

RACIAL JUSTICE COMPETENCY MODEL (RJCM)

RJCM

Implementation Toolkit for Public Health Professionals



**PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING
CENTER NETWORK**



**National Network
of Public Health Institutes**

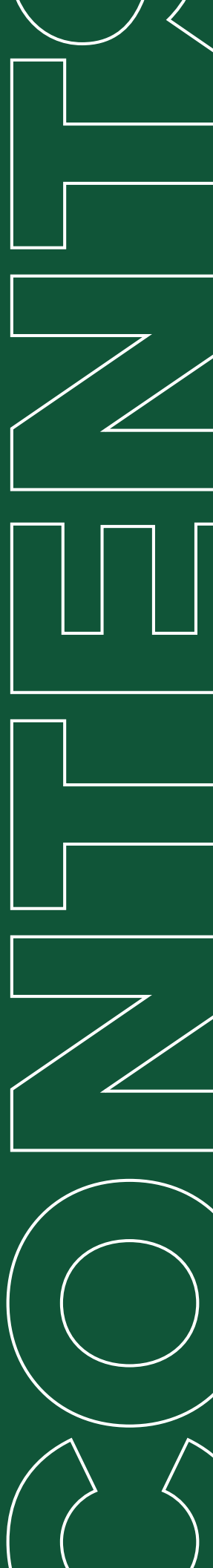
**National Coordinating
Center for Public
Health Training**

**NATIONAL COORDINATING CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING
PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING CENTER NETWORK, HEALTH RESOURCES AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
RACIAL JUSTICE COMPETENCY MODEL (RJCM)**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. [Introduction: Purpose and Intent of the RJCM Toolkit](#)
- II. [Overview of the Racial Justice Competency Model](#)
- III. [When to Use the RJCM](#)
- IV. [How to Use the RJCM](#)
- V. [Assessing Impact of the RJCM](#)
- VI. [Next Steps](#)
- VII. [Appendix](#)



ONE

I. INTRODUCTION - PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE RJCM AND THIS TOOLKIT

The public health field is one of the most important fields in our society, as it seeks to protect and promote the health and well-being of individuals and communities.

As a result, it is essential that public health professionals are adequately prepared to address the unique needs of individuals and communities of color, who are often disproportionately exposed to health disparities and health inequities. The workforce needs the capacity to approach each component of its work (including the planning and implementation of programs) with health equity, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in mind.

During 2020-2021, the [Public Health Training Center Network \(PHTCN\)](#) in collaboration with the [National Coordinating Center for Public Health Training \(NCCPHT\)](#) housed at the [National Network of Public Health Institutes \(NNPHI\)](#), coordinated developmental events for the creation of a racial justice competency model to support the public health workforce's capacity-building efforts. Through a network workgroup and an Expert Review Panel, the group sought to establish clear, specific, consensus-based recommendations for the production of a Racial Justice Competency Model for Public Health Professionals (RJCM). See the [RJCM website](#) for more information.

The RJCM is designed for the public health field to ensure the workforce is able to understand and address the intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, and health. The model aims to provide public health professionals with a resource to reflect upon the knowledge, skills, and values needed to provide equitable, culturally-competent care and services to all individuals and communities, regardless of race or ethnicity. Moreover, this model helps ensure public health professionals are trained to identify and address structural and institutional racism, which is a major driver of health disparities in the United States.



This **toolkit** was created to support the implementation of the **RJCM** offering relevant tools and insight to public health practitioners.







This effort is consistent with formal declarations of racism as a public health issue by public health agencies across the country and a growing interest in ongoing health equity and racial justice training. **In this pilot phase**, the RJCM toolkit will assist **Public Health Training Centers, our partners, and local and state health departments to develop training curricula, write job descriptions, and evaluate both individual and organizational performance that center racial justice and health equity to reach its goals**. Other intentions include incorporating the model into longer-term projects and planning, such as strategic planning and developing training plans; or for educators, trainers, and researchers to revamp existing public health courses or curricula. The PHTCN plans to update this toolkit upon completion of the pilot phase to include examples of stories, lessons learned and tools from the pilot group for broader distribution.

This project is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of the Affordable Care Act: Regional Public Health Training Center Program Award.

As an implementation guide, this toolkit provides practical guidance on **WHEN** and **HOW** to incorporate the RJCM into an organization's infrastructure and future developments to foster a culture of equity within their organization.

