



## Ted Wheeler, Multnomah County Chair

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To: Multnomah County Employees

Fr: Ted Wheeler, Multnomah County Chair

Re: Health Equity Initiative Training Series: “*Unnatural Causes*” Screenings and Dialogues

Dt: April 24, 2009

Please join me and the Board of County Commissioners at this year’s Health Equity Initiative (HEI) Training Series: “*Unnatural Causes*” Screenings and Dialogues. Multnomah County, under the guidance of the Health Department’s Health Equity Initiative, continues to partner with communities nationwide in exploring the root causes of health inequity. Differences in opportunities (inequity) lead to differences in outcomes (disparities). African American, Latino, American Indians, Asian and other ethnic communities have experienced historical inequities in education, jobs, housing, land use, and within our health care systems, that have translated into persistent health disparities.

Multnomah County serves many people who are affected by health disparities and your leadership and skills as a county employee can help to address those disparities at your worksite and in your professional and personal communities. We cannot ignore the human suffering and financial costs of health disparities for individuals, families and our entire community. As an example of the economic impact of health disparities, the state of Colorado calculated that it would have saved more than \$33,000,000 from 1999-2002 if disparities were eliminated (source: [APHA Issue Brief, Nov. 2008](#)).

Six distinct episodes of the award-winning documentary [Unnatural Causes](#) will be presented in May and June of this year. After each screening, a facilitated dialogue will follow that will focus on related policy issues and local initiatives important to our communities. Participation in the training will increase your ability to advocate for practice improvements and policy changes that promote the health of the individuals and families you serve.

A training announcement will come out shortly and you will be able to register for these trainings as you would any other countywide training. You are not expected to attend *every* training session, but I encourage you to attend as many as you can for your professional development. Please discuss your participation with your manager/supervisor.

For more information about *Unnatural Causes* and the county’s Health Equity Initiative, please visit the Health Equity Initiative web site at [www.mchealth.org/healthequity](http://www.mchealth.org/healthequity).

The Health Equity Initiative addresses the core values and core responsibilities of the County, and I hope you will be a part of this effort.