

THE NEW JERSEY CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC TASK FORCE ON RACIAL AND HEALTH DISPARITIES

Task Force Toolkit for Public Testimony

October - December 2022



INTRODUCTION

The COVID–19 pandemic (COVID-19) has exposed and worsened persistent racial and health inequities across the nation. Individuals from communities of color and other marginalized populations have been disproportionately affected, and as a result, have borne a higher burden of COVID-19.

To more clearly understand how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted minorities and marginalized communities in New Jersey, legislation was sponsored by Assembly members Shavonda Sumter, Angelica Jimenez and Linda Carter to establish a task force examining racial and health disparities related to COVID-19. This legislation was signed into law by Governor Murphy on June 11, 2021.

The law created the New Jersey Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic Task Force on Racial and Health Disparities (the Task Force), which is staffed by the New Jersey Department of Health. The Task Force is comprised of 23 members, including 14 public members appointed by the Governor, some of whom were selected based upon recommendations from the Legislature, and others based upon requirements stipulated in the legislation. The remaining nine are Ex-Officio members from various relevant state departments. Members represent a diversity of expertise and racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Its mission is to provide specific recommendations to the Governor and Legislature for mitigating inequities caused or exacerbated by COVID-19 and for preventing such inequities in the future.

Prior to providing recommendations, the Task Force will assess how and why the pandemic has affected minorities and high-risk burden communities in New Jersey, as well as the short- and long-term consequences for these communities.

To accomplish this, the Task Force would like to solicit and receive testimony from New Jersey residents from all minorities and high-risk burden communities based on their experiences during COVID-19.

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT AND HOW TO USE IT

The Task Force needs your input to successfully develop recommendations that address racial and health disparities as they relate to COVID-19 in New Jersey.

We will use your stories and ideas to inform the Task Force's recommendations that will be submitted to the New Jersey Governor and Legislature in March 2023.



This toolkit is designed to help you in two ways:



Provide you with ideas on how to give your testimony



Help guide conversations with your communities, other organizations, and individuals about the challenges experienced during COVID-19.

You may then consider submitting the information collected during these conversations in writing, in representation of the communities you serve.

COMMUNITIES OF FOCUS

We are specifically interested in stories and ideas from the state's minority and marginalized communities that will help eliminate racial and health disparities and support the diverse range of individuals and communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 including but not limited to:

- Communities of color
- Rural communities
- People with disabilities
- Adults aged 65+ years

THREE OPTIONS TO PROVIDE TESTIMONY



In-Person

Attend a public hearing in-person and provide oral comments (limited to three minutes) at the next following location:

- **New Brunswick**
 - Location: DCF Training Academy
30 Van Dyke Ave.,
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
 - Date: Saturday, December 3, 2022
 - Time: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm



Virtually

Attend a public hearing virtually and provide oral comments (limited to three minutes):

Zoom Meeting

- Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85656596288>
- Date: December 6, 2022
- Time: 4:30 pm – 8:00 pm
- Call-in information: US +1 929 436 2866
+1 646 931 3860 US
+1 301 715 8592 US
- Meeting ID: 856 5659 6288



Written

Your written comments or comments you collected can be submitted electronically via email at njcdtf@doh.nj.gov. We suggest limiting your written comments to three pages. Please submit no later than Friday, December 16, 2022. You may also mail your written comments to the following address; comments must be received by the same deadline:

**New Jersey Department of Health Office
of Minority and Multicultural Health**

55 N. Willow St., 4th Floor

P.O. Box 360

Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0360

Attention: Aracely Macias

PILLARS

The pillars below define the scope of the legislative charge of the Task Force. They will help guide topic areas of testimony.



Data Systems:

How can existing data systems be improved to ensure that health information collected relating to COVID-19 infections and deaths include specific race, ethnicity, and demographic identifiers?

Health Communication:

How can the communication, messaging, and dissemination of information regarding testing, contact tracing, vaccination, and other related public health approaches during COVID-19 be improved to be more effective?

Historical & Systemic Inequities:

What are the historical and systematic inequalities pertaining to race and ethnicity that have exacerbated the death rate in the state's minority and marginalized communities during COVID-19?

Social Indicators of Health:

What conditions in the environments where people live, learn, work, play, and worship affected their health risks and outcomes relating to COVID-19?

Physical/Mental Health Status & Health Care Disparities:

What are issues relating to the quality of, and access to, physical and mental health treatment and services during COVID-19?

Please share your stories and your ideas for success under each pillar. You may choose to focus on one pillar, multiple pillars, all five, or none. For stakeholders, please share the five pillars and related questions ahead of time to help your community prepare for the conversation.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS/ ORGANIZATIONS TO PARTICIPATE



Host a Watch Party

Stakeholders can gather their constituents and host a watch party to encourage participation in their communities. A watch party can allow communities to gather and promote robust group discussions around the issues being addressed. This can be captured by the stakeholder/organization and submitted in writing to the Task Force before the deadline.



Host a Discussion

Hosting a roundtable, panel discussion or informal conversation promotes engagement and can foster insightful discussions and interest. These events can be virtual, in person, or a combination of both. When you host your own convening, you may use the Pillars (page 6) and Questions (page 8) to guide your conversations. Decide how you will and capture information from the discussions.

After your discussions, please collect or submit your stories and your feedback. Make them as specific as possible. Please share your responses via email at njcdtf@doh.nj.gov by **Friday, December 16, 2022, to be sure they are considered. When you submit your responses, include the name of your organization (if applicable), where your convening took place, describe the number of members in your group and a general description of who was there (i.e., community members from a specific town, advocates, physicians, etc.).**

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO AID YOUR TESTIMONY OR DISCUSSION

-
- How has COVID-19 impacted you, your family, or your community: the places or environments where you live, learn, work, play, worship, and age?

- What steps would you like to see the government take to address these issues?

- Do you feel your race and/or ethnicity affected your access to COVID-19 related information, testing, vaccination, and/or health care?

- In what ways could primary care better serve marginalized communities during the pandemic?

- How can community members be a resource in times of crisis?

- Were you ever a victim of a scam/fraud relating to COVID-19? If so, please describe.

- What are your suggestions for best practices individuals/ stakeholders/organizations/employers can take to prepare for future public health crises?
-

THINGS TO NOTE

- **All in-person public hearings will be livestreamed as listen-in only sessions to ensure that individuals can listen to other community members.**
 - **Listening to other community members might inspire you to give your own testimony at either another public hearing (in-person or virtually) or to submit in writing.**
 - **Please submit written comments no later than Friday, December 16, 2022.**
 - **For more information about the Task Force or to watch the hearings and submit comments, visit <https://linktr.ee/njcovid>**
-