

HRSB Statement on Racial Equity: Racism Is an Ongoing Public Health Crisis

In June 2020, in response to the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing Black Lives Matter protests, the Harm Reduction Services Branch released a statement of our commitment to racial equity. During these extraordinary and unsettling times, we still struggle to find the words to express our outrage, despair, and sadness. We are watching lives and generations being lost, and black lives matter.

In 2021, the Hawai'i State Legislature unequivocally [declared racism as a public health crisis](#). The State also confirmed the need for "a Hawai'i-based, culturally-based, health justice framework that will further combat the continuation of racism with policymaking while also promoting racial equity."

The mission of the Harm Reduction Services Branch is to empower people in Hawai'i to make responsible health decisions for themselves and others by:

- Providing statewide leadership and coordination for the prevention, treatment, care and surveillance of infections transmitted primarily through sexual contact or injection drug use; and
- Assuring the accessibility and delivery of client-centered, non-judgmental, and comprehensive services with the spirit of aloha and respect.

In alignment with our mission, our State Legislature's declaration, and the statements of our partners at [National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors](#), [Association of State and Territorial Health Officials](#), and the [American Public Health Association](#), we condemn racism and racist action and recognize it as an important and ongoing public health issue. We stand in solidarity with our black 'ohana because we know that [Black Lives Matter](#). All of our efforts to eliminate HIV, hepatitis, and STIs--including drug user health, immigrant rights, LGBTQIA+ equity, uplifting Native Hawaiian voices--are inseparable from the struggle to eliminate racism and inequities.

We remain committed to combatting racism and ensuring health equity. Together, let us listen to our black allies, engage with our communities, and take a stand against racism and in favor of health. We are committed to working with our communities to overcome racism and inequalities in all forms. Racism is not a harm that we can merely reduce but must eliminate.