



## Structural Racism and Supporting People of Color: The Role of Prevention Professionals

*Structural racism affects every aspect of American life and society, but it can be confronted at an organizational level with anti-racist actions. These organizational action items will empower prevention professionals to incorporate anti-racism into the operational practices and community outcomes of their prevention work.<sup>1</sup>*

### Recommended Action Items for Prevention Leadership:

#### Make understanding the health effects of structural racism a required professional competency.

**Why** Racism is a fundamental cause of health outcomes,<sup>2</sup> and prevention professionals must understand structural racism in order to confront racial health disparities in the communities they serve.

**How**

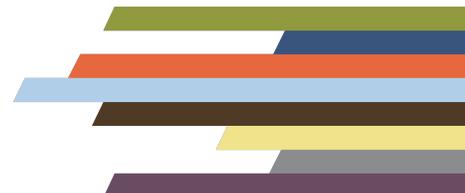
- Prioritize anti-racist competency during recruitment and hiring
- Embed anti-racist trainings into annual organizational training plan
- Create opportunities to engage in interdisciplinary continuing education on issues of structural racism
- Incorporate anti-racism into the framework of prevention programs

#### Diversify the prevention professional workforce.

**Why** Structural racism limits access to resources and opportunities, including impeding entry into the prevention workforce.

**How**

- Collaborate with the higher education system to provide internship opportunities for students of color
- Intentionally recruit a racially diverse workforce
- Promote a professional culture of equity and inclusion
- Prioritize retention of racially diverse employees



## Recommended action items for ALL Prevention Professionals

### Mandate and measure equitable health outcomes.

**Why** Too often in prevention work, "colorblind" policies and programs actually have racially unequal outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Marginalized communities must be centered from the outset in prevention work.

#### **How**

- Engage communities of color and stakeholders in identifying disparities
- Gather and analyze disaggregated data in order to properly identify disparities
- Identify strategies to address root causes and evaluate for effectiveness
- Monitor strategies and adapt as needed

### Divest from institutions that perpetuate racial health inequities.

**Why** Many corporations profit off of the exploitation of communities of color.<sup>4</sup> Money is an expression of morality, and prevention organizations should divest from companies that engage in systemically racist practices.

#### **How**

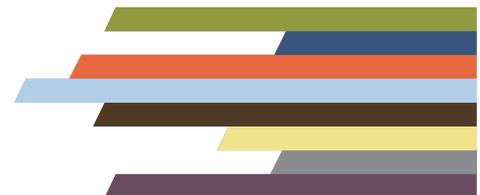
- Research the internal practices and external impacts of collaborators
- Communicate conduct expectations for collaboration and/or investment
- End collaborations with persistently toxic companies/organizations
- Divest funds from persistently toxic companies/organizations

### Promote anti-racist civic and political engagement.

**Why** We are all part of united civic and political society, and we must engage in civics and politics to confront structural racism.

#### **How**

- Provide education on the effects of legislative policy on prevention work to employees and collaborators
- Promote continuing education opportunities on issues of racism and anti-racism in civic, political, and legislative institutions
- Promote civic and political engagement in anti-racist activism among employees and collaborators



## Additional Resources

1. The Association for Prevention Teaching and Research's (APTR's) Anti-Racism Toolkit provides extensive resources on bringing antiracism into prevention practices, teaching, and research,
  - Schlaff, A & Young, D (2020). Anti-racism toolkit. *Association for Prevention Teaching and Research*. Retrieved from <https://www.aptrweb.org/page/toolkitoverview>
2. Historian Ibram X Kendi's TED Talk "The difference between being 'not racist' and antiracist" and book *How To Be An Antiracist*, which define antiracism and explain the necessity for antiracist action.
  - Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. First Edition. New York: One World.
  - Kendi, IX (2020, May). TED2020: The difference between being "not racist" and antiracist. [Video file] *TED: Ideas worth spreading*. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/ibram\\_x\\_kendi\\_the\\_difference\\_between\\_being\\_not\\_racist\\_and\\_antiracist?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/ibram_x_kendi_the_difference_between_being_not_racist_and_antiracist?language=en)
3. Physician Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones contextualizes the effects of structural racism on health in the time of COVID-19.
  - Wallis, C (2020, June 12). Why racism, not race, is a risk factor for dying of COVID-19. *Scientific American*. Retrieved from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-racism-not-race-is-a-risk-factor-for-dying-of-covid-19/>

## References

1. Hardeman, RR, Medina, EM, & Boyd, RW (2020). Stolen breaths. *N Eng J Med*, 383: 191-199. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2021072>
2. Phelan JC & Link BG (2015). Is racism a fundamental cause of inequalities in health? *Annu Rev Sociol*, 41: 311-330.
3. Cross, RI (2018). Commentary: Can Critical Race Theory enhance the field of public health? A student's perspective. *Ethn Dis*, 28(S1): 267-270. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6092171/>
4. Robinson, R (2019). Corporations profit from racism. It's time for us to stand up to them. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/16/racial-justice-corporations>

