What is a Racial Equity and Equity Lens?

Historically, systemic racism has centered whiteness (white supremacy culture). This results in a power differential (oppression) and tends to perpetuate the same system, where power remains connected with whiteness and white leadership. This tool is designed to help us understand these structures of oppression and their impact so that we may develop appropriate solutions that move communities that have historically been left at the margins to now also be centered. Antiracist work never ends it is an everyday commitment. Privilege creates a divide and our solutions depend on how we go about reducing oppression within our organization and profession. This work highlights the intersectionality of feminism and racism, which can inform the work of developing a new paradigm with equity as its foundation.

A racial equity lens is a set of questions we ask ourselves when we are planning, developing or evaluating a policy, document, publication, program or decision. It helps us assess whether we are taking in the perspectives of the racially diverse people and communities we intend to serve, and whether our policies/documents are resulting in equitable or inequitable outcomes.

An equity lens helps us see where challenges and opportunities exist, so that we can make intentional steps to ensure fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all midwives and the families that they serve. This will result in outcomes that more effectively distribute power and decenter only whiteness.

Equity Lens Tool

1. What is the policy, document, publication, program or decision under review?

2. What group(s) experience are not included with respect to this policy, document, publication, program or decision? Are they at the table? (If not, why?)

3. How might the policy, document, publication, program or decision affect the missing group(s)? How might it be perceived by the group(s)? How can their voice be elevated in this initiative/decision?

4. Does the policy, document, publication, program or decision improve, worsen, or maintain existing inequities? Be sure to elaborate on the details of this assessment. Does it identify, dismantle, and result in a *systemic* change intended to address institutional racism? How will the power and voices of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals be elevated in this initiative/decision?

5. What are intentional benefits or unintended consequences will the policy, document, publication, program or decision produce for the affected group(s)?

6. Based on the above questions and team responses, please identify possible revisions to the policy, document, publication, program or decision under review.

7. What next steps are recommended and how will it be advanced?

References and Resources:

- APA Style: Race and Ethnic Identity: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities
- Racial Equity Toolkit: https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf
- Achieving Health Equity: A Guide for Health Care Organizations: http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/IHIWhitePapers/Achieving-Health-Equity.aspx
- Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide: https://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide/
- Racial Equity Tools: https://www.racialequitytools.org/home
- Health Equity: http://www.ihi.org/Topics/Health-Equity/Pages/default.aspx
- The Role of Senior Leaders in Building a Race Equity Culture: https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/organizational-effectiveness/senior-leaders-role-in-building-race-equity?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIz6uNx7626gIVGuy1Ch0BWQdQEAAYAyAAEgKYjvD_BwE
- On Racism: A New Standard for Publishing on Racial Health Inequities: https://www.healthaffairs.org/do/10.1377/hblog20200630.939347/full/

How To Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to ensure that a racial equity and equity lens (which may extend beyond systemic racism) is applied to all work across the organization.

This is essential work that may challenge ingrained subconscious cultural beliefs; thus, an intentional approach is needed. When discomfort arises, one can use it as an indicator of the need to develop greater competence in using an equity lens. Just as with clinical skills, competence comes through leaning in rather than moving away. Intentional learning, constructive critique, repetition of the desired action, and mentoring all facilitate professional growth and behavioral change. This toolkit is about intentionally using an equity lens to create behavioral and cultural change in order to dismantle dysfunctional institutional systems and rebuild them so they function in an equitable manner across the organization.

When in doubt about how to address identified systemic racism during this process, speak up; acknowledge both the apparent racism and the difficulty in moving forward. Be specific; identify and quantify the issues. Please apply the equity lens as if your life depended on it; as it does for so many Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).

1. **What is the policy, document, publication, program or decision under review or development?** For systemic change to occur, every policy, document, publication, program or decision needs to be examined using an equity lens. This provides an opportunity to identify and address bias within the item under review. Documents or items can be inventoried and prioritized for review based on topic, client or stakeholder concerns, or other objective criteria. A timeline and action plan for timely review will inform stakeholders and indicate when to invite participation when appropriate; adhering to the timeline demonstrates commitment to this work.

2. **What group(s) experience are not included (excluded) with respect to this policy, document, publication, program or decision? Are they at the table? (If not, why?)** Each policy, document, publication, program or decision should be examined for its' relevance to *all* stakeholders and members. Seek out content experts and reviewers from the missing groups whenever possible. Inviting a diverse group of developers, guest editors and reviewers can enhance the racial equity review process. Create ad hoc positions to ensure the right stakeholders are present in the development or review process to ensure an equity lens is effectively applied, issues are identified, and appropriate revisions are received.

