



mhac

Mental Health & Addiction
Advocacy Coalition

MHAC Statement about Racism and the Behavioral Health Needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

*"The time is always right to do the right thing."
- Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Never have words resonated more loudly than these words today.

The MHAC recognizes the impacts of systemic and systematic racism on the behavioral health needs of Ohioans who are Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). These impacts have traumatic physical, emotional, and psychological manifestations. We understand our responsibility to continue educating ourselves and those we interact with on the ways that racism and socioeconomic disparities impact BIPOC, and that our collective advocacy priorities should reflect the importance of this issue.

A long history of violence against BIPOC in our country has culminated in recent protests regarding this brutality and the broader systemic racism that has persisted for centuries. These protests occur while we are still in the throes of a pandemic that is disproportionately affecting the Black community, further emphasizing the devastating impacts of individual and systemic racism. It is important that we work together to ensure all Ohioans have access to behavioral health services. Together, we must move purposefully and with great conviction and urgency to abolish systemic inequities and deep seeded prejudices and biases that have been allowed to fester for far too long with tragic consequences. Join us by becoming a voice for change and creating the world we know should exist. We know we can do it together.

We celebrate the diversity of our members and of the individuals and families they serve, and commit to the actions below to address systemic and systematic racism through our work. MHAC members, we look forward to working with you and with community partners to achieve these items.

- Advocating for policies that address systemic and systematic racism in the mental health and addiction space, including action items that address health inequalities and statements of this intention in the advocacy agendas each hub and the state office are currently developing;
- Including systemic and systematic racism and our own implicit biases as areas for discussion in ongoing staff, Board, and committee meetings, allowing members to guide us on ways we can address these issues; and
- Sharing resources regarding mental health and addiction support for BIPOC in Ohio.

The links below offer information on racial disparities and inequities in Ohio and information on how the MHAC, its members, and the community can work to advance equity:

- [Disparities in mental health and addiction needs and access](#)
- [Resources specifically for Black individuals](#)

Sincerely,

MHAC State Board and Staff
mhaadvocacy.org

Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition
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