DECLARATION OF RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

YEAR 1 REPORT
June 2020 to July 2021
1. Policies and Practices: Creation of policy and practice solutions that work to dismantle systemic racism that creates barriers to strong public health.

2. Boston Health Equity Now: Development of a ‘Boston Health Equity Now’ plan that outlines detailed objectives and measurable goals in which the City will focus on root causes of the inequities that cause disparities in health outcomes for our residents.


4. Data Availability and Collection: Complete and regular availability of specific race and ethnicity data that documents the health inequities that exist in Boston through collection, dissemination and remedies for gaps in that data to strengthen our collective understanding.

5. Data Analysis and Social Determinants of Health: Ongoing analysis using the data to understand the complexity of the interconnectedness of societal, environmental and behavioral factors that contribute to the impact of racism on access to those resources that promote good health including good jobs, access to healthy and affordable food and housing, equitable transportation options and excellent public education.

6. Access to Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Care: Focus on access to prevention and treatment that is culturally and linguistically competent and meets communities where they are to counter the inequities that exist in health care.

7. Direct Services: Development of direct service programs and services to address the negative impact that these inequities have had on specific populations and programs that empower communities to tackle these systemic barriers.

8. Advocacy Against Systemic Racism: Advocacy at the State and National level for policies and funding opportunities that directly combat systemic racism.

Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis

In June 2020, protests and vigils to honor the life of George Floyd and other Black Americans and people of color that died from police violence were attended nationwide. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted communities of color, especially Black and Latino residents.

On June 12, Mayor Walsh declared Racism as a Public Health Crisis and released funds to the Boston Public Health Commission for work related to eight strategies (listed below) to reduce racial health disparities in the City. Mayor Kim Janey continues to support this work and is eager to expand it. This report outlines the work to advance these strategies, guided by community voices and input given through the Racism-Free Boston Request for Information, which you can find quoted in this report.

These accomplishments are the result of collaborative efforts between the Boston Public Health Commission, Equity and Inclusion, Economic Development and Health and Human Services Cabinet,
Strategy 1: Health Equity in All Policies

Race, Ethnicity and Language Demographic Data Pilot
The BPHC developed and piloted racial and ethnic (and other) demographic questions that are representative of the populations of Boston to better represent the unique social and health experiences of residents.

Survey was given in 5 languages
English, Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish and Vietnamese

Community-Based Translation Pilot
The BPHC partnered with five community organizations to pilot a process for contracting with local vendors for translation services.

Translations included:
Chinese,
Haitian Creole, Portuguese,
Somali and Vietnamese

Strategy 2: Health Equity Now Plan
In collaboration with the COVID-19 Health Inequities Task Force, the City of Boston’s Equity and Inclusion Cabinet, Health and Human Services and the COVID-19 Equity and Recovery consultant team (CERT), the Health Equity Now Plan was released on July 12, 2021. The plan outlines a path forward for the City of Boston to reach health justice, a vision where social health inequities are eliminated through improving economic security, educational opportunity, fair housing, physical health, and holistic wellness.

The plan includes 8 goals and 18 key recommendations, and also provides the City and its key stakeholders with suggestions on how to foster recovery, wellness, equity, and inclusion.

You can read the Health Equity Now Plan here.

The goals of the plan are:

- increasing housing stability
- decreasing the wealth gap
- expanding access and opportunity for students of color
- increasing representation in positions of influence
- increasing cultural pride
- fostering well being and enhancing quality of life
- increasing disease prevention and reducing chronic disease
**Strategy 3: Community Engagement**

**Racism-Free Boston Request for Information**

The BPHC released a multilingual request for information from residents and community organizations on their vision of a Boston without racism, poverty, and other systems of oppression to inform the Declaration work.

197 Residents responded to the RFI

23 Community Organizations responded

Residents prioritized:

#1 Housing  #2 Education  #3 Jobs  #4 Mental Health

"This effort to develop policies must include people at the table who will be impacted by these policies."

- RFI Respondent

**We Asked, You Said, We Did - Community Accountability Platform**

As a part of the BPHC's commitment to equitable community engagement, the Office of Racial Equity and Community Engagement created "We Asked, You Said, We Did." This platform on the BPHC website shares how community voices have impacted decision-making. The BPHC values community feedback, and must show accountability to all residents.

**Strategy 7: Direct Services**

The BPHC distributed $123,659 in funds through Recovery Services for community engagement and workforce development for people who use drugs and formerly incarcerated individuals.

**Syringe Redemption**

Average of 378 syringes returned daily

**Seasonal Neighborhood Engagement Team**

8 community leaders had 19 engagements with people seeking services in Nubian Square.

**Release, Engage, Network, Employ, and Win (RENEW)**

Provides supported employment and wraparound services to 4 returning citizens.

"Appropriate behavioral health interventions... must be community driven, rather than driven by white-dominated health care systems."

- RFI Respondent
Strategy 4: Data Availability and Analysis

Boston Health Equity Measures Set (BHEMS)

The Boston Health Equity Measures Set is a data sharing and reporting plan that allows BPHC to create population-level analysis of health inequities in real-time, looking at data from all Boston residents that use the health care system. These data can guide planning and implementation of responses aimed at reducing inequities and help measure progress toward success. Each clinical partner contributing information to this database has the opportunity to address health inequities and their potential causes at the institutional and patient level as well.

