

# GUIDANCE, ACTIONABLE STEPS, AND EXAMPLES TO BEGIN TO ADDRESS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES & BRING RACIAL EQUITY WITHIN THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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# Disclaimer

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# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Reinforce role of behavioral health agencies in addressing health disparities
- Discuss actionable steps to address racial disparities and equity within the behavioral health care
- Guidance for incorporating inward and outward steps and examples to increase health equity, including specifically for individuals with SMI/SED
- Understand possible next steps within each participant's role to bring these action items to address health disparities

## ASSOCIATED TERMS

***Equitable:*** Fair and Impartial

***Inward-facing:*** Internal Agency Policies and Practices

***Outward-facing:*** Agency Collaboration with Providers and Outside Community Organizations

***Actionable Steps:*** Manageable and Do-Able Task to Reach Our Goal

# HOW THE GUIDE WAS DEVELOPED

- In June 2020, NASMHPD and the National Council issued a Joint Statement on Racial Equity. NASMHPD's Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) Division formed a subcommittee representing nine states that met monthly over the course of a year to work on making the Joint Statement actionable.
- Under NASMHPD's Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) program, the CYF Division developed a working document to provide suggestions for inward and outward-facing actionable steps, and examples of what some states have already implemented to address racial disparities and inequities in the behavioral health care system.

## WHY IS THE GUIDE IMPORTANT

Everyone in the United States doesn't have the same equitable opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Everyone should have the same access and quality of behavioral health services and support regardless of ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, gender, financial status, education, where they live, work or play.

To achieve this, we need to address social problems, unfair practices, and unjust conditions that can weaken the health of specific marginalized groups of Americans.

Providing applicable low-cost and/or no-cost actionable steps and current state examples can encourage the implementation of these steps to address Behavioral Health Care Disparities and Bring Racial Equity within the Behavioral Health Care System

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# GUIDANCE TO ADDRESS DISPARITIES AND BRING RACIAL EQUITY

TOPICS TO ADDRESS

# SUGGESTED GUIDANCE FROM JOINT STATEMENT

Creating safe spaces for individuals receiving care and individuals providing care

Reflecting and challenging our own implicit biases and commit to developing practices that promote cross-cultural humility and practices of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Remove review and change structural inequity through practices in hiring, disciplinary and promotion practices in our own institutions and organizations to ensure they promote racial equity.

Review social and health care policies, laws and practices and oppose, change, or work to eliminate those that sustain racial inequity.

Implement policy and practice changes that will comprehensively address health disparities and support racial equity.

Working with the African American community, and specifically African American advocacy organizations, to improve access to quality health care in committed, transparent and quantifiable ways



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# ACTIONABLE STEPS AND EXAMPLES TO IMPLEMENT GUIDANCE

INWARD AND OUTWARD  
ACTIONABLE STEPS

# CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING CARE AND INDIVIDUALS PROVIDING CARE TO GIVE VOICE TO THEIR EXPERIENCES OF TRAUMA, ROOTED IN UNJUST AND UNFAIR PRACTICES THAT HAVE CAUSED HARM AND CONTINUE TODAY.

## Inward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **Example of a strategy to create meaningful and consistent opportunities and mechanisms for agency staff to share their experiences and concerns:**

*The Indiana Council of CMHCs has a Racial Equity and Leadership Committee comprised of employees who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color across Indiana's CMHCs who meet regularly for such reasons.*

- **Example of strategy to create explicit policies on engaging individuals with lived experience, including families and youth, to learn how to better serve them:**

*Potentially provide stipends for public advisory committees with people with lived experience, including young adults and family members, who can inform state practices.*

*Illinois pays a stipend of \$85 per meeting for individuals with lived experience who are not otherwise compensated to serve on public advisory committees.*

## Outward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **Example of a strategy to create opportunities for individuals with lived experience providing and receiving services to voice any experience of racial inequity, including in inpatient settings:**

*Washington has trainings specifically for Black, Indigenous, People of Color youth, TRANSFORM (Trauma and Racism Addressed by Navigating Systemic Forms of Oppression using Resilience Methods), which is a learning tool that focuses on addressing trauma and racism and the intersection of the two, as well as building racial/ethnic pride among Black, Indigenous, People of Color youth and anti-racism advocacy among white youth, and building awareness among adult facilitators and increasing adults' skills to be more culturally responsive and trauma-informed.*

REFLECT ON AND CHALLENGE OUR OWN IMPLICIT BIASES AND COMMIT TO DEVELOPING PRACTICES TO APPROACH CARE THROUGH THE LENS OF CROSS-CULTURAL HUMILITY AND THE INTENTIONAL PROMOTION AND PRACTICES OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION.