   How might the policy, document, publication, program or decision affect the missing group(s)? How might it be perceived by the group(s) identified? How can their voices be elevated in this initiative or decision? Understanding how the policy, document, publication, program or decision might affect BIPOC is necessary. This can be done in a number of ways. Seek out content experts, guest editors and reviewers from the missing groups. Listen to the invited participants. Explore scenarios of how the content or language used might be perceived, interpreted or challenged. Develop a racial equity advisory group lead by and primarily or exclusively made up of BIPOC who can provide insight into how materials may be perceived. Acknowledge their work and comments within the materials. Review citations and language to ensure they are representative of current best practice standards, and that cited

materials meet the racial equity standard desired.

3. **Does the policy, document, publication, program or decision improve, worsen, or maintain existing inequities? Be sure to elaborate on the details of this assessment. Does it identify, dismantle, and result in a *systemic* change intended to address institutional racism? How will the power and voices of Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color (BIPOC) individuals be elevated in this initiative/decision?** Systemic change is the goal of this review process. Systemic change should intentionally elevate BIPOC interests and acknowledge the untoward effects of prior versions of the policy, document, publication, program or decision. Explicit acknowledgement of the effects of racism, colonization, or oppression specific to the topic are appropriate to include in the text or language. A description of the changes made, and their rationale, may be indicated in some instances or be included as a matter of course. Clear demonstration of the intent to dismantle and rebuild systems exclusive of institutional racism improves transparency and challenges stakeholders and members to examine their actions and beliefs. Systemic institutional change occurs through concrete action as well as policy, and for this reason, overt and covert institutional racism and practices that are consistent with oppression must be identified and acknowledged, and expectations for future behavior clearly delineated. There must be a mechanism to address concerns that arise, including internal guidance on how to act to demonstrate the organization's commitment to address and dismantle systemic racism when complaints arise about the review process or changes in the policy, document, publication, program or decision that elevate the interests of BIPOC.

4. **What are intentional benefits or unintended consequences will the policy, program or decision produce for the affected group(s)?** Specify the intended benefit of effect of the policy, document, publication, program or decision on BIPOC. Explore and acknowledge the potential for unintended consequences. Invite BIPOC reviewers to identify potential unintended consequences. List all possible concerns identified in the working document for later review and action if needed. Acknowledge the potential for unintended consequences in the document. When possible, include a mechanism so BIPOC can respond and raise concerns when unintended consequences arise, and a mitigation plan can be implemented. A statement referring to this Tool and the process of applying a racial equity/equity lens can be developed for inclusion going forward.

5. **Based on the above questions and team responses, please identify possible revisions to the policy, program or decision under review.** Be sure recommendations are concrete, actionable, and effectively reduce institutional or systemic bias. Working documents can provide the rationale for the change and a summary of discussions to allow leadership or stakeholders to revisit the review process through a quality improvement lens and identify any gaps or areas for improvement. Describe recommendations to identify and address institutional racism within the item. Develop a plan to dismantle the existing evidence of white privilege in the item and replace with a *systemic* change intended to promote equity. Identify the concrete actions that serve to demonstrate this change; these actions must be attainable,

measurable, and able to be assessed objectively.

6. **What next steps are recommended and how will they be advanced?** Be systematic when delineating next steps. Create an action plan and timeline that is realistic and identifies individual and group responsibilities along with potential resources for revision of the policy, document, publication, or program. Include a reliable follow-up mechanism to ensure no aspect of the revision falls between the cracks and participants are held to the timeline and to carry out recommended actions. A sequential review process (content, language, racial equity, equity, etc.) can be used to examine, refine, and finalize draft documents.

We hope this guide will be helpful in your anti-racism work. If you have additional recommendations or comments, please contact the ACNM National office.

Equity Lens Tool
Checklist

1) Identify the policy, document, publication, program or decision under review:

   a) Identify the priority and timeline for review:

2) Identify who needs to be included to ensure all voices are heard with respect to this policy, document, publication, program or decision.

   a) Name/contact information:

3) Verify that group discussions are held related to

   a) Existing inequities are identified and dismantled

   b) *Systemic* changes to address institutional racism

   c) Specific language to elevate the power and voices of Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color (BIPOC)

   d) Unintended consequences are explored and identified

4) Identify possible revisions to the policy, program or decision under review.

5) Revise document.

6) Identify next steps and how they will be advanced:

   a) Timeline/Responsibilities

   b) Reviewers

7) Review document for

   a) Content

   b) Citations

   c) Language

   d) Racial equity

   e) Equity

   f) Format

   g) Other:

8) Submit for approval

Citation: