

# Racial Equity Forum Survey Results

September 10, 2020 Implementing Racial Equity in County Health Web Forum #2

## Background

On September 10th, 2020, County Health Public Health, Policy, and Planning (PHPP), Behavioral Health and Recovery Services' Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE), and the County Health Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE) cross-divisional team hosted "Sharing Challenges & Opportunities: Implementing Racial Equity in County Health Web Forum #2". This report summarizes the findings from the post-event survey sent to all San Mateo County Health staff, Boards and Commissions, and contracting partners, to collect respondents' feedback on the event (for those who attended), future engagement and interest in racial equity work in San Mateo County Health, and experiences of racism and discrimination in the workplace.

## Key Takeaways

- The majority of respondents were from County Health. Two-thirds (2/3) identified as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC). Less than one-third of the group are supervisors. Nearly all contractors and board/committee members who attended identified as white.
- Roughly one-third (1/3) of respondents attended the September 10 racial equity forum. Attendees found the small group discussions and hearing from leadership to be the most valuable components. Most attendees reported that parts of the event were valuable, though some reported they wanted to hear more about the actions being taken to address racial equity at County Health. For future events, respondents were interested in hearing panels of speakers - frontline staff, community representatives, and management/supervisors, and hearing an overview of the forthcoming Racial Equity Action Plan.
- About one-third (1/3) of respondents are interested in engaging in racial equity work, but many are unsure of where to start and feel limited by time and capacity issues. Those who would like to be involved are most interested in trainings and identifying racial equity actions within their work/programs.
- About one-fourth (1/4) of staff reported experiencing racial discrimination in the workplace. This varied somewhat by race/ethnicity. About one-third (1/3) of Black/African American and Latinx/a/o respondents reported experiencing racial discrimination at work. Roughly one-fifth (1/5) of respondents reported modifying their behavior or appearance at work to avoid discrimination, but half of Black/African American respondents and one-third (1/3) of Latinx/a/o respondents reported modifying their behavior, including language and appearance.
- Staff asked leadership to take action and be accountable for advancing racial equity in the workplace. Throughout the survey, respondents indicated they are looking for clear and direct action from leadership to address racial equity. Many recommended intensive trainings for leadership. Others indicated the HR and hiring processes need to be assessed critically, especially in who gets promoted and/or serves in leadership capacities.
- Just under half of staff reported there are enough resources dedicated to racial equity, yet they also said time and capacity issues are their greatest barriers to engaging with racial equity work.

## Respondents

220 individuals responded to the survey.

*Note: Across the survey, some responses may be lower than 220 because respondents did not have to fill out any question and may be higher than 220 because respondents could choose more than one answer.*

## Affiliation

*Please indicate your affiliation.*

Response	Count	Percent
Contracted partner (i.e. community-based organization)	14	0.06
County Health	195	0.89
Other stakeholder	12	0.05

## Race/Ethnicity

*What is your race/ethnicity?*

Response	Count	Percent
Asian	51	0.23
Black or African-American	27	0.12
Latinx/a/o	53	0.24
Middle Eastern	6	0.03
Multi-racial	16	0.07
Native American or American Indian	8	0.04
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	6	0.03
Other	5	0.02
Prefer not to state	1	0.00
White or Caucasian	77	0.35

## Supervisors

*Do you supervise staff?*

Response	Count	Percent
No	150	0.68
No response	2	0.01
Yes	68	0.31

## September 10, 2020 Forum

### Forum Attendance

*Did you attend the September 10th Racial Equity Web Forum?*

Response	Count	Percent
No	140	0.64
No response	5	0.02
Yes	75	0.34

### Technical Issues

*Did you experience technological challenges?*

Response	Count	Percent
No	57	0.26
No response	148	0.67
Yes	15	0.07

### Most Valuable Aspect

*What was the most valuable part of the Sept. 10th racial equity web forum?*

Respondents found two aspects of the forum most useful - the small group discussions and hearing from leadership/speakers/panelists. Many respondents also found the entire event to be valuable.

