Organizational Opportunities to Address Racial Inequities

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health Experience

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Speaker Introductions

Stephanie Campbell, Acting Director of the Office of Sexual Health and Youth Development

Beth Buxton, Director, Maternal Health Initiatives
Overview

Definitions & Shared Language

Brief history of structural & institutional racism

Explore MA DPH’s role in addressing institutional racism

Application of Racial Justice Tools & Resources

Questions & Answers
Creating Shared Language

Racial Justice ≠ Diversity
(variety)

Racial Justice ≠ Equality
(sameness)

Racial Justice = Equity
(fairness)
Definitions

Disparities or Inequalities
- Differences between individuals or population groups

Inequity
- Differences that are unnecessary and *avoidable*, but are also *unfair* and *unjust*
Levels of Racism

- **INTERNALIZED**
- **INTERPERSONAL**
- **INSTITUTIONAL**
- **STRUCTURAL**

Adopted from the Applied Research Center
Historical Racism in America

1600s - 1860s
- Southern slavery and the slave codes
- Lynching
- Native American removal

1870s - 1960s
- Jim Crow discrimination becomes enshrined in Georgia law
- Redlining solidifies residential segregation, restricts wealth building through homeownership to whites only
- Urban renewal projects as part of the New Deal leads to the construction of highways straight through communities of color

1970s - Today
- Institutional racism and hostility towards immigrants perpetuated by explicit and implicit biases continues to permeate public policy and our everyday lives
Remembering Anarcha, Lucy & Betsey, the Mothers of Modern Gynecology

Dr. James Marion Sims, 19th Century Physician, the Father of Modern Gynecology
Residential Security Map
The George F. Cram Company, 1938
BCHAP/BFHN Racial Equity Initiative

- Racial Equity Initiative aims to:
  - Eliminate structural (and Institutional) racism in MCH policies, programs, and practices
  - Foster a healthy and equitable work environment

- Focus internally on the Title V program within the Department of Public Health

- Begin in two bureaus that comprise the majority of Title V programming
Leading with Race and Racism to Address Health Inequities

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” – Lilla Watson

Learn about:

The role of public health institutions in dismantling systems of oppression

Racial justice tools and materials

Why we lead with race and racism, explicitly, but not exclusively

New ways to use data
Infant Mortality Rate by Race/Ethnicity, MA RVRS—2005-2016

- WNH
- BNH
- Hispanic
- Asian NH
White mothers without high school have better birth outcomes than Black mothers with college or more

![Bar chart showing infant deaths per 1000 live births by race and ethnicity of mother. The chart compares Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, and Non-Hispanic White mothers. The chart indicates that White mothers without high school have lower infant death rates compared to Black mothers with college or more.]

Racial Justice Tools

- Training
- Introductions
- Window of Tolerance
- Racial Justice Re-framing Tool
- Trauma Informed Systems/Moving towards a Healing Organization
- Brown Bag Lunches, Affinity Groups & Racial Equity Workgroups
Racial Justice & Implicit Bias Training

- The Racial Equity Institute: https://www.racialequityinstitute.com/

Introductions

- Name
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Pronouns

Window

Question
Window of Tolerance

LAURA K. KERR, PhD

www.laurakkerr.com

Living Within The Window of Tolerance: The Different Zones of Arousal

**HYPERAROUSAL ZONE**

*Sympathetic “Fight or Flight Response”*  
(Too much arousal)

- Tension, shaking
- Emotional reactivity
- Defensiveness
- Racing thoughts

- Intrusive imagery
- Emotional overwhelm
- Feeling unsafe
- Obsessive/ cyclical cognitive processing

- Hypervigilance
- Impulsivity
- Anger/ Rage

**OPTIMAL AROUSAL ZONE**

*Ventral Vagal “Window of Tolerance”*

- Feel and think simultaneously
- Experience empathy
- Feelings are tolerable
- Present moment awareness - “Right here, right now”
- Feel open and curious versus judgmental and defensive

