



February 4, 2021

Dear Advisory Committee for the Nevada Office of Minority Health and Equity:

Thank you for your letter in support of the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Minority Health and Equity (OMHE) and recommendations for addressing the social determinants of health impacted by structural and institutional racism. We share in the goal for the Department and OMHE to expand its reach and capacity in serving Nevada's minority communities. Please find responses below to the recommendations put forth.

1) Work to increase collaboration between NOMHE and the Office of Analytics within the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services to increase health outcomes minority communities.

The Office of Data Analytics and NOMHE have demonstrated increased collaboration and work to identify areas of need for data and reporting. The State's Chief Biostatistician confirmed there are data gaps, some of which may be addressed through proposed legislation this session. The Department is committed to greater data stratification across all vulnerabilities, abilities and demographics, including those reflecting Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI indicators).

Concern exists about collecting comprehensive quality data through phone based self-report surveys, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), in addition to dependency on externally assembled data to produce reports. The Department is looking at ways to improve minority health data collection and reporting. One idea is to hire a staff person to help facilitate data collection and data refinement by working across DHHS agencies to develop protocols for consistent completion of self-identified reporting of demographic data during DHHS service delivery.

I am pleased to share the Office of Data Analytics will be posting the *Minority Health Report 2021*. This report has been redesigned, in collaboration with NOMHE, to reflect vulnerability mapping and reporting on SOGI indicators. The report may be found at the link below:

[Office of Analytics Data Reports](#)

The Department's Office of Analytics dashboard serves as the State's resource on COVID-19 statistics representing its impact on its 3.149 million residents. Reports stratified by race, ethnicity, age and gender are available for the following indicators: Nevada's population; people tested for COVID-19; people with negative COVID-19 test results; confirmed positive COVID-19 cases; and confirmed positive COVID-19 related deaths. Health equity advocates and service providers committed to culturally competent delivery are encouraged to use the data to administer programming and inform public health policies.

<https://nvhealthresponse.nv.gov/>

2) Increase the role and footprint of the NOMHE to serve as a facilitator and convener for Nevada's minority communities and the organizations who serve them.

NOMHE serves as a hub of information and communications for actions to address minority health and health equity, including initiatives with long-term, sustainable impact, for all Nevadans. The Department looks

forward to supporting NOMHE's efforts as the Office develops its capacity and presence in communities statewide. Highlights of recent NOMHE engagement includes:

NOMHE developed an *Amplify Equity Toolkit*. In its current version, its resources are heavily weighted to service entities providing COVID-19 responses. The content is meant to serve immediate pandemic-related needs as well as general health initiatives with equity-focused, unique resources and will regularly be updated. This Toolkit will be expanded general and emerging topics. The Toolkit is being presented to stakeholders, posted publicly, and a designated NOMHE contractor is also available to provide technical assistance. The Office is developing metrics to track the utilization and effectiveness of the toolkit.

In July 2020, NOMHE, the Nevada Minority Health and Equity Coalition, and United States DHHS Office of Minority Health Region IX hosted an equity-focused web series reflecting the voices of public health officials, academia and social scientists whose personal ethnic/racial identities represent marginalized communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

NOMHE has also held a listening session addressing clinical trial diversification and will be holding a similar event for equity in healthcare.

3) Work collaboratively with the Nevada Legislature to support the passage of legislation that would designate Chief Diversity Officers at State agencies.

The Department of Health and Human Services, and its extensive scope of programs and resources, actively engage with the public, local organizations, other state agencies, and legislative representatives, but especially during Nevada Legislative Sessions. NOMHE has been designated to collaborate with The Office of New Americans, the Commission for Minority Affairs, and the Governor's Office of Economic Development on the designation of Chief Diversity Officers at State agencies

Additionally, the Department and NOMHE are reviewing opportunities in legislation to work with the Council to maximize service to minority communities and to identify barriers in policy.

4) Convene an advisory council of diversity-focused agency leaders to meet and collaborate on an ongoing basis.

The Department created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Steering Committee to ensure the actioning of the Governor's August 2020 Proclamation of Racism as a Public Health Crisis. NOMHE leadership is charged with directing the work of the DHHS DEI Steering Committee. The Committee is comprised of representatives from all the DHHS Divisions, the Director's Office, BIPOC Support Group, and additional subject matter experts; facilitation is provided by Social Entrepreneurs, Inc. The Committee is assessing diversity and inclusivity in the workplace. The completion of a Situational Analysis will provide a baseline from which improvements to Human Resources (HR) functions such as recruitment and hiring practices reflective of the community served, and inclusive promotional opportunities can be measured. Though hiring is primarily centralized through the Department of Administration's Division of Human Resource Management, DHHS would welcome the Council's recommendations on posting locations for job announcements to increase visibility among the community served

5) Work to increase the resources available to the NOMHE through federal funding to best serve Nevada's minority communities.

NOMHE has an established relationship with the State Grants Office. There have also been opportunities through existing Federal grants within the Department to collaborate.

Funded with Title XX and Fund for Healthy Nevada from the DHHS Grants Management Unit, OMHE worked in collaboration with University of Nevada, Reno's (UNR) Public Health Training Center to conduct Three-Part Health in All Policies (HiAP) 101 training series. (HiAP) is a collaborative approach integrating health considerations into policymaking across sectors to improve the health of all communities and people. It includes an emphasis on engaging dialogue about the consequences of public policies on health systems, determinants of health, and well-being. This funding also supported Ally training to better the communities understanding, and awareness, of the issues faced by LGBTQIA+ and other marginalized persons.

OMHE has a federally funded Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Foundation COVID-19 Surge contractor working directly for the OMHE on COVID-19 minority and health equity supportive activities. The contractor will be working with OMHE for approximately one year. As well as a Coronavirus Relief (CRF) Fund supported contract staff person designated to the Amplify Toolkit.

Thank you again for the recommendations from the Committee. The Department of Health and Human Services is dedicated to the OMHE vision of achieving optimal levels of health and wellness for racial and ethnic minorities in the state. I am grateful for the work of the Advisory Committee for the Nevada Office of Minority Health and Equity to promote health equity for all Nevadans. It is a shared goal. I am committed to continuing to work with the Committee to enhance and promote health equity in Nevada. We welcome continued dialogue and appreciate your partnership.

Sincerely,



Richard Whitley, MS
Director, Department of Health and Human Services

CC: Senator Pat Spearman
Tina Dortch, Manager, Nevada Office of Minority Health and Equity
Beth Handler, Deputy Director, Programs