



Population Health Advisory Committee

Racism is a public health crisis. The Population Health Advisory Committee advocates for anti-racist public health response to demonstrations against systemic injustice occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Population Health Advisory Committee offers unwavering support for our communities of color.

We are bound and committed to strive for a world that is equitable and just.

Institutional racism has led to the disproportionate burden of COVID-19 on Black and African-American communities and perpetuates police violence. We support protests against systemic racism, as these demonstrations are vital to the national public health and specifically to the health of Black and African-American people. We support the application of public health best practices during demonstrations without detracting from peoples' ability to gather and demand change.

We propose the following guidance to support the health of protesters by encouraging the following:

- Use of face coverings.
- Wear eye protection to prevent injury.
- Distance of at least 6 feet between protesters, where possible.
- Use signs and noisemakers (yelling can spread droplets).
- Staying at home when sick.
- Facilitate safe demonstrations by providing the following:
 - Masks, hand-washing stations, or hand sanitizer to demonstrators.
 - Eye protection, such as face shields or goggles, for protection against COVID-19 and chemical irritants used to disperse crowds.

We propose the following guidance to local governments to uphold the right to gather for protests and peaceful demonstrations by encouraging the following:

- Advocate that protesters not be arrested or held in confined spaces, including jails or police vans, which are some of the highest-risk areas for COVID-19 transmission.
- Discontinue the use of tear gas, smoke, or other respiratory irritants, which increases risk for COVID-19 by making the respiratory tract more susceptible to infection, exacerbating existing inflammation, and inducing coughing.
- Discontinue the use of crowd-control weapons—including rubber and wooden bullets—which are lethal at close range and inaccurate at longer distances.
- Provide increased free access to testing and care for people in the affected communities, with priority for those individuals who attend protests and their families.
- Listen, and prioritize the needs of Black and African-American people as expressed by Black and African-American voices.
- Actively assist and support voter registration activities and efforts for expanded access to voting.
- Actively help citizens communicate directly with elected officials by letter, phone or electronic means.

It is our sincere hope that all demonstrators will be able to follow these suggestions to ensure public health for themselves and the broader community. We continue to support demonstrators who are tackling the paramount public health problem of pervasive racism. We express solidarity and gratitude toward demonstrators who have already taken on enormous personal risk to advocate for their own health and the health of their communities. We pledge our services as allies who share this goal.