



Ottawa County
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Office

Robyn Afrik she/her/hers
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director

Good Afternoon,

My name is Robyn Afrik, the Director for the Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI).

Since the start of COVID 19 – our office has been part of many local, state and national conversations, recognizing the affects that COVID has had (firstly) on all of our communities. Amongst the many discussions, we've learned about the impacts that COVID has on different racial, ethnic and other historically marginalized and vulnerable populations.

Two areas continue to be assessed – on both a state and national level:

1. The stigmas that have formed, having an adverse effect on our Asian American Communities
2. The higher burden of COVID cases and deaths within African American, Hispanic and other historically marginalized and vulnerable populations

Today, the Ottawa County Department of Public Health shared data that highlights a disproportionate burden of COVID illness among those in the Hispanic/Latino populations. While our departments continue to assess the determinants that contribute to the disparities in these numbers, we want to reiterate someone's race or ethnicity is not the cause. Rather, COVID highlights and amplifies the historic/social/economic/geographic disparities that exist within our community.

It is with that understanding that the Departments, and other local, State and national organizations continue to partner to address the current, disproportionate burden of COVID19 illness among the Hispanic/Latino populations and position ourselves to address impacts COVID has on other demographic segments, including the elderly and those with disabilities.

The DEI Office has been listening to input from various departments within Ottawa County and local community members. These listening sessions have yielded new resources that will be communicated in the following days; key among them is our Ottawa County website, which offers translation in Spanish and now the addition of ten other languages.

The department has also been engaged in conversations at the national level. This has culminated in a COVID19 Racial Equity Rapid Response Guidebook for Government. In this, you'll find amongst other resources, best practices, policies and strategies using a racial equity lens developed by cities, counties and municipalities across the US.

You'll find access to this resource and more, on the DEI County website, under resources.

In closing, we want to encourage you to continue to reference the OC department of Public Health website for the most up to date and accurate status on this pandemic. We look forward to providing more updates and resources as they become available.

Thank You