

## MHAC Statement about Racism and the Behavioral Health Needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

*"The time is always right to do the right thing." - Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Never have words resonated more loudly than these words today.

The MHAC recognizes the impacts of systemic and systematic racism on the behavioral health of Ohioans who are Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). These impacts have traumatic physical, emotional, and psychological manifestations. We understand our responsibility to continue educating ourselves and those we interact with on the ways that racism and socioeconomic disparities impact BIPOC, and that our collective advocacy priorities must reflect the importance of this issue.

A long history of violence against BIPOC in our country culminated in protests regarding this brutality and the broader systemic racism that has persisted for centuries. These protests occurred while we were still in the throes of a pandemic that continues to disproportionately affect the Black community, further emphasizing the devastating impacts of individual and systemic racism. It is important that we continue to work together to ensure all Ohioans have access to behavioral health services. Together, we must move purposefully and with great conviction and urgency to abolish systemic inequities and deep seeded prejudices and biases that have been allowed to fester for far too long with tragic consequences. Join us by becoming a voice for change and creating the world we know should exist. We know we can do it together.

We celebrate the diversity of our members and of the individuals and families they serve and offer our ongoing commitment to the actions below to address systemic and systematic racism through our work. MHAC members, we appreciate the partnership that you and other community partners provide in helping us to achieve these items.

- Advocating for policies that address systemic and systematic racism in the mental health and addiction space, as specifically detailed in the advocacy agendas for each hub and the state office;
- Including systemic and systematic racism and our own implicit biases as areas for discussion in ongoing staff, Board, and committee meetings, allowing members to guide us on ways we can address these issues; and
- Sharing resources regarding mental health and addiction support for BIPOC in Ohio.

Sincerely,

MHAC State Board and Staff

[mhaadvocacy.org](http://mhaadvocacy.org)

