

# Confronting Racism *by Achieving Health Equity*

THE CATHOLIC HEALTH MINISTRY COMMITMENT

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*“We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.”*

POPE FRANCIS, JUNE 3 GENERAL AUDIENCE

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Racism within any context is an affront to the core values of Catholic social teaching, which acknowledges the inherent dignity of each person, calls for the furthering of the common good and seeks justice through solidarity. Catholic health care recognizes the profound effect racism has on the health and well-being of individuals and communities and is committed to addressing the systemic causes of health disparities among underserved and vulnerable populations. As such, we are committed to working with partners who share these convictions to implement wide-sweeping change and eliminate the racial inequities in our marginalized communities.

Achieving health equity requires us to listen meaningfully and engage effectively by involving in the decision-making process those most affected by health care challenges, disparities and inequities in order to develop and implement systemic changes. As health leaders in communities across the country we are in a unique position to bring about the change that justice demands. We must be actively anti-racist, lead through accountability, develop authentic community engagement built on trust and demonstrate measurable impact in the communities we are called to serve.

## **We Are Called**

**TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.**

## **We Commit to Immediate Action to Achieve COVID-19 Health Equity By:**

- ✦ Engaging our communities of color and community leaders to identify and address community health needs and disparities where the impact of COVID-19 is most devastating;
- ✦ Ensuring that testing for COVID-19 is available and accessible in minority communities;
- ✦ Providing health care in our local communities for vulnerable populations experiencing racial/ethnic, gender or socioeconomic related health disparities. We will leverage all resources including telehealth capabilities to provide access and available care;
- ✦ Ensuring that new treatments are distributed and used equitably as they become available; and
- ✦ Prioritizing proven and effective vaccinations for those individuals and families at higher risk — elder populations and communities of color, including Native American communities.

## **We Commit to Systemic Change for Health Equity By:**

- ✦ **PUTTING OUR OWN HOUSE IN ORDER.** We will examine all aspects of our organizations, including how we provide clinical care; how we recruit, hire, promote and retain employees; how we conduct our business operations including visible diversity and inclusivity at the decision, leadership and governance levels; and how we incentivize and hold our leaders accountable to ensure we are truly dismantling and not perpetuating racism and inequity. We will leverage all our assets towards proactively eliminating health disparities.
- ✦ **BUILDING RIGHT AND JUST RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR COMMUNITIES.** We will find ways to build and strengthen trust with communities of color. This includes fostering and sustaining authentic relationships based on mutually agreed upon goals; “leaning in” to listen; learning about and understanding the needs of the community; determining how we can best partner together to bring about sustainable change; measuring the impact of our efforts; and making adjustments as called for by the community and as our combined work and relationships evolve.
- ✦ **ADVOCATING CHANGE TO END HEALTH DISPARITIES AND SYSTEMIC RACISM.**  
We will leverage our united and powerful voice to advocate changes that:
  - **Eliminate health disparities.** We will advocate policies that ensure access to quality health care services for all; end racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes; promote and improve the delivery of culturally competent care; and increase the diversity of the health care work force.
  - **Eliminate systemic racism.** We will oppose policies that exacerbate or perpetuate economic and social inequities as they greatly contribute to health disparities and systemic racism. We will call for changes to policies that shape people’s lives - education, housing, nutrition, criminal justice reform and the environment - so that every man, woman and child in our society may flourish.