### BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

THE COUNTY ROLE



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### UNDERSTANDING INEQUITIES

An overview of how injustice and bias impact our communities

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Disproportionate health impact of COVID-19 on people and communities of color

 African Americans and Hispanics represent *nearly 20* and 30 percent of COVID-19 cases though making up only 12.3 and 17.8 percent of the total U.S. population, respectively.

The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on income and employment

 Among lower-income adults, 46% say they have had trouble paying their bills since the pandemic started and roughly one third (32%) say it has been hard for them to make rent or mortgage payments. Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced. -James Baldwin

### HOW DID WE GET HERE? UNDERSTANDING OUR HISTORY

Broadly speaker, <u>inequity or injustice</u> refer to a lack of fairness and justice. While many individuals and groups in our country's history have endured different types of injustice, the groups we will specifically call out today are:

- Indigenous Peoples
- People of Color
- Women
- Religious Minorities
- Sexual and Gender Minorities
- Individuals with Disabilities

Though these events occurred years ago, it is worth exploring the ways their effects persist and frame the lived experiences and opportunities of those groups in our present day.



Did any of the historical events covered surprise you? What stood out to you the most?



### **KEY TERMS & CONCEPTS: DEI**

<u>Diversity</u> is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective.

**Equity** is promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.

• Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

**Inclusion** is an outcome to ensure those that are diverse actually feel and/or are welcomed. Inclusion outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are truly inviting to all.







### **EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY**



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally. In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed. Broadly speaking, bias is defined as "a disproportionate weight in favor of or against an idea or thing, usually in a way that is closed-minded, prejudicial, or unfair." For our purposes, we will look mainly at the following two types of bias:

- Explicit/Conscious Biases are the prejudices or attitudes we have towards or against certain groups that we can acknowledge and are aware of.
- Implicit/Unconscious Biases are when, rather than being neutral, we have a preference for (or aversion to) a person or group of people.
  - Up to 90% of the decisions we make are made unconsciously

KEY TERMS & CONCEPTS: UNDERSTANDING BIAS

Can you think of any examples of how bias (implicit or explicit) shows up in your life (either professionally or personally)?





Internalized racism lies within individuals. These are private thoughts and beliefs about race that reside inside our minds.

<u>Interpersonal racism</u> occurs *between individuals*. Once we bring our private beliefs about race into our interactions with others, we are now in the interpersonal realm.



<u>Institutional racism</u> occurs *within institutions*. It involves discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race.

<u>Structural racism</u> is racial bias *across institutions and society*. It is the cumulative and compounded effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

Can you think of any examples of the different types of racism?

- Internalized
- Interpersonal
- Institutional
- Structural



# COUNTY ACTIONS & INITIATIVES

### COUNTY DEI EFFORTS

Baltimore County, MD:Baltimore County ExecutiveJohnny Olszewski issued an ExecutiveOrder creating a Diversity, Inclusion and EquityEmployee Advisory Council and Community AdvisoryCouncil, both aimed at advancing equity andinclusion in Baltimore County and ensuring theCounty government consistently applies an equitylens to its decision-making.

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 Ottawa County, MI: The Ottawa County Board of Commissioners established the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in December 2018. The <u>DEI</u> office leads the development of an equity plan and intends to provide assistance to local units of government with similar objectives.



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Durham County, N.C.: Recognizing the cost of racialized systems and their impact on the quality of life for communities of color, in May 2020 Durham County announced its first racial equity officer. This role is tasked with leading and coordinating efforts to embed and integrate principles of equity within existing county government operations, processes and services.



Are you working on similar initiatives in your community around fostering equity?



### ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEI AT THE LOCAL LEVEL



# HUMANIZE THE ISSUES AND THE SOLUTIONS

- Diversity, equity and inclusion are NOT partisan issues.
- Sustainable change requires the commitment and engagement of individuals and systems, beyond term limits and administrations.
- Creating space for those impacted by inequities to tell their own stories is a step towards meaningful engagement.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OWNERSHIP

"Thriving, diverse, equitable communities are possible through deep participation, particularly by communities commonly excluded from democratic voice & power. The stronger our local democracies, the more capacity we can unleash to address our toughest challenges, and the more capable we are of surviving and thriving through economic, ecological, and social crises. It is going to take all of us to adequately address the complex challenges our cities and regions are facing."

### -Facilitating Power, The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownsership



#### HEALTH EQUITY PRINCIPLES FOR STATE AND LOCAL LEADERS IN RESPONDING TO, REOPENING AND RECOVERING FROM COVID-19

- Collect, analyze and report data disaggregated by age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, neighborhood and other sociodemographic characteristics.
- Include in decision making the people most affected by health and economic challenges and benchmark progress based on their outcomes.
- Establish and empower teams dedicated to promoting racial equity in response and recovery efforts.
- Proactively identify and address existing policy gaps while advocating for further federal support.
- ✓ Invest in strengthening public health, health care and social infrastructure to foster resilience.



Which element of DEI work will be especially useful for your community? Which element seems the most feasible and actionable at this point in time?



### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND FEDERAL ADVOCACY



Milwaukee County, WI: Resolving to assess internal policy and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element, increase diversity across the county workforce and leadership, advocate for policies that improve health in communities of color.

### COUNTY DECLARATIONS

• <u>Montgomery County, MD:</u> Committed to understanding the impacts of racism in its past work and promoting racial equity and social justice through advocacy and policy.



Douglas County, NE: Declared that racism has resulted in a "health divide" with increased premature death rates, infant mortality rates and other overwhelmingly negative consequences in communities of color.

#### **Resolution on Declaring Racism a National Public Health Crisis**

Issue: Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by a multitude of socioeconomic and public health challenges facing counties across the country, and this disproportionality is rooted in individual, systemic, and institutional racism.

Adopted Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the Federal Government to: (1) Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire country (2) leverage a racial equity lens in evaluating federal policy; (3) Develop relevant policies aimed at improving health and economic opportunity in communities of color, and (4) support local, state, and Federal initiatives that advance social justice.

Adopted | July 15, 2020

# Adopted | Ju RESOLUTION

# RESOURCES

County Resources on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Racism and Health

**County Health Rankings and Roadmaps** 

**Government Alliance on Race and Equity** 

The Racial Equity Institute

**Burns Institute for Justice, Fairness & Equity** 

### **QUESTIONS?**

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