



Washtenaw County Continuum of Care Equity Statement

Signaling a county-wide commitment to resolving racial inequities, in [September 2018](#) the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners (BOC) adopted a County Equity Policy and established the Washtenaw County Racial Equity Office. In [July 2020](#), the BOC officially declared racism a public health crisis.

The Washtenaw County Continuum of Care (CoC) recognizes that systemic racism exists in large part due to historical, perpetuated biases that create inequity within our community. And in accordance with the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, the CoC further recognizes that “without intentional intervention, inequitable outcomes linked to race, socioeconomic status and other [positionalities] will persist,” including within the homelessness response system.

The CoC therefore endeavors to understand and address the landscape of racial inequities in its policies and procedures, dissemination of information, and distribution of homeless resources to inform an intentional plan that addresses such inequities in Washtenaw County.

Mission: The CoC aims to intentionally and meaningfully engage with issues of racial equity in the homelessness response system to create positive, transformational change across the CoC. This includes working towards equitable access to CoC services and achieving just outcomes, as well as realizing the CoC’s capacity to address the impacts of inequities left by public systems tangential to homelessness.

The CoC seeks to approach racial equity from a place of learning, driven by earnest dialogue and active listening. It recognizes that individuals of color hold expertise in determining the effects of inequitable policies, practices, and interactions, and strives to create an atmosphere of inclusiveness, diversity, and engagement in all aspects of the CoC to ensure that both participants and staff are able to reach their full potential.

Vision: The CoC looks towards a vision of a thriving county where residents have equitable access to housing opportunities, free of socioeconomic and racial inequities. For the CoC, this includes equitable housing outcomes for participants regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or any other positionality.

Practice: The CoC aligns with the values and definitions outlined in the [Washtenaw County Equity Policy](#) focusing on individual, institutional, and structural measures to address inequities in Washtenaw County.

- **Individual:** All CoC staff and members of community partners share individual responsibility in achieving racial equity in the homelessness system. In addition to attending trainings offered by the CoC, individuals are responsible for seeking to understand their own conscious and unconscious biases and incorporating behavioral changes that support the goal of equity.
- **Institutional:** As part of Washtenaw County and in partnership with the Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED), the CoC will develop a Racial Equity Action Plan to advance the equity initiative within the Department and across the CoC. All items in the Racial Equity Action Plan will undergo a vetting process through the CoC Board.
- **Structural:** The CoC will continue to evaluate its progress in addressing inequities in homelessness and housing programs, as well as implications for the wider community.