The RJCM:

-  Serves as a tool to combat racism in public health work and the field of practice. Enables public health practitioners to be able to challenge organizational policies and equity initiatives that uphold institutional and structural racism.
-  Helps ensure that public health professionals are properly equipped to understand and address the intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, and health.
-  Provides an overview of the necessary knowledge or skills to connect theory to action and have measurable impact.
-  Allows organizations to better understand and respond to gaps in training. Provides accountability to addressing health disparities and bringing about true racial justice.

PREREQUISITE: The Racial Justice Competency Model is designed to help organizations make meaningful progress in achieving racial equity, providing an outline of necessary and practical knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to address racism in public health practice. The model's success in an organization is based on three foundational elements: **Commitment, Assessment, and Implementation.**



Organizations should first ensure **commitment** to infusing these competencies within their workforce/ teams. With a team committed to addressing racism but with the misalignment of organizational values, principles, and practices, unintended consequences may arise that could negatively impact the organization's culture and teamwork. With committed leadership, any internal or external push-back about the effort could be addressed with assurance and communication about the alignment with the organization's mission. Pre-work before implementing activities with the RJCM would include strategic communication about the commitment and planned use of the model.



The **assessment** element requires the organization to identify its readiness and current status of racial inequity within the organization, identifying areas of improvement and developing an action plan. It would also include assessing possible push-back or risk from internal staff or external partners so the organization can develop mitigation strategies. Here is a good resource for developing assessments: the [Region V Racial Equity Resource Library](#).



The **implementation** element is guided by that action plan to ensure that the organization is making meaningful progress towards achieving it. The commitment, assessment, and implementation of such competencies to address a complex societal and structure issue like racism requires courageous organizational leadership.

Some crucial questions for the organization's (or team's) leadership to ask before beginning to use the RJCM include:

- What is the intention of the organization regarding Racial Justice and Health Equity?
- Is this intention clear and shared with internal and external partners?
- Is this intention in alignment with other organizational goals?
- Does the organization have any current Racial Justice (RJ) or Health Equity (HE) goals?
 - What are they?
 - How can this competency model be used to further goals?
- What is the organization's readiness for cultivating and experiencing these competencies within its workforce? Within the organization's policies, practices, and programs?
- Will such competencies be valued and nurtured within the organization?

The Racial Equity Special Interest Group, a workgroup of Region V Public Health Training Center that included partners and external partners from across the region, gathered and reviewed resources for public health practitioners to conduct racial equity assessments at the organizational and individual levels. The result is a resource library of racial equity resources, including assessment tools and guides, as well as other informational items of a variety of formats.



II. OVERVIEW OF RACIAL JUSTICE COMPETENCIES

The [10 Essential Public Health Services \(EPHS\) framework](#) serves as a backbone for the work of the public health workforce.

In the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic and an intense time of racially motivated tragedies in the U.S., the de Beaumont Foundation and the Public Health National Center for Innovations published the updated 10 EPHS with “Equity” as the central focus, bringing the framework up to date for current and future public health practice. By Centering equity, the public health field has committed to instituting more equitable practices and influencing public health and healthcare organizations to address community priorities and the Social Determinants of Health where all people can achieve their best possible health.

According to the American Public Health Association (APHA), “Racism shapes where and how people live,

what resources and opportunities they have and directly impacts the health of the nation. Racism is a longstanding systemic problem in this country that must be dismantled through policy and practice changes and transformations, which must start with brutally honest conversations and assessments of our systems and structures.” To support the public health field and national professional organizations like APHA with calling out racism as a public health threat, the PHTCN has developed this racial justice competency model to dismantle racial bias and discrimination within the public health field. It is to instill confidence and support the commitment for organizational change towards internal and external health equity.



The PHTCN has utilized the EPHS framework as an anchor in the development of the RJCM. The following outlines the steps of the model development process:

The first step began with the 10 PHTCs and partner organizations to identify existing competency statements and frameworks being used in training development and strategic planning efforts. The resulting competency library comprised over 650 statements relevant to health equity and racial justice.



The second step consisted of convening an Expert Review Panel (ERP) to help prioritize competency statements and provide feedback and suggestions throughout the process. The ERP was a group of 35 public health practitioners from state, local, and tribal public health departments; federal government agencies such as the CDC; non-governmental organizations; and academics from various schools of public health across the country.



