



# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION ACTION STATEMENT

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**Phoenix Center at Auraria**

**2020  
EDITION**

Note: This statement has been modified from the University of Colorado Denver Health, Wellness, Advocacy, and Support Division statement which is currently under review. While under review, it has been adopted individually by the Phoenix Center at Auraria.



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## DIVERSITY ACTION COMMITTEE

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# INTRODUCTION

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As staff members of the Phoenix Center at Auraria (PCA), we recognize that it is our duty to foster an environment that supports the diverse and multifaceted wellbeing of survivors of violence within the Auraria campus. The focus of this wellbeing must be survivor-centered and holistic in nature, as we acknowledge the limitations and harms of *siloed health*. Our approach would not be holistic in nature without acknowledging or recognizing the systems in which we operate. These structures and systems are rooted in *white supremacist culture, racism, sexism, transphobia, ageism, ableism, classism, heterosexism, homophobia, xenophobia*, and the many other manners by which peoples are oppressed. Therefore, our structures and systems are not inclusive or accessible to everyone and harm all of us. As such, it is our responsibility to critically reflect upon and dismantle systems and structures within our Center that perpetuate exclusion.

Historically, the PCA has not done enough to support our community in pursuing truly survivor-centered wellbeing. We have not reliably prioritized the needs of survivors who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), we have participated in and perpetuated a hierarchical structure which does not ultimately serve community needs, we have made statements about valuing the diversity of our staff but have been lackluster in advocating to the Universities as a whole regarding inclusive hiring or human resource practices which support these statements specifically with regards to accessibility and trauma-informed practices, we have perpetuated white supremacist standards of professionalism, and we have enacted or perpetuated harm in a myriad of ways which are not quantified here.

# VALUES & RELATED ACTION ITEMS

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As bell hooks posits in her influential 1984 book "Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center", we must center historically marginalized populations to truly provide a structure which is equitable to the needs of all. The following values and affiliated action items (organized by individual, department, and division level actions) seek to do so. These action items are not meant to serve as a "checklist" and can always be expanded upon; we encourage all who utilize this document to seek to go further than we have dreamed here. We believe we are uniquely positioned to lead the way in university-wide policy development and implementation.

## **ANTI-RACISM**

The PCA recognizes that it is not enough to be nonracist. We must commit ourselves to being antiracist, meaning we espouse beliefs against racism AND take action to heal the racial inequities in our division. In order to do this, we must first analyze our functioning, identifying the ways in which our administrative policies have historically excluded and negatively impacted our BIPOC community members. We must take responsibility for the impact we have caused and then take corrective action. We make these changes and commit to this antiracist work because we see the recruitment and retention of BIPOC staff and students as essential to the mission of the PCA.

### ***Related Action Items***

#### **Individual**

- We will advocate for change and redress when they encounter microaggressions or overt racist messaging.

#### **Department**

- The PCA will work towards changing recruiting and hiring practices to ensure equitable consideration of BIPOC candidates.
- The PCA will evaluate BIPOC staff without racial prejudice.
- The PCA will advocate for the promotion and equitable pay of BIPOC staff where applicable
- The PCA will include BIPOC community members in the development of programming and education.

## **ANTI-OPPRESSION**

Anti-Oppression is a framework that actively challenges systems of oppression on a daily, ongoing basis in order to seek social change. This work seeks to recognize the oppression that exists in our society and attempts to mitigate those effects with the ultimate goal of equalizing power imbalances within our communities.

### ***Related Action Items***

#### **Individual**

- We will take time to study and understand bell hooks' "margin-to-center" theory. Margins-to-center theory asserts that those in the "center" of society, and thus those with the most access to privilege and power, are often oblivious to the needs of those on the "margins" who are often very much aware of the realities of those in the center. This requires bearing witness to those who live in the "margins" and acknowledging that we are not the expert on their marginalization, and avoiding the "retelling" of these experiences.
- Each of us will attend 2 professional development opportunities annually focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Each of us will actively solicit feedback related to anti-oppression from PCA constituents in the scope of their position in order to best meet the needs of our community.