Approved Measures for Data Collection:

- Breast Cancer Screening
- Colorectal Cancer Screening
- Childhood Immunizations
- Depression Screening
- Housing Security
- Food Security

11 Hospitals
7 Community Health Centers
$270,000 invested to support implementation

"We need standard screening and tracking of treatment of individuals with similar symptoms and diagnosis to see if there are differences in treatment." - RFI Respondent

Strategy 5: Data Analysis and Social Determinants of Health

COVID-19 Health Equity Survey

The COVID-19 Health Equity Survey was a callback survey of prior Boston Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System respondents. The data collected has informed the BPHC's policy and practices address inequities related to the impact of COVID-19.

Higher percentages of residents of color reported receiving recent food assistance
1 in 5 residents reported 14+ days of their mental health "not being good"
Vaccine confidence lower among Black and Latinx residents
Looking Forward to Year 2

The first year of the Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis provided many lessons learned as Boston has faced dual pandemics - COVID-19 and Systemic Racism. Looking forward to the next year of work, the BPHC, City of Boston's Equity and Inclusion and Health and Human Services Cabinets will continue to work to address the impacts of Racism on the health and wellbeing of all Boston residents.

The BPHC and the City of Boston's Equity and Inclusion and Health and Human Services Cabinets, under the leadership of Mayor Janey, are eager to build off of the successes of year one and implement new strategies based on community feedback.

POLICY AND PRACTICE

Race, Ethnicity, and Language Standards of Practice:
- Using the survey data from the Race, Ethnicity, and Language Data pilots, a standard set of demographic questions will be created, tested and implemented at the BPHC and HHS departments.

Community-Based Translation Pilot:
- Planning is underway to continue partnerships with Community-Based Translation Pilot awardees. The BPHC is also interested in soliciting new partners for additional languages.

ADVOCACY AND ACCESS

Community Engagement:
- As the work under the Declaration grows and new strategies are created, there will be more opportunities for residents and community partners to give feedback to guide this work.
- The BPHC is expanding the "We Asked, You Said, We Did" platforms to all of their programs and departments. Several of the community engagement efforts through the Declaration will also be highlighted on this page.

Community Investments through Recovery Services:
- Planning is underway to continue with Year 1 investments in order to expand current treatment and prevention of substance use disorder in communities of color.

DATA

Boston Health Equity Measures Set:
- The data for the six approved measures will be reported soon. The next steps will be implementation support and adding additional health equity measures and health care and community partners.

COVID-19 Health Equity Supplemental Survey:
- The CHES survey has informed the BPHC’s COVID-19 communications campaign and programming for community events. The BPHC will continue to disseminate these findings and create opportunities for reporting these results to the community.
Acknowledgements and Community Partners

This work would not be possible without the leadership and commitment of our community organizations, health care institutions and residents. We are grateful to each of our partners who have provided their feedback, time and energy, and hard work to hold us accountable in our efforts to address systemic racism in the City of Boston.

COVID-19 Health Inequities Task Force: Rev. Sam Acevedo, Dr. Jean Alves, Dr. Joseph Betancourt, Dr. Cheri Blauwet, Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, Michele Courton Brown, Karen Chen, Petrina Cherry, Michael Curry, Louis Elisa, Linda Dorcena Forry, Rev. Ray Hammond, Rev. Gloria White Hammond, Dr. Thea James, Suzanne Lee, Manny Lopes, Victor Anthony Lopez-Carmen, Eva Millona, Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, Alexandra Oliver-Dávila, Dr. Lorna Rivera, Carol Rose, Marie St. Fleur, Guale Valdez, Paul Watanabe, Frederica Williams

BHEMS Healthcare Partners: Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston Children's Hospital, Boston Medical Center, Brigham & Women's Hospital, Brigham & Women's Faulkner Hospital, Carney Hospital, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Massachusetts General Hospital, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Institute, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Tufts Medical Center, Boston Healthcare for the Homeless, Bowdoin Street Health Center, Brookside Community Health Center, Harbor Health Services, NEW Health, Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center, Whittier Street Health Center

Board of Health Assembly Testimonials: SEIU 1199, Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, Inc., Massachusetts Organization for Addiction and Recovery, Asian American Civic Association, Community Labor United, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corps, Shali Holiday - Youth Advocate

Racism-Free Boston Respondents: AAG Foundation, Inc., Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, Big Sister Boston, Boston Medical Center's Center for Infectious Diseases, Boston Children's Hospital - Office of Community Health, Care That Works Coalition, Casa Esperanza, Children's HealthWatch, Boston CHNA-CHIP Collaborative, Doc Wayne, Ethos, IBA, Justice Resource Institute, Mattapan Community Health Center, The Network/La Red, Samaritans, Sociedad Latina, Teen Empowerment, Upham's Corner Community Health Center, Urban Edge, Women's Lunch Place, and the 197 Boston residents who participated.

Recovery Services Community Investments: Community Syringe Redemption Program, the Gavin Foundation, Federal Probation Department, Boston's Office of Returning Citizens, Phoenix Multisport

Community-Based Translation Pilot: Asian Community Development Corporation, Brazilian Worker Center, Immigrant Family Services Institute, Inc., Somali Development Center, and the Vietnamese American Civic Association.

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Please consider the environment before printing the report.

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