

# Beyond COVID-19 with Equity

Health Equity Council

## Executive statement

One of the key problems with COVID-19 are the existing underlying health issues. Underlying health issues including cancer, kidney disease, lung disease, neurological diseases, diabetes, heart disease, Down syndrome, obesity, smoking, and substance use disorders make the virus deadlier to vulnerable populations. Because many of the underlying health issues have an equity component, each of the conditions needs to be looked at individually for common social and political determinants to increase policy impacts.

## Background

COVID-19, as a novel coronavirus, developed into a global pandemic that brought to light many historical policies which have contributed to health inequities. Negative experiences are common to many people of color, working class people, refugee and immigrant communities, and some social and political determinants of health have historically created barriers in fair opportunities for economic, physical, and emotional health. Social and political determinants of health are the over-arching conditions that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. These impacts are important to address as we move through this pandemic, into building our communities stronger, and preparing for the next pandemic.

## Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1: Ensure that health equity is a key component of all policy efforts**

Health in All Policies (HiAP) is an important public health approach that seeks the health impacts of all policies. Going a step forward with things such as Health Equity Impact Assessments, or researching equity impacts of policies prior to implementation will move us toward health equity.

### **Recommendation 2: Create a Community Health Improvement Plan that centers equity and social determinants of health**

Investigate the common social determinants that impact as many of the underlying issues that exacerbated and develop an improvement plan that takes into consideration largest impacts and does not leave out a specific group or specific issue. Use an equity lens in planning, considering, and approving budgets for community improvements.

### **Recommendation 3: Center women of color**

Center Women of Color in post COVID-19 long-term planning. A gender, class and racial justice analysis is critical to long-term planning and policy change.

### **Recommendation 4: Ensure community engagement**

Increase levels of community engagements at all levels of decision-making.

### **Recommendation 5: Educate decision makers**

Educate decision makers on the historical context of colonization and its impact on gender, race, and class; and on the use of equity-lens tools.

### **Recommendation 6: Improve data on racial inequities**

Improve the collection, analysis, reporting and use of disaggregated data and Social Determinants of Health

### **Recommendation 7: Increase funding for public health**

Increase funding for public health, community organizations working on the health of people of color, and other groups working on health equity efforts.

### **Recommendation 8: Reduce income, wealth, and educational gaps**

Health equity comes from social, political, and economic equity. Commit to living wages, guaranteed income, paid leave, and promotion of equitable workforce and economic development practices.