

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments - National

Empowering Nurses to Lead Community-Driven Solutions for Climate Change, Health, and Equity

As a grant-funded partner in the Climate Change Health and Equity (CCHE) network, the Alliance of Nurses for Health Environments (ANHE) has been engaging and training nurses to work with communities in tackling serious environmental health issues, with an emphasis on climate and health equity. Funding through the CCHE initiative supports ANHE's Environmental Health Nurse Fellowship Program (EHNf). Their efforts align with the overall [CCHE Theory of Change](#) as part of Strategy 2.

Through their CCHE-funded activities, ANHE launched the EHNf program in 2019 which united nurses and communities in advancing community-led, equitable climate and health solutions. Nurse fellows in the EHNf program were trained to effectively partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) and contribute to policy advocacy, climate change mitigation, and community education. Nurse fellows have grown into leaders and continued to support communities and environmental health efforts beyond their time in the EHNf program. Through their CCHE-funded efforts, ANHE and nurse fellows gained credibility as experts of climate change and health-related issues and translated the knowledge from the EHNf program into new roles and projects in their communities. After their time in the EHNf program, nurse fellows felt empowered to independently partner with CBOs and ANHE has seen a transformation among nurse fellows as they became more conscientious of issues that are not strictly tied to healthcare settings. See an overview of ANHE's key activities and intended impacts in the ANHE [CCHE theory of change \(slide 10, 2022\)](#), described in more detail below.



Alliance of Nurses for
Healthy Environments

Mission:

Promoting healthy people and healthy environments by educating and leading the nursing profession, advancing research, incorporating evidence-based practice, and influencing policy.

Policies, Activities, and Initiatives Advanced During the CCHE Initiative

Educated, trained, and provided nurses with the tools and skills to work with communities to address institutional barriers that are preventing transformative change. As described above, ANHE has successfully implemented a transformative EHNf program and have improved upon the fellowship over time. For example, ANHE engaged the Black Nurses Association, Filipino Nurses Association, Native American Nurses Association, and other organizations to broaden the applicant pool for the third EHNf cohort. As a result, two-thirds of that cohort were BIPOC nurse fellows. During the CCHE initiative, another CCHE-funded partner Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) and ANHE collaborated to educate 50,000 health professionals through the Nurse Climate Champions Initiative. Overtime, an increasing number of institutions and organizations have requested support from ANHE to educate more healthcare practitioners to become community advocates and messengers.

Since ANHE established the EHNf program, they solidified partnerships with healthcare and institutional leaders and contributed to the advancement of climate change, health, and equity initiatives in other organizations. ANHE worked with the American Nurses

Select Resources and Media

- [Climate Change Poses Risks to Our Health. These Nurses Want to Fix That](#)
- [Op-ed: In a warming world, nurses heal people and the planet](#)
- [ANA Position Statement](#)

Association (ANA) to release an [updated climate change position statement](#). Recently, ANHE presented on the success of the EHNH program at a White House event that highlighted organizations who were advancing Justice40 priorities at the local level.

Designed and delivered programming that centers anti-racism and health equity. ANHE’s skill-building workshops and webinars on health equity and anti-racism garnered feedback from nurse fellows that the content helped them “actively acknowledge [current systems and policies] as racist and colonial.” ANHE continued to prioritize work with environmental justice communities that focused on racial justice and dismantling systemic racism. Nurse fellows researched CBOs and salient environmental justice and health equity issues to understand the dynamics between climate change, anti-racism, and health equity in their own communities and how these same communities were developing solutions. *“I think the biggest takeaway was the reminder that the policies and systems in place now stem from racist and colonial histories and thus we must actively acknowledge them as racist and colonial.” – ANHE Nurse Fellow*

Trained, and later provided stipends, to 22 nurse fellows annually to address environmental justice and health equity issues in climate vulnerable communities and supported fellowship convenings and educational sessions led by nurse fellows that enhance climate knowledge and action. As just one example of the impact of the EHNH program, a nurse fellow Joe Bowman, in partnership with West End Revitalization Association and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, developed a bank of questions relating to environmental justice for health departments across the state to include in their county health assessments which successfully engaged many more CBOs in this work and equipped them to collaborate with government agencies.

ANHE held virtual and in-person fellowship orientation convenings throughout the EHNH program that connected veteran nurses and incoming nurse fellows. Nurse fellows were supported to share their learnings with colleagues and community members through educational sessions, such as:

- Nurse fellow Gloria Barrera, in partnership with the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council in Chicago, organized and moderated a panel discussion in Spanish and English on the neighborhood impact of climate pollution among Latino children with asthma.
- Nurse fellow Jennifer Rasmussen, in partnership with CCHE-funded partner Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative (FICC), coordinated a series of community discussions around the intersection of health and climate justice.
- Nurse fellow Prabina Dahal collaborated the Bellevue School District to provide education on impact of climate change on student illness and absenteeism.
- Nurse fellow Christy Haas-Howard presented to health professionals and community members, including those from Moms Clean Air Force Colorado, on the correlation between air pollution and asthma.

