The Washington County Local Implementation Plan (LIP) Advisory Committee met on February 4, 2021 to discuss racial disparities and equity strategies important for Supportive Housing Service program development and implementation. The following discussion questions were asked of committee member during small group breakout sessions:

- What do you need to tell us about the way racial disparities exist and can be measured within Washington County?

- What are your recommendations for our racial equity strategies to mitigate and address these disparities?

FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The following general themes of disparity emerged in small group discussions:

- Black and Indigenous people of color, Latinx, immigrant/refugee communities, LGBTQI2S+, and young people's needs are not reflected in housing service data collection methods, metrics, and reporting on homelessness in Washington County, reducing or eliminating opportunities to access needed supports.
- Communities of color have been excluded from formal decision-making and response-forming tables, governance bodies, and community leadership opportunities.
- Washington County has few culturally specific organizations or culturally specific services.
- Housing stock, zoning, funding, and codes are based on a White lens, threatening and eliminating housing stability for communities of color.

The following general themes for solutions emerged in small group discussions:

- Invite, welcome, and expand access for communities of color to lead and participate in decision-making activities, evaluation, budgeting, governance, and response-planning initiatives in Washington County.

- Include racial-, ethnic-, gender/sexual identity, and developmentally-informed metrics across service delivery and social determinants of health to identify and reduce gaps in service accessibility and housing security.

- Enhance, expand, and extend culturally specific technical supports to community serving providers for best practices in serving diverse communities of color with intersecting identities,

- Hold public and private organizations accountable to develop infrastructures to eliminate systemic racism, increase culturally specific supports, and use best practices in trauma-informed and person-centered care.

Culturally specific awareness of COVID-19 consequences for communities of color:

- The Latinx community has experienced a surge in experiences of homelessness during COVID-19 due to restrictions limiting traditional protective factors across family supports, home, and work contexts, as well as from lack of culturally-specific supports, reduced access to existing services due to experiences of systemic and interpersonal racism, and immigration threats to family separation and trauma.

AGGRIGATED QUALITATIVE DATA

Small groups formed by the Washington County LIP Advisory Committee documented and submitted conversation topics discussed to Washington County SHS staff. The following sections represent general categories where all small group feedback for racial disparities and equity strategies has been placed.

<u>**Metrics**</u>

- Not all communities of color access services at the same rate based on need, limiting data reliability.

- Inaccurate data impacts vulnerable communities by further limiting access and visibility, perpetuating inaccessibility to needed services.

- Missing qualitative data

- Forms don't offer information categories relevant or reflective to specific cultural group dynamics.

- Need improved disaggregation of data based on race and ethnicity.

- County's centralization of systems and data, focus on quantitative data, miss out on important information and experiences.

- Black and Indigenous people of color, LGBTQI2S+, lifespan development, experiences of political or domestic violence, and immigration populations are invisible in data collection and reporting on homelessness in Washington County.

  - Don't experience homelessness in ways traditional counts look for or when focused on unsheltered and chronic homelessness

- Mixed race identification can be of an issue in different category.

- Social determinants of health are important data points that can look different across diverse communities of color, ages, identities, and life experiences.

- Integrated systems data needed: law enforcement, health, education, human services

- Use a Community participatory model approach to data collection and analysis – the community owns their own data.

- Expand race/ethnicity data categories to better capture information.

- Monitor Engagement, retention, & outcomes (success as defined by the community themselves) by race/ethnicity to monitor our effectiveness in serving the community.

<u>**Services**</u>

- Need to invest in culturally specific organizations to help them scale services, ensure long-term technical and financial support to do that, ensure pay equity for staff.

- Multi-cultural, multi-lingual services so all communities have equal access.

- Bring in more culturally specific services within our county.

- Washington County culturally sensitive services don't exist due to implicit bias and assumption progressive support equals culturally competent actions.

- People are most likely to admit/share their housing status if they are receiving other services.

