

## RESOLUTION #01-2020

### A RESOLUTION BY THE BOARD OF HEALTH OF ST. JOSEPH COUNTY, INDIANA, DECLARING RACISM IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS IN ST. JOSEPH COUNTY.

WHEREAS, racism is defined variably as:

- A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call "race"), that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources;<sup>1</sup>
- Prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of a racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized;<sup>2</sup>
- A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a race;
- A system of race-based prejudice with social and institutional oppression; and

WHEREAS, racism adversely affects life-long health outcomes beginning even before birth; and

WHEREAS, racism creates inequities, harms individuals and communities by causing unequal access to quality education, employment, livable wages, healthy food, stable and affordable housing, and safe and sustainable communities; and

WHEREAS, the National Institutes of Health reports that multiple studies suggest that experiences of racism or discrimination raise the risk of emotional and physical health problems, including depression, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and even death; and

WHEREAS, the negative repercussions of historical racism, including but not limited to racist federal policies and practices continue to negatively impact Black individuals and communities of color today; and

WHEREAS, Black infant mortality in St. Joseph County is more than three times higher than white infant mortality; and

WHEREAS, Black life expectancy in St. Joseph County is 5 years less than white life expectancy; and

WHEREAS, 43% of Black children in St. Joseph County live in poverty compared to 14% of white children; and

WHEREAS, Black median household income in St. Joseph County is \$27K and white median household income is \$56K; and

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<sup>1</sup> Jones, Camara Phyllis, American Public Health Association, <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.google.com/search?q=racism+definition>

WHEREAS, Fr. John Jenkins, C.S.C., President of the University of Notre Dame wrote that we are compelled "... institutionally and individually, to combat the sin of racism and work to include all fully in our community" and

WHEREAS, Mayor James Mueller said "Systemic racial injustice negatively impacts the health and well-being of our communities of color. Health disparities and higher infant mortality rates should be a call to action. We must continue the important work of pushing for racial justice in all aspects of American society, including public health."

WHEREAS, racism exists on systemic, institutional, and interpersonal levels and persists across generations; now, therefore:

**Be it resolved by the St. Joseph County Board of Health that we declare racism to be a public health crisis that affects all members of our community and deserves action from all levels of government and civil society.**

We commit to a Board of Health that:

- Engages in frank and open discussions of race and the impact of the decisions we make upon racial inequities in our community, that these discussions will be integrated into our daily work together, and that we will address issues of race and racial disparities in a full and forthright manner.
- Provides educational opportunities for the board of St. Joseph County Department of Health on matters of racism and implicit bias.
- Will promote greater diversity on the Board of Health.

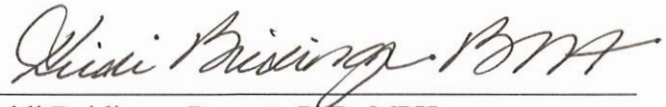
We also commit to hold accountable our Department of Health to:

- Hire and promote individuals of color within the Department.
- Support the Health Officer and the Department's plans to:
  - Develop a Health Equity, Epidemiology and Data Unit within the St. Joseph County Department of Health that will conduct an equity-focused health impact assessment; define baseline data regarding health disparities and equity in St. Joseph County; identify factors contributing to health disparities; and, examine and implement best practices to minimize health disparities.
  - Recruit, hire, and deploy community health workers of color with "lived experience" to strengthen relationships between the St. Joseph County Department of Health and the communities it serves, and to work in partnership with the community to reduce health disparities.
  - Explore with law enforcement, emergency response units, hospital systems, behavioral health systems, and other local and state partners the feasibility of creating, funding, implementing, monitoring and evaluating a pilot program of crisis intervention consisting of "interventionists" employed by the Department of Health to provide mobile crisis intervention in response to non-criminal situations such as substance abuse, mental/emotional crisis, and dispute facilitation - providing assessment, intervention, and transport to services as needed.

- Develop and implement a strategy for evidence-based harm reduction strategies.
- Identify and implement evidence-based best practices for the primary prevention of trauma and to nurture resiliency among individuals, families and communities that suffer trauma.

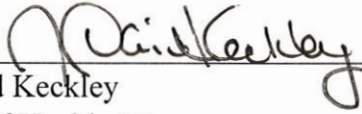
NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Board of Health of St. Joseph County, Indiana, that the above-referenced Resolution is approved.

APPROVED THIS 15<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF JULY 2020  
THE ST. JOSEPH COUNTY, INDIANA, BOARD  
OF HEALTH



Heidi Beidinger-Burnett, PhD, MPH  
President of the Board

ATTEST:



J. David Keckley  
Board of Health Attorney