



## **The Adverse Impact of Structural Racism on Child and Adolescent Health September 24, 2020**

**WHEREAS**, Racism is a system of structuring and assigning value based on the social interpretation of one's appearance, social group, or culture (which we call race/ethnicity) that unfairly disadvantages racial and ethnic minority individuals and communities, and unfairly advantages racial majority individuals and communities <sup>(1)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Racism deprives certain sectors of society – and in turn, the society as a whole— from reaping the benefits of both real and potential contributions of excluded individuals <sup>(1)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Racism weakens the strength of the society as a whole by denying the full participation of all individuals within society <sup>(1)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Structural Racism is defined as a discriminatory system and practice built on advantage and disadvantage based on race/ethnicity, which embodies socially constructed racial hierarchy within policies and practices, contributes to visible and invisible inequities, including educational, socioeconomic and health disparities and promotes negative thoughts, beliefs about and actions towards racial minority groups through discrimination and oppression <sup>(2)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Racism is a socially-constructed health epidemic <sup>(3)</sup> <sup>(4)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Racism is a core social influencer of health that has a profound impact on the health status of children, adolescents, emerging adults, and their caregivers/families <sup>(5)</sup>; and results in racial disparities in various pediatric health conditions and access to care (i.e. obesity, mental health and asthma) across the US <sup>(6)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Racism is a global and historical issue that has resulted in the systematic lack of investment in particular communities and sectors of our population; and

**WHEREAS**, intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding that racism is exacerbated by the cumulative impact of multiple types of oppression and discrimination directed at a person's overlapping social identities (gender, sex, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability and physical appearance); <sup>(7)</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, the exposure to Racism can affect the psychosocial, physical, and mental and behavioral health development of children throughout their lives, and additionally, Racism has inter-generational effect <sup>(8)</sup>; and



**WHEREAS**, in the U.S. Black infants have a 2.6 higher mortality rate than White infants and, in Illinois, Black infants have a 2.2% higher mortality rate than White infants <sup>(9)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, in Illinois the uninsured rate is 3.9% for Black youth and 4.4% for Latinx youth, compared to 2.7% for White youth <sup>(10)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, more than one-third of Black children and adolescents live in poverty and are less likely to access health care <sup>(11)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, 75% of Black youth graduate from high school and 81% of Latinx youth graduate as compared to 91% of White youth. <sup>(12)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Black children and adolescents make up 17% of Illinois' youth population, but represent 71% of youth incarcerated in the State compared to White youth who make up 66% of Illinois' youth population, but 15% of incarcerated youth in Illinois <sup>(13)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, a Black student is seven times more likely to be suspended than a White student, and five times more likely to be suspended than a Latinx student <sup>(14)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, despite having similar levels of mental health disparities (including seriously considering suicide in the past 12 months), Black LGBTQ youth are less likely to seek professional mental health care <sup>(15)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, death by suicide for Black youth ages 5-19 years has increased in the last ten years <sup>(16)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the police brutality is the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death among young black men, and this number does not include the non-fatal instances of violence or the enduring racial trauma that continues to persist as a result of disproportionate police contact and brutality <sup>(17)</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, residents living in the Streeterville community live to be 90 and 79% are White, but just 9 miles away in Englewood, residents only live to be 60 and 95% are Black, illustrating that among 500 U.S. cities, Chicago has the largest life expectancy gap (30.1 years) across its neighborhoods <sup>(18)</sup>.

**WHEREAS**, the Lurie Children's 2020-2022 Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Strategy prioritizes addressing racism in healthcare both internally and externally, and integrates a racial equity framework to explicitly address racial disparities across health outcomes.

**LET IT BE RESOLVED:**

That Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago will actively engage in innovative approaches to eradicating racism through internal and externally-facing policy and program initiatives that: 1) confront and dismantle structural Racism through the development of



structural and anti-racism competencies, <sup>(19)</sup> action vis-à-vis deliberate policy formation and review, advocacy and legislative efforts, hospital operations, and medical care which seeks to achieve racial equity and eliminate health disparities; 2) improve access to care and advance health equity for children, adolescents, and young adults; 3) eliminate racial biases that contribute to poor health outcomes for children, adolescents, and young adults; 4) increase funding, resources and support for social needs, including social services that promote social justice and racial equity; 5) attract, recruit, select and engage employees and medical staff to better reflect the cultural demography of the hospital's patient base and service area, 6) cultivate a culture of respect and inclusion that is welcoming to all patients, families and staff, 7) pursue the highest quality of clinical care and service to all patients and families, irrespective of their socio-demographic background and their diverse social identities; and 8) address racism in healthcare both internally and externally as committed to in the 2020-2022 Community Health Implementation Strategy.

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<https://www.advanceillinois.org/swi/data/>.
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18. United States Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project  
<https://nyulangone.org/news/large-life-expectancy-gaps-us-cities-linked-racial-ethnic-segregation-neighborhood>
19. Anti-Racism is a form of action against racism and the systemic oppression of marginalized groups.