

To: **Colin Greene, MD, MPH, State Health Commissioner, Virginia Department of Health:**
From: **Nia Harrison, MPP, Chair, Advisory Council on Health Disparity & Health Equity**
(ACHDHE), Virginia Department of Health (VDH)

Date: October 11, 2022:

Subject: **ACHDHE Recommendations for Program Enhancement:**

In response to the July 12, 2022 presentation on “COVID-19 Best Practices & Lessons Learned” presented to the ACHDHE by **Lance Gregory**, Office of Environmental Health, we respectfully present the following recommendations:

- VDH identifies how much additional funding is needed to meet demand, utilizing data obtained from the Septic and Well Assistance program application process and community outreach initiatives, and seeks the resources needed to expand the program accordingly.
- VDH improves the accessibility of the Septic and Well Assistance Program application by posting to VDH's website (1) the translations into other languages that are currently being developed; (2) an application that is more accessible to people who use e-readers, in compliance with federal requirements; and (3) a plain language version to help people with cognitive impairments.
- VDH adds a question about disability status to the Septic and Well Assistance Program application.

In response to the July 12, 2022 presentation on “COVID-19 Best Practices & Lessons Learned” presented to the ACHDHE by **Amy Popovich**, Nurse Manager and **Jackie Lawrence**, Director of Health Equity/Population Health Manager, Richmond City & Henrico County Health Department, VDH we respectfully present the following recommendations:

- VDH works with the local health districts to implement a more inclusive approach to serving Virginia's diverse community of people who are homebound in a more culturally and linguistically competent way, modeled after Richmond City and Henrico County Health Districts' equity framework.
- VDH provides additional funding to support local health districts' efforts to conduct post-pandemic outreach to minority communities, modeled after Richmond City and Henrico County Health Districts' equity framework.
- VDH should identify, share, and promote COVID-19 best practices across local health districts. Best practices include but are not limited to the Richmond and Henrico health districts' health equity model and health equity trainings.

In response to the July 12, 2022 presentation on “OHE Mental Health Incentives Program Overview” presented to the ACHDHE by **Heather Anderson**, Director, Division of Primary Care and Rural Health, VDH, we respectfully present the following recommendations:

- VDH seeks increased funding and staffing for the behavioral health workforce program and create the awareness in building the next generation of providers.
- VDH requires Behavioral Health Loan Repayment Program beneficiaries to participate in one or more diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings provided by the Department.

In response to the July 12, 2022 presentation on “Health Challenges in the Disability Community” presented to the ACHDHE by **Nia Harrison**, Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, we respectfully present the following recommendations:

- VDH provide disability awareness training to agency staff, health professionals, and other key stakeholders. VDH increase collection, analysis, and reporting of health data regarding people with disabilities. The data should identify the specific locality, type of disability, and types of needs including accommodations.
- VDH and local health departments should seek federal funding and technical assistance to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in health initiatives. Potential federal resources include the National Association on County and City Health Officials' (NACCHO) Disability Technical Assistance Program and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) State Disability and Health Programs.

Signed: Nia Harrison
Nia Harrison, ACHDHE Chair