#### **Department**

- The PCA will assess our commitment to equity and inclusion on a quarterly basis, soliciting necessary feedback and evaluations.
- The PCA will annually take on a group professional development course, project, or book-read to further incorporate anti-oppression tactics into their work (see resources section for suggested content).
- The PCA will revisit established standards of professionalism, interrogating and refining with an eye to eliminating standards based in white supremacist culture until they meet the needs of all within the department.
- The PCA will opt-out of the HR pre-screening process and utilize a uniform search committee process that allows pre-screening to be completed manually in understanding that algorithms are only as unbiased as their creators and any single individual screens with bias.

## **Division Advocacy**

- We will advocate for the suspension unpaid internships and create a division-wide work-study fund to support this initiative as budgets are reorganized office-to-office.
- We will advocate on search committees to intentionally hire new staff members who reflect the demographics of the student body.
- We will advocate for a division reassessment of language in all official policies to remove any language which promotes cultural oppression.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

The UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines those for whom it advocates as "people who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. In our pursuit of an inclusive environment, we must simultaneously prioritize the needs of this community.

We recognize the negative impact doing too little to prioritize this community has had on our ability to function, represent the diversity of the people we work to serve, and recruit and retrain quality individuals who will positively influence our work. Additionally, we affirm that all employees show up to their work environment as whole people with holistic support needs. We decline to participate in the notions that emotions are not appropriate for the workplace and support our staff, students, and faculty in reasonable expression of and accommodations related to these needs.

### ***Related Action Items***

#### **Individual**

- We commit to consulting resources which center the disability community from a holistic lens when enacting any policy or practice.

#### **Department**

- The PCA will provide and require completion by staff members of annual training provided by subject matter experts.

- The PCA will review their hiring practices to eliminate coded job descriptions which discourage differently abled applicants from applying, address online accessibility of application and application format, and reformat job interview practices (e.g. providing interview questions in writing ahead of time, asking questions which provide information about the breadth of a person's experience, and have accessibility tools readily available).
- The PCA will review its physical and virtual workspaces to ensure necessary accessibility options are in place. These include but not limited to offering flexible work schedules, broad understandings of timeliness, supporting the use of service/therapeutic animals, having text-to-speech capabilities readily available, reviewing best practices for graphic and web design, and utilizing captions or transcripts for all meetings and presentations.
- The PCA will review its marketing materials to ensure that they are representative of and accessible to the diversity of our clientele.
- The PCA will maintain working contracts with translation and assistive communication entities to facilitate greater access to individuals with these needs.
- The PCA will work in concert with the building manager for their space to reasonably address physical accessibility concerns such as a lack of automatic entrances.

### **Division Advocacy**

- The PCA will advocate for the division to formally expand its interpretation of the sick leave policy to include support for utilizing this time for mental health needs.

## **HOLISTIC & INDIVIDUALIZED WELLNESS**

Health and wellness is often understood as the absence of disease or sickness and this definition lacks the comprehensiveness of a broader approach. The Global Wellness Institute defines holistic health and wellness as “the pursuit of activities, choices, and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health”. Furthermore, wellness is an “active pursuit”, not a passive or static state. As a part of the Health, Wellness, Advocacy, and Support division, we recognize that everyone is unique and we will honor this by fostering services for clients as holistic beings. Holistic health and wellness is sustained by 7 dimensions of wellness: physical - prioritizing nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and other health related behaviors to create a resilient body at every size; emotional - coping effectively with feelings & thoughts to build resiliency; spiritual - possessing a set of values & beliefs that help give direction to one’s life; social - developing a sense of connection and belonging through relationships with friends, family, & community; environmental - occupying, preserving, & sustaining pleasant & stimulating natural & built environments; financial - living within your means and successfully planning for current & future financial needs; and creative - experiencing satisfaction & enrichment from self-expression in work, play, & life activities. It needs to be understood that the path to wellness is not one-size-fits-all.