The third step involved the ERP members and PHTC staff creating draft models from an iterative process of development, including monthly meetings to discuss the utility of the model, the organizing framework that should be used, including domains and the use of tiers. The ERP provided insight on the applicability of the competency statements and their relevance in providing staff with the tools to combat racism in their public health work.



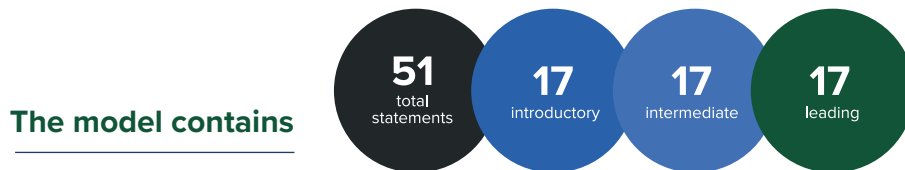
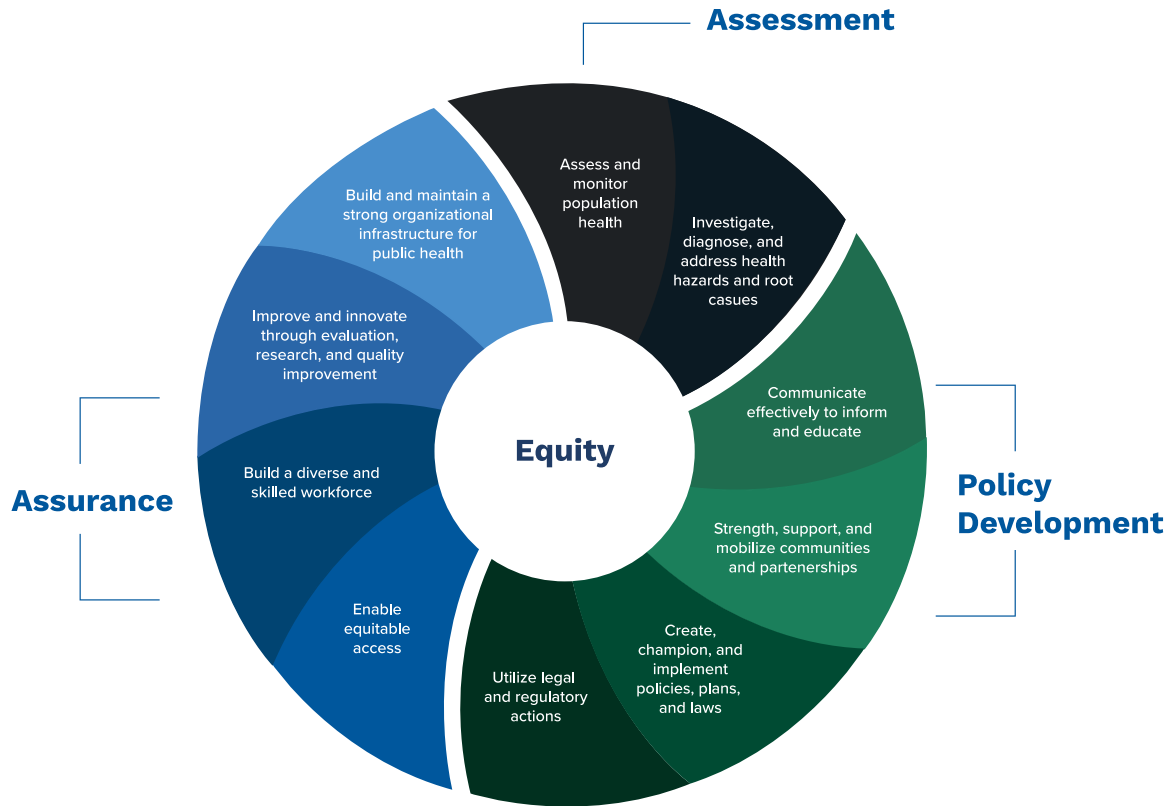
The fourth step was validation, ensuring that the model reflected the necessary and practical knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to address racism in public health practice. This included a survey administered to the expert review panel and feedback from town hall meetings held in Spring 2022.



The final step includes finalization and distribution. Based on the results of the validation phase, the PHTCN refined and finalized Version 1 of the model. Version 1 was launched on the rjcmph.org on October 1, 2023! This model will be periodically reviewed and revised to ensure it remains relevant for public health practitioners.

