



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

ELIZABETH HERTEL  
DIRECTOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Jan. 12, 2022

**CONTACT:** Chelsea Wuth  
517-241-2112  
[WuthC@michigan.gov](mailto:WuthC@michigan.gov)

## **Michigan Opioids Task Force announces RFP for racial equity consultant to lead new Racial Equity Workgroup**

**LANSING, Mich.** - The Michigan Opioids Task Force is requesting proposals for a racial equity consultant to guide the development of a Racial Equity Workgroup to target disparities in overdose fatalities among Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).

In 2020, the economic and social disruption of the COVID-19 global pandemic exacerbated the already deadly drug overdose epidemic and brought to the forefront the deadly impact of health disparities on BIPOC communities. Provisional 2020 data illustrates increases in overdose fatalities among African American and Hispanic/Latinx populations. The age-adjusted opioid overdose death rate for Black residents, increased from 29.1 deaths per 100,000 residents in 2019 to 37.5 deaths per 100,000 residents in 2020. The age-adjusted opioid overdose death rate for Hispanic residents, increased from 15 deaths per 100,000 residents in 2019 to 22.3 deaths per 100,000 residents in 2020. Overdose deaths among Hispanic residents increased by 52% in 2020, from 91 in 2019 to 138.

In response, the Michigan Opioids Task Force will establish a statewide Racial Equity Workgroup committed to evidence-based initiatives to combat growing racial disparities in overdose deaths. The racial equity consultant will support the development of a statewide Racial Equity Strategic Plan for reducing overdose disparities. Qualified applicants must have two years of experience as a racial equity consultant and/or experience facilitating community conversations about race and equity.

“The Michigan Opioids Task Force was created to quickly respond to growing disparities in our state,” said MDHHS Director Elizabeth Hertel. “These deaths are tragic, and we want to encourage anyone struggling with substance abuse to seek help. I am proud that our organization is taking swift action to prevent overdose deaths – especially in minority groups who are experiencing higher death rates.”

Overarching goals of the workgroup will include:

- Targeting the distribution of resources and opportunities to people and groups that have experienced structural and institutional discrimination and oppression.
- Eliminating harmful and unjust policies, practices and systemic barriers that produce historical and contemporary inequities based on race and ethnicity, with

additional consideration given to gender identity, class, sexuality, geography, disability, and other forms of difference.

- Creation of new systems, policies, and practices that institutionalize equity and support sustainable, transformational change.

The Michigan Opioid Task Force is partnering with [Vital Strategies](#), a global health nonprofit, will support the work of the Racial Equity Workgroup. Vital Strategies' work on this initiative is part of the Bloomberg Philanthropies investment in overdose prevention in Michigan announced in March 2019.

Interested applicants can view the [Request for Proposal](#) and proposals are due by 5 p.m. on Feb. 7. The anticipated start date of the project is March 1.

For more information and resources, visit [Michigan.gov/Opioids](https://Michigan.gov/Opioids).

# # #