Many nurse fellows have stepped into new roles after participating in the EHNH program to continue working with CBOs. For example, one nurse fellow became a Co-Executive Director for the CBO they partnered with in Kansas and another nurse fellow became a director at an environmental health organization in Colorado. Another fellow joined the Board of Directors for the Environmental Justice Community Action Network, which guides community initiatives to address environmental health impacts from industrial facilities. In another example, a nurse fellow from the first EHNH cohort was appointed to a CDC advisory committee for childhood lead poisoning and leveraged experience from the EHNH program in her new role.

Provided cross-disciplinary education and skills building webinars on relevant environmental justice and health equity topics. For the second EHNH cohort, ANHE continued monthly webinars with topical content and peer learning/sharing. Webinars covered topics including challenges and successes with community-based partnerships, effective community education sessions, and cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration. For the third EHNH cohort, one webinar by Dr. Azita Amiri covered mapping tools for community assessments. Another webinar led by Emmie Mediate from HCWH highlighted opportunities for nurse fellows to advocate for mitigation and emissions reductions within their hospital systems.

Centered relationship building between nurses and CBOs they support. ANHE trained nurse fellows to learn how communities were most affected by climate change so that they would move away from the typical response of pushing their own solutions or ideas. Nurse fellows were instructed to take their cues from CBO partners and be open-minded to ensure healthy and mutually beneficial partnerships. Nurse fellow Mia McPherson, in partnership with CCHE-funded partner Eastside Community Network (ECN) in Detroit, created a guidebook on heat resilience in Detroit and continued work with ECN beyond the fellowship term.

Established 60 nurse-community partnerships that prioritize existing CCHE communities and community-driven action projects. ANHE connected with other CCHE initiative grant-funded partners about potential partnerships with nurses ahead of the EHNH selection process. ANHE coordinated with the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC), Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience (CEER), ECN, FICC, Go Austin, Vamos Austin (GAVA), Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE), and WE ACT. Throughout the

EHNF cohorts, ANHE accepted nurse fellows in locations with existing CBO partners like CEER, ECN, and FICC and facilitated connections between those organizations and nurse fellows.

CBOs who partnered with nurse fellows reported positive experiences from these collaborations and ANHE noticed that CBOs have shifted the ways they want to work with nurses. CBOs initially had very medical-focused ideas for work with nurse fellows; however, CBOs have realized the breadth of technical assistance that nurses can offer. For example, CEER brought on a nurse fellow who developed health messaging for community forums to raise awareness of the impacts from climate change on mental health. In Seattle, a nurse fellow partnered with 350.org and developed health messaging to advocate for improved renewable energy and energy efficiency in apartments across communities that were impacted by climate change. The nurse fellow's health messaging led to new legislation being passed since it highlighted how sources of energy can impact health among residents.

Key Partners

Organization	Type
AA/PI Nurses Association	Health Partner
Emerging Leaders in Public Health Program	Health Partner
National AN/Al Nurses Association	Health Partner
National Association of Hispanic Nurses	Health Partner
National Black Nurses Association	Health Partner
Philippine Nurses Association	Health Partner

Insights from CCHE Initiative

- **ANHE trains and supports healthcare practitioners so they realize the value that they bring to this work and can be effective partners and advocates in their communities.** Jeremiah Headen of ANHE described that *“healthcare professionals need to be involved in the work as their vantage point serves as confirmation to what climate change scientists are observing and what communities are directly experiencing.”* ANHE is the missing link that frames a whole picture together and highlights how climate change is impacting communities.
- **Priming partnerships with communities takes time.** Nurse fellows and CBOs need time to initiate and build trusting partnerships. ANHE has normalized expectations around the partnership building process among nurse fellows. ANHE conducted open calls for CBOs who desired support from nurse fellows. This process often yielded the best results as CBOs with a plan already in mind were often the most effective at bringing nurse fellows into the fold.
- **Throughout the CCHE initiative, nurse fellows have experienced some obstacles to working in politically conservative communities.** However, more people are personally experiencing the impacts of climate change, so nurse fellows gained momentum with their work. Some nurse fellows used “environmental health” as a blanket term for their work, which gave some leeway to continue their work while not being held back by their community's political climate.
- **More work is needed to raise awareness among healthcare institutions about the connections between major health issues and climate change.** While more nurses are becoming aware of how they can address issues related to climate change, health, and equity, ANHE recognized that there is still a need for change across healthcare systems.

Looking Ahead

ANHE will continue supporting CBOs through the EHNF program and aims to leverage the EHNF program's success to push for greater change across healthcare institutions. ANHE will leverage the EHNF alumni network to work with CBOs and new nurse fellows and plans to expand the EHNF program. ANHE also plans to collaborate with other organizations to develop nurse fellow programs in new geographic regions, potentially addressing demand from applicants outside of the U.S. ANHE recognizes the international need for this work and hopes to empower nurses from other countries to work at the intersection of climate change, health, and equity.