### ***Related Action Items***

#### **Individual**

- We will attend annual training with regards to inclusive wellness cultures such as participation in the Auraria Campus Body-Positive Cohort or something similar.
- We will refrain from engaging in diet culture in the workplace in deference to maintaining safe environments for anyone with a history of disordered eating.

#### **Department**

- The PCA will prioritize the holistic needs for self-care of its staff, student employees, clients, and interns.
- The PCA will support the use of a dedicated space that is quiet where employees can engage in meditation, yoga, prayer, or other relaxation activities
- The PCA will regularly discuss self-care needs during staff meetings to promote a culture of care and determine ways the PCA as a whole can better support holistic wellness.
- The PCA will discuss and provide resources for holistic understandings of wellness within its prevention and advocacy work.
- The PCA will incorporate self-care as a dimension of the quarterly evaluation process.



## **Division Advocacy**

- The PCA will advocate for the division offering employees a reasonable amount of paid work time (e.g. one hour per week) to attend to their mental health needs and will work with the University Human Resources department to ensure that EAP resources are widely publicized and available.
- The PCA will advocate for the University to allow employees to select relevant holiday time (e.g. a non-Christian employee may deselect Christmas from their holiday paid time off and instead select a more relevant holiday of equal time)
- The PCA will advocate for the allowance of remote work days during non-pandemic business operations to renew focus and remove distractions .
- The PCA will advocate for staff access to the wellness center at a reduced rate for employees or work with the university to maintain and develop diverse discount and incentive opportunities for community wellness providers.

## **TRAUMA-INFORMED**

A term initially coined by Maxine Harris and Roger Fallot (2001), “trauma-informed” may be utilized to describe a way of working and interacting with others that acknowledges the pervasive impact of trauma on individuals, systems, and communities. The PCA is committed to working from a trauma-informed perspective by incorporating a holistic understanding of trauma into its operations on an individual & departmental level in interactions with all members of the university community, including students, faculty, staff, clients, and colleagues. This also includes an acknowledgement of all types of trauma, its biological, psychological, and social impact on individuals, systems, and communities, as well as culturally-specific experiences of trauma, including race-based and historical trauma. In order to operate from a trauma-informed perspective, we are committed to implementing the following actions within our department working from principles of safety, collaboration, choice, and empowerment.

### ***Related Action Items***

#### **Individual**

- PCA staff will be provided with and complete annual training, participate in group education, or select their own professional development topic related to being trauma-informed.

### **Individual (cont'd)**

- We commit to operating from principles of safety, collaboration, choice, and empowerment.
- We commit to remaining survivor-centered and survivor-lead, recognizing that no one survivor experience is representative of all and each survivor is their own best expert.

### **Department**

- The PCA will work continuously to create a safe environment through transparency with staff about changes in departmental operations, staffing, policies, etc.
- The PCA will review current policies and incorporate opportunities for staff input at all levels of decision-making.
- The PCA will acknowledge the impact of secondary trauma on its staff and engage in practices that support staff well-being.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through pursuit of these above actions and others, we as a division hope to continue actively creating and maintaining an equitable environment. This document was created by individuals who have their own gaps and, as such, it is not considered a complete guide to creating an equitable environment; we wish for this to be a living, breathing document which is routinely updated and expanded upon.

# REFERENCES

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Menschner, C., Maul, A. (2016). "Key Ingredients for Trauma Informed Care Implementation." Center for Health Care Strategies

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# APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

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**Ableism** is the intentional or unintentional discrimination or oppression of individuals with disabilities. [1](#)

**Accessibility** is the quality of being possible to get into, use, and/or make use of a tool, resource, or space. [2](#)

**Ageism** is the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age. While frequently used only to refer to discrimination against older adults, it has recently been expanded to include discrimination against younger adults.[3](#)

**Class** is a person or group's relative social rank in terms of income, wealth, education, occupational status, and/or power [4](#)

**Classism** is the institutional, cultural, and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic class; and an economic system that creates excessive inequality and causes basic human needs to go unmet.[5](#)

**Culture of Urgency** is a culture which promotes a continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, think long-term, and consider consequences. This type of culture frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results and is reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money.[6](#)

