

**RESOLUTION
ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Supervisor Kara Purviance
INITIATED BY



Marie-Noel Sandoval
DRAFTED BY

Board of Health
SUBMITTED BY

June 16, 2020
DATE DRAFTED

Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis

1 **WHEREAS**, race is a social construction with no biologic basis¹; and
2
3 **WHEREAS**, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism is internalized or
4 interpersonal; and systemic racism is institutional or structural, and is a system of structuring opportunity
5 and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks, that unfairly disadvantages some
6 individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and saps the
7 strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources^{2,3}; and
8
9 **WHEREAS**, racism causes persistent racial discrimination in housing, education, employment and
10 criminal justice; and an emerging body of research demonstrates that racism is a social determinant of
11 health^{1,4}; and
12
13 **WHEREAS**, more than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes⁵; and
14
15 **WHEREAS**, in Wisconsin, the highest excess death rates exist for African American and Native
16 Americans, at every stage in the life course^{6,7}, and our infant mortality rate for infants of non-Hispanic
17 black women is the highest in the nation⁸; and
18
19 **WHEREAS**, in Rock County, several health behaviors and outcomes are worse for African Americans
20 including infant mortality, breastfeeding rates, premature death rates, and children living in poverty; and,
21
22 **WHEREAS**, the American Public Health Association (APHA) launched a National Campaign Against
23 Racism³; and
24
25 **WHEREAS**, Healthiest Wisconsin 2020 states that, "Wisconsin must address persistent disparities in
26 health outcomes, and the social, economic, educational and environmental inequities that contribute to
27 them"⁹; and
28
29 **WHEREAS**, public health's responsibilities to address racism include reshaping our discourse and
30 agenda so that we all actively engage in racial justice work; and
31
32 **WHEREAS**, while there is no epidemiologic definition of "crisis", the health impact of racism clearly
33 rises to the definition proposed by Galea: "The problem must affect large numbers of people, it must
34 threaten health over the long-term, and it must require the adoption of largescale solutions"¹⁰.
35
36 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rock County Board of Supervisors duly assembled
37 this 25th day of June, 2020 asserts that racism is a public health crisis affecting our
38 entire society.
39
40 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Rock County Board of Supervisors advocates for policies
41 that improve health in communities of color, eliminate health and opportunity gaps along racial lines,
42 and increase the success of all groups by distributing resources justly across all communities.
43
44 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Rock County Board of Supervisors will support local, state,
45 and federal initiatives that advance social justice.
46

47 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Rock County Board of Supervisors encourages individual
48 advocacy to dismantle systemic racism and recognizes that every Rock County employee is responsible
49 for creating and maintaining a culture in which employees respect the diverse values, beliefs, and
50 behaviors in the workforce and the community they serve.

51

52 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Rock County Board of Supervisors works to build alliances
53 and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism, commits to engaging
54 municipalities and institutions within the county to prioritize racial equity to address structural racism
55 producing disparate population health outcomes, and encourages other local, state and national entities
56 to recognize racism as a public health crisis.

57

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Respectfully submitted,

Board of Health

/s/Louis Peer
Supervisor Louis Peer, Chair

/s/Doug Wilde
Supervisor Doug Wilde

/s/Dr. Connie Winter, DDS
Dr. Connie Winter, DDS, Vice Chair

/s/Danette Rynes
Supervisor Danette Rynes

/s/Dr. Kaitlyn Meyers, DVM, MPH
Dr. Kaitlyn Meyers, DVM, MPH

/s/Debra Kolste
Debra Kolste

/s/Dr. Vijaya Somaraju, MD, MPH, FACP
Dr. Vijaya Somaraju, MD, MPH, FACP

/s/Shirley Williams
Supervisor Shirley Williams

/s/Eric Gresens, R.PH
Eric Gresens, R.PH

FISCAL NOTE:

No fiscal impact.

/s/Sherry Oja

Sherry Oja
Finance Director

LEGAL NOTE:

The County Board is authorized to take this action pursuant to §§ 59.01 and 59.51, Wis. Stats.

s/ Richard Greenlee

Richard Greenlee
Corporation Counsel

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

Recommended.

/s/Josh Smith

Josh Smith
County Administrator

Executive Summary

This resolution acknowledges that racism causes persistent discrimination, is a social determinant of health and is linked to poor health outcomes. The public health community has a responsibility to acknowledge racism, advocate for equitable policies and inform the public discourse. In Rock County, disparities in health outcomes and behaviors for African Americans indicate ongoing racial discrimination. Differences in birth outcomes, death rates due to chronic conditions, and other economic factors are some of the most serious consequences of racism in our society. Therefore it is our responsibility to acknowledge this racism and to work to eliminate and reduce its impacts in Rock County.

References:

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2. Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. *Phylon*. 2002;50(1/2):7---22.
3. American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. Accessed February 20, 2018.
4. Flynn, A., Holmberg, S., Warren, D., and Wong, F. REWRITE the Racial Rules: Building an Inclusive American Economy. Roosevelt Institute, 2016.
5. Institute of Medicine. Unequal Treatment. <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/2#7>. Accessed 3/2/2018.
6. Hatchell K, Handrick L, Pollock EA and Timberlake K. Health of Wisconsin Report Card-2016. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, 2016.
7. Healthiest Wisconsin 2020 Baseline and Health Disparities Report. <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hw2020/>. Accessed 2/23/2018.
8. Mathews, TJ., Ely, D., and Driscoll, A. State Variations in Infant Mortality by Race and Hispanic Origin of Mother, 2013–2015. NCHS Data Brief. No. 295, January 2018
9. Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health, Office of Policy and Practice Alignment. Healthiest Wisconsin 2020: Everyone Living Better, Longer. A State Health Plan to Improve Health Across the Life Span, and Eliminate Health Disparities and Achieve Health Equity. P-00187. July 2010.