UPHA Resolution to Address Racism as a Public Health Crisis

Approved by the Utah Public Health Association 2021 May 18

Jointly submitted by: the 2020-2021 UPHA Policy/Advocacy Unit and Communications Unit, including Christy Cushing, Jessie Mandle, Carrie Butler, Sarah Hodson, Dr. Julie Gast, and Alison Conover.

Whereas, the Utah Public Health Association believes racism is a barrier to health access and equity, and is a public health crisis that must be proactively addressed within our state.

Whereas, to ensure we, as a state, are addressing the root cause of inequities, it is important that we prioritize the implications of structural racism in public health policymaking and plans, as well as in budgeting and resource allocation. We must dismantle the barriers to access and care, and transform systems designed to exclude; we must establish and repair trust within communities and our institutions.

Whereas, the Utah Public Health Association supports statewide and local policy, systems, and environmental changes that remove systemic barriers, improve access to care, and advance health equity for all Utahns.

Whereas, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the tremendous strength and resilience of communities of color in Utah, while also highlighting long-standing inequities. Representing just under 25% percent of Utah’s total population, Utahns of color disproportionately experience many barriers to care. COVID-19 has underscored the gravity of these health disparities, with people of color experiencing much higher rates of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.

Whereas, the Utah Public Health Association recognizes that the health of the entire public cannot truly be achieved as long as the lives of people of color are compromised by constraints, violence, trauma, and stress of different forms of racism. Large-scale solutions and actions are necessary at all levels—systemic, institutional, and individual:
from applying a lens of racial equity within UPHA and the Utah public health community, to promoting policies and programs that advance health equity and justice for everyone.

Be it therefore resolved that UPHA commits to the following action items:

- Improving diversity and uplifting diverse voices on the UPHA board and within UPHA leadership, including, but not limited to:
  - Ensuring future UPHA Board members and staff have a clear commitment, background, and experience in advancing racial and ethnic equity and justice;
  - Enhancing inclusion of community-based public health workers and partners on UPHA Board and membership;
- Including anti-racism training in the onboarding process for all board members;
- Reviewing and revise internal policies and practices through a health-equity lens;
- Reviewing and revise external policy prioritization through a health-equity lens;
- Expanding membership opportunities for anti-racism education and awareness, including social media, public events, conferences, and training sessions; and
- Increasing UPHA external and internal engagement around racism as a public health crisis in communications, advocacy, membership outreach, and fiscal management.

UPHA commits to all of these ongoing action items and will work to implement them by July 2023.