

SHAWNEE COUNTY RESOLUTION TO DECLARE RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS WITH A COMMITMENT TO ACTION

WHEREAS, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other people of color face economic injustice, social deprivation, and health inequities because racist policies, regulations, and laws created opportunity for some and barriers for others; and

WHEREAS, structural racism refers to the totality of ways in which societies foster racial discrimination through mutually reinforcing systems of housing, education, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, transportation, media, health care, and criminal justice that in turn reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values, and distribution of resources; and

WHEREAS, in Shawnee County, the average median household income is \$36,200 for Black households and \$46,100 for Latinx households, compared to \$61,100 for non-Latinx whites; (1) and

WHEREAS, 52% of Black and 36% of Latinx residents in Shawnee County cannot afford to rent a safe and decent quality two-bedroom unit. (7)

WHEREAS, in Topeka/Shawnee County, 23.2% of Black and 17.4% of Latinx residents live in poverty, as compared to 9.2% of whites (3).

WHEREAS, in Topeka/Shawnee County, unemployment affects 10.1% of Black and 5.1% of Latinx residents compared to 3.3% of whites. (8)

WHEREAS, in Topeka/Shawnee County, 11.5% of Latinx and 11.4% of Black residents 25 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher, as compared to 34.9% of whites. (5)

WHEREAS, the population of Topeka is 10.5% Black and 15.3% Latinx but are involved in 46% recorded incidents of officer use of force. Data for Shawnee County Sherriff is not readily accessible. (6) (9)

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked racism to negative health outcomes, including research supporting that the cumulative experience of racism throughout one's life can induce chronic stress and increase susceptibility to chronic health conditions that lead to otherwise preventable deaths. The American College of Physicians has found that Black individuals in particular are at risk of being subjected to discrimination and violence against them because of their race, endangering them and even costing them their lives. The U.S. National Institutes of Health reports that multiple studies suggest that experiences of racism or discrimination raise the risk of emotional and physical health problems, including depression, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and even death. The American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Family Physicians have declared hate crimes a public health concern. The Surgeon General of California found that racism is a risk factor for toxic stress, a root cause of some of the most harmful, persistent and expensive health challenges facing our nation; and

WHEREAS, experiencing racism can increase stress hormones and lead to activation of the immune and inflammatory systems; changes in brain structure; elevation of blood pressure and blood sugar; and changes in how genes are read, which are associated with increased risk for numerous mental and physical chronic health conditions, like heart disease, cancer, asthma, stroke, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and suicide.; and

WHEREAS, in Shawnee County, 56.1/10,000 of Black adults were hospitalized with diabetes, as compared to 21.7/10,000 of white adults (2); and

WHEREAS, in Shawnee County, the infant mortality rate is 14.8 per 1,000 Black births, compared to 5.7 for white births (2); and

WHEREAS, in Shawnee County, Black residents die prematurely with a total of 15,600 years of potential life lost compared to whites at 8,600 years of potential life lost. (4)

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Commissioners of Shawnee County publicly asserts that racism is a public health crisis in Shawnee County affecting all members of our Shawnee County and all of Kansas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Shawnee County departments should prevent biased policy decision-making and implementation through protocols that require equity analysis through staff training on equity, bias, and cultural sensitivity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Shawnee County calls upon all Shawnee County elected officials and departments to continue, with urgency, the review of policies and procedures for the purposes of eradicating implicit and explicit racial bias and develop instead policies and procedures that build racial equity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Shawnee County departments should ensure equal and unbiased law enforcement and criminal justice through policies on policing practices, adequate accountability measures instilled in law enforcement contracts, through training, and publishing data on arrests and use of forces for public view. Data on sentencing recommendations by the District Attorney's office should be kept and published; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Shawnee County should always promote policies and grant funding opportunities, both in procurement and in distribution, that prioritize the health of all people, especially people of color, and address at least one area of the social determinants of health.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Shawnee County Health Department

Citations

- (1) County Health Rankings & Roadmap:
<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/kansas/2021/measure/factors/63/data>
Shawnee County, Kansas 2019
- (2) Kansas Health Matters, Measurement Period 2015-2019, Shawnee County
<https://www.kansashealthmatters.org/index.php?module=indicators&controller=index&action=dashboard&id=83319366815456082&card=0&localeId=1028>
- (3) U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts:
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Income%20and%20Poverty%3AOfficial%20Poverty%20Measure%3APoverty&g=0400000US20_0500000US20177&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1701
Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S1701
- (4) County Health Rankings & Roadmap:
<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/kansas/2019/rankings/shawnee/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot> Years of Potential Life Lost Before Age 75 per 100,000 population (age-adjusted 2015-2017)
- (5) Kansas Health Matters, Measurement Period 2015-2019, Shawnee County:
<https://www.kansashealthmatters.org/indicators/index/indicatorsearch?module=indicators&controller=index&action=indicatorsearch&doSearch=1&i=340&l=1028&primaryTopicOnly=&b%5B%5D=100&subgrouping=2&card=0&handpicked=1&resultsPerPage=150&showComparisons=1&showOnlySelectedComparisons=&showOnlySelectedComparisons=1&grouping=1&ordering=1&sortcomp=0&sortcompIncludeMissing=>
- (6) Topeka Police Department 2021 Year End Use of Force Report:
<https://cot-wp-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/police/2021+Year+End+Use+of+Force+Report.pdf>
- (7) Topeka Citywide Housing Market Study and Strategy, 2020, pg. 21:
<https://cot-wp-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/planning/HS/TopekaHousingStudy.pdf>
- (8) U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts:
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=unemployment%20shawnee%20county%20kansas&t=-01%20-%20All%20available%20basic%20races%20alone%3AEmployment%20and%20Labor%20Force%20Status&g=0500000US20177&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S2301>
Employment Status in the Past 12 Months, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S2301
- (9) U.S Census Bureau QuickFacts, Topeka, Kansas
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/topekacitykansas>

