



1300 17TH STREET NORTH, SUITE 340, ARLINGTON, VA 22209

TEL (202) 682-0100

FAX (202) 204-0071

WWW.APHSA.ORG

## **Forging Ahead to Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Health and Human Services** *APHSA Special Statement – October 16, 2020*

---

The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and the National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA), affirming our commitment to advancing race equity through the health and human services system (H/HS), stand in support of efforts at federal, state, and local levels to increase the understanding of the environmental and structural root causes preventing social and economic mobility and health and well-being for communities that have been historically marginalized and oppressed. The recent [Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping](#) issued on September 22, 2020 prohibits federal agencies, grantees, and contractors from incorporating critical race theory and discussion of white privilege that examines the core underpinnings of structural inequities that exist in our communities.

NSDTA, an affinity group of APHSA, calls on our colleagues to forge ahead in building capacity within H/HS systems to eliminate structural bias and advance equitable health and well-being outcomes for all. To achieve this, H/HS systems must build healthy relationships among diverse staff and teams, as well as with diverse communities that our public institutions serve. H/HS leaders, including those charged with staff development, training, and learning, have a responsibility to prepare the workforce with the necessary tools to recognize and challenge their own biases which, if left unchecked, can further deepen racial inequity and disparate outcomes for families and children. Education of our workforce on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a key component for any impactful and sustainable strategy aimed at addressing racial disproportionality. A competent workforce trained in DEI is necessary to halt future biased treatment and service provision at the individual level, and advocate for and influence the reform needed to address structural inequities in our systems.

As H/HS and training and staff development leaders, we see evidence of how structural racism has been built into the design of every system in which we work—from early childhood and child welfare, to housing and income supports, as well as in our public and mental health systems. Data at local, state, and national levels show clearly that Black, Brown and Indigenous populations are more likely to face structural barriers to accessing these services as well as experience discriminatory treatment within them. We need a resolute focus on training and development opportunities that call each of us and the systems we represent to examine how decades of efforts to implement race-neutral policies have too often perpetuated systematic discrimination among historically excluded groups. We must support the H/HS workforce in actively understanding how bias—both explicit and implicit—can show up in our daily work. We need to support the capacity of the H/HS workforce to be able to quickly identify where disparate outcomes exist and apply a race equity lens when analyzing problems and looking for solutions. By promoting workplace cultures and environments where staff and teams learn together, we can build the muscle we need to fundamentally redesign our systems and put an end to structurally driven inequities.

*American Public Human Services Association advances the well-being of all people by influencing modern approaches to sound policy, building the capacity of public agencies to enable healthy families and communities, and connecting leaders to accelerate learning and generate practical solutions together.*

**INFLUENCE. BUILD. CONNECT.**

APHSA and NSDTA members are committed to supporting continued training, discussion, and understanding of how structural bias and inequities show up in H/HS systems. Public H/HS agencies and institutions of higher education have and will continue to accelerate organizational learning and change to apply a race equity lens to all aspects of our collective work. We encourage our colleagues across the nation to be an active participant in this work—make your voices heard by articulating the value of DEI training in advancing the health and well-being of all people in all places.



**Tracy Wareing Evans**  
President and CEO  
American Public Human Services Association  
(APHSA)



**Karyn Schimmels**  
Chair  
National Staff Development and Training  
Association (NSDTA)