- Get households off the street and match services to ensure stability.

- Community resources advocate meet with recently house household to assist. Get navigators to assist in weaving the system to get the need required.

Practice/Program Approaches

- Important to have choice and autonomy for people being served.

- Providing trauma-informed care is critical.

- Understanding developmental factors in youth support work.

- Recognizing intersections between race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and gender identity in experiences of homelessness and domestic violence.

- Making certain that services are flexible enough to meet people's own self-defined needs and the needs of their family to become housed or remain housed, rather than trying to fit them into specific types of support.

- Proximate services tailored to community needs, so people don't have to travel.

- Black are treated differently in law enforcement

- Need to develop workforce. We don't have a culturally responsive workforce.

- Lots of outreach has happened already, consider fatigue of being asked over and over.

- Starts with Trust – someone who looks/likes you – who have similar experiences, can the person who needs help relate to the person trying to help.

- Peers and community-based groups are critical for making organizations safe spaces for diverse community members.

- She wants us to be community centered and individual centered, and build trust and start where people are and their lived experience.

- Need to take care with labels and how people self-identify, not just identifying people by their diagnosis.

Organizational Needs

- Ensure outlying communities have access to funding to meet needs of their community.

- Washington County SHS department can provide accountability structures for best social service practices in the community (e.g., trauma-informed, harm reduction, etc.) and adherence to equity principles (e.g., equity, diversity, and inclusion) in relation to CBO interactions with communities and individuals served.

- Engage faith-based community in this work.

- Improve coordination of services at County level that is equitable and includes outreach for providers serving communities of color.

- Bring established culturally specific organizations into Washington County.

- Culturally specific organizations need Washington County staff and CBO's to welcome and invite relationship for partnership in housing.

- Facilitate collaboration and strengths-based networking of organizations.

- Build scalable infrastructure to provide supportive long-term housing services for communities of color experiencing chronic homelessness.

- Build capacity with local culturally specific organizations and community led groups to do supportive housing service work.

- Support and organize communities so that voices are heard, and systems are responsive.

- Invest funding, time and resources in community-based organizations.

- Create an environment in which developing organizations can thrive – identify and remove barriers to competing for service contracts and support data and reporting both with adequate funding and T/TA.

Education

- Racial disparities in school settings reduce access to supports to keep or find safety for young people.

- Bring in support for speakers of indigenous languages.

- Ensure SHS provides translation supports in verbal and written form.

- Online classes without the needed technology.

- Large families with need for enough space for kids to learn in.

- Local partnerships with McKinney-Vento liaisons to extend and enhance supports.

Covid-19

- Where sharing rides to work has also become less common. We are aware of cases where ride sharing has led to the spread of COVID.

- COVID rates are very high in the Latinx community of Washington County, and we have also seen this threaten people's livelihoods in agricultural/rural areas.

Housing

- Housing stock and zoning lens based on white lens.

- Some building codes prevent flexible use of housing.

- Need to ensure that people who are doubled-up are less at risk of violating rental agreements.

- HUD rules and public charge affect immigrant households, urges Long Term Rental Assistance program from Metro dollars to not discriminate against immigrant households.

- Concerned about savvy landlords using their knowledge of landlord-tenant law in ways that disadvantage tenants that don't know their rights.

- Can lose housing for what are often very minor infractions . . . We advocate for housing when there are many problems.

- Fair housing disparities

- Tenant rights

- We need regional tenant advocacy & a strength-based approach

Employment

- In hiring and promoting

- Need to develop workforce. We don't have a culturally responsive workforce.

- Need to broaden pool of workers, meet people where they are at with people that look like them. Go out to cultural groups.

