



Focus Area | *Lisa Peyton-Caire*, Founder/Chair, Foundation for Black Women's Wellness  
Co-chairs: | *Bill Greer*, C.E.O., Journey Mental Health

### PURPOSE

To identify, lead, and advocate for policies, practices, and innovations that promote the health and wellness of African American adults, children, and families while eliminating racial disparities in key health and wellness indicators in Dane County.

### STATEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

The Justified Anger Coalition recognizes health and well-being as a basic human right, and the state of 'wellness' as defined by the World Health Organization as the desirable condition for all children and families in our community: "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." We believe that the presence of healthy, thriving families that are succeeding in attaining social, economic, and educational opportunity and mobility, and positive health outcomes is the defining measure of a truly equitable, sustainable, and world-class community, county, and region.

### SUPPORTING DATA

Data from 2009-2011 highlight these sobering realities (Source: Race to Equity report)

- Dane County African Americans are more likely than their non-Hispanic white peers to live with chronic illness, and bear higher rates of morbidity and mortality from heart disease, stroke, diabetes, lung cancer, and early infant death.
- Dane County African Americans are 2.3 times more likely than their non-Hispanic white peers to be uninsured.
- Dane County African American children are more likely than white children to be born at low birth weights, to mothers with insufficient prenatal care, and to die in infancy.
- Dane County African Americans make up 4.9% of the total population but 20.0% of the population in poverty.
- Approximately 75% of Dane County African American children live at or below the poverty level.
- In Dane County, African Americans were referred to Child Protective Services at a rate 6.6 times as high as that of non-Hispanic Whites.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. **Culturally Competent & Accessible Health Care Services and Providers:** Advocate for the development of diverse and culturally competent health care systems, providers, and community-based health and educational resources that are respectful, responsive, and readily accessible to African American families. To achieve this, we propose the following actions:
  - a) Work with local health systems and providers to recruit and retain culturally competent physicians and health practitioners, including African American physicians, nurses, and other health professionals to ensure effective and responsive patient care delivery.
  - b) Propose the creation of African American Health Advocate/Patient Navigator positions to be hired in all major local health care provider agencies and deployed to neighborhoods and communities to provide culturally competent outreach, engagement, and connection of African American families and children to available health services and health coverage options.
2. **Culturally Competent & Accessible Health Care Services:** Initiate establishment of a network of community-based, community-led Family Wellness Centers supported by culturally competent and diverse staff/providers that offer comprehensive access to basic preventative health services and screenings by:
  - a) Facilitating referrals for behavioral and primary health care.
  - b) Supporting community outreach groups to develop family education workshops that promote healthy parenting, child development, and lifestyle habits, as well as culturally rich social and learning opportunities that provide informal social support networks that build community and connection among African American families. Services would be offered to families regardless of ability to pay.
  - c) Convening and facilitating a quarterly Council on African American Family & Community Wellness to include local African American health advocacy organizations, health system partners, as well as city, county, and state health and social service agencies as a vehicle for collaboration, shared decision-making, and accountability towards collectively eliminating health and quality of life disparities impacting African American families and communities.
3. **Family preservation and restoration:** Advocate for systemic reforms to social service and child welfare delivery models, policies, practices, and interventions that result in family preservation, restoration, and stabilization, and that build family capacity to weather crises while leaving families intact. To achieve this, we will:
  - a) Work directly with the leadership of Dane County Department of Human Services, Dane County Courts, the Corporation Council and other social service delivery systems to build a collective commitment to promoting family preservation, restoration, and stabilization of African American families as a systemic priority, while protecting the safety and security of children; and to develop and employ best practices for empowering families to overcome barriers to social and economic security.
  - b) Work with City, County, non-profit and other social service providers to develop a plan to expand culturally competent, asset and empowerment-based social service, mental health, and family support services that equip African American families with the resources, skills, and personal capacities to build and sustain healthy, thriving homes for themselves and their children.
  - c) Work with the appropriate agencies to reduce the number of African American children and families in the foster care system, and the number of CHIPS (Children in Need of Protection) cases resulting in the termination of parental rights of African American parents by prioritizing reunification as the primary goal, and shaping coordinated case plans and capacity-building supports that keep families intact.

### FOCUS AREA CONTRIBUTORS

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### INNOVATIVE INTERACTIONS TO BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL

- ❖ Support existing annual African American Wellness Fairs and work with community partners to expand these efforts. Wellness Fairs will be funded by local healthcare providers. Attention will be paid to physical, emotional and mental health issues. Great emphasis will be given to preventative care, stress reduction, dietary education, AIDS prevention, exercise, etc.
- ❖ Offer mental health screening training and screenings in local churches.
- ❖ Provide education about mental wellness and the resources available to improve it.



### NEXT STEPS: WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Check for training opportunities:

- Nehemiah - <http://www.nehemiah.org>
- YWCA - <http://www.ywcamadison.org>
- Groundwork - <http://groundworkmadison.wordpress.com>

*This list is not exhaustive, but exemplary. Be thoughtful and creative.*

- Encourage your physician/mental health providers to get involved in community efforts.
- Encourage your HMO to have an assessment of their policies and practices related to race.

### COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- ❖ Get involved with one of the following Madison area organizations.  
*This is not an exhaustive, but a representative list.*

Foundation for Black Women's Wellness - <http://www.blackwomenswellnessday.org>

Lilada's Livingroom - <http://lilada.org>

Joining Forces for Families - <https://danecountyhumanservices.org>

Journey Mental Health Center - <http://www.journeymhc.org>

Sankofa Behavioral & Community Health - <http://www.sankofabch.org>