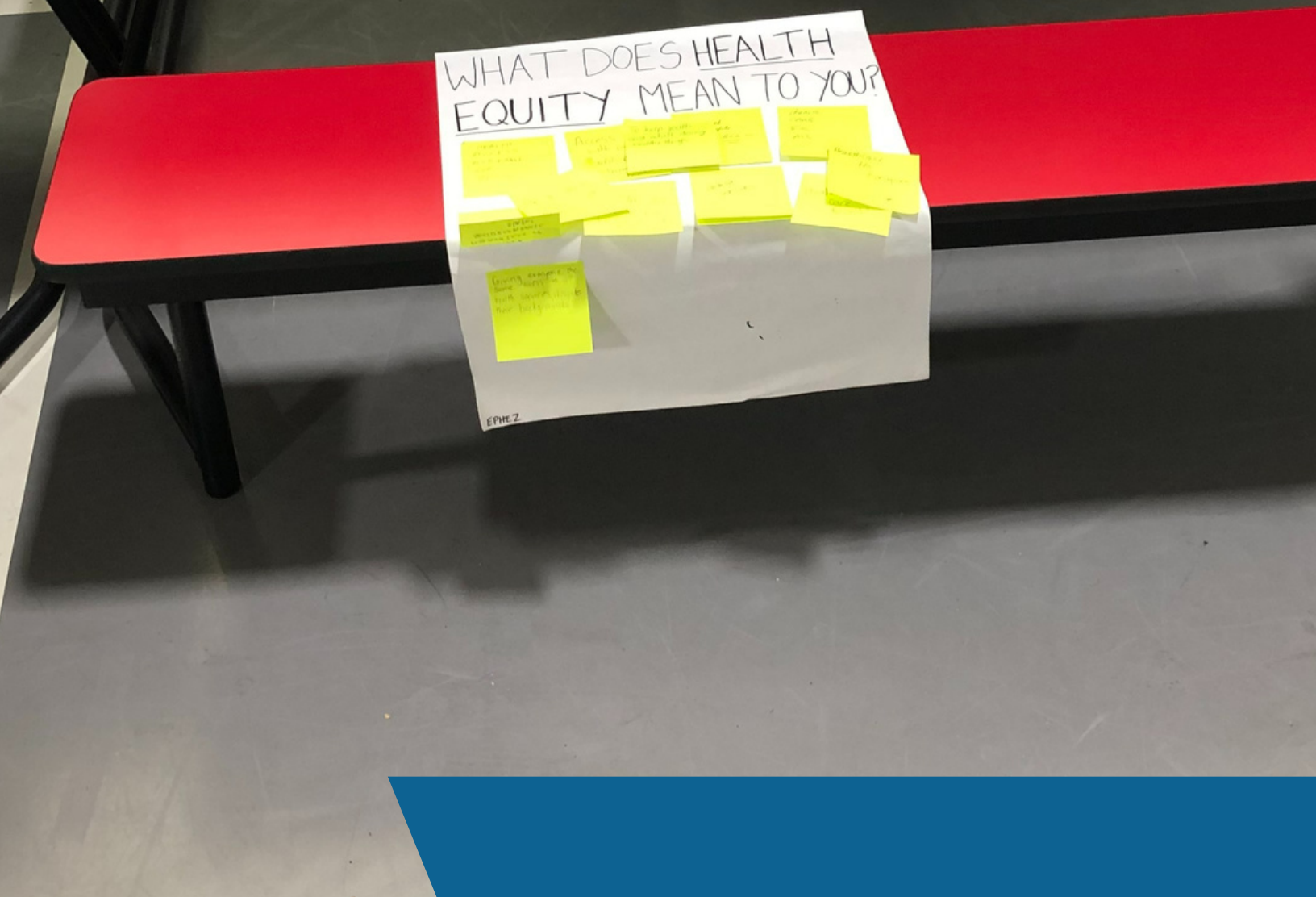
Rhode to Equity (R2E) Grant: provides fresh produce 1x/month to 29 East Providence residents with diabetes experiencing food insecurity

Volunteer RDN provides education-information and recipes in each bag, virtual cooking demo in November, and 1:1 consultation in the Spring

Education-how can we make changes that will continue after this program-partnership with URI Snap-Ed, Age Friendly RI, East Providence Senior Center, and other



# MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS



# Health Disparities

In Spring 2022, EPHEZ conducted three community-wide report out events, marketed as “Identifying Resident Priorities” which had over 600 attendees. In response to community members’ frustration that they are often asked for their input and stories without receiving anything in kind, these events were combined with a resource fair, vaccination clinic, and on-site appointments for Rent Relief RI and SNAP.

