

Community Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Emergency

Attachment B: *Summary of participating organizations' immediate commitments*

July 16, 2020

Immediate Actions from Participating Organizations

This community declaration of racism as a public health emergency is the starting point for action to address this emergency that will be both immediate and ongoing. In joining the declaration, participating organizations also committed to immediate actions that they will take to address this emergency in the work that they do. Together, these groups represent some of the largest and most impactful employers, educators, service providers, housing organizations, and other organizations in Chittenden County. **A full summary of commitments from all participating organizations is below.**

1. City of Burlington

- Create a new Public Health Equity Manager position to expand the City's public health capacity, support the efforts of the City and partners who have declared systemic racism a public health emergency, and assist in crafting a strategic plan for the City's racial health equity work. The strategic plan will involve the restructuring of City operations to support this new capacity.
- Work in partnership with the Racial Justice Alliance to deploy the \$1 million fund for racial justice created in the City's Fiscal Year 2021 budget to advance the goals laid out in the RJA's Operation Phoenix R.I.S.E agenda: expanding economic opportunity and cultural empowerment for Black Burlingtonians, and strengthening the City's newly created Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging. This work will include conducting a full review of the City's existing procurement policies and economic opportunity and racial justice programs, and will lay the foundation for securing the substantial additional resources that will be needed in the years to come to achieve the transformative goal of eradicating systemic racism.
- Create a new, all-employee training initiative aimed at eradicating systemic racism within the institution of the City of Burlington. This work will include a review of City advertising, recruitment, compensation, and retention practices, and look at employee demographic data to identify potential barriers to the hiring of BIPOC individuals.

2. Howard Center

- Create a data dashboard system to identify health disparities and inform practice change within our agency's clinical practice and recruitment plan.
- Advance recruitment strategies to racially diversify the Board of Trustees and senior leadership at Howard Center.
- Enhance training and support to address racist actions by those we serve (clients, students, patients).
- Demonstrate support for Black Lives Matter through an agency action initiative.

- Offer educational sessions on racism related to mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities as part of our free and open to the public Community Education Series.

3. United Way of Northwest Vermont

Our Initial Commitments:

- Use racial equity as a foundational principle in our community investments;
- Increase training and learning opportunities for staff, community partners & volunteers with a priority on hiring BIPOC organizations that do this work;
- Commit to promote access to and understanding of data on community outcomes by race.

4. University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMCC)

At UVMCC, we are committing today to three specific action items:

- Health Disparity Data -- We are working to collect data from across our clinical areas to understand how our BIPOC patients are being impacted by illness vs. our white patients, and to identify other health equity trends beyond outcomes. For example, we know that patients who identify as Black have lower rates of mammography than those who identify as white.
- Enhancing Diversity and Equity in our Workforce -- UVM Medical Center will implement a Workforce Diversity Assessment of its 8,000 employees in August to ask them about how they experience equity and racism at work. This assessment will be used to increase recruitment and retention of BIPOC staff and leaders, identify gaps in equity within the organization, and reveal learning opportunities to increase cultural humility throughout the organization. The assessment will also take place across the UVM Health Network.
- Listening Sessions and EDI Steering Committee Work -- We have been hosting Listening Sessions on Racial Equity & Justice to amplify the experiences and recommendations of BIPOC staff. Based on what we have heard, and at the direction of our Equity Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee, we will be taking several additional action items, including implementing Employee Resource Groups, instituting an anonymous hotline for employees to report racism, and training our leaders and staff about how to address racism whenever and wherever it occurs.

5. Burlington Housing Authority

Burlington Housing Authority (BHA) is committing to the following action steps:

- BHA will strengthen and support its newly formed Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee that will review, develop, recommend, and implement relevant policies, training, and action steps.
- BHA will reexamine HUD and other housing regulations to ensure we are affirmatively furthering fair housing.
- BHA will continue its participation with community partners to ensure public health messages are delivered to New Americans in multiple languages.

- BHA will coordinate with community partners, housing providers, and public agencies to actively identify and overcome fair housing issues that perpetuate systemic racism and persistent inequities.
- BHA will strengthen its efforts in hiring, promoting, and advancing a diverse workforce.

