

RECOGNIZE CHRONIC INEQUITIES & RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS



Why it Matters: At the same time that family life has been upended in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Vermonters have mobilized to respond to address systemic racism across the country. In May 2020, George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis by a police officer who knelt on his neck for over eight minutes. For those who live and work with the comfort of racial and systemic privilege, this death brought the experiences of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) at the hands of the police into renewed focus and pushed countless Vermonters and Vermont institutions to evaluate their role in ending racism. In visioning what an anti-racist approach to social change might look like for the EC system in Vermont, Building Bright Futures released a statement committing to address these issues, which was formally endorsed by Vermont's Early Childhood State Advisory Council on June 22nd, 2020:

"[It is] our responsibility to personally and organizationally explore implicit biases, unconscious racism and actions that contribute to racial inequities. The personal commitment our team has made will better prepare us to be effective stewards to apply a racial equity and economic justice lens to our policies and practices in order to collectively, as an Early Childhood system, make overdue changes for a stronger, more equitable, Vermont. The threats of racism are not new; we recognize many of our existing systems are built on a history of oppression, however we are now stepping up to answer the call to action. Our commitment to positive change will not just be in reaction to current events, but as a part of our ongoing work in the Early Childhood system by integrating and weaving a focus of diversity, equity, social justice and inclusion into our personal lives and all of our work."

It is critical to elevate the focus on equity for Vermont's young children and their families, recognizing that during the early childhood years, the effects of racism and poverty can have profound impacts which shape health throughout life.

LEVELS REQUIRING ACTION > FAMILY, COMMUNITY, SYSTEM

RECOMMENDATION 1

Partner With Vermont's Racial Equity Task Force To Identify And Build Structures Of Support For Racially Diverse Populations And Address Health Disparities And Systemic Impacts Of Racism.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Align And Integrate Equity Initiatives To Leverage Impact And Expertise Across Sectors And Early Childhood Partners To Inform Strategies In The Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan And Early Childhood System.

