

Uncovering Equity Opportunities: Looking for Leverage Under the Water Line

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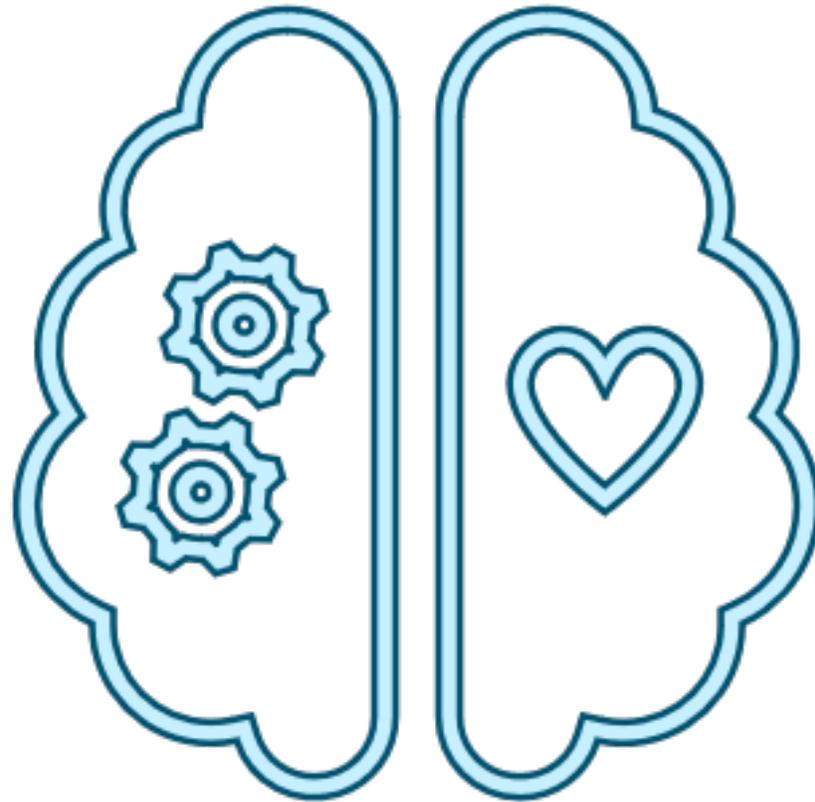
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National **MCH** Workforce
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Check-In



Session objectives

Explore a structured conversation guide you can use with diverse stakeholders across settings to:

- Reflect on priorities for what a well-functioning MCH system would look like
- Share experiences of structural and system-based determinants that *do or could* contribute to health equities in your setting
- Uncover inequities, root causes, and meaningful opportunities for improvement in your setting

What is a “System?”



