

**DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRIC STATEMENT ON RACIAL JUSTICE
JUNE 2020**

As a Department of Pediatrics, we recognize that racism is highly prevalent in our intramural and extramural communities, and that the effects of racism are real, multifaceted and wide-ranging. We see these effects every day in our university, our clinics and our hospital. Racism affects our patients in countless ways: from the impact on childhood homelessness because of racist housing practices, the severity of lung diseases aggravated by environmental racism, food insecurity because of an inequitable food system, to poverty and health neglect because of racist underemployment and the pay gaps endured by Black people. We agree with the American Academy of Pediatrics' assertion that [racism is a child public health crisis](#).

We also recognize the lifelong impact of historical trauma from generations of the oppression of Black people in our country, as well as the [trauma sustained](#) by youth who are disproportionately targeted by police in our communities and schools every day. We amplify the voices of those who have long called out the numerous health disparities among Black people, including children, as a result of systemic and interpersonal racism.

We understand that anti-Black racism has a long history, beginning with the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which began in our country, here in Virginia, in 1619. Our Commonwealth, community and institution have not been on the right side of history when it comes to racism and the oppression of Black people. We founded the institution of American slavery; we led the fight to keep Black people in bondage from 1861-1865; we erected social structures to enforce covert and open oppression under segregation; and we discriminated against justified advancement because of pseudo-scientific theories of innate inferiority. Through centuries, we have been morally and scientifically wrong.

As a Department of Pediatrics in 2020, we must be and are committed to providing equitable care for all children, and standing in solidarity with Black people in Charlottesville and beyond. Beyond that, we must be and are committed to confronting and mitigating the effect of centuries of falsehood and evil.

To this end, we will continue to examine our hiring and appointment practices and strive to have our workforce and our leadership look more like America itself. We will strive to incorporate the recognition of historical and existing injustices into our clinical practice.

We will continue to conduct and encourage research that addresses health disparities, such as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and outcomes

for babies in neonatal intensive care units. We will continue to support research on vaccines and other preventive interventions for diseases that disproportionately impact Black communities and other people of color, including HIV and COVID-19. We will look for opportunities to increase our representation on local boards and task forces to reduce health disparities and allocate resources to community organizations that have been doing this work effectively. Our pediatric [Equity & Inclusion Committee](#) will continue its efforts to improve our department's internal culture, recruiting diverse faculty, staff, and trainees, and engaging with community partners in order to better serve our patients of color. We have developed and will implement new curricula to teach our medical students and residents about the impacts of racism on health and health care.

And we will seek to understand each other's experiences. In recognition of the current national movement, we have come together as a department to establish a Racial Justice Book Club in order to better educate ourselves on these topics. We recognize that we still have much to learn.

At this important moment in time, we realize that we are better together. We will increase our partnership with local organizations which have been working for racial justice for many years, and we invite you to learn more about some of them and consider donating your time and money to their causes:

- [Jefferson School African American Heritage Center](#)
- [New Hill Development](#)
- [City of Promise](#)
- [Cultivate C'ville](#)
- [Public Housing Association of Residents](#)
- [Piedmont Housing Alliance](#)
- [Abundant Life](#)
- [Donor Diapers](#)
- [The Women's Initiative](#)

There are many other organizations and individuals doing the important and necessary work of fighting for racial justice. This is not a complete list, but recognizes groups particularly engaged in work around social determinants of health.

We the Department of Pediatrics stand in solidarity with our Black patients, colleagues, neighbors, friends, and family. We recognize our role and the role of our institution and community in the history of racial injustice. We redouble our commitment to do and be the best we can in the fight for racial justice.

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