

Adopting Anti-Racist Practices to Promote Health Equity in Pediatric Care

Racism in the health care system — a driver of health inequities — affects patients, caregivers, and providers alike and is reinforced by organizational culture, policies, practices, and interpersonal relationships.

Health care providers and institutions, including [pediatric practices](#), have an opportunity to not only acknowledge historical and current racism in medicine but to dismantle racism in health care through explicit efforts, such as [establishing anti-racist policies and practices](#) that can disrupt systemic racism and promote equity. Pediatric health care providers can hold themselves, their organization, and staff accountable to anti-racist practices and play an important role in combatting racism in health care systems.

This implementation fact sheet offers practical strategies that pediatric practices can adopt to provide care that is high-quality, inclusive, equitable, and delivered with dignity.



Opportunities to Address Racism in Care Delivery

Below are strategies and resource links — including tools, trainings, and articles — that medical teams can use to inform development of anti-racist policies and practices during and outside of provider visits.

Meet the Needs of Patients and Families During Provider Visits

- ✓ **Promote an environment of mutual trust and respect**, rooted in [dignity](#), where the care team:
 - (1) listens to feedback shared by families, particularly families of color, about their [care experience](#);
 - (2) uses [plain language](#) that is [health-literacy](#) friendly; and
 - (3) ensures that interventions are responsive to families' unique needs.
- ✓ **Ensure inclusive and supportive environments** to [build trusting relationships](#) through continuity of care by the same provider and partnership-building communication styles.
- ✓ **Consider beliefs and cultural backgrounds** in planning and delivery of care. Instead of making assumptions about a patient or family's preferences, simply ask.

Learn More at the Child Health Transformation Resource Center

This fact sheet is a product of *Accelerating Child Health Transformation*, a national initiative that seeks to accelerate the adoption of key elements necessary to advance anti-racist, family-centered, holistic pediatric practice, made possible by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and led by the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS). For more information, visit CHCS' *Child Health Transformation Resource Center* at www.chcs.org/child-health-transformation-resource-center.

- ✓ **Ensure accessibility and inclusion while reducing barriers** resulting from racism, intolerance for individuals who do not speak English, ableism, bias around gender identity, and other biases. This might include, for example, ensuring appropriate interpreters and multi-lingual documents are available for individuals who are not fluent in English, doing [simulations on person-first language](#), and tailoring services to a patient’s culture and language preferences using tools and trainings, such as the [Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services](#) developed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.
- ✓ **Use strengths-based approaches** by encouraging caregivers of color to learn more about [racial socialization](#), for example, and how that can serve as a protective factor against negative health outcomes associated with racism in infants, children, and their parents.

Assess and Evolve Organizational Policies

- ✓ **Complete organizational race equity assessments** to evaluate current practice culture, internal policies, and capacity for addressing racism in health care systems (using models and [assessment tools](#) such as those shared by [Race Equity Tools](#) or [Race Forward](#)).
- ✓ **Examine institutional policies and practices to advance racial equity** through [actionable frameworks](#) and [improvement efforts](#) at the organizational level.
- ✓ **Promote organizational accountability to antiracism** and hold staff who commit microaggressions or racist acts toward people of color accountable for their actions by discussing the harmful nature of these acts, enacting disciplinary measures as necessary, and providing trainings, including ones where staff can learn to recognize and [interrupt microaggressions](#) and support others who experience them.
- ✓ **Develop and implement recruiting, hiring, training, and retention strategies** — including through improved [job postings, resume reviews and interview](#) protocols and other [recruitment/retention](#) strategies — to [more closely align the racial and ethnic makeup](#) of providers and organizational leadership with that of the patient population.
- ✓ **Identify and address barriers to equitable pay and promotion** to ensure equitable access to living wages, professional growth, and leadership opportunities.

A Critical Role for Medicaid

State Medicaid programs can help reduce significant health disparities for children of color. Currently, [nearly six in 10](#) Black, Latino, and Native American/Native Alaskan children rely on Medicaid for health care coverage. Since Medicaid covers a large proportion of children of color, policymakers at the state and federal levels can help maximize Medicaid opportunities to increase health equity and accelerate child health care transformation.

With over [41 million children](#) enrolled in Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in fiscal year 2023, even small changes to these publicly funded health coverage programs can have large impacts on access to health care services and children’s health outcomes. [Medicaid](#) as well as CHIP and managed care plans can explicitly tailor [policies and practices](#) to be anti-racist and promote health equity, thereby facilitating opportunities to make measurable improvements in health disparities for children.

Provide Staff Training and Supports

- ✓ **Provide staff trainings on anti-racist strategies and race equity** — including [cultural competence and humility](#) as well as [implicit bias](#) — allowing trainers with lived experience of racism to share their stories with colleagues. Conduct specific trainings to [prevent biased language](#) and [biased electronic health records](#) and urge all participants to deepen their understanding of how organizational practices may contribute to discrimination against marginalized populations. Providers can also learn to examine their bias and mistrust of patients and families of color to [reduce wrongly reporting suspected abuse](#) to child protective services.
- ✓ **Encourage regular group reflections and cultural humility across the organization** to promote continuous learning, improvement, and [commitment to welcoming and inclusive environments](#).
- ✓ **Train staff to speak with families about race and the effects of racism on health**, including experiences of racism in health care, and recognize the strengths that patients and families have in overcoming racial harm.
- ✓ **Create space for staff to discuss the effects of racism on their personal and professional lives** and support each other as they seek to disrupt racist practices within their institutions.
- ✓ **Value and support staff with diverse life experiences and racial and ethnic backgrounds**, and ensure they feel supported in the practice, including through mentorship and peer-to-peer support.

Listen to Community Members

- ✓ **Join or establish a community collaboration dedicated to anti-racism work**, comprised of interdisciplinary medical professionals, community members, and community organizations, as exhibited by [Vital Village Networks](#).
- ✓ **Intentionally [seek diversity and inclusion](#) when recruiting for patient and family advisory boards** to ensure members mirror the population served.
- ✓ **Partner with community-based organizations to facilitate discussions** with community members about the ways they experience bias and racism in their care and to lift up policies and practices communities prioritize for change.



ABOUT THE CENTER FOR HEALTH CARE STRATEGIES

The Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is a policy design and implementation partner devoted to improving outcomes for people enrolled in Medicaid. We support partners across sectors and disciplines to make more effective, efficient, and equitable care possible for millions of people across the nation. For more information, visit www.chcs.org.