

The Alliance’s Racial Equity Network Action Steps:
Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Homelessness System

System Entry

Understanding Who Enters the Homeless System

	Action Step
Immediate Steps	<p>Add race/ethnicity data to CoC data reports for continual tracking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze the data to see if people from disproportionately represented racial or ethnic groups have different entry points into your system. - Analyze other characteristics of disproportionately represented groups, e.g. income, disabilities, history of homelessness. - Consider how public systems such as corrections, foster care, health care, or the military may affect disparities.
	<p>Convene focus groups of people experiencing homelessness to provide firsthand accounts on the root causes that led to their homelessness. Compensate people for their time.</p>
	<p>Educate the Continuum of Care and the wider community about disproportionalities by creating data dashboards or visualizations that show the percentage of people of various races/ethnicities who are entering your homeless system, in comparison to the percentage of people of those races/ethnicities in the community overall. Make them widely and regularly available.</p>
Long Term Steps	<p>Convene representatives of feeder systems (child welfare, criminal justice, mental health, health, etc.) and identify opportunities for data-sharing and data warehousing. Begin dialogue with these partners on policy changes that could reduce exits into homelessness among racial and ethnic groups disproportionately represented in their systems.</p>
	<p>Enlist community influencers (funders, elected officials, etc.) to promote and sustain cross-systems collaborative work.</p>

Crisis Accommodation

Identifying Who Gets Shelter and Transitional Housing

	Action Step
Immediate Steps	Convene a group of staff members, program residents, and community stakeholders to review policy and procedure for any barriers that might cause a specific racial group to avoid or be barred from crisis housing (e.g., culturally biased dress codes, racial balance of program staff, rules on previous behavior or residence, etc.)
	Review data on who was banned or terminated from crisis housing to check for disparities in who is asked to leave and for how long.
	Examine the program environment to ensure that it is culturally inclusive (what holidays are celebrated, bilingual signs, etc.).
	As a part of your exit process, provide anonymous ways for people to give feedback on racial and cultural treatment.
Long Term Step	Engage with other minority-serving organizations to exchange ideas about outreach and assessment processes that improve equitable outcomes.

Permanent Housing

Reviewing Who Gets Rapid Re-Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Subsidized Housing, or Other Housing Placements

	Action Steps
Immediate Steps	<p>If there are racial or ethnic disparities in permanent housing placements, consider the program design of your permanent housing model(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do(es) your model(s) address discrimination that may occur in the market (e.g., landlord engagement)?- Do(es) your model(s) take into account culturally-responsive, community-based supports the client/tenant might need?- Is your model(s) supportive of the person's employment or employment prospects?
	<p>Continuously examine the coordinated entry processes, including vulnerability assessments and housing matching tools to determine any potential disparate impact by race/ethnicity.</p>
Long Term Step	<p>Get technical assistance to re-design your coordinated entry process (which includes access, assessment, prioritization, and referral) if found to have disparate outcomes.</p>

Returns to Housing

Identifying Who Becomes Homeless Again

	Action Steps
Immediate Steps	Review and eliminate (where possible) policies that ban services for returning clients.
	Make previous experience of homelessness a prioritization factor during the coordinated entry process.
	Analyze characteristics of people who return to homelessness. Determine whether the results of structural racism (such as family configuration, criminal records, or undiagnosed disabilities, etc.) are contributing to housing instability.
	Aggregate and assess resources and interventions provided during any previous homeless episodes to identify what services and assistance could have been provided to prevent returns.
	Assess patterns of disparate placement in communities of higher/lower poverty, opportunity, transportation, jobs, schools, churches, family support, health care, etc. to see if the race of the consumer is a factor.
	Examine whether housing case management is engaging landlords who do not discriminate.
Long Term Steps	Partner with community-based systems that can support clients with jobs, health care, social support, etc. in a culturally-responsive manner.
	Analyze and replicate programs that place and maintain people in housing while achieving equitable outcomes.

Organizational Next Steps

Improving Your Organization's Racial Equity Practices

Action Steps

Identify a staff person or create a team that will be charged with either leading or ensuring that the racial equity work is undertaken.

Annually train all staff on race equity and inclusion.

Hold ongoing opportunities (i.e. brown bag lunches, conference presentations, internal race-based caucusing) to discuss racial equity and how to achieve progress. Invite all levels of staff, administration, consumers, board members, CoC boards, and partners.

Identify which other systems interact with the homelessness system. Start a committee with those community partners to address cross-system disparities.

Expand opportunities for people of different races/ethnicities who have lived experience of homelessness to provide expert advice and opinions on policy, procedures, and services delivery. Pay them as experts.

Create an annual anonymous survey to get feedback from staff and clients on the culture and climate of your services and system with regard to race, ethnicity, and equity.

Continue to analyze data to see if inequities persist.