



RUTGERS

School of Public Health

RWJ Barnabas
HEALTH

Social Impact &
Community Investment

Racism is a Public Health Crisis

This call to action is not simply a suggestion but rather an undoubtedly strong commitment from our institutions in an effort to ensure a more equitable and just world for Black and brown people and, therefore, for all.

We join with others around the nation to declare that racism is a public health crisis and that Black Lives Matter.

Racism is an ongoing public health crisis that is responsible for the disproportionate rates of illness and death from preventable diseases like COVID-19, cardiovascular disease, Type2 diabetes, drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, obesity, and other chronic illnesses within Black and Brown communities.

Racism hurts the health of our communities by depriving people of the opportunity to attain their highest level of health.

Racism may be intentional or unintentional, operating at the individual, structural, and systemic levels in society. Racism results in generational trauma and poverty, while also unquestionably causing higher rates of illness and death in Black and brown communities. Racism is the fundamental cause of health disparities inextricably tied with poverty, inadequate housing, under-resourced and thus, underperforming schools, police brutality, mass incarceration, food deserts, food swamps, unemployment or underemployment, wage disparity, stress, poor access to health care, and violence, all of which are substantial barriers to health equity.

As anchor institutions within our communities, we share a common mission and a moral obligation to address the racial and social inequities that impact our communities, colleagues, students, and patients.

To achieve health equity, eliminate healthcare disparities, and create more vital communities, we must address racial injustices. First, we must acknowledge manifestations of racism in the advancement of medicine and business interests and listen to those with the lived experience facing these challenges at all levels of society. Second, we must confront the policies, systems, and organizational structures that, by their very nature, perpetuate discrimination in our institutions. Through open and honest conversations on these matters, we can take strong actions to create change at all levels. Only then can we hope to ensure equal opportunity for all, where everybody, regardless of skin color, can feel safe and thrive.

We have come together as a unified, multisector group of organizations that includes academia, government, business, and community-based organizations, which realize it is only through a collaborative effort that we can move towards an antiracist world. Following are some of the steps that we have already taken or commit to take moving forward.

LEARN

- Enact a policy of zero tolerance for harassments, discrimination, and racism in our organizations as informed by the work of the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health.¹
- Address microaggressions, macroaggressions, and micro-assaults in our organizations by creating a culture of self-reflection, mindfulness, and personal accountability.
- Expand our organizations' commitment to providing anti-racism and unconscious bias training at all levels of the organization.
- Uplift the voices of people of color to ensure unique perspectives are interwoven into the fabric of our organizations; develop on-going mechanisms to provide inclusive fora to provide feedback loops that encourage honest, open dialogue without fear of sanctions.
- Attend to the multiple, intersectional identities held by Black and brown people and work across sectors to develop strategies to promote an equitable culture for all.

CHANGE

- Identify, evaluate, and revise internal processes, practices, policies, and behaviors that fail to promote an antiracist culture; in so doing identify and utilize appropriate tools to help evaluate, measure, and monitor the administrative and clinical decisions, including but not limited to Racial Equity Indices.
- Drive policy and systems change to achieve sustainable and equitable impact at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Develop a quantifiable strategic plan which will be evaluated in a transparent manner at regular intervals to demonstrate progress, inclusive of the continual collection and appropriate use of race, ethnicity, language preference, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other socio-demographic data.
- Commit to proactively addressing the social determinants of health in a comprehensive and integrated manner to ensure equitable health, social, economic, and educational outcomes by building trusted relationships with diverse community stakeholders.

COMMIT

- Promote careers in science, technology, engineering, and math for people of color, particularly black and brown individuals, as it is known that when patients receive care from people who look like them they have improved health outcomes.
- Hire locally from communities which evidence a disparate impact of COVID-19 and the resultant economic impact and create employment opportunities for local hires – training for entry-level positions, career ladder opportunities across job levels, and purposeful mentorship for advancement into management and leadership positions to promote a livable wage.
- Support New Jersey's Black and Latinx entrepreneurs, of small, medium, and large-sized businesses through our procurement practices and business relationships in our communities, including upfront payments and < 30-day payment cycles, as evidenced by our collective spend with minority-owned businesses.
- Leverage our investment assets and capital projects to support the built environment and minority-owned business sustainability in the Black and brown communities in which our facilities reside.
- Work with local organizations committed to fighting social injustices including, but not limited to the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, Equal Justice USA, New Jersey Citizen Action, and New Jersey Policy Perspective that work to eliminate inappropriate use of force in law enforcement, systemic incarceration of Black males, healthcare disparities, and economic inequalities in the Black community.

¹ Halkitis, P. N., Alexander, L., Cipriani, K., Finnegan, J., Giles, W., Lassiter, T.,... & Kelliher, R. (2020). A Statement of Commitment to Zero Tolerance of Harassment and Discrimination in Schools and Programs of Public Health. *Public Health Reports*, 135(4), 354-358. 0033354920921816

WE COMMIT



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**NAC founding members: Broadridge, The City of Newark, Edison Properties, Essex County College, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield, The MCI Amelior Foundation, New Jersey Institute of Technology, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Panasonic, Prudential Financial, RBH Group, Rutgers Newark, Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences, and RWJBarnabas Health*