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Report of the Advisory Committee

Maryland OMHHD

Pursuant to section 2-104(d) of the Health-General Article, the Secretary of Health established the Advisory Committee on Minority Health (the "Advisory Committee") to work with the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (the "Office") in fulfilling the Office's duties and responsibilities described in section 20-1004 of the Health-General Article.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to advise the Office on ways to improve the health of racial and ethnic minority populations in the State of Maryland and fulfill the Office's duties and responsibilities in section 20-1004 of the Health-General Article.

Activities:

The Advisory Committee met on the first Thursday of each month in 2020 with the exception of August.

The Advisory Committee agreed to the following principles to guide its work. The Advisory Committee shall:

- A. Uphold and prioritize inclusion of the voices of communities in all aspects of the Committee's activities to assure that the work has value and benefit and is responsive to community interests;
- B. Apply an intersectoral lens to the analysis of health inequities, understanding that racial and ethnic minority status does not fully describe individuals. Race and ethnicity intersect with gender, age, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other identities, significantly impacting health equity;
- C. Uplift the historical roots of health inequities. Maryland's history powerfully shapes today's health inequities, whether related to the treatment of the people who first inhabited these lands, those brought here enslaved, or those who have recently arrived. The Advisory Committee will incorporate historical analysis throughout its work.

The Advisory Committee also provided comments to the Maryland Department of Health regarding racism as a public health threat. The Advisory Committee commended the department for its strong statement declaring that racism is a public health threat and committing to engage in meaningful partnerships throughout the state in an effort to dismantle racist and discriminatory policies. The

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Advisory Committee offered a number of recommendations as “action steps” to accompany the statement.

The Advisory Committee established five workgroups to provide focal consideration for priority issues. The workgroups are:

Institutional Power: The Institutional Power sub-committee’s goal is to promote the State’s identification and recognition of the policies, programs, organizations and processes that influence factors contributing to the “social determinants of health” (SDOH) (i.e., housing, employment, education, nutrition, public safety and income) that impact health and wellness of the “whole person.”

Equity Framework: The Equity Framework sub-committee’s goal is to promote identification and use of an equity framework that will assist the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (OMHHD) and the State of Maryland in creating organizational infrastructure/operations to support health equity and to guide decision-making for program and service development based on a social determinants of health perspective.

Data: The Data sub-committee had discussions pertaining to the quality, availability, applicability, and use of data for the various workgroups. Discussions revolved around issues of data collection (e.g., what data is being or needs to be collected, breakdown of demographic information), and availability of different sources of data available at various geographic levels.

Workforce: The workforce sub-committee seeks to assess the critical role of universities and training institutions such as Area Health Education Center (AHEC) in providing a properly educated workforce for an increasing knowledge-based economy.

Engagement and Practices: The Engagement and Practices workgroup will initiate its work after the Advisory Committee has had an opportunity to synthesize the findings and recommendations of the other groups during the next calendar year.

Sub-committee reports are attached.

Conclusion

In summary, the Maryland State Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities Advisory Committee’s first year efforts have been focused on building a foundation for the work of the committee moving forward. In so doing, the Advisory Committee has been able to identify an agenda for next year’s activities that are planned to include the following:

1. The Advisory Committee will establish a common language and understanding for a variety of terms frequently utilized in our communications to include: equity, intersectionality, stakeholders, and community so that the work of the committee can proceed with greater clarity.
2. The Committee has crafted a statement on racism to serve as an added commentary to complement the statement released by the Maryland State Health Department. Next

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year the group plans to receive responses to the statement as well as pursue the statement's implications for specific actions and identification of priority areas for consideration.

3. The established five workgroups will continue to evolve their respective objectives as well as integrate them with the efforts of the other workgroups and bring the findings and recommendations to the full committee for discussion and review.
4. The Advisory Committee will intentionally seek greater communication and, where appropriate, collaboration with a variety of organizations who are working and have a vested interest in health equity.
5. As the problems of the coronavirus pandemic continue to disproportionately impact people of color, the Committee will also examine the implications of the pandemic for minority health and health disparities.

It is hoped that the Advisory Committee on Minority Health, as evidenced by this report and the minutes of our regular convenings, is fulfilling the charge to the group as provide by the Maryland State Secretary of Health.