



COMMITMENT TO

RACIAL EQUITY

BY BHN & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

OUR COMMITMENT

Members of the Behavioral Health Network commit to addressing, individually and collectively, obstacles to racial equity that impede the fair and equitable treatment of members of the St. Louis community.

The Behavioral Health Network's Racial Equity Principles are a framework to communicate the St. Louis behavioral health community's pledge to reforming systems of bias, discrimination, and oppression, strengthening underserved communities, advocating inclusion, and removing barriers to achievement.

Although the organizations represented in the BHN have made their own individual statements and pledges, this unified approach sends an important signal about BHN's collective commitment. The Principles articulate how BHN and individual organizations can commit to advancing racial equity within their organizations and throughout our community.

As leaders, we commit to the following principles and will promote the application of these principles within our spheres of influence:

OUR PRINCIPLES

COMMUNICATION & DIALOGUE

- ▶ We will **regularly engage with and listen to the communities we serve** to deepen our understanding of the inequities experienced and together, seek lasting solutions.
- ▶ We will **use a shared language and definitions** to normalize conversations and support and encourage uniform understanding.
- ▶ We will **acknowledge missteps and correct course** when warranted.
- ▶ We are **committed to transparency** and will be intentional about all our communication.
- ▶ We know that advancing racial equity requires a **willingness to be uncomfortable** and we will work to **create a brave space** to foster authentic conversations and meaningful change.
- ▶ We will create and **support spaces that are authentically welcoming, inclusive, and accessible.**

COLLABORATION, COMMUNITY VOICE, & SHARED DECISION MAKING

- ▶ We support **advancing equity in the communities in which we live and operate**, understanding that our long-term success depends on our shared progress.
- ▶ We will practice and encourage behaviors that **build trust and understanding** rather than resentment and bias.
- ▶ We commit to **centering community voice and shared decision making** by creating opportunities for the people we serve, ensuring they have an active role in decision making and crediting them for their contribution.
- ▶ We commit to **creating, implementing, and transforming programs** by building relationships and engaging in collaborative partnerships that are created for and accountable to people of color.
- ▶ We commit to a process of **shared decision making, power sharing, and recognizing and valuing expertise that exists in communities** by including organizations that are led by people of color.

- ▶ We will **actively identify and call out processes and spaces** where power is not shared equitably, including exploitation of people and resources.
- ▶ We **recognize the influence of the communities and systems** in which we work.
- ▶ We will **embed targeted recruitment and hiring efforts to diversify staff, partners, and funders** to better reflect the demographics and lived experiences of those our collaborative projects serve.



DATA, EVALUATION, & EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

- ▶ We commit to **drilling down into the data to identify inequities that underlie racial and ethnic differences in outcomes**, using disaggregated data by race, gender, class and other characteristics to better document and track disparities.
- ▶ We commit to **advancing the use of disaggregated data across the network**.
- ▶ We will **use the data to inform shared decision making and affect systems change** and impact funding and resources.
- ▶ We will **critically evaluate our programmatic work to specifically examine to the extent to which programs decrease racial disparities**, particularly in systems and settings known to negatively impact people of color and other marginalized groups.



LEARNING & ADAPTING

- ▶ We commit to **continuous improvement by routinely participating in anti-racist learning opportunities** to deepen our collective consciousness of oppression and expand our personal commitment to acting as agents of social change.
- ▶ We will **identify concrete ways within our own institutions to prioritize services** to those most impacted by racial injustice.
- ▶ We **acknowledge that we all have implicit biases**, and that as leaders we need to check our biases by inviting other voices and perspectives to the table.
- ▶ We will **identify ways that BHN can support and amplify the work of local agencies and organizations** already engaged in explicit equity work.
- ▶ We **commit to a culture of trying** by acknowledging our mistakes, sharing what we learn, being accountable for making changes, and fostering an openness to ongoing growth and learning.

VITAL CONTEXTUAL DEFINITIONS

WHITENESS

Whiteness is a deeply relational and constantly shifting boundary. Operating at all times and on myriad levels across history, the essential idea of whiteness separates those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation is justified by their not being white.

WHITE PRIVILEGE

Unearned advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on humans solely because they are white. Generally, white humans who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it. Because hierarchies of privilege exist, even within the same group, note that “privilege” does not equal “without struggle.”

WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

The dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. These standards are likely seen as “mainstream.” Because it is so normalized it can be hard to see, which only adds to its powerful hold.

CULTURE

A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication.

RACIAL EQUITY

A state in which a person’s life outcomes cannot be predicted by race.

BIAS

The story that we tell about other people before we know them. Regardless of our identity, we all have implicit bias.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for People of Color, regardless of intention. Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups.

CONTACT US

If you or your agency are interested in joining the **Racial Equity Steering Committee**, please reach out through any of the below channels:



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