

WHP Statement on Racial Justice and Health Equity

The Washtenaw Health Plan stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter.

We condemn racist policing, mass incarceration, and police brutality.

We understand that structural racism and discrimination permeate every aspect of our lives and that includes access to health care and public benefits.

We believe that everyone has a part to play in the healing of our nation and our community.

We pledge to continue to advocate for the residents of Washtenaw County and to continue conversations about how we can dismantle systemic racism both outside and inside our organization.

If you have faced discrimination in accessing or paying for health care or have difficulty obtaining affordable health insurance or public benefits, like food assistance and utility assistance, please call our culturally diverse, multi-lingual staff for free help today.

El Washtenaw Health Plan, se solidariza con el Movimiento Black Lives Matter- Las Vidas Negras Importan.

Condenamos la vigilancia racista, el encarcelamiento masivo y la brutalidad policial.

Entendemos que el racismo estructural y la discriminación impregnan cada aspecto de nuestras vidas y eso incluye el acceso a la atención médica y los beneficios públicos.

Creemos que todos tenemos un papel que desempeñar en la sanación de nuestra nación y nuestra comunidad.

Nos comprometemos a continuar abogando por los residentes del condado de Washtenaw y continuar las conversaciones sobre cómo podemos desmantelar el racismo sistémico tanto fuera como dentro de nuestra organización.

Si ha enfrentado discriminación al acceder o pagar la atención médica o tiene dificultades para obtener un seguro médico asequible o beneficios públicos, como asistencia alimentaria y asistencia de servicios públicos, comuníquese hoy con nuestro personal multilingüe y culturalmente diverso.

The Washtenaw Health Plan (WHP) is outraged once again over the clear and undeniable systemic racial injustices and police brutality we have witnessed in recent months in the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Rayshard Brooks, to name a few. The Washtenaw Health Plan stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and all local, state, and national organizations that are pushing for accountability and change. As a healthcare safety net in Washtenaw County, the WHP will not be silent or passive in addressing racial injustice. We must be actively anti-racist. We acknowledge and accept that we operate in an infrastructure with a history of alienating and dividing the people we are here to serve in our community: Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color.

We will work to identify and eliminate racist policies and practices within our community—and within our organization. To do this, we recognize that:

1. **Racism is structural, and often unconscious.** Structural racism has created systems that foster discrimination and inequitable resource distribution through practices in housing, employment, education, health care, and criminal justice. The WHP's current mission is based on filling gaps in access to healthcare that exist because of the systemic racism that silences the voices and needs of people of color. The WHP seeks to amplify the voices of those we serve and center our efforts based on their experiences. We will work with the Washtenaw County Health Department and our other community partners to improve access to equitable healthcare and mental health services by addressing structural racism.
2. **Policing and racism are public health issues:** Existing laws and practices promote increased stress during interactions with law enforcement for Black people and people of color. While racism and police violence impact Black communities most intensely, other communities - especially Latinx and Arab immigrants - are subject to racism and police violence as well. Structural racism and systemic discrimination in policing increases barriers to health care and other health-supportive services. (See [APHA Law Enforcement as Public Health Statement](#); [APHA Statement on Racism as an Ongoing Public Health Crisis](#))

People of color have greater mistrust of health systems and poorer health outcomes as a result. This is evident in the [stark health disparities](#) in Washtenaw County and the [disproportionate impact COVID-19 has had on Black residents](#). We are committed to examining our internal practices to make sure we are a vehicle to address structural racism and mistrust of the health system. The WHP's dedication to serving Washtenaw County residents, especially Black people and immigrants, is predicated on trust, trust that we will work alongside our residents to overcome structural racism, trust that we are allies to immigrants, trust that we are a safe place to come and receive help. **Our trust of those we serve - and our work to earn their trust - will be our guiding compass.**

This work is ongoing and will not be finished anytime soon. We will be working towards racial justice and health equity in the years to come in the hopes that we may see a day when the Black members of our community and their allies no longer need to fill the streets in protest to be heard.

In Solidarity,

The Washtenaw Health Plan Staff