Response	Count	Percent
All of the above	20	0.09
Hearing from leadership	28	0.13
I wasn't able to attend the webinar	1	0.00
Listening to the speakers	2	0.01
Other	1	0.00
Overview of how to get involved	11	0.05
Overview of learnings from July 15th event and post survey	10	0.05
Small group discussion and large group report outs	29	0.13
Wellness Activity	5	0.02

### Least Valuable Aspect

*What was the most least valuable part of the Sept. 10th racial equity web forum?*

Most respondents indicated that the entire event was beneficial. Some shared that the presentations lacked substance and felt canned.

One person said,

“While I appreciate leadership supports this effort, the context of their presentation seemed canned and not applicable to what action is being taken in SMC.”

Response	Count	Percent
All of the above	4	0.02
Hearing from leadership	6	0.03
I wasn't able to attend the webinar	1	0.00
Nothing - it was all valuable	47	0.21
Other	6	0.03
Overview of how to get involved	4	0.02
Overview of learnings from July 15th event and post survey	1	0.00
Small group discussion and large group report outs	6	0.03
Wellness Activity	6	0.03

## Future Events

*What would you like to see in future racial equity forums?*

Panels with frontline staff and community partners were the most requested future events. Respondents are interested in learning more about the experiences of staff and community members who have experienced racial discrimination.

Other respondents are interested in hearing more specific information from County Health leadership on how equity is being considered and implemented in practice:

I would like to hear “What racial equity means to our leadership?” in their own words and to provide tangible actions that they are willing to take vs. just theoretical ideals. Real examples of budget/program decisions that they executed with an equity lens and how that influenced their decisions.

Some respondents discussed wanting to know more about hiring practices and the race and ethnic backgrounds of staff, boards, and committees:

There [are] also professional status inequities, share with us the ethnic backgrounds of leadership - who is getting promoted? Who is being bypassed for promotions/advancement (within Health & County as a whole)? What is the ethnic make-up of committees/boards - sometimes I feel as if I am the only brown person in a meeting where the majority are Caucasian.

Response	Count	Percent
A panel for division directors and Supervisors/Managers: what it looks like to lead a division and/or team with racial equity to explore models and best practices on leading with racial equity lens	72	0.33
A panel of community partners and clients to provide insight for County Health staff on how to better support community needs	92	0.42
A panel of frontline staff to share experiences related to racial inequities and share efforts to advance racial equity	101	0.46
Learn more about County efforts outside of Health to advance equity	67	0.30
Other	26	0.12

Overview of priority actions from the Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) once a draft is ready to provide feedback on actions and implementation	76	0.35
Q/A session on racial equity with leadership (Louise Rogers and Srijia Srinivasan). If selected, please indicate questions or topic areas you would like leadership to address in comment box below.	28	0.13

## Interest in Racial Equity Work

### Involvement in Racial Equity Work

*Would you like to be more involved in County Health racial equity work?*

Roughly one-quarter of respondents indicated they would be interested in being involved in County Health racial equity work.

Response	Count	Percent
No	37	0.17
No response	35	0.16
Unsure	86	0.39
Yes	62	0.28

### Engagement with Racial Equity Work

*Which of the following options are you interested in engaging with?*

Respondents are interested in multiple ways to get involved. A majority of respondents are interested in learnings and/or trainings. There is also interest in identifying racial equity work in one's own work/program and advancing the work through that structure. Respondents were also interested in learning about existing health equity initiatives.

One respondent asked for more clear and robust communication on health equity work:

"I'm interested in learning more about what we are currently doing. What has GARE accomplished? What are the group's goals? What are the Health Equity Initiatives? What has each initiative accomplished? What are their barriers? Plans? What kind of people/skills are you looking for on the committees? What are the committees? What is the time commitment? ...Basically, I think there is a lack of communication and awareness among staff what issues Health is faced with and what we're doing about it.