Residents provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about these events—they appreciated the opportunity to share their thoughts, and loved the opportunity to connect with resources, receive their vaccination/booster, and receive assistance with applications. The initial results of these events are being reviewed, and a final report on the feedback received and suggestions for future actions will be available to all later this calendar year. Finally, as an example of our outreach team’s ability to engage with residents, our most recent hire is a direct result of our street outreach efforts—a resident met our team several times during outreach, loved the work being done, and contacted us to learn more about getting involved. Three months later, she is a valuable member of our team, and a perfect example of how Health Equity Zones can engage with and uplift residents.

**17,687**

Residents received masks

**2,142**

Residents received at-home test kits

**753**

Residents assisted in setting up testing or vaccination appointments

**589**

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) screenings provided



Over the last year, an integral component of EPHEZ’s COVID-19 outreach efforts has been the continued building of community relationships and trust and building them in a manner that allows us to meet people where they are, both physically and emotionally. EPHEZ’s outreach team is well-known in the community, and we frequently receive requests from local organizations to provide a resource table at an event or to co-host a program. We have coordinated a variety of direct services over the last year, including those highlighted above.



# Rhode to Equity

## Produce to People

Continued to provide bags of fresh produce, lean proteins, recipes, nutrition information, and cooking utensils to 29 East Providence residents each month. Our R2E Coordinator speaks with residents at least once a month, conducting ongoing needs assessments, gathering feedback about the items provided and their impact on clients' daily lives, and connecting them with continuing education. Enrollment in the program follows an initial needs and risk assessment, with ineligible residents connected with other resources.

## Building Relationships

We built several new relationships this year, including connecting with Means Database, who provided free, pre-made, diabetic-friendly meals to clients in the fall, and who we are working with to offer these meals to a wider range of residents. Frontier Farms, a small farm in Rhode Island, will begin donating produce on a bi-weekly basis at the beginning of July, expanding the offerings available at the EBCAP Food Pantry.

## PLE Advisory Board

Recognizing the value of resident voices, and particularly those with lived experience, the EPHEZ R2E team has begun the process of creating a PLE Advisory Board, which will be comprised of residents with chronic illnesses that are also experiencing or have experienced food insecurity. In addition to providing regular input as to programming efforts, the PLE Advisory Board will also receive training and coaching in self-advocacy, creating a sustainable, resident-led advisory board.

## Additional Highlights

Additional highlights include: partnered with Stop and Shop, EBCAP's WIC office and Food Pantry, and Good Neighbors RI to provide free baby food and formula to families before the holidays; distributed supermarket gift cards to families in need during the holidays; approached by Age Friendly RI to participate in their Silver Aprons program, offering cooking classes to seniors throughout the city starting in August 2022.

The East Providence Rhode to Equity team, led by EPHEZ, successfully participated in Year 1 of Rhode to Equity (R2E), an innovative approach to creating systems change that is funded by the Rhode Island Health Systems Transformation Fund. Rhode to Equity combines the resources of HEZs, community partners, accountable entities, and persons with lived experience to address barriers to health equity in individual communities. The East Providence team, which includes members of EBCAP's Community Health Team, Nursing staff, and Food Pantry, as well as staff from Integrated Healthcare Partners (IHP), and a resident with lived experience, continues to focus on addressing food insecurity among East Providence residents, and particularly those with diabetes. We continued and expanded the Produce to People pilot program from the Diabetes Health Equity Challenge, serving nearly 30 individuals by the end of the reporting year. The program also continued to grow in the scope of services provided, integrating the feedback and services of a Registered Dietetic Nutritionist (RDN), partnering with the SNAP-Ed program at the University of Rhode Island, and identifying local farms for produce donations.

