

Dear Leadership of Community Organizations,

These most recent horrific events shed a painful light on disadvantages that people of color face, and the equity still needed within our country's systems to protect all people and particularly the marginalized and people of color.

Thank you for recognizing the need to make this a priority for not only the needs of your staff, but also the needs of the community you serve.

There are strategies we can offer to start you off on this journey, as we know the events of last week are not new for our country, but an ever present stain and source of threat and pain for communities of color.

CONVERSATIONS

- First, starting the conversations and spaces to process the events and the ongoing need for support—while important in your work with those you serve, should start internally with your teams. The work and need to recognize **countertransference**, on the parts of white staff and staff of color is best addressed prior to a crisis, but in this circumstance a place to start is to talk about the incident and the aftermath, and listen to your teams.

A suggestion: Organizational leadership is responsible for providing a safe space to discuss the continuous societal events. It is imperative that organization's leadership first communicate organizational commitment to cultural competency for conversations about societal events impacting communities of color to begin. Conversations can be facilitated by team leads and directors/managers, however the message about the importance of safe spaces should start with organizational leadership. In order for meaningful discussions to take place, leaders should engage team members in rich conversation so that team members are heard, no matter their experience and no matter the level of discomfort it might bring, to truly dialogue about important values and encourage interest and commitment to combating social injustice together.

- Second, for both internal and external communication, a commitment to dismantling racism in organizations and a commitment to understand and implement cultural competency plans will send a clear message that while our system suffers from inequity toward communities of color, there are concrete goals and action steps that your organization is taking and will continue to build to become an agent of change.

A suggestion: As shared above, the commitment to understanding and treating diverse people fairly is most effective when organization leadership takes the lead in demonstrating the organization's commitment to cultural competency. Communication from leadership acknowledging the atrocities of the event and systemic racism in newsletter (if applicable), social media, and on your website will also inform consumers and partners alike of your position and your plan.

ACTION

- To be most effective in countering the disparaging racial experiences that our clients and your staff experience, action is dependent upon growth. Resources generally bring awareness surrounding the plights of people of color and the opportunities for allyship for members of your community that are white.
- Whether it's action steps toward being an anti-racist ally organization, if the staff and clients are not multicultural; or facilitating an evolution to a multicultural anti-racist organization, this may indicate where your organization needs to grow. The goal is to build power for communities of color against the racist systems that have continued to prevail. That can happen internally and externally.

For staff, a continued communication of the imperative of cultural competency and for ongoing discussions in supervision, team meetings, and larger staff trainings. This is a GREAT TIME to revisit your cultural competency/diversity and inclusion plans and make revisions with the input of staff.

While emotions are running high, there are ideas that will be much more present about agency needs. We hope you will process and benefit from our input and technical assistance as well.

For clients: While you all are a main source of support for your clients and can continue to help them process through multicultural interventions and creating safe spaces for those you serve to exercise their voices and their autonomy in leading you in the care that they need, you can arm yourselves with ally resources to grow in your individual and organizational competency. This includes education on historical oppression against people of color, current policies that create divides in access and opportunity, and involvement in supporting their communities. Talk to your staff and providers about how they are discussing the incident and supporting those you serve holistically.

For Community: Are support and resources available for board members, leadership teams and staff to create change agents? Do you consistently work in partnership with organizations/campaigns led by people of color to receive guidance for strategic planning as well as advocate for their causes? Do you provide support for white board members, leadership, and staff to develop them into anti-racist allies and connect them to those partnerships? Where efforts along these lines are engaged community support and trust are maintained.

TOOLS:

Education, Interventions, and Action Resources

- <https://naswnj.socialworkers.org/News/Race-and-Justice> Multiple resources
- https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AGLEOINitQ1Jl7MvQXZxrpEbAvr42r5RewjO_iXaKtE/preview?pru=AAABcp_yADs*-w7sqzWN3rhw-93G_LBrg Resources on Black Mental Health and Systemic racism
- <https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/mental-health-resources/racism> Multiple resources
- <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma15-4426.pdf> Chapter Six's pages specifically address clinical interventions for populations of color (106, 114, 116-117, 121-122 have bulleted lists)
- <https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/brochures/treatment-minority.pdf> Includes upcoming support events, articles, and trainings specific to support during this time, as well anti-racism education.

We invite you and your leadership to stay in touch with us to help you address the current needs. We encourage you to stay engaged long term in the fight against racism and healthcare inequity, and fight for access, equality, and continued cultural competency. We offer you support for this journey.

Best,

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