

States are receiving federal funds to address mental health and substance use disorders (SUD) through emergency COVID-19 funding. This financial support has created a unique opportunity to increase support, professional development, and innovation for providers, organizations, and service systems. It is critical to ensure that these initiatives also redress persistent structural forms of racism, discrimination, and intersectional oppression that limit access to lifesaving services and supports for People of Color (POC). Without ensuring racial equity and acknowledging colonialism, anti-Blackness, and xenophobia as endemic in the U.S., we will never achieve equal access to recovery, housing stability, economic opportunity, and well-being for all.

“The facilitators were able to construct an open, honest conversation about race in our society and how we can make change, even if it seems overwhelming.”

—Participant in an Ohio training

C4’s work leads with racial equity, to ensure that those who are most severely marginalized by racism are at the center of system and service design. We support recovery and behavioral health leaders to examine deeply rooted structures, systems, and beliefs that perpetuate racial inequities within the treatment and recovery continuum, and to determine how to advance recovery supports that are accessible, equitable, and sustainable. Some of the internal work undertaken by members and leaders of recovery and behavioral health agencies involves acting on a collective commitment to understand forms

of oppression, identifying anti-racist practices, learning to be leaders of conversations about racism with staff and board members, and implementing measurable action steps to shift organizational culture and results.

Recommendations

States and organizations need to prioritize the necessary time, resources, and support for inclusivity. Thoughtful collaboration is required for solutions and services to be equitable and sensitive to the unique needs of different communities. C4 can support states and behavioral health systems to:

- Advance equity across the state portfolio of service grants, training and technical assistance initiatives, and data and evaluation efforts. Allocate funding and establish clear expectations, guidance, and accountability that will advance racial equity across providers and practice, agencies, systems, and policies. Involve People of Color (POC) and individuals with lived experience in auditing grantee requirements in procurement efforts to be more inclusive.
- Build out and fund programs that are explicitly designed to address racial inequities in behavioral health and prioritize grantees that are primarily serving and led and staffed by Black people, Indigenous people, Asian people, Latino/a/x people and other POC.
- Integrate foundational knowledge about the various levels of racism and bias at play in the behavioral health and adjacent systems throughout all state-sponsored

training. Offer enhanced training opportunities that allow for deeper exploration of the role that individual providers and agencies play within communities and systems, and strategies to advance racial equity.

- Support technical assistance (TA) at the program/agency level that will help organizations to audit policies, practices, personnel, services, website and program materials, demographics, data, culture, and other factors utilizing a racial equity framework.

“It sparked my personal — and I believe our collective — imagination for how to engage in this work. I have new ideas percolating and know my team does as well. I feel more confident engaging in these conversations in the immediate future.”

—National training participant

- Facilitate racial equity discussions and learning within and across systems, with the goal of building knowledge, assessing sources of structural racism and other barriers to racial equity across service systems, and aligning goals and actions toward racial equity.

To learn more about C4's work with racial equity, recovery, and behavioral health, please contact us at training@c4innovates.com

About C4 Innovations

C4 Innovations (C4) promotes equitable access to recovery, wellness, and housing stability for people who are systematically marginalized. We are committed to reducing disparities and achieving equitable outcomes by promoting best practices for individuals, families, and communities affected by substance use, mental illness, trauma, and housing instability. Central to C4's core values is the involvement of people with lived experience in all of our work. Over one-third of C4 staff identify as having lived experience of substance use, mental illness, trauma, or homelessness.

Using state-of-the-art research, training, facilitation, and implementation strategies, C4 helps individuals, agencies, communities, and systems deepen the impact of their work. C4 helps to strengthen organizations at multiple levels through training, technical assistance, coaching, workforce development initiatives, implementation of evidence-based and best practices, capacity building, systems change, and strategic planning to develop leadership and long-term sustainability. C4 supports multidisciplinary teams and communities to facilitate approaches that are inclusive, integrated, and collaborative. We are known by our collaborators as an organization that is mission-focused, grounded in both research and real-world experience, committed to high quality, and being trustworthy and reliable partners.