



Led by the American Trauma Society, PA Division
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Safe Kids Pennsylvania Commitment to Health Equity

“To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived -that is to have succeeded.” -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Safe Kids Pennsylvania (SKPA) is part of Safe Kids Worldwide’s global network dedicated to keeping kids safe from preventable childhood injury, which is the number one cause of death among children ages 1 to 19. These injuries range from accidental falls, to poisonings, car crashes, drownings, and many more. SKPA promotes and supports childhood injury prevention activities through education, collaboration, and advocacy throughout Pennsylvania.

Unfortunately, unintentional injuries impact various communities in different ways. Historical and cultural contexts have built a society in the United States of America where people of color and other marginalized groups are disenfranchised, discriminated against, and exploited. This social foundation affects the livelihoods of all marginalized individuals and people of color; it also deeply affects people with privilege. The structures of oppression harm everyone, but that harm is not necessarily equal in nature and has vastly different outcomes for those affected.

National data and our own PA Child Death Review Annual Reports (from 2015-2020, reflecting data from 2012-2017) show that Black and/or African American children die at a higher rate than those of other races -often more than twice that of white children.¹ Black infants are twice as likely to die in their first year of life than white infants. Because of differences in social contexts, Black people die at more than three times the rate of white people from

DEFINITIONS

Please note that the definitions of the following terms do not have scientific consensus across disciplines. The following definitions should be understood as an attempt to bring people a common understanding of unfamiliar language, not as a scientific measurement or anything similar. Further resources can be found at the end of this document.

Health equity can be understood as an ongoing process of providing every person with a fair and equitable opportunity to attain their full health potential. Ideally, it is the absence of health disparities between all populations. It means that everyone should be able to live their healthiest lives regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and/or any other marginalized identities or combinations of those identities.

¹ After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the Associated Press and many other organizations made the decision to capitalize “Black” but not “white.” More information can be found on page 3.

DEFINITIONS (CONT.)

The **social determinants of health (SDOH)** are “indicators of health and well-being in places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes,” according to the CDC. The five SDOH indicators are Economic Stability, Education Access and Quality, Health Care Access and Quality, Neighborhood and Built Environment, and Social and Community Context.

Simply put, a person’s social location - where they are born and live, where and/or if they go to school, where they are employed or if they are employed, etc. - have real impacts on their health. Their individual circumstances are actively shaped “by the distribution of money, power, and resources at global, national, and local levels” -all of which can be altered and changed. The primary way to improve individual health is to improve the SDOH through social policy, public health services, and other evidence-based programs.

heat stroke annually. American Indian and/or Alaska Native children (and adults) have higher rates of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)-related hospitalizations and deaths than any other racial group, and Black people and Hispanic people are less likely to receive follow-up care after a TBI incident. Black children and those who live within high-poverty zip codes have been disproportionately affected by unintentional poisoning fatalities. Even the Coronavirus pandemic is killing Black people at twice the rate of white people. This is not an issue of individuals having “poor health” or a group of people being particularly susceptible to injuries. This is systemic in nature, meaning that it is built into the foundation of our society through history, culture, law and policy, and worldviews.

In the same way that we question the teacher and their methods when an entire class of students fails a test, we must examine our histories and biases when we see the data listed above.

Following the footsteps of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as many other public health and multidisciplinary agencies throughout the USA, Safe Kids PA acknowledges and recognizes the harm of racism and all other forms of oppression and marginalization, as well as their various intersections within systems and individuals. We will continue to work towards increasing health equity throughout our Commonwealth by addressing the social determinants of health with our mission. Safe Kids PA stands with those who are working towards ending health disparities and oppressive social structures.

The reality of racism and other oppressions are not the work of any single person, but they do affect everyone in different ways. The contexts we find ourselves in are not our fault, but it is our responsibility to change those contexts to make the world a better place for all.

Reducing health disparities creates better health for all people, and inherent in this objective is working to end oppressive systems and unjust social standards. Through working to redeem these social conditions, we hope to make everyone breathe a little easier, and leave the world a bit better.

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FURTHER READING AND REFERENCES

GENERAL RESOURCES

About Social Determinants of Health (SDOH). Published by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/about.html>

AP says it will capitalize Black but not white. By David Bauder. Published by the Associated Press (AP News). 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/entertainment-cultures-race-and-ethnicity-us-news-ap-top-news-7e36c00c5af0436abc09e051261fff1f>

Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity Through Action on the Social Determinants of Health. Published by the World Health Organization, Commission on Social Determinants of Health. 2008. https://www.who.int/social_determinants/final_report/csdh_finalreport_2008.pdf

Health Equity. Published by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/index.html>

Health Equity Report 2019-2020: Special Feature on Housing and Health Inequalities. 2020. Published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Office of Health Equity. <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/health-equity/HRSA-health-equity-report.pdf>

Healthy People 2030. Published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

Promoting Health Equity: A Resource to Help Communities Address Social Determinants of Health. By LK Brennan Ramirez, EA Baker, M Metzler. Published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2008. <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/sdoh-workbook.pdf>

Racism and Its Effects on Pediatric Health. Published by the American Academy of Pediatrics. <https://www.aappublications.org/cc/racism-and-its-effects-on-pediatric-health>

RESOURCES ON DEFINITIONS

Fact Sheet: Health Disparities by the American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/topics/health-disparities/fact-sheet>

Health Disparities and Health Equity: The Issue is Justice by Paula Braveman, Shiriki Kumanyika, Jonathan Fielding, Thomas LaVeist, Luisa N. Borrell, Ton Manderscheid, and Adewale Troutman. 2011. Published in the American Journal of Public Health. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2010.300062>

Health Inequities, Social Determinants, and Intersectionality. N. Lopez and V. L. Gadsden. 2016. Published by the National Academy of Medicine. <https://nam.edu/health-inequities-social-determinants-and-intersectionality/>

What Are Health Disparities and Health Equity? We Need to Be Clear by Paula Braveman, 2014. Published in Public Health Reports. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3863701/>

What is Health Equity? by P. Braveman, E. Arkin, T. Orleans, D. Proctor, and A. Plough. 2017. Published by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>