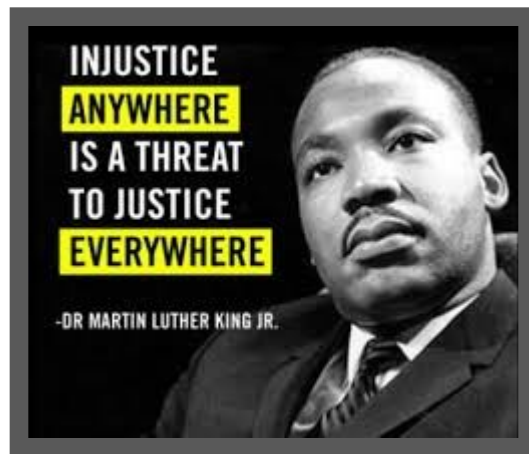




To Everyone:

The deaths of Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd have caused a rising tide of public awareness regarding the effects of racism, prejudices and biases within public systems, as well as the resulting adverse impacts on the lives of people of color.

Central Florida Behavioral Health Network believes that black lives matters, and stands for what is just, right, and equal!



How can we do our part more effectively? In 2008, former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, identified the issue of disparities in health as **a matter of life and death**. As stewards of behavioral health, we frequently engage in conversations regarding disparities and stigma. However, we must also continue to amplify our conversations on how institutional racism and cultural incompetence impact disparities in engagement, quality of treatment, and the long-term well-being of people and communities of color. Throughout history, many of us witnessed the crack cocaine epidemic that plagued black communities, resulting in prison sentences, while the surge of opioid addiction among whites spurred funding for treatment. Fast forward to 2020, research continues to demonstrate that ethnic and racial minorities face illness earlier, and suffer higher rates of impairment and death than white Americans. Other marginalized groups, such as individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or gender nonconforming have also been affected in similar ways. **Until we are intentional about taking action, disparities will persist.**

As stewards of behavioral health and **conduits for healing**, each of us has a responsibility to use our positions, platforms and power to make positive change. As a Managing Entity, Central Florida Behavioral Network is responsible for providing a safety net of mental health and substance abuse treatment and support services across 14 counties. We expect that all behavioral health services will be provided in a culturally competent and responsive manner. **We also challenge our provider network to create opportunities with their staff for self-reflection, organizational reassessments, and authentic conversations on race, culture and other sensitive topics.**

I admit that I do not have all of the answers. I will never fully know what it feels like to walk in the shoes or life of any person of color. However, I am committed to listening, educating myself, and learning from our diverse team members. **Central Florida Behavioral Health Network is committed to taking action!** Here's what we are doing at CFBHN... Two years ago the CFBHN Board of Directors and Staff committed to becoming a more culturally diverse and inclusive workplace. Both Board and Staff committees were formed under the leadership of Dr. Tonia Freeman Foster, Coordinator of Equity and Diversity. The committees quickly became an inclusive learning environment where all members felt represented, supported, and safe to have uncomfortable conversations. Our journey is still new, and there's so much work to be done, but as a team we are committed to doing the work!

Please join us! We are asking for our network's therapists, direct services and support staff to **complete a short survey**. The purpose of the survey is to assess the resources needed in order to facilitate the highest quality culturally responsive and relevant services possible. Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/healracism>. **The survey will close on Monday, June 15, 2020.** Thank you in advance for your participation!

In Solidarity,

Linda McKinnon
President & CEO