### Inward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **Example of a strategy to create a DEI competency training for supervisors and those in leadership positions and reinforce these principles after initial trainings with staff and provider agencies:**

California put together DEI workgroups to help understand inequities that are occurring that include: data utilization and analysis; recruitment and hiring; staff development and advancement; and workplace outreach and awareness.

- **Example of a strategy to Provide training for state staff and/or provider staff on DEI, similar to other mandatory staff trainings such as sexual harassment:**

Using *Harvard's Implicit Association Test* to raise self-awareness of implicit bias.

Encouraging use of an *Equity Challenge* for leadership teams and their staff teams, such as the *United Way Equity Challenge*.

### Outward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **Strategy examples to encourage providers to use solution-focused statements to address disparities and power differentials between how individuals, including youth, are treated based in implicit racial biases:**

*Remediating instances in which Black, Indigenous, People of Color youth are treated, or held to similar behavioral standards, as adults in both provider interactions and policies.*

*Encouraging providers to provide alternative, adaptive options for youth behaviors rather than focusing on ceasing negative behaviors.*

REMOVE STRUCTURAL INEQUITY IN HIRING, DISCIPLINARY AND PROMOTION PRACTICES WITHIN OUR OWN INSTITUTIONS. REVIEW AND CHANGE PRACTICES IN HIRING, DISCIPLINARY AND PROMOTION PRACTICES WITHIN OUR OWN INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO ENSURE THEY PROMOTE RACIAL EQUITY.

## Inward and Outward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **An example of a strategy to integrate the agency's cultural competency committee to have an explicit role in ensuring equitable practices in hiring, promotions, etc. and address discrepancies of diversity between state workers and higher levels of management:**

*South Carolina has a committee as part of the Division of Equity and Inclusion that includes external partners such as an attorney, a representative from the [Minority Affairs Commission](#), the faith-based community, a person with lived experience, and others. It is important to keep a balance of internal and external stakeholders.*

- **An example of a strategy to implement intentional mentoring, job sharing, systemic workforce development through each level of the agency to prepare employees for new job opportunities:**

*Providing mentorship opportunities for Black, Indigenous, People of Color to move into leadership positions and other roles, as well as training to help them do so.*

- **Strategy examples to collect and share data of state agency demographics to illustrate issues and needed workforce changes, i.e., discrepancies as compared to the demographics of the local populations served:**

*Washington created a DEI panel and developed a workgroup to inform practices around equity. Specifics include collecting data around the makeup of the organization, especially leadership; and analyzing interview questions and the structure's impact on equity.*

- **Strategy examples to create responsive HR systems that are able to address past and existing unjust and unfair practices in agencies to develop the workforce equitably:**

*Addressing how the recruitment process could be creating inequity. Create broadened/targeted recruitment practices to diversify applicant pools. For example, this could be done through the types of websites used, eliminating non-inclusive wording, and not limiting the applicant pools based on the existing processes. Widely market positions on all platforms and towards many different communities. Examples of strategies to achieve this include:*

- *South Carolina has a newsletter with facts and myths about cultures; non-intimidating formats are useful for reaching all groups.*
- *Some states market openings to faith-based centers to promote diversity in the hiring pools.*

## REVIEW SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE POLICIES, LAWS AND PRACTICES AND OPPOSE, CHANGE, OR WORK TO ELIMINATE THOSE THAT SUSTAIN RACIAL INEQUITY.

### Inward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **Example of a strategy to utilize and analyze data to illustrate disparities based on race, zip code, etc., based on different trajectories for different populations:**

*In an effort to assess and prioritize strategy implementation to address health disparities, Alabama is initiating impact statements at the prevention service provider level to ensure the needs of unserved and underserved populations are met and service delivery is provided in a cultural and linguistically competent manner. This method of identification and prioritization is also being explored within other programs of the continuum*

### Outward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **Examples of a strategy to ensure equal quality of care is provided to individuals covered by Medicaid compared to private insurance:**

*Indiana's Division of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA) is evaluating the intake experience of individuals accessing services at Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs), and includes an examination of the total initial experience of an individual seeking services and will examine the same experiences of individuals in private practice. The end goal will be the reduction of administrative burdens placed on CMHCs in an attempt to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the initial intake experience.*

# IMPLEMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE CHANGES THAT WILL COMPREHENSIVELY ADDRESS HEALTH DISPARITIES AND SUPPORT RACIAL EQUITY.

