



# SUMMARY

## Advancing **equity** through measurement

### Purpose

The Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties (MHRB) works with care providers and community partners to find strategic, cross-systems solutions to the most pressing mental health and substance use concerns in the counties it serves. This includes efforts to advance equity. **Behavioral health equity** refers to the right to access quality health care for all populations regardless of the individual's race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation or geographical location. This includes access to prevention, treatment and recovery services for mental health and substance use disorders.

In June 2020, MHRB adopted a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis and committed to taking meaningful action, with a focus on Black communities in Clark, Greene and Madison Counties.

### Community engagement process

MHRB engaged Black communities through a series of virtual and in-person discussions in 2020-2022:

- Focus groups in December 2020-September 2021 (one for each county)
- Community forum in October 2021
- Virtual roundtables in February 2022 (one for each county)
- Community forum in March 2022

In December 2021, MHRB contracted with the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO) to summarize the findings of these community conversations. The following are key insights from the summary:

- Black community members are **not treated with dignity and respect** in behavioral health settings, and that affects mental health.
- Respondents described a need for a diverse behavioral health **workforce** that is trustworthy and understands their experiences.
- Local **leaders and providers** should reflect the communities they serve.
- Providers should be **located in the neighborhood**, accessible and part of the community.
- **Stigma** about behavioral health in the Black community needs to be addressed.
- **Young people** struggle the most and need prevention and early intervention.

Drawing upon these qualitative findings, HPIO worked with MHRB to plan the Advancing Equity through Measurement project. The purpose of the project was to provide intensive technical assistance to MHRB staff focused on measuring and improving access to care and mental health and substance use outcomes for Black residents across the life course. The result is a detailed plan with measurable objectives, trend data and plans for improving outcomes. An overview of the objectives is provided on the next page.

Drawing upon insights gained through community engagement and a review of available data, MHRB identified five goals to improve well-being in Black communities:

**1** Prevent mental health and addiction-related crises and deaths among Black community members

**2** Improve the quality of behavioral health care for Black youth and adults

**3** Ensure Black children, youth and families thrive in their home, school and community

**4** Strengthen behavioral health workforce diversity and equitable location of services

**5** Build capacity to collect actionable equity data in the future

# Objectives

## Goal 1. Prevent mental health and addiction-related crises and deaths among Black community members



- **Objective 1.1.** Reduce youth suicide attempts, as measured by emergency department (ED) encounters
- **Objective 1.2.** Reduce youth overdoses, as measured by ED encounters
- **Objective 1.3.** Reduce adult suicide attempts, as measured by ED encounters
- **Objective 1.4.** Reduce adult overdoses, as measured by ED encounters
- **Objective 1.5.** Reduce suicide and drug overdose deaths (all ages)

## Goal 2. Improve the quality of behavioral health care for Black youth and adults



- **Objective 2.1.** Improve timely follow-up after hospitalization for mental illness (among Medicaid enrollees)
- **Objective 2.2.** Improve timely follow-up after ED visit for mental illness (among Medicaid enrollees)

## Goal 3. Ensure Black children, youth and families thrive in their home, school and community



- **Objective 3.1.** Reduce out-of-home placements
- **Objective 3.2.** Reduce school suspensions and expulsions among K-12 students
- **Objective 3.3.** Increase connections to trusted adults among middle and high school students

## Goal 4. Strengthen behavioral health workforce diversity and equitable location of services



- **Objective 4.1.** Increase understanding of workforce diversity among MHRB-contracted provider staff
- **Objective 4.2.** Increase service opportunities in underserved areas

## Goal 5. Build capacity to collect actionable equity data in the future



- **Objective 5.1.** Increase ability to monitor youth wellbeing (disaggregated by race) through coordinated collection of school-based surveys
- **Objective 5.2.** Increase ability to monitor client satisfaction (disaggregated by race) among community members served by MHRB-contracted mental health and substance use disorder treatment and recovery providers through coordinated collection of a standardized client survey
- **Objective 5.3.** Increase ability to monitor crisis service quality (disaggregated by race)
- **Objective 5.4.** Increase ability to assess provider capacity to effectively address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) through a provider survey

## Next steps

MHRB will use this document to guide the implementation, evaluation and improvement of equity activities over the next seven years. To access more specific information about these objectives, including baseline data and a continuous quality improvement plan, visit the [Advancing Equity through Measurement detailed plan](#).