6. Boys and Girls Club of Burlington

- Develop relationships with Vermont employers to create and support professional opportunities for our BIPOC Club members. This deepens the impact of our own work to hire and provide professional experiences to our BIPOC Club members.
- Provide our BIPOC Club members with academic and financial support for higher education
- Plan and participate in staff training on restorative practices in youth development
- Plan and participate in board level training on diversity, equity and inclusion

7. Burlington School District

- Fully implement restorative practices in all schools to create a more equitable behavioral response system to reduce suspensions and punitive disciplinary actions.
- Review our core curricular materials and develop a plan to ensure our curriculum and teaching is culturally relevant, anti-racist, and holds high expectations for what all students know and are able to do.
- Create space for student and family voice in youth- and parent-led conversations about race and equity in our community.
- Implement a year-long race and equity training series for school and district leaders this school year.
- Create a resolution to raise the Black Lives Matter flag at each school.

8. Burton

Burton has elevated racial justice as a key priority for the company:

- Burton hired Luis Calderin as a full-time consultant for JEDI work through his Burlington based agency Okay Okay.
- Burton donated \$100,000 to NAACP LDF.
- Burton has joined the “In Solidarity Project” as a partner to play a role in bringing the outdoor industry together for a more inclusive future.
- Burton is a ‘B- Corp’, which creates rigorous resources and demands for all of its members.
- Burton is developing a strategic plan to address racial justice inside our company, throughout snowboarding, and across our broader customer community.

9. Cathedral Square

- We are forming a staff committee to oversee anti-racism efforts and activities, including a representative from each of our five department areas and at least two POC.
- We are adding annual anti-racism and implicit bias training to our mandatory training schedule for all employees.

- We are checking to ensure that a strong statement of inclusion and commitment to diversity and equal opportunity is on all our publications and digital venues.
- We commit to implementing additional strategies and practices recommended by the Racial Justice Alliance to dismantle racism and ethnic oppression at all levels of our organization.

10. Champlain College

Champlain College is committing to the following actions:

- Completing a strategy review of diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities as outlined in the Champlain 2025 strategic plan in order to identify benchmarks and metrics to measure ongoing achievements as part of the College's strategic planning process.
- Conducting a thorough review of organizational practices by carrying out a College-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion audit that will be used to identify opportunities and inform short and long-term priorities and implementation.
- Supporting the advancement of racial justice work in the community by expanding external relationships, and strengthening the City's efforts in this work by partnering with such organizations as the Population Health Alliance and the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council to collectively address issues of access and support the development of social justice and anti-racist content.

11. Champlain Housing Trust

CHT's Board of Directors approved a resolution on June 3, 2020 over the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and of the regular killing of and violence against Black and brown citizens. The statement can be found at <https://www.getahome.org/news/statement-on-the-violence-against-black-and-brown-people>. In this statement we dedicated ourselves to change internally and to call for change in our communities. CHT affirms and reaffirms its commitment to fight racism and to the principle that Black lives matter in its policies, programs, and employment in all aspects of its work. CHT, its Board of Directors and staff, commits to the following goals as pieces of a broader action plan:

- We will continue to ensure that the number of people served by our programs will meet and exceed the percentage of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in our community who are in need;
- We will continually review internal policies and screen them for racial bias, including the use of criminal history and credit ratings;
- We will continue to review our actions that may cause people to lose their housing such as evictions that have been known to disproportionately impact BIPOC;
- We will commit to strengthening our partnerships with organizations serving BIPOC and other historically disadvantaged groups;
- We will ensure BIPOC representation on our Board of Directors and will continue to work toward having staff reflect not just the community, but the people we serve.

12. Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)

- Facilitating and providing opportunities for our staff, partner municipalities, and other local and regional partners to address inequities and advance anti-racism efforts together.
- Examining our organization's policies, practices, culture, and services through the lens of anti-racism and white privilege to ensure they reflect our commitment to racial justice, and adjusting accordingly.
- Furthering our understanding of the significant historical role land use policies and transportation investments has had in systemic racism and inequity and making sure that future zoning and transportation investments in Chittenden County encourage equity and provide increased opportunities for Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), and low income residents. More specifically, we will update our Equity Impact Worksheet that is part of our Public Participation Plan based on best practices around the country and will have this reviewed locally by a diverse audience.
- Encouraging municipal appointments on our Board and Committees that reflect the diversity of our community.
- Committing to advancing Strategy 8 of the Chittenden County ECOS Plan, which includes specific tasks related to tracking and analyzing inequities in all sectors of our work, prioritizing positive programs and investments to low opportunity places, and more.