## Inward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **Example of a strategy to ask people served for information about their service experiences AND create practices of how to use the data from the feedback given:**

*New York's Office of Mental Health (OMH) implemented a wide-reaching survey of individuals who participate in or receive services from OMH or OMH-licensed programs, and/or their family members. The survey was also extended to programs that are funded by OMH and monitored by local government units. The data collected was stratified by demographic categories and has been used to guide, inform and implement program and policy changes related to tele-health, service expansion and improved access for special populations (i.e. transgender individuals, people with language barriers).*

## Outward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **Strategy examples to educate entire communities about 988 and other available behavioral health services:**

*Faith-based institutions provide community resources beyond services (ex. food, resources, support, etc.). Churches are hubs in certain regions for providing support and increasing awareness. For example, to increase access to the COVID vaccine, West Virginia utilized their faith-based partners, led by two prominent Black pastors, to do outreach to churches, which was very effective.*

*Missouri has a prevention section that, among other efforts, creates targeted advertising campaigns using billboards, radio spots, newspaper ads, etc. to educate specific communities about available resources.*

# WORKING WITH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, AND SPECIFICALLY AFRICAN AMERICAN ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS, TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE IN COMMITTED, TRANSPARENT AND QUANTIFIABLE WAYS.

## Inward and Outward Actionable Steps and Examples

- **Example of a strategy to educate staff, leadership, and providers on the barriers that drive a lack of access to care, lack of quality care, and mistrust of services:**

*Washington is conducting research on what Black, Indigenous, People of Color communities are doing for behavioral health interventions for youth and families to create a report on what is happening and move it into a practice-based (ultimately EB) practice.*

- **Example of a strategy to increase outreach to groups who historically mistrust services by utilizing already trusted groups and leaders for effective outreach:**

*Vermont issued an apology for historical wrongs to tribal communities and addressed current mistrust. They are connecting with leaders from communities to build relationships and to partner with them to understand what the communities needs and what they already have.*

- **Strategy examples to create opportunities for discussion with leadership of other state agencies, such as criminal justice, juvenile justice, child welfare, etc., on how to collectively build an infrastructure to support current laws and policies:**

*Washington has a law to divert youth in contact with law enforcement from the criminal justice system but is working on developing the infrastructure to support it.*

*South Carolina's work on juvenile justice reform includes avenues in the community to create options for diversion from restrictive settings.*

- **Example of a strategy to create practices that build trust between providers and people we serve:**

*Adding people with lived experience to mental health teams has been shown as one ways to effectively increase trust. For Black, Indigenous, Peoples of Color, the very presence of another Black, Indigenous, Person of Color can significantly increase the recipient's trust in their interactions with the provider.*

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

- The guide is being promoted and recognized as a beginning guide and resource for State Behavioral Health Agencies to address disparities and promote racial equity in their behavioral health care systems.
- Through the Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI), NASMHPD encourages agencies to utilize this document however they see fit, whether through specific DEI initiatives, and/or throughout policies and programs within the state.
- If a specific state example stands out, and you'd like to be connected for more information, please reach out to NASMHPD.



## CONTACT INFORMATION



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# REFERENCES

- [Joint Statement from NASMHPD and the National Council](#)
- [Guidance, Actionable Steps, and Examples to Begin to Address Behavioral Health Care Disparities & Bring Racial Equity within the Behavioral Health Care System](#)

# COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE INTIMATE DIALOGUE

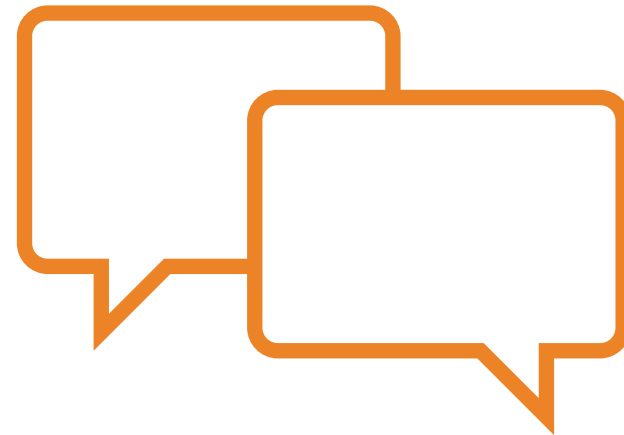
## Join us for Part Two

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAodOuorzgjGt3lQV8CmKryG2iaRiLxWclo>

## **Guidance, Actionable Steps, and Examples to Begin to Address Behavioral Health Care Disparities & Bring Racial Equity within the Behavioral Health Care System**

August 12, 2022 from 3:00-4:00pm ET

- \* Dive deeper into your questions
- \* Coordinate your efforts
- \* Expand your network



Part Two will be via Zoom so you will have the opportunity to interact with the presenters verbally or via chat.