RACISM & CHILDHOOD

Racism is scientifically proven as a core determinant of child health that has a profound impact on the well-being of Black children, their families and their communities. Racism impacts every stage of a child’s development and continues to harm children by shaping the conditions in which they live, learn and play, manifesting itself in the form of persistent inequitable outcomes. Achieving health equity requires that we collectively dismantle the racism that exists within our systems and demand bold policy changes that put the well-being of children first. Inequities confronting Black communities noted in this fact sheet are rooted in our country’s racism and its inextricable downstream effects on housing, transportation, economic opportunity, education, food, air quality, health care and beyond.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE: CALIFORNIA REPARATIONS TASK FORCE

Reparations— the act or process of making amends for a wrong—are a fundamental component of addressing racism and its lingering effects, and pursuing equity and healing. Assembly Bill 3121, authored by Shirley Weber, established California’s first-in-the-nation Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans that is studying the institution of slavery and its lingering negative effects on society and on living African Americans, including descendants of persons enslaved in the United States; and making recommendations around remedies of compensation, rehabilitation, and restitution. The Task Force issued its interim report June 2022 and will issue a report with its final recommendations to the Legislature by July 1, 2023 following an extensive community engagement process.

POPULATION

There are at least 727,849 children and youth under 18 who identify as BLACK, including those who also identify with another race or ethnicity, making up about 8% of the state’s 9 million children. Of these children, at least:

- 437,149 identify as Black alone.
- 122,438 identify as Black and Latinx.
- 5,156 identify as Black and Native American.
- 16,337 identify as Black and Asian American.
- 111,069 identify as Black and white.
- 35,700 identify as Black and another race/ethnicity not included in Census categories.

21,000 Black Children are BILINGUAL. About 9,000 Black children are NON-CITIZENS.

At least 71,000 Black children have ONE PARENT who was BORN OUTSIDE OF THE US: 16,000 live with NON-CITIZEN PARENTS.

COVID-19

At least 75,110 Black children and youth have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Black children account for 8.7% of COVID-19 DEATHS – above their share of the population 0-17 (5.4%).

Black children and youth have the lowest COVID-19 vaccination rates across all groups. 3% of Black children under 5, 27% of Black children ages 5-11, and 55% of Black youth ages 12-17 have received the VACCINE, compared to 7%, 37% and 67% of all children and youth in these age ranges, respectively.
PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective factors—conditions or attributes that help mitigate or eliminate risks to health and well-being—can help prevent and address health inequities impacting Black children and their families. Black communities have challenged and actively subverted racist structures in medicine to care for their own health by utilizing community-defined practices and care that develop and reinforce protective factors in Black children and families.

- Social supports received from peers and families. The California Black Women’s Health Project oversees a community-defined intervention called Sisters Mentally Mobilized™ that decreases mental health stigma, anxiety, and isolation in Black women by combining advocate training and social support networks to build the capacity of Black women to advocate around mental health issues in their lives and communities.
- Programs that facilitate a strong connection to Black identity and culture like emotional emancipation circles—liberatory spaces for Black people designed to help heal, and end, the trauma caused by the root cause of anti-Black racism.
- Positive opportunities that allow for Black youth to be agents of change in their own communities, including utilizing youth peer leaders to provide culturally responsive and gender-affirming peer support, advocacy, mental health education and wellness promotion. The California Black Health Network coordinates a Behavioral Health Peer Network for behavioral health students and professionals to network with peers and determine best practices to ensure all Black Californians have access to behavioral healthcare.

The California Black Health Network and California Black Women’s Health Project are co-sponsors of the California Health Equity and Racial Justice Fund (HE&RJF), a proposal to increase community power by providing resources to community-based organizations (CBOs), including clinics, and tribal organizations to identify and design community solutions to address the most pressing health and racial justice issues in their communities.

MENTAL HEALTH

Nearly 1 in 2 (44% or ~39,000) Black teen girls say they need help for EMOTIONAL/MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS like feeling SAD, ANXIOUS OR NERVOUS. Yet, 70% of Black teen girls DID NOT RECEIVE COUNSELING.

