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**Class of 2025 Request for Applications**

**Deadline: October 23, 2024**

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| KEY information | |
| Purpose | *Equity Changemakers Institute* (*Changemakers*)is a year-long professional leadership development program designed to bolster the capacity of state and territory health and human services leaders who have significant oversight over their agency’s programmatic and policy efforts to advance health equity, reduce disparities in health care, and improve health outcomes. *Changemakers* aims to support these leaders in strengthening the necessary skills to manage transformational change; connecting with a network of health equity peers across the country; and positively impacting the health of those who live in their states/territories. *Changemakers* is led and supported by the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS). |
| RFA Release | September 25, 2024 |
| Informational Calls for Potential Applicants | * Thursday, October 3, 2024, 1 – 2 pm ET * Thursday, October 18, 2024, 1 – 2 pm ET   To participate by phone, call **877-853- 5247** and use meeting code  **777 235 6608.**  For video, please use this link: [**https://chcs.zoom.us/j/7772356608**](https://chcs.zoom.us/j/7772356608) |
| Applications Due | October 23, 2024, at 11:59 pm ET |
| Selection Notification | Applicants will be notified of their status in December 2024. |
| Program Period | January – December 2025 |
| Virtual Kick-Off | January 21, 2025, 1 – 2:30 pm ET |
| First In-Person Retreat | February 4 – 6, 2025 (Location TBD) |
| Eligibility | Public sector health and human services leaders from all states, commonwealths, and territories charged with leading their agency’s health policy and programmatic efforts to advance health equity, reduce disparities in health care, and improve health outcomes. Leaders from child welfare, disability services, long-term services and supports, Medicaid, mental health, substance use treatment, public health divisions, and/or broader health and human services “super agencies” are eligible to apply. |
| CHCS Contacts | Priti Khanal, Senior Program Officer, Leadership and Capacity Building ([pkhanal@chcs.org](mailto:pkhanal@chcs.org)) |

# Purpose

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| *Changemakers* gave me tools that I could use in my real-time work — and share them back with my team, too. It also helped me create a network of peers from across the country doing similar work as me that was so helpful.  - Recent *Changemakers* participant |

*Equity Changemakers Institute* (*Changemakers*)is a year-long professional leadership development program designed to bolster the capacity of state and territory health and human services leaders who have significant oversight over their agency’s programmatic and policy efforts to advance health equity, reduce disparities in health care, and improve health outcomes. *Changemakers* aims to support these leaders in strengthening their skills to manage transformational change; connecting to a network of peers across the country; and positively impacting the health of those who live in their states/territories. *Changemakers* is led and supported by the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS).

# Background

Public sector health and human services leaders are responsible for administering a broad range of programs. These programs — including child welfare, disability services, long-term services and supports, Medicaid, mental health, substance use treatment, and public health — play a central role in supporting the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities with diverse identities, as well as leading efforts to advance health equity.

Health equity asserts that everyone deserves a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This is particularly salient given that longstanding inequities facing historically and contemporarily marginalized communities — including Black, Indigenous, people of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities, individuals with disabilities, and rural and frontier areas, among others — continue to exacerbate health disparities. Efforts to advance health equity include, for example, assessing the needs of the community, engaging communities in policy and program design, and addressing provider shortages. Across state and territorial contexts, these efforts may or may not be explicitly referred to as health equity, but regardless of nomenclature there are crucial similarities across public sector health and human services agencies that aim to better support the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities with diverse identities.

Increasingly, many health and human services agencies have identified staff to be responsible for advancing health equity efforts within and across their agencies. These staff leaders must navigate complex budgetary, operational, and political environments, and rely heavily on building relationships with an array of internal and external stakeholders in an environment where they cannot always control the scope of work assigned to them.While tasked with leading these organizational and programmatic change efforts, these leaders face unique challenges related to clarifying organizational vision for change, building coalitions and buy-in, and adeptly responding to resistance. Although more leaders in state and territorial government are now responsible for advancing health equity, they often work within small teams or even as the sole staff member leading health equity efforts. *Changemakers* supports the success of these leaders.