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A System is

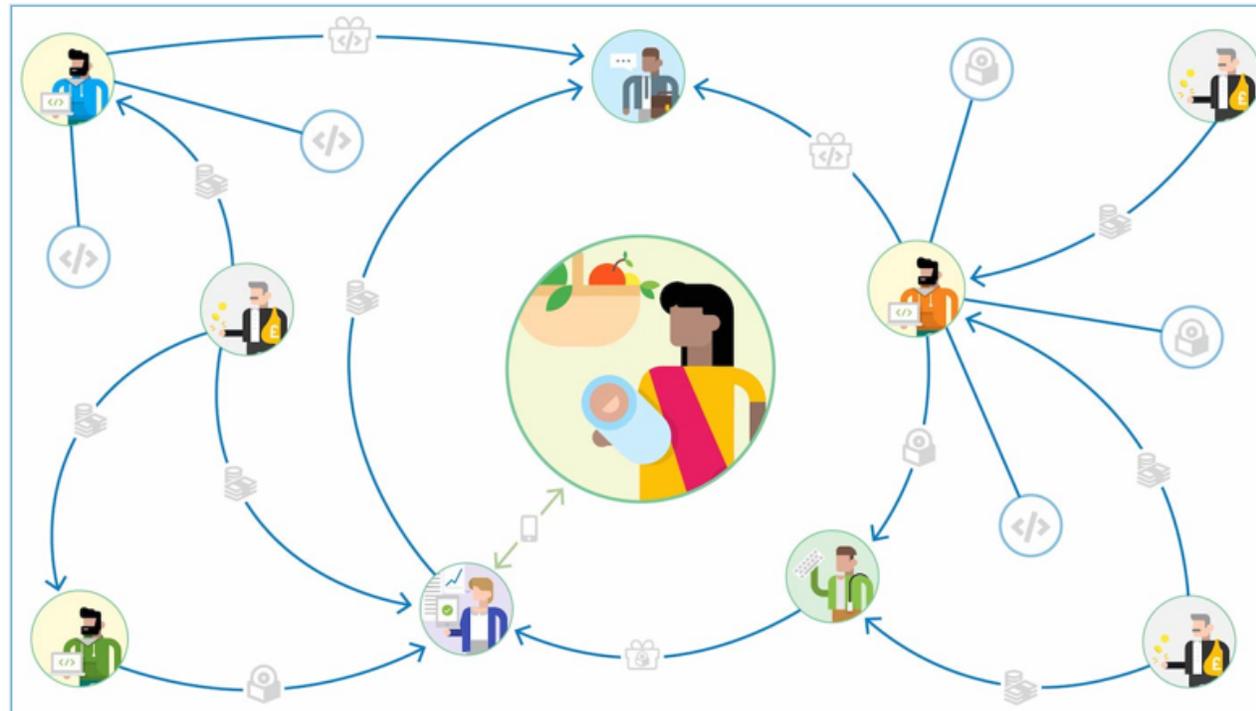
a collection of parts that interact with each other to form an interdependent whole





A Systems Perspective is needed because...

- ... maternal and child health *systems have many parts*, with *many factors* affecting what happens





A Systems Perspective is needed because...

- ... in our work, we rarely create something new, but rather *change something about the system*, hoping it produces better outcomes



Nike hands-free shoe for pregnant people and people with disabilities



Shifting from "Mr. Potato Head" to "Potato Head"

