



BIPOC Experiences with Health Disparities in the Time of COVID

MIDD Advisory Board Meeting
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Public Health – Seattle & King County
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Group & Conversation Agreements

- Assume good intent.
- Listen with intent and respect.
- Be open to hearing new information and honest conversation.
- Be comfortable with the uncomfortable.
- Participate fully.
- Seek to understand.
- Speak from personal experience.
- Don't be afraid. We are taking risks together.
- No blaming, shaming, judging, or discounting.
- Trust is built over time.

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We all have a responsibility to protect our cherished elders and those who are also vulnerable and valuable members of our communities.

Jay Begay, NDN Collective

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Pandemic Upon Pandemic: Behavioral Health

Underlying Context:

- Different cultural perceptions about mental illness, help-seeking behaviors and well-being
- Racism and discrimination
- Greater vulnerability to being uninsured, access barriers, and communication barriers
- Fear and mistrust of treatment

Has Resulted In:

- Less likely to have access to mental health service
- POC youth & the school to prison pipeline
- Overdiagnosis of schizophrenia in black men
- More than three times as many people with serious mental illnesses in jails and prisons than in hospitals.

Source: The historical roots of racial disparities in the mental health system. Counseling Today, May 7, 2020, <https://ct.counseling.org/2020/05/the-historical-roots-of-racial-disparities-in-the-mental-health-system/>

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Challenges & Opportunities: How do we operationalize equity during a pandemic?

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Health & Medical Area Command (HMCA)

- **Pre-COVID:** An Equity Officer was included as part of the HMCA's Command & General Staff.
- **2020:** Due to the level of response needed for COVID-19, an Equity Response Team (ERT) was formed.
- **ERTs Mission:** Works in concert with the EO to assure that equity considerations are included in public health policy level decisions, resource allocation and response priorities related to the HMCA's crisis response.
- ERT members represent different areas of subject matter expertise, to include civil rights, LGBTQ, youth, community, faith, just to name a few.

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What does the ERT do?

- **National model:** The Equity Response Team (ERT) is the first of its kind and a leading national model for incorporating equity into an emergency response
- **Inclusive emergency response:** Formed during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the ERT also addresses cross-cutting issues raised by our team and partner agencies. COVID has touched all areas of our society, and the ERT looks to address these upstream effects.
- **Short- and long-term impact:** The team has played a role as thought partners in Racism as a PH Crisis, the creation of an emergency response bill of rights, and feedback on emergency relief programs such as food and rent assistance.

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Case Study

- Weekly Command & General Staff Equity Conversations
 - a) Goal: To increase the capacity of HMAc branches/leadership to assure that equity considerations are included.
- Example of Guiding Questions for Used for Group Discussions:
 - a) Why do you work to improve the wellbeing of our communities?
 - b) It is difficult to face how good intentions/well meaning programs may have contributed to health disparities. How has this been addressed and discussed by our group?
 - c) Knowing that it is an issue that cannot be solved this week, month or year, how can our group work to address the "pandemic upon pandemic" that the communities we serve are facing?

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QUESTIONS?

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For more information visit:
<https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19.aspx>

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