*Changemakers* grew out of CHCS’ longstanding national [leadership development programs](https://www.chcs.org/topics/medicaid-leadership/) for health and human services leaders and safety-net providers, including the [*Medicaid Leadership Institute*](https://www.chcs.org/project/medicaid-leadership-institute/) (MLI) and the [*Medicaid Pathways Program*](https://www.chcs.org/project/medicaid-pathways-programs/) (MPP), both supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. MLI provides leadership development for competitively selected state Medicaid directors and their senior executive management teams. Since 2009, 83 directors from 47 Medicaid agencies have participated in MLI. MPP supports senior-level Medicaid leaders and those emerging into senior leadership roles. Since it launched in 2021, the program has supported 60 rising leaders from 29 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

# Program Description

*Changemakers* supports senior-level leaders with significant oversight over their agency’s programmatic and policy efforts to advance health equity, reduce disparities in health care, and improve health outcomes. *Changemakers* offers an intensive year-long development program for up to 15 competitively selected senior-level leaders.

The objectives of *Changemakers* are to:

1. Strengthen participants’ knowledge and skills to enhance [inclusive leadership](https://www.chcs.org/becoming-a-more-inclusive-leader/) and advance an organization’s internal equity strategy;
2. Increase knowledge, approaches, and use of tools and policy levers to advance health equity, reduce disparities in health care, and improve health outcomes;
3. Increase capacity and resiliency to navigate power structures, organizational cultures, and potential resistance while building consensus among a range of stakeholders; and
4. Build peer relationships and foster a network of state and territory leaders overseeing health equity initiatives to better sustain long-term change.

## Program Curriculum

The program curriculum is designed to be relevant to participants’ interests, as well as the current environment at both the federal and state/territory levels. *Changemakers* includes four core program components:

* **Competency-Based, Practical Leadership Training**. Participants will receive expert training through a curriculum grounded in a [competency-based core leadership framework](https://www.chcs.org/resource/an-introduction-to-the-framework-for-public-sector-leadership/) designed by CHCS, the Milbank Memorial Fund, and the National Association for Medicaid Directors. With an added focus on inclusive and equity-minded leadership, this training will seek to engage participants at three levels: the individual level, the organizational level, and the broader state/territorial landscape each leader is navigating. The curriculum is built on co-created learning, a shared commitment to a more inclusive future, and accountability and support for taking action across one or all of the above three levels. The training will help leaders enhance their self-awareness, be accountable for their biases, increase their commitment to empowering others, navigate resistance effectively at both interpersonal and organizational levels, and adopt inclusive leadership traits to drive change.
* **Key Topics Seminars***.* Given the diverse and complex health and social needs of individuals and communities, and the political landscape of states/territories, *Changemakers* Key Topics Seminars will provide a “deep dive” into specific aspects of advancing health equity, such as use of specific policy levers. The seminars will allow participants to interact with leading health equity experts, gain exposure to emerging evidence and best practices for advancing health equity, and explore current and potential approaches to better meet the health and social needs of individuals and communities. Participants will help identify which topics to prioritize for the Key Topics Seminars.
* **Individualized Leadership Coaching**. Each participant will be assigned a leadership coach who will provide 1:1 coaching throughout the program. Coaches will work with participants to craft an individualized leadership development plan, which will include personal leadership development goals, activities to practice skills, and opportunities to apply key leadership skills within the participants’ daily work. The coaching will support participants in translating key leadership competencies into their daily activities and developing a Leadership Action Plan.
* **Leadership Action Plans**.As part of the program, participants will develop a Leadership Action Plan to advance an important strategic initiative that benefits their organization and partnering communities and/or promotes agency health equity priorities. All action plans will include a strong focus on participants’ individual leadership development goals. The plan, presented to the cohort at the conclusion of the program, will focus on an area within the participant’s sphere of influence where substantial progress can be made. CHCS will work with participants to refine their Leadership Action Plans and identify potential technical assistance resources to support successful implementation over the course of the program.
* **Accountability Networks**.Accountability Networks will provide an opportunity for cohort members to connect and support each other in shaping their individual Leadership Action Plans. These sessions will provide space for shared learning and collaboration, feedback, and continued development of participants’ plans.