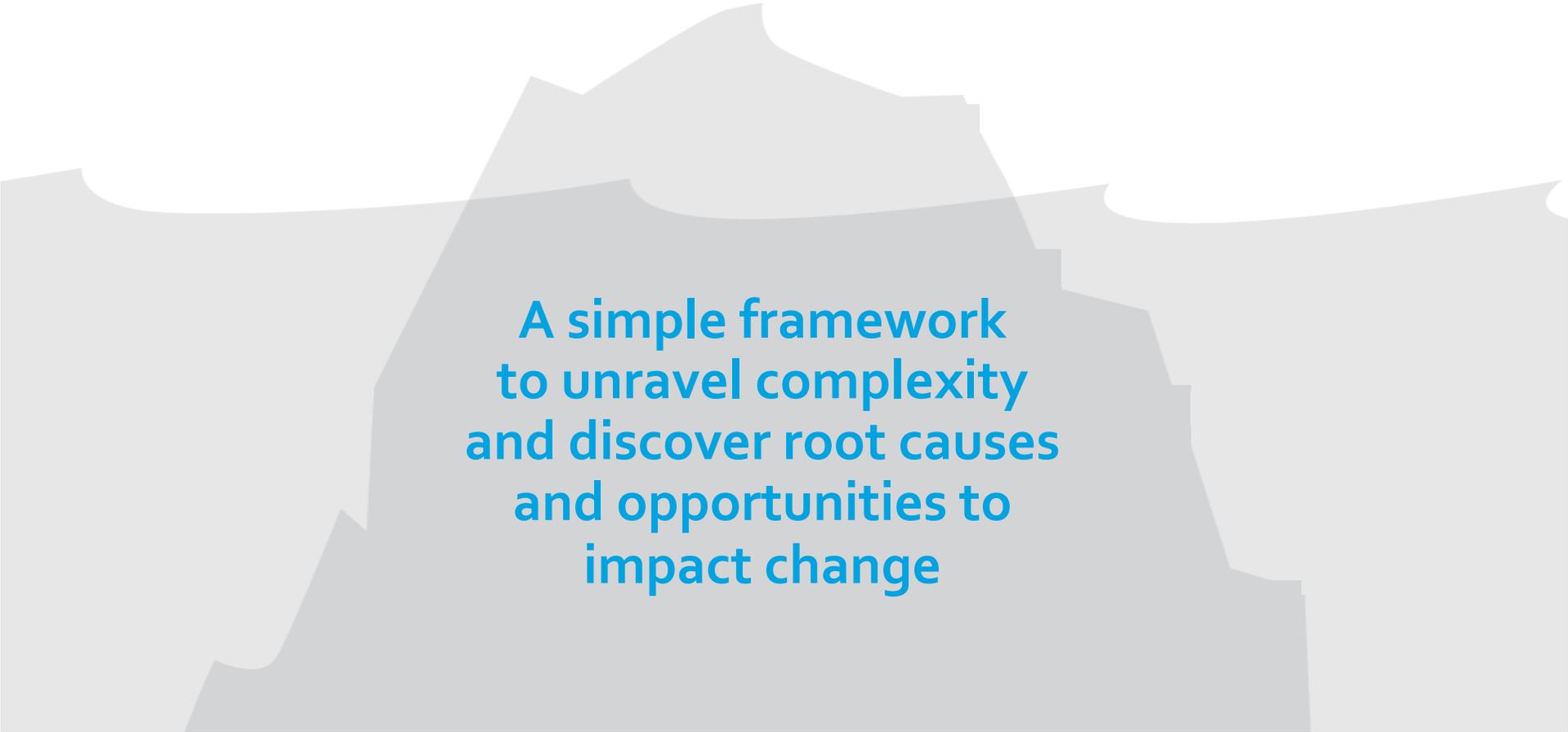


A Systems Perspective is needed because...

- ... we need to *expand the way we see "the system"* to make real change. But to understand the details, we'll need to "zoom in" to know what we can change/should change. But don't forget to zoom back out (in, out, in....)



The Iceberg

An iceberg graphic with a jagged top edge. The top part is a light gray triangle, and the bottom part is a larger, darker gray trapezoid. The text is centered within the darker part.

**A simple framework
to unravel complexity
and discover root causes
and opportunities to
impact change**

The Iceberg



Events

What happened?

- Headlines in a newspaper
- Anecdotes
- Fires to put out

The Iceberg

Events

Patterns of Behavior

What's been happening?

- Past behavior over time
- Anticipated future behavior
- By race? By geography? By...

The Iceberg

Events

Patterns of Behavior

What's been happening?

- Past behavior over time
- Anticipated future behavior
- By race? By geography? By...
- Look for disparity and gaps
- Wealth gap
- Health inequities (i.e., in maternal and infant mortality rates)

The Iceberg

Events

Patterns of Behavior

Systemic Structures

What structures generate the patterns of behavior?

- Rules, norms, policies
- System forces at play
- Relationships between the parts

The Iceberg

Events

Patterns of Behavior

Systemic Structures

What structures generate the patterns of behavior?

- Rules, norms, policies
- System forces at play
- Relationships between the parts

Policies and programs that limit/deny access to services and cause harm

The Iceberg

Events

Patterns of Behavior

Systemic Structures

Mental Models

What drives individuals' actions?

- Vary based on experience, training
- Our simplified rules about how the world works
- Reflect norms, biases, gaps in experience or understanding

The Iceberg

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Mental Models



What drives individuals' actions?

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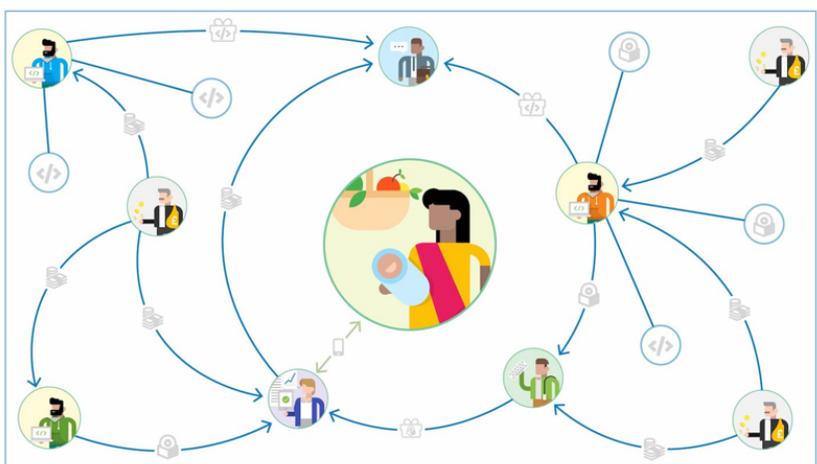
The Iceberg

Events

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Mental Models



What drives individuals' actions?