Response	Count	Percent
Already involved in GARE	2	0.01
Health Equity Initiatives	30	0.14
Identify racial equity actions within your work/program and work within your supervisory structure to advance	43	0.20
Interested in all options	34	0.15
Joining GARE team committees	14	0.06
NA	1	0.00
None	1	0.00

Other	5	0.02
Review racial equity readings, videos and other learning materials provided by the GARE team	34	0.15
Trainings	55	0.25

## Barriers to Engagement with Racial Equity Work

*What is the biggest barrier to engage in and advance racial equity in your role?*

The majority of respondents indicated they lack time and capacity for racial equity work. They also feel that they lack resources and skills/knowledge. Some respondents did not know what the goals/action steps were and there was uncertainty on how to proceed.

One respondent asked,

“What will success look like and how will this be achieved?”

Response	Count	Percent
Lack of resources (i.e. funding and/or staff)	46	0.21
Lack of skills/know-how	56	0.25
No barriers	5	0.02
Other	11	0.05
Support from Supervisor/Manager	25	0.11
Time and capacity issues	114	0.52
Unsure	6	0.03

## Experiences of racism and discrimination among respondents

Respondents described their experiences of racism and discrimination in the workplace.

### Experiences of Discrimination

*Have you experienced racial discrimination at work?*

About one-fourth (1/4) of staff reported experiencing racial discrimination in the workplace. This varied somewhat by race/ethnicity. About one-third (1/3) of Black/African American and Latinx/a/o respondents reported experiencing racial discrimination at work.

Response	Count	Percent
No	123	0.56
No response	41	0.19
Yes	56	0.25

### Modification of Behavior to Avoid Racism or Discrimination

*Have you felt the need to modify your behavior at work to avoid racism in your work life? For example, did not share feedback, taken a county car versus your personal vehicle, etc.*

- Roughly one-fifth (1/5) respondents reported modifying their behavior or appearance at work to avoid discrimination, but half of Black/African American respondents and one-third (1/3) of Latinx/a/o respondents reported modifying their behavior, including language and appearance. They may change the words they use, change their physical appearance, or avoid bringing certain foods to the workplace. One respondent shared:

“I have felt like I have to turn down my blackness and tip toe around a office. I have not shared on some issues [due] to race. I always watch how I sound when I talk to not be “the stereotypical” black male in the office, sometimes talking as close to Caucasian colleagues to blend in when I can.”

- They also frequently discussed *not* sharing their views or not speaking up:

“My English is not excellent, I speak with an accent, and look and think different from native coworkers; this has created situations in which my views or opinions have not been taken seriously and some coworkers do not expect high level of competence from me, I find myself making efforts to modify my behavior so as to fit in, but the precedent still exists and I often feel discouraged to participate.”

Response	Count	Percent
No	131	0.60
No response	39	0.18
Yes	50	0.23

### Belonging

*Are there things that County Health can do to increase your sense of belonging and of safety? Safety refers to comfort in expressing yourself and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule, or denial of experience. That you experience a supportive, non-threatening environment both physically and mentally.*

While there was a general request for more training for all staff, and for continued conversations, respondents indicated that the responsibility to increase a sense of belonging and safety lies with leadership (supervisors, managers, and executives) in County Health.

“Management doesn’t recognize its failure to ensure an environmental where everyone feels safe to express themselves without ridicule.”

Another respondent said:

“Supervisors and managers need to be more involved and “buy-in” to the concept that racial injustice impacts their supervisees and that supervisors and managers also need to engage in self-reflection.”

Staff would like to see intensive training for leadership to address their internal biases, prejudices, and how their actions might affect the people they supervise. One respondent indicated:

“[Teach] leadership how to have complex conversations about race+ (LGBT issues, colorism, classism, ableism). If they shut down the conversations or get defensive, it makes it hard for the team to go there.”

Overall, leadership can “validate [staff] experience and continue to advocate at all levels for racial equity.”

Response	Count	Percent
No	101	0.46
No response	47	0.21

Yes 72 0.33

## Resources Allocated

*Do you feel our resources are being allocated sufficiently for racial equity work?* Just under half of staff reported there are enough resources dedicated to racial equity, yet they also said time and capacity issues are their greatest barriers to engaging with racial equity work.

Response	Count	Percent
No	86	0.39
No response	35	0.16
Yes	99	0.45