# Program Activities

Participants will engage in the program activities outlined below.

1. **Attend virtual all-participant meetings**. During these meetings, participants receive group training, rooted in an inclusive leadership model, attend in-depth Key Topics Seminars, and converse with national experts in an informal setting. Virtual all-participant meetings will typically occur one to two times a quarter (see [**Timeline**](#_Timeline_1) section). Each virtual meeting is up to ninety minutes long.
2. **Attend three in*-*person, all-participant retreats.** Participants will attend three in-person meetings, which will each be three days (location TBD). CHCS will cover all allowable program costs for participants. Relevant travel guidelines will be shared with participants in advance of in-person meetings.
3. **Participate in leadership coaching.** Participants will be assigned a leadership coach with whom they will work throughout the year-long program. The coach will help the participants translate the leadership competencies into their daily practice. The total time commitment for 1:1 leadership coaching is up to 6-8 hours throughout the program.
4. **Participate in accountability networks**. CHCS will organize participants into small groups. Accountability Networks meet three times during the year, focusing on Leadership Action Plan discussions, building peer relationships, and creating ongoing support networks that participants can rely on throughout the program and beyond. The total time commitment for these networking sessions is no more than six hours throughout the program.

***All Changemakers services outlined above, including travel costs (e.g., airfare, accommodations) will be provided at no cost to the participants. Relevant travel guidelines will be shared with participants in advance of in-person meetings.***

# Timeline

Following is a tentative schedule for the 2025 Class of *Changemakers*. Participants are expected to attend all meetings; please hold dates on your calendar when applying to the program.

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| Date | Event |
| October 3, 2024, 1 – 2 pm ET  OR  October 18, 2024, 1 – 2 pm ET | Informational Call(s) for Potential Applicants.   * To participate by phone, call **877-853- 5247** and use meeting code 777 235 6608**.** * For video, please use this link: [**https://chcs.zoom.us/j/7772356608**](%20https://chcs.zoom.us/j/7772356608)   *(These calls are* ***optional*** *for applicants. Interested applicants only need to attend one of the calls.)* |
| October 23, 2024, 11:59 pm ET | Applications Due via E-mail Submission |
| December 2024 | Applicants will be notified of their status in mid-late December 2024. |
| January 21, 2025, 1 – 2:30 pm ET | Virtual Kick-Off Meeting |
| February 5 – 7, 2025 | In-Person Opening Retreat, Location TBD  *(Tuesday, February 4 is a travel day)* |
| February – November 2025 | **Virtual Meetings | 2 – 3:30pm ET | Zoom**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * March 5 * April 9 * June 4 | * August 6 * October 8 | |
| July 23 – 25, 2025 | In-Person Midpoint Retreat, Location TBD  *(Tuesday, July 22 is a travel day)* |
| December 10 – 12, 2025 | In-Person Closing Retreat, Location TBD  *(Tuesday, December 9 is a travel day)* |
| Ongoing | * Individualized Leadership Coaching *(monthly, March – October 2025)* * Accountability Networks  *(May, September, and November 2025)* |

# Selection Criteria and Process

Public sector health and human services leaders in all states, commonwealths, and territories charged with leading their agency’s health policy efforts to advance health equity, reduce disparities in health care, and improve health outcomes are eligible to apply, including leaders from child welfare, disability services, long-term services and supports, Medicaid, mental health, substance use treatment, public health divisions, and/or broader health and human services “super agencies” are eligible to apply. Multiple applications from the same state/territory will be considered; however, there may be a limit on how many applications from the same state/territory will be selected. While applications from states, commonwealths, and territories will be prioritized in the selection process, applications from local government agencies, such as cities and counties, are also invited to apply.

