

LINCOLN-LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis

September, 2020

WHEREAS, public health is the science of protecting, promoting, and improving the health of people, communities, and populations with the goal of achieving optimal health for ALL; and,

WHEREAS, the work of public health prevents the spread of disease and injuries, protects against environmental hazards, promotes and encourages healthy behaviors, assures the quality and accessibility of services, responds to disasters, and leads the community response in managing epidemics; and,

WHEREAS, public health professionals work with community members and all partners to continuously assess the health status of the community, develop and support policies, provide services, and implement programs and strategies to limit health inequities; and,

WHEREAS, multiple studies show race, income, and zip code significantly impact health; and

WHEREAS, race is a social construct with no biologic basis; and,

WHEREAS, for communities of color and those of low socio-economic status, health inequities are tied to poor health outcomes as a consequence of their social determinants of health – economic stability, education, physical environment, access to nutritious food, and access to health care systems; and,

WHEREAS, racism causes persistent racial discrimination influencing many areas of life, including housing, education, employment and criminal justice; and an emerging body of research demonstrates that racism itself is a social determinant of health; and,

WHEREAS, the Lincoln-Lancaster County Board of Health supported “Achieving Health Equity” as a cross-cutting measure throughout strategies of the Health Department’s 2019-2021 Strategic Plan; and

WHEREAS, the mayor of the City of Lincoln has established One Lincoln as a priority to focus on promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in the community and inside City Hall, especially to protect and advance the health, safety, economic opportunity, and quality of life of every resident – making sure that everyone in Lincoln has the opportunity to reach their full potential; and,

WHEREAS, public health’s responsibilities to address racism include active engagement in the work of racial justice; and,

WHEREAS, unfair and race-based inequities will continue unless we undertake the uncomfortable but necessary work to address systems that perpetuate racism, violence, poverty, and injustice; and,

WHEREAS, Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department acknowledges that the health impact of racism in Lincoln and Lancaster County is a crisis and rises to the definition proposed by Dr. Sandro Galea who notes: “The problem must affect large numbers of people, it must threaten health over the long-term, and it must require the adoption of large-scale solutions”;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by this Board of Health that the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department declares that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire community.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department will:

- Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire community.
- Include in any decision making the people most affected by health and economic challenges.
- Partner with the community to co-create solutions.
- Advocate for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and supports local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism.
- Ensure the consistent collection, analysis and reporting of disaggregated data for all public health efforts (age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, neighborhood, sociodemographic characteristics and impact to health status) with data visualization and description of said data.
- Promote policy and system level changes within Lincoln and Lancaster County to move beyond equity only and to undo racist structures.

Lincoln-Lancaster County Board of Health

James Michael Bowers

President, Board of Health

September 8, 2020

Date of Adoption

Attest:

Angel Edwards

Secretary, Board of Health

References:

Galea, Sandro. Crying "Crisis". Dean's Note. Boston University School of Public Health.
<https://www.bu.edu.sph/2017/04/23/crying-crisis/>.

American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>.

Community Health Endowment, Place Matters. chelincoln.org

<https://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/Blueprint-Executive Summary FINAL 201904.pdf>

<https://lincolnne.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/79eb4e7acdce4c9aa368c39604abe0cd>.