# Partnership with the City of East Providence

The East Providence HEZ has continued to expand its ability to impact policy and systems change through a strong partnership with the City of East Providence. Following an invitation from the Resident Engagement Workgroup to Mayor DaSilva to attend a meeting, EPHEZ and the East Providence Mayor's Office have co-hosted several successful events, including two virtual town halls for faith based leaders, the series of combined vaccination clinics and community report outs referenced above, and a city-wide effort to distribute at-home COVID-19 test kits. Recognizing the impact of substance use, we continue to strengthen our relationship with the East Providence Prevention Coalition (EPPC), supporting a summertime health fair, creating a "Coffee and Connections" series to facilitate resident connection and peer support, and hosting a successful screening and community conversation around the Department of Justice produced documentary "Circles and Silence," which address substance use.



# Pre-School Development Grant

Over the last year, we have continued to focus on providing resources, support, and education to families with children ages 0-5 and expectant parents, particularly those from traditionally underserved communities. As detailed in the Executive Summary above, our Family Navigator has spent the last year establishing herself as a trusted resource within the community, through a regular presence at Hennessey Elementary School, programming initiatives such as dance classes for toddlers at Weaver Library, and setting up kid-friendly activity tables at vaccination clinics and resource fairs. Her work and relationship with residents cannot be overstated. She has had such a positive impact on the families at Hennessey that the East Providence School Department has approached us about placing Family Navigators or their equivalent at other elementary schools throughout the city, with a plan already in place to expand to Whiteknact Elementary School at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. In an example of how evolving relationships can begin to create change outside of the initial scope of work, the work done at Hennessey allowed us to begin conversations with the incoming Superintendent to provide trainings on NARCAN administration to school personnel. These conversations among EPHEZ, the East Providence School Department, and the East Bay Recovery Center led to an agreement to provide training to school personnel during school-sanctioned Professional Development days at the beginning of the upcoming school year, and have opened the door to further conversations around substance use and behavioral health needs, for staff, students, and families.



For the second year in a row, “Family Music Time with the Phil,” a free, 18-week program that combines music education for infants, toddlers, and pre-k students with the evidence-based PAT curriculum for parents, was offered to families across the city. The program was once again virtual due to COVID-19, but was still able to retain the majority of families enrolled throughout the program. Families receive free books and musical instruments to continue their education at home, and are able to make a connection with both the EBCAP Family Visiting team and the EPHEZ Family Navigator. Families have already contacted us about next year’s programming, and we plan to continue our relationship with the Philharmonic Music School and the EBCAP Home Visiting Team as we head into Year 4.

For the second year in a row, we offered the evidence-based Incredible Years program, a 12-week series of classes that helps to treat and prevent behavioral health challenges among children, and to promote social, emotional, and academic competence.



Created Play-and-Learn kits to distribute; each kit contained seeds, potting soil, a small pot, and kid-friendly info around growing vegetables and healthy eating. These have been very well-received by parents and children alike, and along with other kid-friendly activities that were provided throughout the year, have led to EPHEZ being approached by organizations throughout East Providence to host family-activity tables at community events throughout the remainder of the calendar year.



# Governance Development and Supported Growth

A priority for EPHEZ during Year 3 was the creation of a governance structure. This is the result of six months of revisions, feedback from the Steering Committee and workgroup members, and the work of our resident-led Governance Workgroup. Also resident-led is our Resident Engagement Advisory Workgroup, which continued to meet on a monthly basis, structuring their meeting days and time around the requests of resident members. They planned and co-hosted two successful town halls for faith-based leaders in East Providence, as an opportunity for them to share resources, the concerns of their congregations, and suggestions for removing health equity barriers. A third town hall is being scheduled for Year 4, and participants are working to create a city-wide email thread for all faith-based leaders, allowing for the immediate sharing of information

## Housing

Co-facilitated by the Policy Director of Housing Works RI and the East Providence Director of Community Development, they are strategizing methods of increasing the affordable housing stock in East Providence, as well as working to remove the stigma of affordable and subsidized housing among residents. With the support of a grant from United Way RI, Housing Works RI chose East Providence as a city to conduct housing workshops and focus groups, in an effort to assess the community level of knowledge around housing barriers, resources, and regulations.

## Behavioral Health

The Behavioral Health Workgroup has grown significantly over the last year, increasing membership to include Bradley Children's Hospital, the East Providence Prevention Coalition, the East Bay Recovery Center, school personnel, and residents. They successfully co-hosted the previously mentioned "Circles and Silence" film[RC1] screening and discussion, and identified trauma-informed care as a priority for the upcoming year.

