

BEFORE THE BOARD OF HEALTH
SPOKANE REGIONAL HEALTH DISTRICT

RESOLUTION #20-07

RE: ADOPTING A SPOKANE REGIONAL HEALTH DISTRICT HEALTH EQUITY RESPONSE

WHEREAS, health disparities have existed in America for more than 400 years and Americans are now witnessing a coronavirus pandemic which is shining a stark light upon the long-running racial divide – Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) dying in larger-than-expected, record numbers, and BIPOC disproportionately suffering in-part due to long standing, unaddressed health disparities resulting from the unfair inequitable distribution of power and resources, as well as systematic racism and other socioeconomic inequities; and

WHEREAS, there is clear data to illustrate that racism negatively impacts the lives of BIPOC in Spokane County; the current COVID- 19 crisis has helped to highlight now, more than ever, that structural racism, not race causes disproportionately higher rates of homelessness, incarceration, and economic hardships for BIPOC and racism can be seen across systemic, institutional and interpersonal levels - all operating over the course of time and across generations; and

WHEREAS, the negative repercussions of historical racism, including but not limited to discriminatory lending practices of the 20th century known as “redlining” and the current limitations and access to healthy, nutritious food, reduced life expectancy, increased exposure to indoor environmental hazards ~~lead poisoning~~, and higher rates of infant mortality demonstrate the current impact of structural racism; and

WHEREAS, the privileges that other Americans experience inhibits them from fully understanding how racism impacts BIPOC; for example, the performance of simple tasks like driving, walking in neighborhoods or just going to a park come with certain risk not experienced by others and life events like getting a job, purchasing a home, buying a car, or just raising a family come with barriers that other cultures don’t experience; and

WHEREAS, the Spokane Regional Health District Board of Health supports the recent work of the American Public Health Association resolution declaring “Racism as a Public Health Crisis”; because it recognizes that racism is real and as a community, we have to work together to promote equity and eradicate racism; and

WHEREAS, this Board believes that it is now time to declare racism a public health crisis in our community; because the disparities that we have outlined represent a public health crisis which affects us all, and we, as a civil society, have an obligation to raise awareness and make sure that every sector of our society works to reverse this crisis; and

WHEREAS, this Spokane Regional Health District Board of Health urges every sector of society to declare these inequities as a public health crisis and to immediately take steps to address, fund, and support areas that strategically reduce the long-term impact of the social determinants and influences for at risk communities - this includes reducing and eliminating preferential treatment for the majority while subjecting people of color to increased hardships,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Spokane Regional Health District’s Board of Health adopts as follows:

1. Spokane Regional Health District will build the internal infrastructure to advance health equity by applying a health equity lens to current and new programs, policies, services, and interventions to ensure they include public health actions that break the cycle of health inequity in the community.
2. Spokane Regional Health District will lead, engage and call-to-action the community, partners, and other local jurisdictions in strategic partnerships to develop and implement public policies for the purposes of eliminating health inequities. Specifically, Spokane Regional Health District will provide institutional means for community-based organizations and individual community members most impacted by racism to participate in decision-making for programs, policies, services, interventions, and materials.

3. Spokane Regional Health District will call-to-action and foster community partnerships to advance health equity by providing health education, health communications, and other public information about community health status and needs in the context of health equity (e.g., focused on determinants vs. focusing solely on individuals' health behaviors).
4. Spokane Regional Health District will call-to-action and champion transformative change to advance health equity through supporting an ongoing, all-staff professional development program that aspires to the attainment of core competencies in health equity, cultural competency, and anti-racism.
5. Spokane Regional Health District will apply strategies for recruiting and hiring a workforce that reflects the demographic, cultural, and linguistic characteristics of the populations it serves.

Signed this 25th day of June 2020 in Spokane, Washington.

SPOKANE REGIONAL HEALTH DISTRICT
BOARD OF HEALTH

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