

Conquering the Health Disparities of Structural Racism:

Best Practices for Public Health Practitioners

Targeting Structural Racism

Public health practitioners have an opportunity to fight the structural racism that directly impacts social determinants of health, worsening health disparities for BIPOC citizens.

Definition of Terms



Social determinants of health are the conditions in which one is born, lives, learns, works, plays, worships, & ages that affect a wide range of health, functioning, & quality-of-life outcomes and risks.



Health disparities are the preventable differences in health outcomes and their determinants between segments of the population caused by the social determinants of health.



Residential segregation is a key example of structural racism noting the connection to poor environmental health standards such as air & water pollution and adverse health outcomes including those surrounding birth, chronic disease, life expectancy, & safety.



Hypersegregated communities are often located in metropolitan areas predominantly comprised of one minority group by way of structural racism through housing and lending discrimination.

Race & Health Disparities

Structural racism is a root cause for the social determinants of health, creating health disparities and magnifying poor health outcomes for BIPOC citizens. Hypersegregation creates conditions where these impacts are clearly demonstrated. Not only do hypersegregated communities display a larger burden of health disparities for all who reside there, they worsen the previously documented health disparities between races. In considering solutions for health disparities, targeting structural racism is imperative to ensuring lasting improvements in health outcomes.

Programmatic Development as a Solution to Health Disparities

Considering the impacts of structural racism, planning programming to target health disparities must include community engagement. This focus on community involvement ensures cultural relevance and sensitivity as citizens are able to assist in crafting and sustaining inclusive programming that meets their most pertinent needs.

Dismantling the Impacts of Structural Racism through Policy

Policy is key in mitigating the impacts of structural racism on communities as policies can have inequitable and unintended consequences in vulnerable communities. These effects can be mitigated through dedicated efforts of public health departments to observe and analyze health data associated with policies. This yields public health practitioners the tools to actively participate in advocacy for equity in their communities.

Collaborating to Create a Culture of Health Equity

The social determinants of health create 80% of the health of communities, while medical care contributes to the other 20%. All stakeholders must be working towards the goal to achieve health equity, particularly when fighting the effects of structural racism. As public health practitioners are the experts in the collective health outcomes of the communities that they serve, partnering with medicine in providing health equity education is a necessity to help medical professionals provide equitable care that meets the needs of their communities.