**HYPOAROUSAL ZONE**

*Parasympathetic “Immobilization Response”*  
(Too little arousal)

- Relative absence of sensation
- Feeling ‘dead’
- No energy
- “Not there”
- Can’t defend oneself
- Disabled cognitive processing/ “can’t think”

- Numbing of emotions
- No feelings
- Disconnected
- Ashamed
- Flat affect

- Reduced physical movement
- Passive
- Shut down
- Can’t say no

US National Suicide Hotline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

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<tr>
<th>Framing Element</th>
<th>Traditional Approach</th>
<th>Racial Justice Approach</th>
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<td>1. What’s the Problem?</td>
<td>Health center patients are late and missing appointments. Non-compliance with meds and treatment.</td>
<td>People of color receive inequitable public transportation service resulting in poorer access to health, employment and other SDOH.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What’s the Cause?</td>
<td>Not leaving enough time to get to appointments on public transit, not calling to let staff know. Not getting babysitter</td>
<td>Historical and current transit racism, racial redlining and displacement has impacted funding by mode and service that preferentially benefits white riders from the suburbs. Federal, state and local government, MBTA and other decision makers.</td>
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<td>What/Who’s Responsible?</td>
<td><strong>Individuals</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What Action is Needed?</td>
<td>Reminder calls, charge patients for lateness, cab vouchers in special situations, PT1, the Ride and case management</td>
<td>Improve service on key bus routes as defined by T-riders Union Tiered fare structures and reallocation of funding to the modes most used (also used by POC) Progressive tax system for Ma</td>
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<td>5. What Values are highlighted?</td>
<td>Personal responsibility</td>
<td>Equity; Justice; Fairness; Shared Responsibility</td>
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Trauma

“I'm right there in the room, and no one even acknowledges me.”

Race & Racism
Trauma-Informed Organizational Assessment Tool

5 Domains:

- Safe & Supportive Environments
  - Creating a Safe Physical Environment
  - Creating a Safe Emotional & Supportive Environment
  - Interactions with vendors/programs

- Professional Development
  - Educational Training
  - Supervision & Support

- Policies and Procedures
  - Policies & Procedures
  - Interactions with vendors/programs

- Systems Integration/Coordination
  - Systems Integration & Coordination

- Workplace Culture
  - Communication & Collaboration
  - Supportive & Inclusive Workplace Culture
Select Examples of Workplace Practice & Process Considerations

- Intentionally use the ‘window check-in’ tool in meetings/ supervision and explain how to use it and provide resource explanation as to why it is used
  - Develop meaningful protocol on what it means to “check-in” with someone who shares being out of their normal window range
- Develop an accountability plan for ensuring changes are sustainable and are happening (monitor changes)
- Create a brown bag series to create more awareness of trauma-informed systems and opportunities to get to know one another
- Intentionally end a meeting 10 mins early to give time for participants to decompress (usually coming from another meeting) and not hustle to the next meeting.
- Make time to have lunch with one another – especially those you don’t know as well (maybe creating monthly DPIE lunch outings)
Racial Equity Initiative

• Brown Bag Lunches
• Affinity Groups
• Racial Equity Town Hall Meetings
• Racial Equity Workgroups
  o Communications
  o Procurement
  o Operations
  o Evaluations
  o Professional Development
  o Policy
Racial Equity Initiative Key Takeaways

• Lead with race and racism explicitly, and not exclusively
• Keep your analysis structural.
• Systems that are failing communities of color, are actually failing all of us.
• Balancing short-term gains to maintain momentum and staff engagement with the understanding that organizational and cultural change takes time
Racial Equity Initiative Lessons Learned

- Relationships and trust are the foundation of this work
- Investment and buy-in from staff at all levels, including leadership
- Sit and learn from discomfort
- Our path is not linear
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Beth Buxton, LCSW
beth.buxton@state.ma.us
617-624-5910

Stephanie Campbell, MPH
stephanie.campbell@state.ma.us
Phone 617-624-6057