CHCS is committed to developing a cohort that includes a diverse range of social identities, lived experiences, positions, roles, geographic regions, and political contexts. Since this program aims to support a diverse cohort of leaders, applicants are welcome to share any relevant information in their application about their identity, lived experience, and/or perspectives that informs their work to advance health equity. Up to 15 health and human services leaders will be selected as participants for the 2025 *Changemakers* class based on the following criteria:

1. ***Leader as Self (Individual Development).*** Applicants should provide a statement explaining their interest in *Changemakers* ([**page 12**](#self)). This statement should describe:
   * The individual leadership challenges and opportunities they currently face as leaders with significant oversight over their agency’s health equity strategy.
   * Their individual strengths as leaders, their perceived opportunities for growth, and their commitment to becoming a more inclusive leader. This should include specific goals for personal development.
   * How *Changemakers* can support the achievement of these goals and their long-term success as a public sector health equity leader.
2. ***Leader as Champion (Organizational Development).*** Applicants should describe how their participation in *Changemakers* can ([**page 13**](#champion)):
   * Support their ability to advance key organizational equity initiatives internally and/or build more organizational capacity to benefit the communities their agency serves.
3. ***Leader as Changemaker (Policy and Program Development).*** Applicants should describe the programmatic challenges they’re facing and at least one way participating in *Changemakers* can support their policy and program priorities to advance health equity, reduce disparities in health care, and improve health outcomes ([**page 14**](#leader)). This description should include:
   * Specific ideas of new or enhanced health equity initiatives and/or;
   * Strategies as well as a reflection on the potential barriers to success.

**Questions?** See our [**FAQs**](#_Application_Narrative) or email Priti Khanal, Senior Program Officer ([pkhanal@chcs.org](mailto:pkhanal@chcs.org)).

# Required Application Content

Applications should include:

1. ***Cover sheet.*** Applicants must include a cover sheet with their name and contact information (including title, mailing address, phone number, and email address), as well as the name and contact information of an administrative assistant.
2. ***Bio.*** Applicants should include a brief professional bio. Please include name, pronouns (optional), job title, department, a brief description of your responsibilities, and one sentence about your previous role(s), including degree(s) or education. We also welcome you to share anything about yourself that is important to you, your work, or your identity.

See [**examples of *Changemakers* participants’ bios**](https://www.chcs.org/equity-changemakers-institute-participants/). Bio should be no more than 100 words. If accepted into the program, you will be asked to provide a quote at that time.

1. ***Application narrative.*** Applicants must submit a narrative that addresses each of the above selection criteria (see [**template beginning on page 12**](#_Application_Narrative_1)). Applications should follow the word count limit noted in each section with standard one-inch margins and 12-point font (the letter of support and requested attachments do not count against word limits).
2. ***Resume.*** Applicants must include a recent resume.
3. ***Letter(s) of executive support.*** Applicants must obtain a letter of support for participation from their agency’s leadership (e.g., director, secretary, commissioner). The letter should indicate the willingness of executive leadership to support the applicant in meeting *Changemakers’* travel and time requirements, including participation in virtual and in-person meetings, coaching, and other program activities. The letter should not exceed one page.

## Submission Information and Deadline

Applications must be received by **11:59 pm ET, October 23, 2024**. Please follow the below steps:

1. Access the [**JotForm application**](https://form.jotform.com/242474127936159).
2. Provide responses to your name, agency, email address, and your availability to participate in all events outlined in the [**Timeline**](#_Timeline_1).
3. Combine your cover sheet, professional bio, and responses to the application narrative into one PDF. Please name the file: **Changemakers Application\_First Name\_Last Name**, and upload it to the *Cover Sheet, Brief Bio and Responses to Narrative Questions* field.
4. Upload your resume (in PDF format) to the *Resume* field.
5. Upload your letter of support (in PDF format) to the *Letter of Support* field. Please note that letters of support can be submitted after the application deadline. If you need an extension, please let Jahira Sterling ([jsterling@chcs.org](mailto:jsterling@chcs.org)) know and email it to her when it becomes available. The letter of support is required for program selection.