Over 1 in 3 (38% or 54,000) Black teens say they need help for EMOTIONAL/MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS like feeling SAD, ANXIOUS OR NERVOUS. 71% or 101,000 Black teens DID NOT RECEIVE COUNSELING.

Only 16% of Black children and youth in Medi-Cal have been screened for depression and provided with a follow-up plan if needed.

In California, the suicide rate among Black youth has doubled between 2014 and 2020 and is now TWICE the statewide average, exceeding all other groups. In 2020, Black children and youth made up 12% of suicide deaths - the highest of any racial and ethnic group. Nearly 1 in 4 (22%) of Black 7th graders has considered suicide - double the rate of white students (10%) and the HIGHEST of any group in that grade.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress who call, text, or chat 988, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

DISCRIMINATION

Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) Black children and youth have experienced BEING TREATED OR JUDGED UNFAIRLY because of their race – the highest of any racial or ethnic group.

HEALTH COVERAGE AND ACCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVERAGE</th>
<th>About 97% of Black children have HEALTH INSURANCE, leaving about 13,000 who remain UNINSURED.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCESS</td>
<td>On average, MORE THAN HALF (60%) of Black children under 18 in Medi-Cal DO NOT RECEIVE the PREVENTIVE CARE they are entitled to, with the greatest disparities experienced during their youngest years: 74% of Black 1-year olds and 81% of Black 2-year olds enrolled in Medi-Cal DO NOT RECEIVE PREVENTIVE CARE.</td>
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<td>Only 26% of Black children in Medi-Cal RECEIVED six or more WELL CHILD VISITS in the first 15 months of life, below the statewide average and national benchmark (38% and 55%, respectively).</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Only 41% of Black children have RECEIVED a LEAD SCREENING by their second birthday, significantly below the statewide average and national benchmark (58% and 72%, respectively).</td>
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COMMUNITY AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Black children and teens are 4x more likely to be removed from their homes and placed into FOSTER CARE compared to all children and teens.

1 in 3 (34%) Black children have experienced TWO OR MORE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES compared to 15% of all children.

Black children are more than 2x MORE LIKELY to have been a VICTIM or WITNESS of NEIGHBORHOOD VIOLENCE compared to all children (10% vs. 4%).

Nationally, Black children and youth suffer a lifetime risk of being KILLED BY POLICE that is 250% higher than white children and youth.
**ECONOMIC WELL-BEING**

Over 1 in 4 (27%) Black children 0-18 experience **POVERTY**, over the state average (16%).

Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) Black families report that it is **SOMETIME OR OFTEN** difficult to **COVER THE BASICS** like food or housing on their family’s income compared to 11% of all families.

Over 1 in 2 (56%) Black children live in households that are burdened by **HOUSING** and **UTILITY COSTS**.

34% of Black children live in households that own their home, the lowest of any racial and ethnic group and below the statewide average of all children (52%) and white children (66%).

**ORAL HEALTH**

Black children enrolled in MEDI-CAL have the lowest rate of **DENTAL VISITS** of all racial and ethnic groups.

Black children experience the highest rates of **UNTREATED TOOTH DECAY** at 26%, almost twice the rate of white children. 11% or 54,000 Black children **NEEDED DENTAL CARE** including check-ups, but didn’t receive it.

Despite facing the greatest inequities, Black children also have the **lowest rates of accessing dental sealants** – a protective coating that helps keep cavities from forming in the first place.

**MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH**

The **INFANT MORTALITY** rate is twice as high in Black families compared to all families: there are 8.3 deaths per 1,000 births among Black infants compared to 4.2 deaths per 1,000 births among all infants.

Black women are 6x more likely to die of pregnancy-related causes compared to white women.

**DIGITAL EQUITY**

About 1 in 10 (~49,100) Black children live in a household without a **BROADBAND CONNECTED DEVICE** compared to 1 in 14 of all children.

Black children in Medi-Cal have the lowest numbers of **TELEHEALTH** visits of all racial and ethnic groups.

**FOOD ACCESS**

Black children are nearly 2x more likely to be experiencing **FOOD INSECURITY** compared to all children. 9% or 33,633 Black families sometimes or often could not afford the food they needed compared to 5% of all families.