

A partnership in five communities improves health equity

Vitality is defined by the ability to pursue life with health, strength, and energy. Among U.S. adults, [high vitality](#) is associated with better physical health and is driven by healthier habits and higher health engagement.¹ Higher health engagement can be challenging because of the impact of [social determinants of health \(SDOH\)](#) – the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, play, and age.² In fact, while numerous factors can be obstacles in the path to better health, these physical, environmental, social, and economic factors are responsible for 80% of health outcomes – versus just 20% for clinical factors.

[Research](#) commissioned by The Cigna Group shows people with high vitality are at least six times more likely to say they feel a sense of belonging in their community than those with low vitality.³ Fostering and nurturing community can have a positive impact in helping to address SDOH barriers through social interaction and shared experiences, which is what led, in part, to a partnership between the Y and The Cigna Group Foundation, and corresponding grant funding [contributing \\$1 million](#) to improve community vitality.

From teens to seniors, equitable health with community

The Y programming is designed to help teens and young adults develop leadership skills and to provide opportunities for older adults to build social connections and participate in healthy activities in the communities of: Houston, Texas; Memphis, Tennessee; Nashville, Tennessee; Phoenix, Arizona; and St. Louis, Missouri.

In Houston, over 500 teens will have access to experiences that foster a culture of service. In Nashville, the Northwest Family Y will strengthen its Active Older Adults programming to include social events, lunch-and-learns, and meaningful connections in a community where SDOH challenges are particularly high.

The Y locations in Phoenix and St. Louis will engage older adults in social activities designed to reduce isolation. Additionally, the Gateway Region Y in St. Louis will use The Cigna Group Foundation grant funding for a dedicated staff person to improve social connectedness, decrease isolation, and help seniors be well emotionally and physically. In Memphis, the grant will help provide post-secondary opportunities to help young adults develop confidence and leadership skills.

In the same research report, Generation Z adults (ages 18-24) struggled more than any other age group surveyed. One in four reported low vitality levels, which is in stark contrast to the 10% of people aged 65-75 years and the 16% of people aged 25-64 years reporting low vitality.⁴

“Building connections – whether at home, work or school – is central to improving the health and vitality of individuals and our communities,” said David Cordani, chairman and CEO of The Cigna Group. “The YMCA of the USA plays an instrumental role in fostering connections across the communities they serve.”

This collaboration is a strong step toward helping to reduce the impact of SDOH in these communities by improving vitality and giving each person every opportunity to live well.

You can read more about the Y programming supported by The Cigna Group Foundation [here](#).

Sources

1. The Cigna Group, "April 2024
2. CDC, "[Social Determinants of Health](#)." January 2024.
- 3,4. The Cigna Group, "[Vitality 2023: Americans are optimistic despite facing physical, mental, and financial health challenges](#)." June 2023.