



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Black Lives Matter to Vermont Care Partners

Vermont Care Partners is deeply disturbed by the brutal murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers and the ongoing violence and discrimination against Black people and people of color that pervades our state and country. Racism is dehumanizing whether the words and actions are deliberate or unintentional. It cannot go on, must not be accepted, and must be actively fought against.

Vermont Care Partners condemns racism and values justice for all, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Our work is anchored in the principle that all must be free to exercise their rights and have equitable access to the resources and supports necessary to live healthy, safe, productive, and peaceful lives as active integrated members of our communities. Everybody benefits from living in equitable, diverse and inclusive communities.

As a network of 16 community-based agencies providing mental health, substance use disorder, and intellectual and developmental services and supports, Vermont Care Partners recognizes the effects of racism on the people and communities we serve, as well as on our staff. Our work informs us that having a mental illness, a disability, and and/or a substance use disorder is stigmatizing in and of itself and that for Black people and people of color that stigma is exacerbated. We strive to support all people to overcome stigma and discrimination that create obstacles to achieving one's dreams so all can reach their full potential.

As a network, we have been dedicated to exploring and challenging our own system of care, and Vermont at large, to address equity and racism. For the past four years our annual conference has been centered on understanding and developing solutions to inequity and racism in recognition of our own need to learn and grow as organizations that fully embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion. Our annual conference and webinar series are one way we educate the broader health care system. Additionally, we hold trainings for, and work in partnership with, local and state law enforcement to meet the needs of citizens in distress and to deescalate crises.

This is a critical juncture and we will strengthen our efforts as there is much more work to be done.

- As a provider network we will purposefully strive to identify, discuss, and challenge implicit bias and issues of race, color, ethnicity, and their impacts. This will include ongoing reexamination of our Centers of Excellence quality improvement program to continuously strengthen its focus on implicit bias and racism.
- As policy leaders we will reevaluate our education and training offerings to maximize attention to racial injustice and educate on best practices to address it.



- As service providers we will examine our services and partnerships with law enforcement to reduce racial injustice.
- As employers we will reexamine and share best practices for recruitment, training and retention of staff and contractors to promote diversity and equity.
- As advocates we will continue to speak out against racism and racial injustice

Vermont Care Partners stands together with our partners to address institutional and structural racism in our organizations, communities, state, and nation. We refuse to stand idly by. Listening, learning from those with lived experience, taking a stand, taking and mandating action, grieving, and healing are all needed right now. Our doors are open, all are welcome, and we commit to working harder for racial justice, equity, and inclusion.