



# THREE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 2021

Beginning in February 2020, the Three County Continuum of Care (Franklin, Hampshire, and Berkshire Counties in Western Massachusetts) made an explicit commitment to center racial equity in our homelessness response. Recognizing that Black and Latino people are dramatically overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness in our region, we undertook efforts to:

1. Analyze our data through a racial equity lens
2. Provide antiracism training for providers working in the homelessness system
3. Engage community partners to develop strategies to address racial inequities in our homelessness response
4. Develop a Racial Equity Action Plan to guide our work

This plan is the result of our efforts. Through the course of our work together in 2020, it has become clear that centering racial equity in our homelessness response is more urgent than ever. The murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and so many others shone a light on the continuing racial violence against Black people in our nation. The racial uprising in the wake of those murders revealed a broad-based commitment to change. And the racially disparate impact of the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout has devastated Black and Brown communities.

There is so much work to be done. Now is the time.

Our hope is that the plan serves as a guide as we work to operationalize our racial equity commitment. This summary includes strategic priorities, goals, and key activities. The full plan contains specific action steps and timelines, as well as measurable outcomes to assess our progress. We invite partners from across the community to join us as we move forward in our efforts to achieve a more just and equitable community in which all people, regardless of the color of their skin, have access to safe, stable housing.

## Strategic Priority 1: Coordinated Entry

**Goal:** Redesign the coordinated entry, assessment, and prioritization system to center racial equity.

**Key Activities:**

- 1.1 Examine models from across the country
- 1.2 Look more closely at data around racial differences in housing placements
- 1.3 Develop racially equitable tools and strategies for intake, assessment, prioritization, and system evaluation

## Strategic Priority 2: Data

**Goal:** Ensure that the CoC's homeless population reflects the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of general population of the region, without disparities in performance measures.

**Key Activities:**

- 2.1 Stratify coordinated entry data by race/ethnicity/language
- 2.2 Stratify performance measures in annual racial disparities report by REaL across all household types and project types to identify racial disparities
- 2.3 Consider strategies for cross-system data sharing and diversion planning (criminal justice, child welfare, health care)
- 2.4 Continue to monitor local data and strategies to support the health and economic impact of the pandemic with a focus on risk of homelessness/impact to people of color/increase stakeholder support of shelter needs and capacity

## Strategic Priority 3: Organizational Training and Development

**Goal:** Increase Organizational efforts towards antiracism work and support the hiring, retention, and leadership development of a diverse and inclusive workforce in CoC-funded organizations and partners.

**Key Activities:**

- 3.1 Increase motivation towards a more inclusive workforce at all levels of each agency in the CoC, free of racism and bias through education, communication, engagement
- 3.2 Increase the recruitment and hiring of diverse talent at all levels (including the CoC Board) by interrupting racism and mitigating bias
- 3.3 Increase retention and advancement of diverse talent

## Strategic Priority 4: Housing Continuum

**Goal:** Increase shelter capacity and availability of low-barrier housing accessibility for people of color experiencing homelessness.

**Key Activities:**

- 4.1 Increase stakeholder support of the needs of people of color experiencing homelessness in our communities
- 4.2 Ensure housing resources are up to date
- 4.3 Increase collaboration among housing providers and other stakeholders in reference to the needs of POC across the three counties in Western Massachusetts
- 4.4 Increase access to housing resources and unit availability in our communities
- 4.5 Increase provider education surrounding housing first models, evictions and housing denials

## Strategic Priority 5: Lived Experience

**Goal:** Bring people with lived experience of homelessness into decision-making roles.

**Key Activities:**

- 5.1 Involve people with lived experience of homelessness who are racially diverse in work groups and committees and pay them for their time
- 5.2 Make committee and work group structure more accessible through childcare, transportation, technology and other support
- 5.3 Train racially diverse people with lived experience to step into leadership roles

## Strategic Priority 6: Legislative Policy

**Goal:** Influence local and state policy and funding to support communities of color to prevent and end homelessness.

**Key Activities:**

- 6.1 Coordinate with the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness (WMNEH) to develop a racial equity policy agenda
- 6.2 CoC/WMNEH to meet with Western Massachusetts legislators to address policy agenda and specific legislation that supports the needs and interests of POC
- 6.3 Connect with other organizations that focus on racial equity advocacy
- 6.4 Promote engagement in advocacy with CoC partners and individuals
- 6.5 Expand the number of youth/young adults involved in legislative advocacy and widen the umbrella so more people and people with lived experience are involved

Through the strategies outlined in this plan, we will work together to center racial equity in everything we do to prevent and end homelessness in Franklin, Hampshire, and Berkshire Counties.