Such a model will provide public health professionals with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to provide equitable, culturally-competent care and services to all individuals and communities, regardless of race or ethnicity. Moreover, this model aims to ensure that public health professionals are trained to identify and address structural and institutional racism, which is a major driver of health disparities in the United States.

The RJCM organizes the competencies within domains named after the core functions of public health, according to the EPHS, and establishes clear, specific, consensus-based recommendations to produce a competency set.



These statements are to be used as guiding points to help individuals or organizations gauge where they are or for those who may not know where to start, but that this work is a commitment and life-long process, not a check-list.

- **Introductory:** These competencies are for staff or practitioners at the beginners level.
- **Intermediate:** These competencies are for staff or practitioners with some knowledge or skill with the concepts of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion and looking to expand their knowledge.
- **Leading:** These competencies are for staff or practitioners who are proficient in their understanding of intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, and health or similar language.

It also includes a glossary that provides definitions for common terms used among public health practitioners.

The PHTCN acknowledges that this is just a starting point for organizations focused on increasing their workforce’s capacity to address Racial Justice in their work. The RJCM toolkit is intended to serve as a “point of reference” to begin with, and it will continue to be reviewed, refined, and revised.

“Structural racism in the United States has been impacting health outcomes and opportunities for people of color and tribes for generations. It is time for public health professionals to be bold leaders and take purposeful action to introduce workforce development practices that promote racial justice. We can no longer claim that racism is a problem of the past. We must work to create equity-centered solutions to stop perpetuating additional harm in the communities most impacted by racism. It is imperative for state and local health departments to understand their role in combating racial injustice.”

- Moving from Conversation to Action. Developing a Racial Justice Competency Model for Public Health Professionals, by the Public Health Learning Network



III. WHEN TO USE THE RJCM

The Racial Justice Competency Model is a useful tool for any public health organization that wants to ensure that their staff, policies, and programs are addressing systemic racism and other forms of inequality. The model’s success in an organization is based on three foundational elements: Commitment, Assessment, and Implementation.

Additionally, the model can help to create an organizational culture of equity and inclusion, as well as provide training and development opportunities for staff to better serve their constituents. This toolkit is a resource for individuals who want to learn more knowledge and skills but don’t know where or how to start. This toolkit is a resource for organizations that have declared racism as a public health crisis but need guidance in next steps, such as planning and implementing actionable practices and policies with measurable impact. This toolkit may also be a resource for organizations that are pursuing accreditation or reaccreditation.

This RJCM toolkit is to assist in developing ideas for using the RJCM by public health practitioners and to formalize an organization’s racial justice efforts. There are several practical instances for using the RJCM to increase the skills and knowledge amongst the public health field needed to address systemic racism and promote health equity.

The following is a list of the intended use of the RJCM, as provided by individuals upon downloading the model **(over 1,700 downloads as of April 2023)**:

1. Developing job descriptions and hiring process (top intended use)
2. Performance review of staff
3. Personal skill improvement or assessment
4. Organizational policy assessment
5. Organizational strategic plan
6. Planning and design of workforce trainings
7. For use in educational setting
8. For use in policy advocacy

Here are some examples of when an organization or team can implement the RJCM:

Use of the RCJM for Organizational Change

The Racial Justice Competency Model can be used by organizations to create an equitable and inclusive environment. This model provides the building blocks of a framework that organizations can create to ensure that any changes they make to policies, procedures, and personnel practices are effective in addressing systemic racism. The model outlines key competencies that organizations should strive to meet, such as creating a safe and welcoming environment, fostering diversity and inclusion, and engaging in anti-racism education and training. By implementing these competencies, organizations can create an equitable and inclusive space that is free from racism and discrimination.

