

Developing a Better Understanding



Understanding Racism

There is a false perception that racism is only a direct act of prejudice initiated by one individual toward another because of race. Racism plays out across multiple levels of society.

Race Forward's "Four Levels of Racism Framework," describes racism occurring at the individual and systemic level.

Internalized racism lies within individuals.

Interpersonal racism (personally mediated) occurs between individuals.

Institutional racism occurs within institutions and systems of power.

Structural racism is racial bias among institutions and across society.

To achieve equity, racism and discrimination in all its forms must be eliminated.

Sources:

- Race Forward
- COVID-19 Ohio Minority Health Strike Force Blueprint

Dismantling Racism and Advancing Health Equity

As a driving force of the social determinants of health, racism causes persistent discrimination influencing many areas of life, including healthcare, housing, education, employment, and criminal justice. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and further exacerbated health inequities. Going forward, we must collectively work across all fronts to dismantle racism and advance equity.

How does racism impact health and the factors that shape health? In "[Connections between Racism and Health: Taking Action to Eliminate Racism and Advance Equity](#)" the Health Policy Institute of Ohio shares the following.

Health is influenced by several modifiable factors, often referred to as the "social determinants" or "social drivers" of health, including healthcare access, health behaviors and community conditions like education, jobs, and housing. Research estimates that 50% of health is attributed to the social, economic, and physical environment, 30% is attributed to health behaviors, and 20% to clinical care. Access to and the availability of resources across these factors can limit or increase individual opportunities for health.

The connections between racism and health are complex and interwoven. However, the research evidence is clear that racism is a primary driver of the inequities and disparities experienced by communities of color. Racism impacts health both directly and indirectly through:

- Exposure to traumatic events, violence, toxic stress, and stigma
- Policy and system inequities (i.e., inequitable access to resources and increased exposure to risk factors)
- Increased risk for unhealthy behaviors

Three Key Findings for Policymakers from HPIO

Racism is a health crisis. The research is clear that racism is an ongoing crisis resulting in inequities and disparities that have led to serious consequences for the health and wellbeing of Ohioans of color.

Racism manifests directly and indirectly across all levels of society. Most conversations on racism focus on the individual level (internalized or interpersonal racism). However, systemic racism (institutional or structural) is an even more pervasive driver of the poor outcomes faced by communities of color.

Many opportunities to dismantle racism exist. While addressing the impact of hundreds of years of racism in our country is daunting, progress is possible and there are multiple opportunities for action.

Source: Health Policy Institute of Ohio, "Connections between Racism and Health: Taking Action to Eliminate Racism and Advance Equity"



Declaration

Racism is a Public Health Crisis

The members of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities declare that racism is a public health crisis. As a driving force of the social determinants of health, racism causes persistent discrimination influencing many areas of life, including healthcare, housing, education, employment, and criminal justice.

OACBHA strongly condemns the death of George Floyd. This unnecessarily brutal tragedy and others like it demonstrate the impact of racism by individuals in power who abuse their authority.

Communities of color, people of low social economic status, and individuals who have disabilities, are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of social determinants of health — health inequities stemming from economic stability, education, physical environment, inadequate food and access to health care systems, including mental health and addiction. The current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and further exacerbated health inequities.

Trauma is often experienced by racial and ethnic population groups as a result of premature deaths, major assaults on culture, and intergenerational lost opportunities. The experience of pervasive racism can itself be traumatic.

The recent deaths and trauma, witnessed by the world, have crystalized the anger and angst born out of a history of pervasive and systemic racism. It is long past time to act. What we have not done before, we must do now. Eradicating racism deserves action from all levels of government and society. We join partners throughout our communities, our state, and our nation committed to shaping new community responses and dynamics.

Our commitment is to:

- Acknowledge racism as a public health crisis and build alliances and partnerships that confront and work collaboratively to end racism.
- Develop local solutions to address disparities and actively engage individuals and communities in racial and social justice work.
- Develop, implement, and support policies and practices to end the inequalities in the health of people of color and mitigate exposure to adverse childhood experiences and trauma.
- Ensure health equity and cultural competence within all mental health and substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery support programs, ensuring services meet the local needs of diverse populations.
- Engage ALL communities to work with state and local behavioral health leaders to develop and promote prevention and awareness efforts designed to reduce stigma, address trauma, and eliminate barriers to care.

We stand in solidarity with everyone seeking to achieve equality and a healthy community where racism is not tolerated.

Approved by the OACBHA Membership on June 5, 2020.

Sources

Health Policy Institute of Ohio
COVID-19 Ohio Minority Health Strike Force Blueprint

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Race Forward