## Teen Focus

Increasing engagement with East Providence teens, and creating meaningful opportunities for leadership and to provide feedback was the top goal of the Teen Focus Workgroup during Year 3. They hosted two teen meet-and-greet sessions during the summer, which were led by two EPHEZ teen interns. These sessions identified the following priorities for teens: recreation opportunities, community events, and a focus on mental health, substance use, and bullying.

## Senior Health

Led by EBCAP's Senior Director of Healthy Aging, the Senior Health and Wellness Group hosted a well-attended workshop on Senior Hoarding and Mitigation; co-hosted meetings with the RI Elder Minority Taskforce; collaborated with the East Providence Senior Center to place teen interns within the Senior Center, increasing inter-generational interactions within the community; and supported the first of our "Identifying Resident Priorities" community events at the Senior Center, which was attended by nearly 200 seniors.



# Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

EPHEZ Collaborative members, including all EPHEZ staff, are deeply committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to supporting anti-racist policies, both within the community and within EBCAP. All staff are members of EBCAP's staff-led Taskforce for Justice and Equity (TFJE), and have participated in trainings around anti-racist leadership and meeting facilitation, creating policy change, and recognizing implicit and explicit bias. Staff have participated in open forums around LGBTQ+ experiences and a special forum around lived experience and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and the EPHEZ Project Director co-led an open forum on disability rights. Two Collaborative members and the EPHEZ Project Director are also participating in the Results Based Accountability Anti-Racist Foundational Series offered by RIDOH and facilitated by Equity and Results; this is a year-long series aimed at creating anti-racist systems change within our communities.

## Creating a Regional Strategy to Address Health Disparities

Recognizing a common theme in regional health disparities, EPHEZ partnered with the Bristol and Warren HEZs to ensure the efficient use of resources and sharing of information. Leaning on the support of EBCAP as the backbone organization for all three HEZs, we have partnered over the last year to not only share support resources, but to also begin developing a regional strategy to address overarching health equity barriers, including access to healthy, affordable food; services for families with young children; and substance use disorders. A highlight of this partnership was the development of a Food Access Report, in partnership with RIDOH's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) department and a graduate student from Tufts University. This report utilized a mixture of geographic information mapping, in-depth survey responses from providers and residents, and an analysis of the food and transportation options within the area to identify the primary barriers to food access and suggestions on addressing these issues. This report has already been utilized by the Rhode Island Food Policy Council during a meeting with Senators Reed and Whitehouse and will be an integral part of our food systems work in Year 4.



# SUCCESS STORIES AND NARRATIVES





# EPHEZ Collaborative

## Steering Committee



*"The East Providence Health Equity Zone has been actively providing resources and needed supplies to our residents throughout this pandemic. Our HEZ has been instrumental in identifying different insecurities our residents are struggling with and has helped tackle the barriers that many residents are facing. The EPHEZ is an asset to our community and its only just begun tackling the hard issues."*

*"I am proud to be a active and involved member of the EPHEZ Steering Committee. Our group remains dedicated and committed to identifying , insecurities and also providing opportunities to the East Providence Community. The work our HEZ is doing on a day to day basis is instrumental to the growth and equity of our community."*

### Street Outreach

EPHEZ continued to provide street outreach to locations such as Taunton Ave Bakery, Sax's, Cafe Zara, City Hall, Weaver Library, Stop and Shop, Cumberland Farms, Laundromax, and more.

### COVID-19

EPHEZ partnered with the City of East Providence to distribute RIDOH provided at-home test kits to seniors, low-income individuals, and families with young children across the city.

### Community Events

Over 600 residents attended our community report-out events, providing feedback on priority areas, barriers to health equity, and what is working well in the city. An initial draft of responses has been provided to RIDOH.

## Resident Voices

*"Thank you for everything that you do to get us connected!"*



# Rhode to Equity



## Participant Feedback

*"This year has shown that the more you listen, the more we (residents) will give. If you give us a voice, you will hear us, and the more open you are, the more we will give you."*

*"This team is important because it allows PLEs to contribute. My ideas are listened to, and I receive feedback from others. These conversations are so important! [I] do not want to see this end anytime soon-this program needs to be built on. Hearing all of the emotions behind everyone's feedback-that is so important, and shared with the community."*

## Staff Perspective-Feedback from Integrated Healthcare Partners (IHP)

*"You should know that this team has been mission-driven and committed to bettering the East Providence community from the start, and that workers from different organizations and PLEs became one unit to work towards our goals."*

### Produce to People

29 East Providence residents received bags of fresh produce, and lean proteins each month, containing items such as kale, summer squash, lettuce, edamame, cauliflower rice, ground turkey, and shrimp.

