



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Butler County
General Health District**

June, 2020

Butler County General Health District Statement on Racism as a Public Health Crisis

Butler County General Health District (BCGHD) acknowledges racism as a public health crisis. We have been and continue to be dedicated to alleviating racism and the resulting health inequities and disparities experienced by persons of color across our county, state, and nation. While we have come a long way in addressing the history of racism in our country, there is much work yet to be done.

Social Determinants of Health: People of color endure challenges in areas collectively known in public health circles as the social determinants of health. These areas have been recognized as being even more important than hospitals and health care providers in determining how healthy a person can possibly be. These areas include, but are not limited to: crime, education, housing, transportation, employment, food access, socioeconomic status, and environmental exposure, access to health services, toxic stress, and public safety. When inequities in the social determinants of health (social conditions of living), are allowed to persist, they impact the health of people in many negative ways. (1)

Health Inequities: Health inequities show up when data analysis uncovers rates of diseases or other conditions that are not in line with what would be expected based on population. Inequities show up for people of color in the following areas: persons of color suffer from excessive rates of chronic diseases, poor birth outcomes for babies, high maternal mortality rates, and shortened life spans. Overall, people of color suffer health inequities across the board, in most every area measured. (2)

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has shone a bright light on the health disparities people of color continue to experience in Butler County and across the nation. While Butler County is 11% Black (Non-Hispanic) or mixed race, 13% of COVID-19 cases are among persons who are Black (Non-Hispanic) or mixed race. While Butler County is only 5% Hispanic, 25% of the COVID-19 cases reported to BCGHD are among people who are Hispanic (3). COVID-19 has highlighted and confirmed what was already known by public health agencies: people of color suffer disproportionately from health inequities of all kinds.

Butler County public health agencies and their partners have worked for many years to implement policies and programs to combat racism and health inequities. Some of our current programs with a focus on people of color include:

Infant mortality reduction activities across the county for Black pregnant women continuing until their babies reach one year of age, called Moms and Babies First. These activities are conducted via home

visiting by Certified Community Health Workers who provide education to address the social determinants of health, provide care coordination, referrals, supplies, and support to ensure healthy Black moms and babies. Our Cribs for Kids program targets families of color and others in need to provide portable cribs to reduce sleep-related infant deaths. LIVE is a policy change partnership of organizations that identifies policies that could be changed to positively impact the health of babies, and young families of color and others in need. COVID-19 related disease reduction activities are specifically targeting persons of color who are currently experiencing the greatest health inequities. These activities are carried out with assistance from community champions such as pastors and leaders within identified communities.

The current climate reminds us that there is always room for improvement and that until all people have equitable health outcomes, complacency has no place in public health. We need to redouble our efforts to reach out more in our communities of color. We need to seek assistance and guidance from people of color to help better identify needs and ways of meeting them. We need people of all races to join in, speak up and address racism in all its forms.

BCGHD is committed to eliminating racism and addressing minority health inequities, including but not limited to systematic, data-driven efforts to address the risk factors associated with the social determinants of health.

Public Health's responsibilities to address racism include reshaping our discourse and agenda so that we all actively engage in racial justice work.

- (1) Kaiser Family Foundation, <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/beyond-health-care-the-role-of-social-determinants-in-promoting-health-and-health-equity/>
- (2) CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/CHDIReport.html>
- (3) June 9, 2020 Butler County Epidemiology Report, COVID-19