Submit application questions to Jahira Sterling, Program Associate, ([jsterling@chcs.org](mailto:jsterling@chcs.org)).   
All other questions should be directed to Priti Khanal, Senior Program Officer ([pkhanal@chcs.org](mailto:pkhanal@chcs.org)).

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| About the Center for Health Care Strategies The Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is a policy design and implementation partner devoted to improving outcomes for people enrolled in Medicaid. CHCS works across sectors and disciplines to connect people and ideas to spark insights, build expertise, strengthen leadership, and spread innovations. Its work focuses on making more effective, efficient, and equitable care possible for millions of people in the U.S. who face serious barriers to well-being, like poverty, complex health and social needs, and systemic racism. For more than 25 years, CHCS has collaborated with state Medicaid and related health and human services agencies across the country to shape how health care services are designed, financed, and delivered.  Through its leadership and capacity building work, CHCS works to ensure that health and human services leaders and safety-net providers have the expertise required to effectively manage U.S. health care safety net programs and related health and human services and to support a robust pipeline of prepared and diverse individuals to succeed in these roles in the future. Since 2009, CHCS has directed the [*Medicaid Leadership Institute*](https://www.chcs.org/project/medicaid-leadership-institute/), which provides expert leadership development and technical assistance for competitively selected state Medicaid directors and their senior executive management teams. Additionally, CHCS leads the [*Medicaid Pathways Program*](https://www.chcs.org/project/medicaid-pathways-programs/)*,* a professional development program for senior-level Medicaid leaders. Since its launch in 2021, the program has supported 60 rising leaders from 29 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. CHCS also works directly with state Medicaid leaders and their teams to support strategic planning and executive team development efforts. |

# Equity Changemakers Leadership Institute Class of 2025 Application Template

***Note:*** *Applications should follow the word limits noted in each section. Please use standard one-inch margins and 12-point font (cover sheet, letter of support, and requested attachments do not count against page limits).*

## Cover Sheet

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| **Applicant’s Name:** |  |
| **Applicant’s Pronouns (Optional):** |  |
| **Applicant’s Title:** |  |
| **State/Territory:** |  |
| **Direct Reports:** | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Yes | If yes, how many? |  | No | |
| **Mailing Address:** |  |
| **Phone Number:** |  |
| **Email Address:** |  |
| **Assistant’s Name  (if applicable):** |  |
| **Assistant’s Phone Number  (if applicable):** |  |
| **Assistant’s Email Address  (if applicable):** |  |

## Bio

Applicants should include a brief professional bio. Please include name, pronouns (optional), job title, department, a brief description of your responsibilities, and one sentence about your previous role(s), including degree(s) or education. We also welcome you to share anything about yourself that is important to you, your work, or your identity. See [**examples of *Changemakers* participants’ bios**](https://www.chcs.org/equity-changemakers-institute-participants/). Bio should be no more than 100 words. If accepted into the program, you will be asked to provide a quote at that time.

## Application Narrative

Since this program aims to support a diverse cohort of leaders, you are welcome to share any relevant information about your identity, lived experience, and/or perspectives that informs your work to advance health equity in your application narrative.

Part 1: Leader as Self—Individual Development *(up to 400 words)*

Provide a statement explaining your interest in *Changemakers*. This statement should describe:

* The individual leadership challenges and opportunities you currently face as a health and human services leader with significant oversight over your agency’s health equity strategy.
* Your individual strengths as a leader, your perceived opportunities for growth, and your commitment to becoming a more inclusive leader. This should include specific goals for personal development.
* How *Changemakers* can support the achievement of these goals and your long-term success as a public sector health equity leader.

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Part 2: Leader as Champion—Organizational and Staff Development *(up to 300 words)*

Please describe how your participation in *Changemakers* can support your ability to advance key organizational equity initiatives at your agency internally and/or build more organizational capacity to benefit the communities your agency serves.