### Cooking Demos

One thing we heard from residents was that they weren't sure how to cook healthy meals-we listened, and not only provided recipes, but a live cooking demo with an RDN.

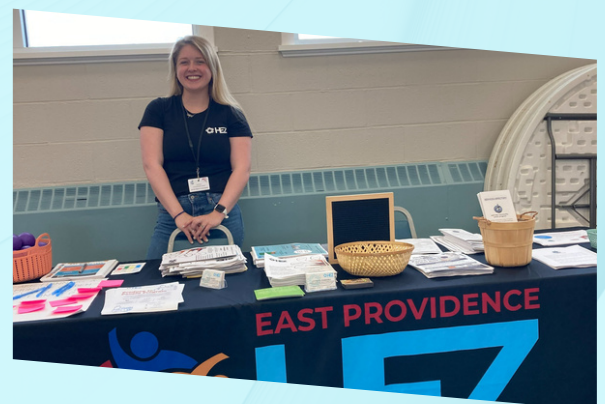
### Eat Well, Spend Less

The follow-up from the cooking demo was a request for more information, so we partnered with URI SNAP-Ed to offer a 6 week class on healthy, inexpensive cooking. The result? Resident interest in our PLE Advisory Board

### Empowering Residents

EPHEZ is grounded in listening to and empowering residents, and to that end we have created a PLE Advisory Board. We are excited to have two residents already on board for Summer 2022!

When creating and running a program like Produce to People, there is always a question of impact-what are we doing besides helping people to eat a little healthier one week/month? Based on feedback from residents, we began including multiple recipes each month, information on how to store produce, make healthy snacks, and better understand nutrition information. We also provided kitchen tools-spiralizers, produce savers, mini-blenders, and more. The result? Participants have said they have expanded the types of produce they will eat, are excited to cook new things each month, and want to know how they can do and learn more.





# Pre-School Development Grant



Incredible Years Feedback:

*"Thank you for everything!! I already feel the effects from this program."*

*"What a pleasure to have attended this session of classes. Who knows I may be back... can I come back? Just kidding, but seriously if I wanted to? I can't express the appreciation I have for all your work and time you put in after hrs. Truly a breath of fresh air, that such a program is available and being provided with the small heart of RI. Once again thank you, will make sure I reach out even if it's regarding schooling in the area or looking for other cool resources."*

## Why are Baby Teeth Important?

EPHEZ, EBCAP's Head Start, and United Healthcare partnered to present "Head Start Talks: Why Are Baby Teeth Important," a discussion on how to keep children's teeth healthy and their smiles happy in February 2022 via Zoom. Families that attended previous Head Start talks were polled on their interest in this topic, and 10 individuals were able to participate in this virtual conversation. We raffled off two water-flossers to participants, and through the generosity of the Rite-Smiles program at United Healthcare, every family at each EBCAP Head Start location received a free dental kit!

### Family Music Time

Average of 6 families and 7 children attended each Infant/Toddler class

Average of 4 families and 5 children attended each Pre-School class

### Let's Dance!

Our Family Navigator taught a jazz dance/movement class for kids at Weaver Library! 13 kids participates, and one family followed up for more resources.

### Safe Sleep

In partnership with RIDOH and EBCAP's Head Start program, EPHEZ presented a culturally-sensitive Safe Sleep workshop, which was attended by 13 participants, one of which won a free Pack-and-Play!

### Play-and-Learn

EPHEZ, EBCAP's Home Visiting Program, and the EP School System offered two Play-and-Learn classes in Spring 2022, where families with young children explored fun ways to support their child's growth and development. We were able to offer these free programs to over 20 families!

As we look to Year 4, EPHEZ is focusing on the intersection between different barriers to health equity-one of which is access to healthy food. Recognizing that healthy eating habits start young, our Family Navigator has created an interactive activity-children choose and decorate their vegetable pot, fill it with soil and the vegetable seed of their choice, and receive a book on eating fruits and vegetables. For parents? We can connect them with WIC, assist with SNAP applications, and provide educational programming. These kits, seen in the photo to the right, have been a huge hit with kids and parents alike!





# THANK YOU