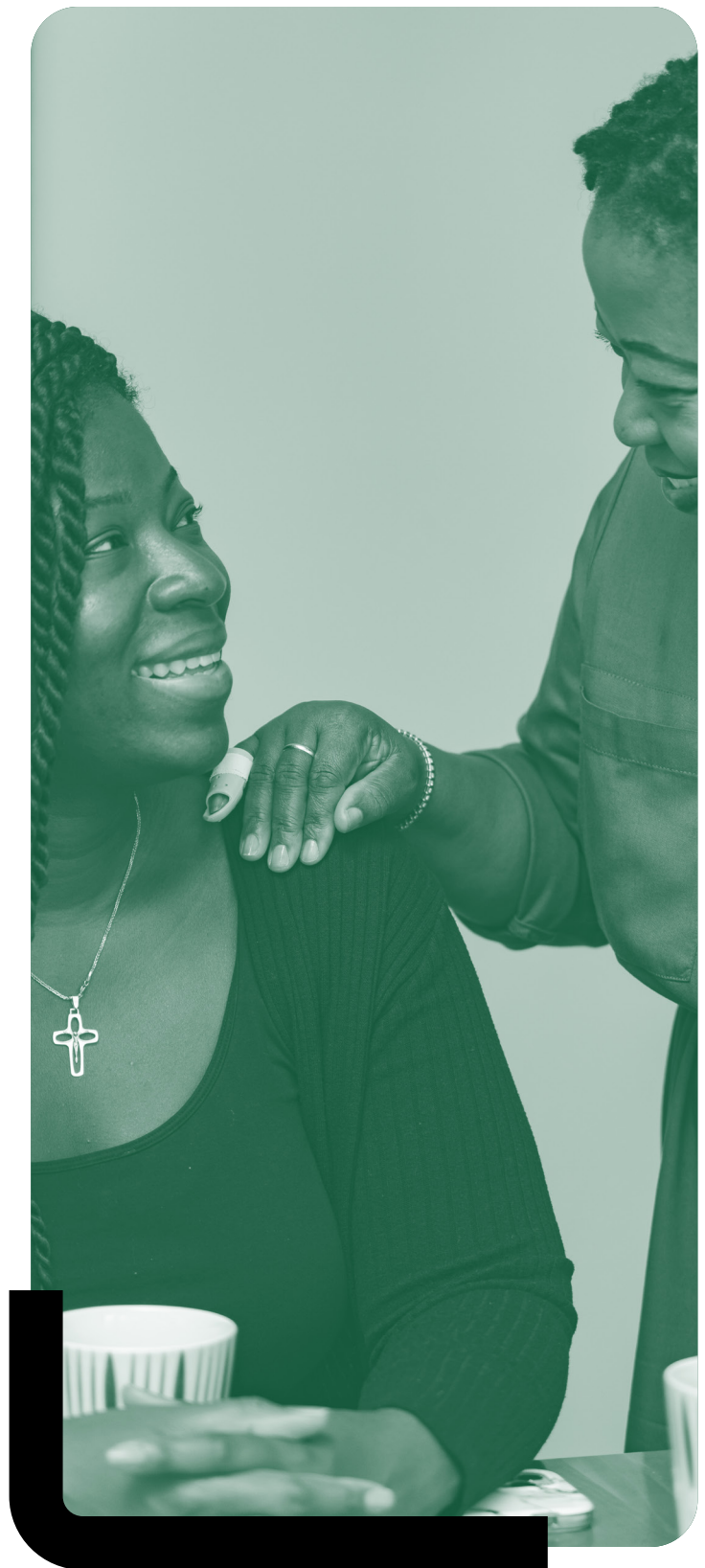
- **Organizational Strategic Planning:** The RJCM can be integrated into the process of developing an organization's strategic plan and help to update its core values and guiding principles. There may also be goals and objectives that center racial justice and health equity using the model.
- **Organizational Internal Policy Assessment:** The RJCM can be used by organizations to evaluate their policies and practices related to the five competencies and identify areas of improvement. They can use the model to craft new policies that promote racial justice and better serve people of color. The model can also be used to ensure that existing policies are effectively implemented and consistently monitored. By using the racial justice competency model, organizations can create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all their staff and constituents.
- **Partnership and Community Engagement:** Organizations can use the RJCM to develop communications and engagement tools that pull from the competencies to create messages to its collaborative partners about its internal organizational changes that center racial justice and health equity. This could also be an opportunity to share the model and its competencies with its partners, contractors and vendors for their adoption.



Use of the RCJM for Workforce Development

The Racial Justice Competency Model can be used to create a workplace culture and workforce that values and actively promotes racial equity. The model encourages organizations to focus on building the capacity of their staff and examining their organizational culture to ensure that it is welcoming and supportive of all people. It can also be used to support diversity and inclusion initiatives, such as hiring practices, mentorship programs, and other activities that ensure the organization is creating an equitable environment. Furthermore, the model can be used to educate employees on how to recognize and address any underlying racial disparities in the workplace. Finally, the model can be used to create development plans and training materials that guide employees in ways to actively combat racism and support racial justice.