13. Community Health Centers of Burlington (CHCB)

CHCB's Action Steps:

- Leverage the newly formed CHCB Diversity and Inclusion Committee to review organizational policy and procedures to ensure alignment with our goals of diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- Examine new approaches to recruitment that strengthen diversity within the Board of Directors, organizational leadership, and staff.
- Increase staff trainings to address racial health disparities and improve cultural competency levels.
- Actively engage with community partners to create an antiracist culture within our community.

14. Chittenden County State's Attorney

Chittenden County State's Attorney Sarah George [released action steps](#) in early June, which also are included here.

- Review all pending cases in Chittenden County with Black offenders for racial disparities and if found, adjust appropriately.
- Advocate for statewide standard for use of force.
- Implement consistent and impartial review of all use of force incidents in Chittenden County.
- Prioritize limited funding. Advocate for more resources to go towards social services, mental health services, and substance use services over prosecution to minimize inherent racial disparities within the criminal justice system.

- Include Black people in conversations about how best to implement these actions and what other actions must be taken.

15. Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)

- CVOEO is hiring a Director of Racial Equity to focus on organizational development as well as working with the communities we serve. This will include connecting with and if needed leading other groups and efforts.
- CVOEO has formed a Racial Equity Committee comprised of twenty people from across its service area and representing all its programs to promote and plan for racial equity within CVOEO and in the communities it services.
- Over the next several months CVOEO will develop a racial equity plan that will look to bridge gaps; building futures and advocate for real change.

16. The JSM Family Room

Our staff and board will get trained in matters of racial justice and develop a better understanding of how systemic racism works and negatively impacts the families we work with. We will search for and hire staff and leadership who represent our families more accurately and we will commit to partner with other organizations to build a larger, more equitable community and combat racial injustices to help heal our community.

17. Housing Vermont

Housing Vermont commits to incorporating anti-racist practices in our organization and to work with others to create a future with equity at its core. As such, we have created a Culture & Race Committee to work with a diversity, equity and inclusion consultant to build organizational processes and practices that reflect a human-centered workplace. Specifically, we are committed to:

- Listen: Listening to and amplifying black and brown voices.
- Learn: Engagement in systemic racism mitigation training for all employees.
- Speak: Using our platform as a regional affordable housing organization to advocate for anti-racist policies and practices.
- Act: Promote racial justice through our organizational policies and partnerships.

18. King Street Center

- KSC Board members/staff team are taking steps to invite diverse people from their different networks to join our Board and staff team.
- Connecting with an agency/consultant in our community who can perform an organization wide audit of programming and practices.
- Embedding anti-racist work into all KSC initiatives, programs and special committees.

19. Lake Champlain Chamber

- Having our Board issue a companion proclamation
- Engaging with BIPOC business owners and community leaders to learn about their experiences, understand their concerns, and in turn guide our work.

- We are investing in internal diversity and inclusion work, including but not limited to: staff education and review of Chamber employment practices.
- Providing education and resources for businesses on how to take action toward advancing racial equity.
- Reviewing our programs and initiatives for changes that can have greater impact.

20. Let's Grow Kids

- Adopt a formal racial equity framework to assess – and improve – Let's Grow Kids programs and policies
- Implement an outreach and engagement strategy to ensure Let's Grow Kids includes, listens to, and represents the needs of Black Vermonters and people of color in all parts of our movement
- Advance sustainable strategies to support early childhood educators in creating antiracist child care programs.

21. Local Motion

- We are participating in this declaration to hold ourselves accountable, and make ourselves publicly accountable through this process.
- Local Motion has formed an Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity team to examine our organization and its programming, educate our staff, board, partners, and constituents on the role of transportation in perpetuating systemic racism, and identify actions we can take to ensure that our organization and its programming works to dismantle systemic racism and the public health emergency it has created.
- By the end of November 2020, this team will produce a list of specific action steps for Local Motion to take in order to actively fight racist practices and contribute to the building of more just and equitable systems both within and outside of our organization. It will also set regular reviews of these action steps in order to monitor progress and ensure a sustained commitment to this effort.

22. Opportunities Credit Union

- Opportunities Credit Union will continue to offer free financial counseling to anyone in need;
- Opportunities Credit Union will continue to offer anti-predatory lending products to Vermonters without regard to race;
- Opportunities Credit Union will continue to offer affordable home mortgages and down payment assistance to all races.

