

Harper Opens Doors for Kaiser Permanente Members



Driven by an experience as a child, Corwin Harper was motivated to open the door of healthcare to all people. Harper is the senior vice president and area manager for the Kaiser Permanente Central Valley area in Northern California, which covers two counties and 367,000 Kaiser Permanente members. In this role he serves as the senior health plan executive, as well as the CEO of two hospitals. "I ensure all hospital operations run efficiently and smoothly, and take care of members, providing access to care for those who have opted into the Kaiser Permanente health plan," says Harper, who's worked for the company for 22 years. Right now Harper is working to expand access for members in the region by writing business

cases to add capacity, including mental health facilities and medical office buildings.

"These facilities are needed to support and give greater healthcare access to members," he explains. Access to healthcare is Harper's passion, driven by an experience from his youth. Growing up in the South in the 1960s, many medical offices had removed signs that designated waiting rooms for "whites and coloreds," as was the terminology then, but the practice of separation still held. One day when Harper was having a life-threatening asthma attack, his mother opted to take her son in through the "whites only" door. "That saved my life, and since then I've been motivated to have one door to serve people," says Harper. "Seeing how much civil rights impacts healthcare has been a big part of my life. That got me into and keeps me in this line of work...the drive to provide access to all people." Harper was initially drawn to Kaiser Permanente after learning about the organization and its integrated care model while working on his master's degree in healthcare administration.

What has kept him with the Oakland, CA-based organization for more than 20 years is Kaiser Permanente's mission to provide high-quality healthcare in the communities it serves: "Our interest is not just in our 12.2 million members, but also in the 68 million people in our respective communities. It's a powerful statement to work for an organization that cares about helping people be healthy and creates opportunities for people to live longer and healthier lives." To maximize career success, Harper says to focus on the three Es: education, exposure and experience. "You have to be educated and be a continuous learner. That's 10% of your success," he believes. With regard to exposure, which he believes provides about 20% of your success, he advises being willing to open yourself to new learning opportunities. "See it, understand it, touch it, appreciate it.

Take on assignments that give you experience and exposure to different tasks." The balance goes to experience, according to Harper. "You have to go places no one wants to go, take assignments that are unpopular. At the end of the day, experience trumps everything. It can help you correlate and connect dots, solve problems and lead people. Experiential learning

will help you learn to look around the corner to see what's next." Specifically, for those seeking a career in healthcare administration, he recommends joining a professional organization like the National Association of Health Services Executives (NAHSE) or the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). In addition, seek opportunities for fellowships and volunteering to become exposed to healthcare organizations in your community. "These offer very powerful networking and educational opportunities, but also offer a culture of support," Harper explains. "It's impossible to do your job unless you have a community around you."