Systems

- Disparities in financial request

- Concern about Public Charge and HUD rules affecting future applications for citizenship lead to immigrant families not seeking or getting access to housing support dollars

- Disparities in healthcare, homelessness, prison, schools and so on

- Disproportionate representation in Justice system and racial profiling

- In applying for loan or mortgage

- When voting

- When speaking in medical treatment

- Treatment at the time of arresting between black and white

- Structural factors like lack of transit, the way the county is spread out, some communities are clustered

- Geographical islands of isolation and no services

- Continuum of Care needs to include more agencies.

- Criminal justice interface with social services/mental health vs. Physical health – opaque nature of government services.

Diversity, Inclusion, And Equity Governance And Allied Supports

- Speak up and don't keep quite (during meet, reporting to law enforcement, to the community)

- Empower our different community to feel safe to speak up

- Place an equity and inclusive lens in everything we do and all decisions

- Ask our marginalized communities what they need and want to see

- Having white recognized that sometimes they need to step back or lean back to allow POC to speak and lead

- Empower our black communities

- Create a governance group that has more minority than white

- The intention is not to take away anything but to make it better and be more inclusive.

- Need greater representation on leadership boards. Not a voice at that level. Need authoritative voice directly to decision makers or to be decision maker.

- Go out to the groups and ask them how services should be provided. Give them a forum to tell us what works and what doesn't.

- Start doing the work, but then go back to the groups to check and make sure we are doing it well. Adjust course as directed by those populations.

- There is a frayed safety net – having government structures that work – to build back trust.

- People being stereotyped when they go to store, more likely to be arrested.

- Indigenous populations: what do we have to engage in and support?

- Ways organizational leaders establish relationships within the county.

- Challenges in obtaining/finding funding, capacity building, and establishing relationships with and within Washington County.

- Round table conversation to easily collaborate; simple conversation and coordinate services among orgs; generate ideas and coordinate with each other

- People who were trying to get back to Washco, included AAPIS, Latino, and MENA communities.

- Finding ways to work with washco-Racial Equity Collaborative

- Support leadership from communities of color to sit at County table.

- County needs to fund and add training capacity for agencies..

- Concerned about savvy landlords using their knowledge of landlord-tenant law in ways that disadvantage tenants that don't know their rights.

- Agreed that power relationship between government/state and individuals receiving help is very strained

- Racial inequities make this worse.

- Resources follow decision-making power – at level of who decides where resources go, not just normal government processes – let people affected have more say in how funds are spent, and decisions are made. For example, some existing government programs, exclude some people, e.g., HUD excludes undocumented.

- We should also recognize indigenous communities – not erase them, including people from Mexico and Central America that are indigenous and speak indigenous languages

- Intersectionality of MH and discrimination issues, and lack of cultural competence to serve certain communities – increased isolation.

- Communities are segregated – separation of groups makes understanding, building empathy, integrated community building challenging.

- People of color experience racism in our communities

- Ensure that the community being served directs the programing.

- Racial Equity Plan that VAN lead and facilitated –

- Empower the Black and Indigenous people of color

Population

- Is there flexibility to include imminent risk in the populations.

- The economy has grown, we should make room for a new generation.

- Increased homelessness in Latin x community since COVID

- People who were trying to get back to Washco, included AAPIS, Latino, and MENA communities.

- Working with people with disabilities, reliant on grant funds and HUD funds

- Indigenous groups – gaps in housing and wealth

- Intersectionality compounds the problem when people have various traits that work together to lead to homelessness, such as a person of color with persistent mental illness

- Intersectionality of MH and discrimination issues, and lack of cultural competence to serve certain communities – increased isolation.

- Important to remember the intersectionality of different identities – race/youth/sexual identity/gender expression.

Lip Process

- LIP committee discussed racial equity a lot. Use that work to help answer this question. Use analysis that's already been done.

- What are other tables/initiatives that have recently happened that we can learn from? There has been a lot of focus in this area over the past few months, can we pull in info from other tables? Integrate feedback from other groups.

- Provide compensation for the info, and then move the info forward. We already have this info! Find the feedback we already have and use it.