



## **Washington County Board of Commissioners Statement on Equity and Inclusion during COVID-19**

In late February of this year, this Washington County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the adoption of an historic “Resolution on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” to guide the County’s efforts to advance racial equity and create a more inclusive community for all.

It stated clearly and unequivocally that Washington County promotes and values the principles of equity, fairness and social justice in relation to and across intersections of race, age, color, disability, faith, gender and other identities represented among our diverse community.





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The work of diversity, equity and inclusion at Washington County is all the more critical amid the COVID-19 crisis. Our community -- and the data -- reminds us that the effects of COVID-19 are not distributed equitably across our community.

As Washington County leadership, we stand in solidarity with employees and our diverse communities, that have experienced rising incidents of racism, threats and hate crimes.





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We are deeply concerned about the disproportionate impact of the crisis on our community members of color and groups impacted by inequities. Communities of color and other groups that have been historically marginalized often experience poorer health outcomes and therefore are at higher risk for medical complications and death due to COVID-19.

Washington County holds equity at the center of our response to COVID-19 and will continue to lead with race as we support our entire community through this crisis.





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Additionally, we know that this virus has effected our community in different ways. For some it means having to work from home or not being able to go on a planned vacation. But for others in our community they were left suddenly wondering how to pay their bills or where their family's next meal was coming from.

On top of these very real concerns for their basic needs, many communities are experiencing stigmatization and racism associated with the virus, causing extra stress and in some cases even experiencing threats to their lives.





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We want the community to know that our Health and Human Services Department as well as our emergency responders are working closely with community members every single day to provide care and contain the virus. We were the first county in the state to assign an equity officer and an equity team to our Emergency Operations Center to provide additional expertise and support.





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Our equity team, along with our Emergency Operations Center leadership, continue to identify, anticipate and recommend communications strategies to reach disproportionately impacted groups and to provide strategies for mitigating inequitable impacts within our community.





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If there's anything COVID-19 is showing us, it's that we're all much more dependent on one another than we might have thought. Going forward, we consider this a learning opportunity for how we can foster inclusion and fairness into our workplaces and throughout our community.

As neighbors, we are better when we support each other and when we work to support both our families and our community. We are always stronger when we work together. In times of crisis like we are experiencing right now, we are reminded of this.

