

American Academy of Pediatrics New Policy on Harmful Effects of Racism

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Written by: Terry Haven



This week, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the nation's largest group of pediatricians, warned that racism can have devastating long-term effects on children's health.

The warning comes in a new policy statement titled, "The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health," developed by the AAP's Council on Community Pediatrics, Section on Adolescent Health, and Committee on Adolescence. The full statement is available at

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2019/07/25/peds.2019-1765> and will be published in the August issue of *Pediatrics*.

This policy statement is the first the AAP has issued to its members on the dangers

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of racism. Doctors involved in the report said the current political and cultural atmosphere makes the work to end racism more urgent.

The Utah Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Voices for Utah Children applaud this policy statement. We join pediatricians in calling upon members of the public to help prevent racism and ensure race equity, and recommend, as an important action step, championing and embedding inclusion within their organization.

"Racism affects (and harms) each of us individually and all of us collectively. This statement is so vital and timely in that it encourages us to directly examine these effects and make the changes in ourselves, our families and our organizations that will allow us to recognize and benefit from the richness of our diversity," says Paul Wirkus, MD, President of the Utah Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

As the KIDS COUNT designated organization in Utah, Voices for Utah Children is committed to race equity and inclusion. The AAP's new policy statement reinforces the importance of the work Voices is doing to ensure that the data we collect, analyze and disseminate is disaggregated wherever possible to uncover patterns of racial inequity. We encourage public institutions, government agencies, and community stakeholders to become deeply invested and committed to using this disaggregated data in their decision-making process so they can more effectively manage and allocate resources to help children and families.

To gain a deeper understanding of how specific groups of people or specific geographic areas of our state are faring, it is important to disaggregate data. This policy statement highlights the need for the collection, analysis and use of data that is broken down by race and ethnicity,. Data broken out this way helps to more clearly underscore trends and disparities, develop targeted strategies and provide greater accountability.