



Cumberland District Public Health Council Statement on Racial Disparities and Covid-19

The Cumberland District Public Health Council (CDPHC) brings together health and wellness stakeholders in Cumberland County, Maine. The Council’s mission is to promote the health of all our communities by providing information, coordination, collaboration and advocacy. The CDPHC’s vision is that communities in the Cumberland District are among the healthiest in the state. However, recent data, along with conversations with partners from those impacted communities, reveal profound racial and ethnic disparities in the incidence of Covid-19 infections

According to the most recent census, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color make up approximately 1.5% of the state’s population, and approximately 10% of the population in Cumberland County. Data shows that one out of every 27 Black residents in Maine has tested positive for COVID-19; while for White residents, that figure is one case for every 725 people. Although people of Color make up a relatively small percentage of the population, approximately 28% of people who have tested positive for COVID 19 are people of color, making Maine the worst in the nation in terms of disparities. Cumberland County -where out of a total population of 294,000, approximately 9,000 people are Black or African American (Non-Hispanic)- is the racial and ethnic disparities “epicenter” of the virus for the state. Whether they are immigrants and new to Maine, or families that have been here for generations, Black and Brown communities are disproportionately suffering during Covid-19. The people behind these numbers are our neighbors, our friends, our family and our co-workers. We recognize the myriad health, social and economic inequalities adversely affecting their health and lives. We are issuing this statement to hold ourselves, and others, accountable for realizing our vision that the Cumberland Public Health District’s communities are among the healthiest in the state.

As a Council, we have listened to our partners with the lived experience of racial health disparities. The following are steps we understand can be taken to mitigate and prevent worse outcomes for Black, Indigenous and People of Color in our communities during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

- Members of ethnic and racial minority communities should be actively engaged in planning, policy-making and implementation of the health and social service responses to Covid-19
- Funding related to community focused Covid-19 prevention and intervention efforts should be provided directly to ethnic-based community organizations
- Testing sites should be accessible to members of ethnic and racial minority communities, with the goal of universal, barrier-free testing for members of Black and Brown communities – and should include mobile testing sites
- The number of culturally and linguistically appropriate Community Health Workers should be increased, and present at strategic locations, including testing sites, points of care, and community-based spaces
- The burden of outreach, education and case-work related to Covid-19 must be funded – we cannot expect that community members will volunteer their time and energy without fair compensation
- Direct financial support, and wrap-around services, should be provided to members of ethnic and racial minorities to enable them to isolate and quarantine when directed to do so
- Employers need to engage in solutions to support those needing to isolate or quarantine

We recognize the long-standing health inequities experienced by Black and Brown people in our community, which Covid-19 disparities confirm and compound. We commit ourselves to learning more and to leveraging our relationships and resources, leaning in to create healthier communities for all.

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