**Disability** is the nature of having long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Impairments included in these definitions can include those which impact hearing, vision, movement/mobility, thinking, remembering, learning, communicating, feeling, emotions, social relationships, and others. [7](#) [8](#)

**Diversity** is a reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences. This spectrum can include variants on dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and more. [9](#)

**Heterosexism** is the marginalization and/or oppression of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, and/or aromantic, based on the idea that heterosexuality is the norm. [10](#)

**Historical Trauma** is multigenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural, racial, or ethnic group. It is related to major events that oppressed a particular group of people such as slavery, the Holocaust, forced migration, and violent colonization of Native peoples. [11](#)

**Homophobia** is the fear, hatred, discomfort with, and/or mistrust of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. [12](#)

**Inclusion** is the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity in people, curriculum, co-curriculum, and communities (e.g. intellectual, social, cultural, geographic) with which individuals might connect. [13](#)

**Race** refers to the categories into which society places individuals on the basis of physical characteristics (such as skin color, hair type, facial form, and eye shape). Though many believe that race is determined by biology, it is now widely accepted that this classification system was in fact created for social and political reasons. [14](#)

**Race-Based Trauma** is the mental or emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes. [15](#)

**Racism** is the marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges individuals of the majority race (e.g. white people in the United States). [16](#)

**Sexism** is any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written word, practice, or behavior based upon the idea that a person or group of persons is inferior because of their actual or perceived sex. [17](#)

**Siloed Health** is the result of a set of individual or group mindsets that can cause divisions inside a health organization and that can result in the creation of barriers to communication and the development of disjointed work processes with negative consequences to the organization, employees, and patients. [18](#)

**Systemic Racism** is a combination of systems, institutions, and factors that advantage people in the majority group (e.g. white people) and cause widespread harm and disadvantages access and opportunity for minoritized groups (e.g. people of color) [19](#)

**Transphobia** is the fear, hatred, disbelief, and/or mistrust of people who are transgender, thought to be transgender, or whose gender expression doesn't conform to traditional gender roles. [20](#)

**White Supremacy Culture** is the idea or ideology that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, practices, norms, and actions of white people are superior to those of people of color. [21](#)

**Xenophobia** is a broad term associated with intense dislike or hatred against people that are perceived as outsiders, strangers, or foreigners to a group, community, or nation based on their presumed or real descent, national, ethnic or social origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other grounds.[22](#)

## APPENDIX B: RESOURCES

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### Books & Workbooks

[El Deafo | Cece Bell](#)

[How to Be An Anti-Racist | Ibram X. Kendi](#)  
[Workbook](#)  
[Journal](#)  
[Kid's Book](#)

[Hunger: A Memoir of \(My\) Body | Roxane Gay](#)

[Know My Name | Chanel Miller](#)

[Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me | Ellen Forney](#)

[Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor | Layla Saad](#)  
[Guided Journal](#)

[The New Jim Crow | Michelle Alexander](#)

[Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture | Roxane Gay](#)

[Privilege, Power, and Difference | Allan G. Johnson](#)

[Sexual Citizens: A Landmark Study of Sex, Power, and Assault On Campus | Jennifer S. Hirsch and Shamus Khan](#)

[So You Want to Talk About Race | Ijeoma Oluo](#)

[Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America | Ibram X. Kendi](#)

[Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America | Michael Eric Dyson](#)

[Unruly Bodies: Life Writing by Women with Disabilities | Susannah B. Mintz](#)

[Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race | Renni Eddo-Lodge](#)

[35 Dumb Things Well-Intended People Say: Surprising Things We Say That Widen the Diversity Gap | Maura Cullen](#)

### **Websites**

<https://www.dismantlingracism.org>

<https://communitylanguagecoop.com/> (Denver Based Language CoOp)

<https://www.bu.edu/antiracism-center/>

<https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-characteristics.html>

[https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs\\_campaigns/childrens\\_mental\\_health/atc-whitepaper-040616.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/childrens_mental_health/atc-whitepaper-040616.pdf)

<http://traumainformedcareproject.org>

<https://www.startbybelieving.org>