



SHHP Statement on Racial Injustice and Updates on Anti-Racism Work

The leadership and staff of the OPH STD/HIV/Hepatitis Program (SHHP) embarked on an intentional, internal capacity building initiative in 2013 to understand, examine and address institutional racism and the racial inequities evident in the STD, HIV, and Hepatitis epidemics. Today all SHHP staff are trained on institutional racism and SHHP makes these trainings available to all contractors, community stakeholders and partners. SHHP has also modified existing messaging, publications, programs and services; and implemented many new and innovative activities intended to eliminate racial inequities in our communities. SHHP staff understand that eliminating racism and racial inequities will require long term commitment, building coalitions with other organizations and communities of color, and ongoing intentional efforts to identify, address and dismantle racism.

On June 5, 2020 SHHP released a statement denouncing all forms of racism and racial violence and stood in solidarity with communities of color in Louisiana, specifically Black and African American communities. One year later, in honor of those we have lost and to commemorate Juneteenth, we take a look back at the work undertaken to address racism in our program and our state, as well as the work that lies ahead of us.

Over the past year, SHHP has:

- Released a statement against racism and racial violence in June 2020 that was shared with staff and posted on SHHP’s website;
- Shared resources, messages, and actions related to Black Lives Matter and racial justice on social media;
- Circulated the CDC’s statement on racism as a public health threat, which describes the toll racism has taken on health outcomes and commits CDC’s resources to a deeper examination of the problem;
- Hosted space for staff to discuss instances of police violence and other violence directed at Black communities in summer 2020;
- Continued offering Undoing Racism by the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond in a virtual format for staff and community partners;
- Underwent an organizational assessment and subsequent development plan to create a more equitable workplace;
- Hired a consultant to examine equity amongst staff and programming;
- SHHP’s Director and Leadership Team spoke out against racism impacting Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in spring 2021 after the murder of AAPI community members in Georgia and heightened harassment and discrimination directed at these communities; and
- Provided education to and supported community partners’ efforts to address legislation that would have a disproportionately negative impact on Black communities in LA.

SHHP today reaffirms its commitment to fight racism and inequity in all forms. To this end the following actions will be taken:

- SHHP leadership is participating on a national workgroup convened by NASTAD, a national organization of city, state and territorial HIV leaders, on a policy statement to address racism as a public health issue;
- SHHP Health Equity Action Team (HEAT) will undergo a strategic planning session in June 2021 with a consultant to clarify the path for equity and anti-oppression work for the coming years and begin the process of updating SHHP’s vision, mission, and values statements;
- Continue to reach communities of color and include impacted communities in planning and decision making processes to End the Epidemics in our state through the Get Loud Louisiana initiative (www.getloudlouisiana.org)
- Implement a mentorship program at SHHP that will support staff of color and LGBT staff of color to explore mechanisms for mutual support and professional development through an equity lens; and
- Form a committee to review educational requirements of various job descriptions, thereby, addressing barriers to employment that impact marginalized communities.

As James Baldwin said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”