

"Where you live determines your access to opportunities in education, in employment, in housing, and even in access to medical care."

— David R. Williams



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THE IMPACTS OF RACIAL DISPARITIES ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Health is shaped by much more than medical care. There are many factors that contribute to individual health and well-being. Factors such as housing, employment, education, and healthcare are primary drivers of health and health inequities. For many Connecticut residents, racism has created barriers to these essential resources and opportunities, resulting in persistent racial inequities in health.

The Strategic Plan for the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health (CREPH) recognizes that health inequities are rooted in systemic and institutional inequities. Community members consistently identified barriers to adequate housing, education, employment, healthcare, and economic opportunity as areas where racism continues to shape everyday experiences and health outcomes.

HOUSING: A FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH

Access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is essential to good health. Yet many residents described rising costs, discrimination, poor housing conditions, and a lack of accountability among landlords as obstacles to housing conducive to good health.

"The housing issue is, the housing crisis is, a health crisis. 'Cause it affects your ability to live... if you already have a chronic condition, it just exacerbates it... the stress around housing in Connecticut – it's ridiculous."

– Participant, Bridgeport, English language group

Housing instability creates chronic stress, worsens physical and mental health conditions, and forces families to make impossible choices between rent, food, healthcare, and other necessities.



EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITY UNEQUALLY DISTRIBUTED

Educational opportunities are not experienced equally across communities due to unequal access to resources, support, and opportunities for Black and Brown students. These inequities can limit educational attainment, economic mobility, and long-term health outcomes. Community members emphasized the importance of addressing barriers across the educational continuum, including access to higher education, childcare, and transportation.

"... In early childhood education, addressing some of the inequities we're seeing in our school system. We're trying to increase access to higher education for working adults by creating more continuing education opportunities and helping address financial barriers. Affordable childcare and transportation also prevent people from pursuing more education and job opportunities."

– Participant, Hartford, English language group

This perspective highlights how barriers to education are closely connected to economic opportunity, employment, and long-term health and well-being.

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EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

Fair wages and equitable employment opportunities are critical to health and financial stability. Community members described experiences where educational credentials are overprioritized in roles where lived experience should be just as valuable and where racial discrimination affects compensation and advancement.

It's almost like the system just sets you up to either depend on them or work...until you drop dead, but you[re] still gonna be poor... It's like, 'Okay, I either don't do anything, but if I do a little somethin' that's gonna put me over the threshold of like this resource that's makin' my ends meet, then I gotta pick up another job,' which then means...you have less time for yourself and your family. It's just – it's a vicious cycle."

– Participant, Hartford, English language group

Limited economic opportunity contributes to housing insecurity, food insecurity, stress, and poorer health outcomes across generations.

HEALTHCARE: ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND RESPECT

Quality healthcare should be available to everyone, but community members described challenges related to affordability, insurance coverage, discrimination, and unequal treatment.

There's a lot of people, they don't have insurance. They are afraid to go to the doctor or the hospital because it's expensive."

– Participant, Willimantic, English language group

When people cannot afford care or do not feel respected and heard within healthcare settings, health conditions often worsen, and trust in the healthcare system declines.

BREAKING THE CYCLE THROUGH THE CREPH STRATEGIC PLAN

The impacts of racial disparities extend far beyond individual experiences. These inequities are embedded in systems and policies that have historically, and continue to, disadvantage communities of color.

The CREPH Strategic Plan provides a roadmap for addressing these root causes by advancing equitable solutions across housing, education,

employment, healthcare, childcare, criminal justice, and economic opportunity. By transforming the systems that shape health, Connecticut can create healthier communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Learn more about the strategic plan recommendations here: wp.cga.ct.gov/creph/strategic-plan/

ADDITIONAL BARRIERS THAT REINFORCE INEQUITIES

Community members also identified several interconnected challenges that disproportionately affect communities of color:

- Limited access to affordable childcare
- Workplace exclusion and discrimination
- Under-resourced schools
- Housing displacement and gentrification
- Stigma surrounding mental health and seeking support
- Discriminatory hiring and housing practices for people with criminal records

"I definitely still say childcare is a struggle, because sometimes people can't get the amount of hours that they want or need to make ends meet."

"Don't punish people for working by taking away their childcare..."

These barriers often compound one another, making it harder for individuals and families to achieve economic stability and maintain good health.

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