

Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities

Foundational Truths (Created during the Council's Redesign – 2023)

- Racism is a public health crisis.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and magnified the human cost of health inequities.
- Climate change affects us all, exacerbates inequities, and must be addressed through a racial equity and intersectional lens.
- We are interconnected.
- There are many dimensions to health and well-being.
- Community holds inherent power.

Vision (Adopted May 2, 2019)

Guided by our North Star that is Equity, we honor the broad differences and bonding similarities that make up this state.

The power entrusted to us by the people inspires us to be channels for change. We shift power by sharing priorities, being transparent and reflective and disrupting oppressive practices so everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

We intentionally act to heal wounds and cultivate trust; instilling equity into every level of government and beyond, assuring true democracy's light shines on all communities.

Operating Principles (Adopted December 6, 2018)

EMBRACE EQUITY

Equity is a journey toward well-being, where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential, as defined by those impacted by inequity. Equity is not equality—equity acknowledges that everyone is not starting from the same place. Equity is achievable and requires unwavering commitment to prioritizing resources and supports toward communities of color and other marginalized communities. Achieving equity requires us to identify, name, and dismantle institutional racism and oppression.

FOCUS ON RACISM

We are committed to promoting equity for all historically marginalized communities. However, we recognize that racism is ingrained in our history and deeply embedded in our institutions today, leading to the inequities we see across all sectors. Therefore, while we seek to challenge and undo all forms of oppression, we are committed to centering racism as our primary focus.

PRIORITIZE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

We acknowledge that health is much more than access to healthcare services or absence of injury and illness. Health starts where we live, learn, work, and play and is shaped by our exposures and experiences across the lifespan. We recognize that achieving health equity requires equitable opportunity across all sectors. Therefore, we embrace our interagency structure and ability to work across government sectors to promote equitable opportunity for all.

CENTER COMMUNITY

We recognize that we can only achieve health equity if communities impacted by health inequities are at the center of our work. We acknowledge that communities know best their assets, needs, and solutions. We strive to recognize and share power and structure our meetings to foster meaningful engagement. We will find opportunities as a Council, individual members, and staff to attend community meetings to listen, learn, and seek input to guide our work. We will strive to incorporate stories of lived experience into our reports and recommendations.

COMMIT TO BOLD ACTION

Health inequities exist because of racism and oppression that hinder opportunities for communities to thrive. Eliminating racism and oppression requires revolutionary change. We commit to using the authority we have and our collective influence to push for revolutionary change. We will use our time in Council meetings to engage in action-oriented discussions and we will commit as individual Council members to be bold and serve as champions for equity in our respective agencies.

BE VIGILANT FOR UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Policy, program, and budget decisions can have adverse unintended consequences if equity is not intentionally and systematically considered. We commit to using an equity lens in the development of recommendations as a Council and in our decisions as individual Council members in our respective agencies. We honor the Seven Generation Principle¹ as standing in the present, while looking back three generations to the wisdom and experience of our ancestors, thinking about issues in the current context, and planning forward for three generations for the protection of our children and the generations to come.

¹ *We acknowledge the Tribal and Urban Indian Pulling Together for Wellness Leadership Advisory Council, American Indian Health Commission for Washington State for sharing this articulation of the Seven Generation Principle.*