

Flint/Genesee County Continuum of Care MI-505

Submission for the
Coordinated Entry Equity Demonstration Round 2

- **Why is it urgent for your community to participate in Round 2 of the Demo?**

Our community is a microcosm of the disparities that are present throughout the nation and the state of Michigan. Genesee County and particularly the city of Flint has seen an economic downturn, a nationally televised water crisis, severe poverty, an affordable housing crisis and the effects of the global pandemic in the recent years. Each of these factors has caused marginalized populations to suffer immensely and has only done more to divide the races and cause additional inequities.

These marginalized populations have increased significantly to include those living in the LGBTQ+ and Latino communities within the county. The racial equity barriers have come to produce even higher rates of segregation, unemployment, and crime (particularly violent crimes).

Our homeless population has a high percentage of African American and Latino individuals and families. We have not yet found systemic methods to impact the racial disparities that exist within those residents experiencing homelessness. A high percentage of those that we encounter are undeserved, those who can't stay in shelters due to increased mental health disorders, people who fear being judged and threatened, and those concerned for personal safety for belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. Those in the LGBTQ+ community are experiencing discrimination in housing as well as racial inequity.

It is urgent for our community to receive the support and technical assistance to focus on racial equity in our community because it impacts the effectiveness of our system to adequately address the needs of ALL of our residents.

Recent data suggests that those experiencing homelessness are increasingly vulnerable due to some form of disability or mental illness. Our community is seeing an increase in homelessness presumably due to the compounded effects of recent AND systemic events which disproportionately impact minority communities.

- **What is the level of support from your CoC leadership, membership and other stakeholders?**

The Flint/Genesee County CoC leadership is supportive. Many agency leaders have verbalized their desire to change the way we do business in serving those experiencing homelessness and engage in creating more equitable systems.

We have a strong level of support from our CoC membership. Many have communicated seeing impactful and meaningful improvements in our processes compared to years ago. In addition, the CoC membership understands the problems that the LGBTQ+ community is facing and discusses often things that can be done to meet those needs. Many CoC members have participated in the Truth Racial Healing and Transformation work being led by the Community Foundation of Greater Flint and are doing their own internal diversity, equity and inclusion work.

The strength of the Flint/Genesee County CoC is that it is a diverse and engaged cross sector group of people and organizations at varying levels of housing and human services, administration and strategic leadership, including philanthropy, health, education and workforce agencies. As a result, there is strong support from the CoC to provide programs and opportunities that would help mitigate the effects of the imbalance in system.

Our CoC has been undergoing a lengthy reorganizing and charter review process and is on the cusp of implementing the same. The core leadership group is strong, members and stakeholders are committed to the community and race equity issues. As such, the Flint/Genesee County CoC is well positioned to pursue this opportunity.

- **What previous TA engagements has your community participated in?**

The Flint/Genesee County CoC has received HUD provided TA for CoC capacity building. In addition, the CoC has sought consultants to support the Point-in-Time process, Governance Charter development, vulnerability prioritization training, and data management through a nationally recognized HMIS expert.

- **Do you have a core team of individuals meeting regularly to have racial equity conversations that includes Black, Indigenous, Latinx and all people of color, and people with lived expertise of homelessness?**

We have not convened a CoC diversity sub-group although all of the necessary entities are involved in committee work, such as the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Quality by Name List (QBNL). These committees frequently engage in conversations referencing equity, racial disparity, housing stability among diverse populations and the need for systemic change.

Membership organizations of the CoC are engaging in conversations among their individual groups and sharing the lessons learned at the CoC table. There are currently regular monthly meetings at the intermediate school district (ISD) that address the systems and programs regarding racial equity across the county public, private and charter schools.

The local Wellness Services staff and consumers meet and talk about how hard it is for individuals and families who live with HIV and AIDS, and those in the LGBTQ+ community to find housing. They empower those they serve to advocate for their needs on an individual basis as they do the same at the CoC table.

Lived experience engagement is a priority for our community and the CoC leadership and membership under the new charter. Rather than have specific isolated meetings to address racial equity, the CoC leadership believes that to be effective racial equity dialogue needs to be included in all aspects of CoC work and include those who have lived experience.

- **In what ways is your community willing to do transformational equity work to prioritize input and strategies from people with lived expertise and Black, Indigenous, Latinx and all people of color in ending homelessness, and how would you reimagine this for your community?**

Our community is resilient, willing and known to pursue unconventional methods to address emerging needs. When the pandemic was having direct racial implications the Governor created a Coronavirus Racial Equity Task force led by a local leader here in Flint. We would like to see the same zeal and energy enacted to combat the racial inequity of individuals and families that are experiencing homelessness.

The community has rallied around supporting the statewide eviction diversion project, a homeless court criminal diversion program, and opportunities to increase focus around affordable and supportive housing expansion opportunities. These efforts are all impacting the targeted individuals favorably during trying times. The CoC envisions a community where the necessary supports and programs can coexist to provide a safety net for ending homelessness.

The first strategy is providing opportunity for people with lived experience of Black, Indigenous, Latinx and people of Color to have a voice in creating the solutions. The CoC leadership and membership is committed to engaging with those living the experience and talk about the ways they would like to see systems improved and how to change them.

Our community is willing to do the transformational equity work by receiving input and strategies from our BIPOC partners to identify the inequities, address the systemic barriers, address discrimination, and create interventions to increase housing options of all kinds to end homelessness

- **Please share any other community efforts toward racial equity that might be helpful to include.**

Flint has recently created a homeless court program that allows for people experiencing homelessness to resolve most civil infractions and misdemeanors by crediting their efforts to improve their lives toward any outstanding fines, costs and jail time. The Flint community is also in the process of advancing an ordinance to stop source of income discrimination which will require landlords to rent to people that have housing choice vouchers.

The Greater Flint Health Coalition and numerous non-profits and educational entities have recognized that racism is a public health crisis and are rallying for community members and organizations to collectively convene our power and voice to address this challenge.

The ISD began an employee wide Cultural Competence Training in April 2021 and have trained 100's to identify, understand and open the dialogue within their school communities to address diversity and racial equity.

- **Do you have anything else to add that might be helpful?**

There are agencies that create rules and expectations on who they will serve and thereby creating barriers for people looking for help. We need to create systemic change to remove those barriers.

In addition, we must explore the racial dynamics that are present in local educational outcomes if we are going to adequately address these concerns. We know that the number one predictor of unemployment is race, quickly reinforced by educational achievement. Impoverished communities that are funded due to a tax structure of property values imposes an economic structure of oppression that perpetuates racism, classism and ultimately homelessness.