- **Capacity Building of Current Staff/Workforce:**
 - Organizations can use the RJCM to update staff performance reviews to assess knowledge and capacity of staff related to racial justice.
 - Organizations can use the RJCM as a framework for creating competency-based trainings and training plans that could include pre and post assessments to measure changes in capacity.
- **Recruitment and Hiring Practices:** Organizations can use the RJCM in the development of new job descriptions and its hiring processes like accessing job qualifications, and interviewing and selection criteria. The model can be used to create or adapt an assessment tool for determining the level of competency of potential staff members.
- **Personal Skill Improvement or Assessment:** Individuals can also use the RJCM for their own professional development. The model can guide one in creating a self-assessment to identify the level of competency across its domains and to outline possible areas for improvement or expertise development.



Use of the RCJM for Policy Advocacy and Programming

The Racial Justice Competency Model can be used for developing a policy advocacy strategy and/or programming by an organization. The model provides a framework for the organization to identify and work on systemic issues that impact marginalized communities and to develop equitable solutions. It also provides elements of a roadmap for the organization to understand how to advocate for racial justice and develop programming with a racial justice lens.

- **Advocacy and Policy Education:** The organization can use the model to inform its stance and strategy regarding proposed policy at the local, state, or federal levels. In an effort to impact systemic changes needed for racial justice and health equity, this model could provide support for significant strategy development within policy teams and coalitions. The model could be used to educate political officials regarding the needs for racial justice, assess the current policies, and identify areas for change.
- **Programming:** The organization can use the model to support the development of community interventions or programs for capacity building regarding racial justice and health equity concepts. The model could also be used to identify areas for improvement of current programs. Lastly, the model can be used to evaluate program outcomes and ensure that the organization is meeting its goals and objectives.



Use of the RCJM for Educational Settings

The Racial Justice Competency Model can be used for educational settings and academia to help promote inclusivity and foster an understanding of race and racism. The model is designed to provide a framework for individuals and institutions to increase their awareness, knowledge, and skills in working towards racial justice. This framework can be used in classrooms, universities, and other educational settings to help create an environment where everyone feels respected and accepted.

- **Capacity Building of Current Staff/Workforce:**
 - Organizations can use the RJCM to update staff performance reviews to assess knowledge and capacity of staff related to racial justice.
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IV. HOW TO USE THE RJCM

The following is an example of a plan for how an organization or team can assess and implement the RJCM.

STEP 1

Map out or audit the organization's existing principles and processes to create a baseline for the organization's starting point. Conduct a pre-assessment of current status of how the topic of racial justice is incorporated into organizational practices and policies, human resource management and workforce development. The Region V PHTC Racial Equity Library includes several pre-assessment tools for you to consider.

STEP 2

Revise, refine, or recreate organizational core values and guiding principles that integrate components of the RJCM and align with updates to the organization's strategic plan.

[Public Health Institute's CA4Health](#) explored how their program office and members can collectively embody their commitment to health equity in 2018. [Members of its CA4Health delegation collaborated to craft a set](#) of intentions related to equity that will keep the energy and lessons alive for the network. The principles they outlined express their commitment to equity and will inform how they assess what policies and/or actions CA4Health will support.

The Principles include:

- People power
- A right to health for all
- Acknowledging systems and history of inequity
- Leveraging privilege for impact
- Centering community voices and community narratives
- Intersectional movement building
- Moving to action
- Inclusion and accessibility



STEP
3

Audit and update the existing staff training plans to include competency-based curricula that includes components of the RJCM.

STEP
4

For current staff, update staff performance reviews with components of the RJCM to assess knowledge and capacity of staff related to racial justice.