23. Sara Holbrook Community Center

The students and families that are a part of Sara Holbrook Community Center bring unique perspectives and value to the center and our community, and we seek to honor that with the following commitments:

- We will add a Diversity and Inclusion Committee to our Board of Directors, made up of staff and board, that specifically seeks and responds to the voices of BIPOC, utilizes best

practices grounded in science and data with the goal of bringing sustained focus to eliminating race-based discrepancies. The initial work of this committee will be a comprehensive examination of SHCC policies and procedures across the organization intended to root out areas where systemic racism is evident and to remedy those discrepancies.

- As we actively update our mission, vision, values, and by-laws; diversity, equity and inclusion will be a key part of that conversation to ensure anti-racist ideals and expectations are a part of our guiding principles.
- SHCC will collaborate and coordinate with the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance, the Chittenden County Population Health Alliance along with other agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals with whom we share this mission and these common goals.

24. Seventh Generation

As a company based in Burlington, we acknowledge our privileges as a predominantly White community and intend to be an active participant in the work to disrupt the structures that have systemically hurt and disadvantaged Black, Indigenous and other People of Color.

As a company that has long been committed to protecting human health and ensuring climate justice, it is now clear to us that systemic racism is intrinsically linked to the health of people and communities. We hope for a city in which all communities thrive. We support the City's declaration of Racism as a Health Emergency and commit to advance solutions that address systemic racism in our hometown.

In addition, Seventh Generation commits to:

- Leadership team to dedicate two full days this month, and time every month thereafter, to building and implementing a short and long term DEI action plan informed by an expert, addressing our culture, our business practices and our community action.
- Establish a DEI Committee with a focus on building a culture of belonging and support for all our employees underpinned by education and courageous conversations.
- To build alliances with the city, state and other businesses to help make Burlington a welcoming place to BIPOC communities.
- To continue the dialogue with our employees through regular "town halls."

25. Spectrum Youth & Family Services

As a mental health organization that is invested in the wellbeing of our community, Spectrum is strengthening our commitment to fight against racial injustice. We commit to including youth clients and board members in our staff-led Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. We commit to hiring an outside consultant to help develop a strategy to challenge our own work, systems, and biases as mental health practitioners and social workers. We commit to educating our board through trainings on Racial Justice.

26. Burlington District of the Vermont Agency of Human Services

- Coordinate efforts with the 6 Burlington District AHS Department Directors/Managers and the AHS Interdepartmental Trauma & Resilience Team to align our work with the tenets of this declaration;
- Establish a direct link between our BDO District Team and the statewide efforts being led by the AHS Equity Director to assure transparency and consistency with State efforts;
- Commit to full participation in the ongoing work of the Alliance to eliminate race-based health disparities and eradicate systemic racism.

27. Vermont Department of Health

As we began doing during the development of our State Health Assessment and State Health Improvement Plan, we will deliberately engage people of color in dialogue about the issues facing them and about possible solutions. We commit to striving to eliminate inequalities in health, health care, and health systems and ensuring that health supports and services are available, accessible, affordable, coordinated, culturally appropriate, and offered with cultural humility. As part of testing or contact tracing we commit to collecting data about race, ethnicity, and preferred language and will publish that data to our website.

28. Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA)

In addition to our longstanding work to promote fair housing and lending, VHFA pledges today to:

- Work to increase the number of BIPOC on VHFA's Board of Commissioners, in Agency leadership positions, and staff;
- Disaggregate VHFA's programmatic data to make clear who VHFA's lending and assistance programs serve and which neighborhoods may be over/under represented. This information will be public and we will target future resources in response accordingly; and
- Strengthen and improve interpretation services and communication about VHFA's programs to cover more languages.

There is far more VHFA is planning to accomplish over the coming year to work towards racial justice. Our Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee will be empowered to push the Agency faster and stronger in these and future actions.

29. YMCA of Greater Burlington

Like all of us, we are working on concrete steps here at the Y. Here is a start:

- We commit to improved infrastructure to support anti-racism work inside and outside of our organization. To that end we are newly creating an internal anti-racism "council" comprised of staff. It will have 9 members. All staff will be eligible to serve on the council for 6 month terms. Terms will be staggered for continuity. Three of the nine slots will be reserved for people of color. This council will report directly to the CEO, who will have an ex officio connection.

- We are re-starting and enhancing a wellness/mentoring/leadership program for youth of color, that we began at our old location and which got sidetracked by Covid. The Y is underwriting that program.