

How Connecticut Has Addressed Racial Inequities in Health

RACISM DECLARED A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

In June 2021, Connecticut enacted Public Act 21-35, formally declaring racism a public health crisis. The law recognized structural racism as a driver of inequities across health, housing, education, and economic opportunity.

The legislation established the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health (CREPH) to develop strategies that mitigate the impacts of disparities in health and social drivers of health.

IMPLEMENTING RACIAL & ETHNIC IMPACT STATEMENTS (REIS)

In 2018, Connecticut passed legislation allowing lawmakers to request Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements (REIS) on proposed bills. However, it was not operationalized until 2023, when REIS implementation was assigned to the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health. CREPH was charged with operationalizing and producing REIS. These statements are intended to analyze the impact a proposed bill may have on inequities, specifically whether the legislation is expected to widen or narrow racial and ethnic inequities.

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN STRATEGIC PLANNING

The UConn Health Disparities Institute partnered with the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health on a strategic planning process grounded in community-based participatory research.

Policy recommendations were developed collaboratively with:

- A Community Research Team
- CREPH Subcommittees
- UConn HDI and Commission staff

This process centered lived experience and community expertise in shaping equity-focused policy solutions.

**2021****2023****2024**

continued...

See Full Strategic Plan
wp.cga.ct.gov/creph/strategic-plan



2025-26

OPERATIONALIZING EQUITY ANALYSIS

The Commission hired analysts to implement REIS and conducted a pilot of the process in the 2026 legislative session. Starting in 2027, legislators will be able to request racial and ethnic impact statements on proposed bills. These informational tools are used to assess whether proposed legislation may increase or reduce racial disparities.

This marks a critical step toward institutionalizing equity analysis within legislative decision-making.

WHAT'S NEXT?



Connecticut has created tools and a commission to address the impact of racism on health—now the work is to position them to deliver systems change as reflected in lasting improvements in the lives of people of color.

- Holding leaders accountable to use Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements consistently and transparently.
- Turning CREPH's recommendations into action, not just reports.
- Continuing to invest in community-led solutions that reflect lived experience.
- Share the strategic plan far and wide.

Health equity will not happen automatically. It requires continued advocacy, organizing, and community leadership to ensure that policies translate into healthier families and neighborhoods.

Find the strategic plan reports here:

<https://wp.cga.ct.gov/creph/strategic-plan/>

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