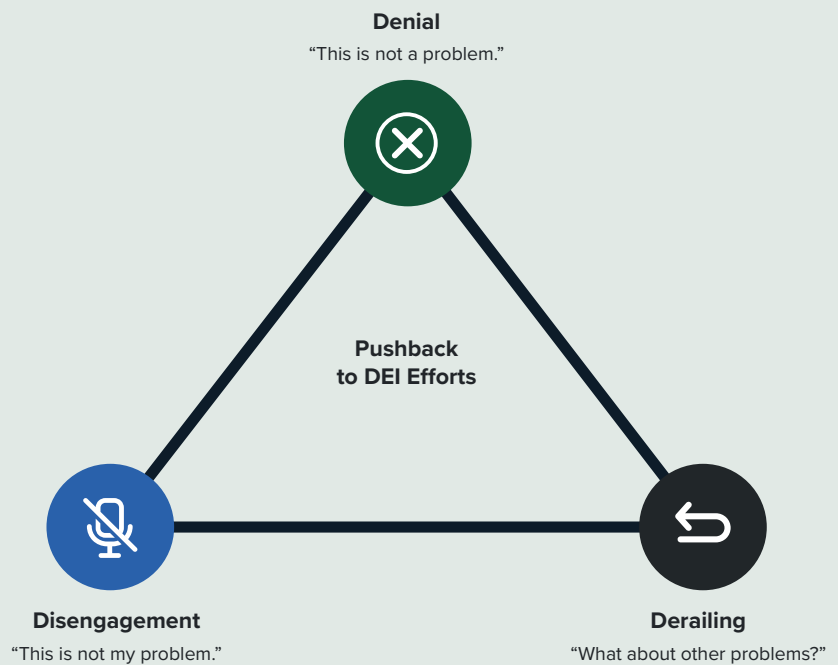
Framework to Categorize Pushback

Gartner created this framework to address pushback that seeks to disrupt, invalidate, or disconnect from initiatives to advance equity and inclusion in work settings.

Denial is when people don't acknowledge the existence of structures like race and ignore the resulting bias, injustice, or inequity.

Disengagement shows up as an unwillingness to take action to support racial justice efforts, which may include struggling with being an ally or active participant in efforts. **Derailing** attempts to shift focus away from racial justice and focus on experiences of members of the dominant group, which can show up as being dismissive of concerns raised by team members or communities of color.

For more information how each of these forms of pushback may look and strategies to combat them, [read the Gartner article](#) *How to Navigate Pushback to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Efforts*.



STEP
5

For recruiting new staff, create [job descriptions](#) that incorporate competencies of the RJCM.

STEP
6

Develop a process that allows for continuous auditing and updates for quality improvement to meet the organization's goals related to the RJCM.

Template for Developing a Plan to Incorporate the RJCM for Organizational Change

Milestone	Activities	Responsible Person	Start Date	End Date	Status/Notes
Step 1. Map/audit organizational principles and policies and conduct pre-assessment					
Step 2. Create organization's Racial Justice Core Values and Guiding Principles					
Step 3. Audit existing training plan and trainings					
Step 4. Update performance reviews for current staff					
Step 5. Create job descriptions for recruiting new staff					
Step 6. Develop continuous quality improvement process post assessment					

V. ASSESSING IMPACT OF THE RJCM WITHIN ORGANIZATION OR TEAM

Organizations may want to assess the success of their implementation of the RJCM within its workforce strategy. The model can help the organization assess its progress in achieving racial justice and identify areas in need of improvement. By incorporating the RJCM into its operations, a public health organization can measure if they are making meaningful change and creating a more equitable and just system of care for people of color.

In order to assess, the organization would use program evaluation and quality improvement methods that are similar to that of public health interventions. The organization could:

1. Collect baseline data for future comparisons of both internal competency increases and external program impact.
2. Administer staff surveys and collect observations for analyzing internal changes and the impact of the culture.
3. Analyze program performance/outcome data from those programs and interventions implemented by staff hired and/or trained based on the RJCM.
4. Collect data from external partners and partners to assess external perception of the organizational changes.
5. Share key themes from findings with the team, organization, and external partners as appropriate.
6. Determine realistic next steps that address findings, e.g., set [SMARTIE goals](#).



VI. NEXT STEPS

This is only the first phase of implementing the RJCM. A pilot group of health departments is using this toolkit to increase their organizational capacity to accomplish racial justice and health equity. The PHTCN will learn how the pilot group applied this to their work and plans to update the toolkit for broader use with examples of tools and lessons from the pilot phase.

Future Development - PHTCN to Collect the following from Pilot Phase:

- Reflections, practical advice, and testimonies
- Promising practices created
- Training materials, curriculum, talking points, PowerPoint presentations, etc.
- Team exercises and activities



VII. APPENDIX

- [Racial Justice Competency Model website](#)

The Public Health Training Center Network is a consortium of regional Public Health Training Centers that collectively represent the nation's most comprehensive resource for public health workforce development

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of the Affordable Care Act: Regional Public Health Training Center Program award totaling \$8,918,000 (2022). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.



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