- Vary based on experience, training
- Our simplified rules about how the world works
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- **Internalized racism**
- **Stereotypes and biases**
- **Perceptions of individual power**

What needs to change to produce equity in your MCH system?



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Writing equity opportunity statements

- Reflect on priorities about what a well-functioning MCH system would look like (discussed previously with your team)
- Write an equity opportunity statement *you observe* in your setting. **Be specific!**

There is an opportunity to ensure _____
(subpopulation) **equitably benefit from**
_____ (aspect of program, resource, or service)
by/by addressing _____
(structural or systemic determinant to be addressed).



Equity opportunity statement example

There is an opportunity to ensure Black pregnant people (subpopulation) equitably benefit from holistic postpartum care (aspect of program, resource, or service) by addressing the extent to which health care providers recognize and take symptoms seriously (structural or systemic determinant to be addressed).



Equity opportunity statement example

There is an opportunity to ensure Black and indigenous youth of color with special health care needs (subpopulation) equitably benefit from transition to adult health care services (aspect of program, resource, or service) by serving them as children in our programs to begin with (structural or systemic determinant to be addressed).



This doesn't happen now because....

Keep your *focus on the system!*

There is an opportunity to ensure **Black pregnant people** (subpopulation) **equitably benefit from holistic postpartum care** (aspect of program, resource, or service) **by addressing the extent to which health care providers recognize and take symptoms seriously** (structural or systemic determinant to be addressed).

There is an opportunity to ensure **Black and indigenous youth of color with special health care needs** (subpopulation) **equitably benefit from transition to adult health care services** (aspect of program, resource, or service) **by serving them as children in our programs to begin with** (structural or systemic determinant to be addressed).

This doesn't happen now because: patient symptoms aren't taken seriously by providers

This doesn't happen now because: the system is failing to engage black & Indigenous youth as children

Equity
Opportunity

This doesn't
happen now
because:

Why?

Black and indigenous youth of color with special health care needs transition to adult health care services

This doesn't happen now because: the system is failing to engage black and Indigenous youth as children

Structural racism

Services are not structured in culturally competent way

Programs are centered in large, wealthy, white businesses (children's hospitals)

Have never co-created services with BIPOC communities

Contracts go to these predominantly white businesses

Program staff is not representative of BIPOC communities

MCHB 75% match requirement (funding requirement)

System has historically rewarded contracts to white communities

Hiring practices favor white professionals

Uncover the “Why”



After you brainstorm equity opportunity statements, pick one as a group to focus us. Then discuss as a group your answers to the Why's.

- “This doesn’t happen now because: _____” is the first Why. Then ask *why* that condition/barrier exists in the first place.
 - What is equitable or inequitable about how the services are designed?
 - What power imbalances impact service provision?
 - What social/structural determinants impact access to services?
- Continue to answer *why* to drill down into the root cause.
- You may have more than one response at any given level – feel free to add those in to tell your story.

Team Time Part 1:

Introductions & Reflection

(20 minutes)



Introductions (*Name, Pronouns*)



How is this approach to equity that you just heard about similar or different to other approaches to equity you've been exposed to in the past? (*Waterfall Chat*)



Where in your system/context do you want to create equity? (i.e., prenatal care, preterm birth outcomes, etc.)

Team Time Part 2:
**Equity Opportunity
Statements**
(35 minutes)

**Individual
brainstorming**

- Develop and share equity opportunity statements

**Group
discussion**

- Pick one to focus on
- Brainstorm *why* the equity opportunity isn't happening now to drill down into its root causes

Please share your
response in the chat box:
*What are you excited,
inspired, or curious about?*



Achieving equity means **all people** have a **fair opportunity** to attain their **full health potential** and **no one is disadvantaged** from achieving this potential.

Thank you!



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