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Part 3: Leader as Changemaker—Policy and Program Development *(up to 300 words)*

Please describe the programmatic challenges you are facing and at least one way participating in *Changemakers* can support your external policy and program priorities to advance health equity, reduce disparities in health care, and improve health outcomes. This description should include: (a) specific ideas of new or enhanced health equity initiatives and/or (b) strategies, as well as a reflection on the potential barriers to success.

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## Resume

Applicants must include a recent resume uploaded as a separate PDF to the [**JotForm application***.*](https://form.jotform.com/242474127936159)

## Letter of Support

Applicants must obtain a letter of support for participation from their agency’s leadership (e.g., director, secretary, commissioner). The letter should indicate the willingness of executive leadership to support the applicant in meeting *Changemakers’* travel and time requirements, including participation in virtual and in-person meetings, coaching, and other program activities. The letter should not exceed one page. Please upload a separate PDF to the JotForm application or email to Jahira Sterling ([jsterling@chcs.org](mailto:jsterling@chcs.org)) if after the application deadline.

# Frequently Asked Questions

#### Q: I work for a county or local government agency, managed care organization, health care system, or community-based organization and partner with public sector health and human leaders from states, commonwealths, and territories to advance policy initiatives. Am I eligible?

**A:** Due to limited space in the program,public sector health and human leaders from all states, commonwealths, and territories will be prioritized in the selection process, though applications from local government agencies, such as cities and counties, are also invited to apply.

#### Q: My position is appointed, and I am nervous that an administration change may impact whether I stay in my role. Should I still apply?

**A:** Yes, you should apply even if your role is impacted due to an administration change. If your position changes or you leave your role, CHCS will work with you to determine your participation for the remainder of the program year.

#### Q: Do I need to attend the informational calls to apply to the program?

**A:** No, you do not need to attend the informational calls to apply to the program. These sessions are optional and a great way to meet the CHCS team, other potential applicants, and get any questions you may have answered.

#### Q: I am interested in the program, but I cannot obtain a letter of support from executive leadership before the deadline. Should I still apply?

**A:** Yes, you can send the letter of support after the deadline. Please submit your application by the deadline and let CHCS know when to expect the letter of support. The letter of support is required for program selection. Please find more details about the letter of support in the [**Required Application Content**](#_Required_Application_Content) section.

#### Q: Can more than one person from the same agency or state apply?

**A:** Yes, multiple applicants from the same agency or state are welcomed, however, it is unlikely to have more than two participants from the same state selected for the program in any given year to ensure geographic diversity and perspective.

#### Q: There are virtual or in-person meetings that I cannot attend due to other commitments. Should I still apply?

**A:** *Equity Changemakers Institute* has a robust curriculum with diverse program components to make the opportunity valuable and fulfilling for all participants. To maximize your learning and take full advantage of what the program has to offer, participants are expected to confirm their participation in all events when they submit their application. When you apply, please hold the dates on your calendar for all meetings noted in the **Timeline**. We recognize that situations may arise out of your control, and CHCS will work with participants on a case-by-case basis.

#### Q: I have applied to the program before but was not selected for participation. Can I reapply?

**A:** We welcome applications from individuals who have previously applied. We encourage repeat applicants to highlight how they have grown since their last application and reflect on their personal and professional development in their new submission.

#### Q: Do I have to pay any out-of-pocket costs to participate in this program?

**A:** CHCS covers all allowable costs, including travel to in-person meetings, hotel accommodations, and meals. CHCS reimburses costs incurred during travel, such as rideshares, taxis, and meals. Participants must submit a reimbursement form to CHCS within 10 days of the meeting to receive payment.

#### Q: I have a question that is not answered in this document. Who should I contact?

**A:** Please email Priti Khanal, Senior Program Officer [pkhanal@chcs.org](mailto:pkhanal@chcs.org) or Jahira Sterling, Program Associate [jsterling@chcs.org](mailto:jsterling@chcs.org).