



COMPACT FOR THRIVING COMMUNITIES

A collective call to action to policymakers, advocates and practitioners supporting health, choice, and equity, instead of institutionalization

THE NEED

It is a time of reckoning in America. It is estimated that there are at least 1.1 million individuals and families facing the intersectional barriers of extreme poverty, health and ability disparities, and systemic racism, who cycle between the street and institutions for a lack of suitable alternatives in the community.[1] The time is now to join together to disrupt the status quo and transform the public systems to better address their needs and enable them to thrive.

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

The confluence of two crises has put our history of systemic racism into the public spotlight. It is a moment we cannot let pass. The killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and too many others, has brought tens of thousands into the streets in protest against structural racism. At the same time headlines highlight how the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and the most vulnerable people, especially those residing in institutional settings like mental health and addiction treatment facilities, nursing homes, group homes, jails and prisons.

The well-being of our communities depends on protecting the health of people facing the intersectional barriers of extreme poverty, disparities in health and ability, and systemic racism. The pandemic has made this clearer than ever before. We cannot secure public health when people cannot safely shelter in place and the only options are places where physical distancing is impossible, or the street.

The lack of community-based resources too often leads to forced institutionalization and unsafe conditions. We must seize this opportunity brought to light by both the pandemic and widespread calls for systemic change to create housing and service alternatives that offer better options. With state and local budgets depleted, we must prioritize available resources to break individuals and families free from overburdened, costly, and uncoordinated institutional and crisis response systems.

CENTERING RACIAL EQUITY

Centering racial equity is central to transforming these institutional systems. The CSH Racial Disparities and Disproportionality Index (RDDI) was developed to better understand the racial disparities embedded in institutional systems. In nearly every system analyzed, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) are over-represented.

Addressing these disparities requires recalibrating expectations for system performance. When we prioritize health, choice, and equity we prioritize the opportunity to live in a thriving community; a place people choose to call home that offers the healthcare, food, jobs, schools, childcare, and recreation necessary for life-long success and well-being. *The cornerstone to thriving communities is safe, affordable housing with the supports people need to move from just surviving to thriving.*

[1] See <https://www.csh.org/supportive-housing-101/data/>

Realizing this vision means increased advocacy for public policies focused on:

- eliminating racial disparities in institutional systems;
- dismantling the collateral consequences and stigma they create; and
- investing in the housing and service infrastructure needed to create opportunity and thriving communities.

We acknowledge that some past efforts to address these issues have perpetuated norms of white-dominant culture which have only reinforced these disparities. Developing the approaches and solutions needed to undo the historical legacy and persistence of racism must center the voices of people with lived experience, and be shaped by the expertise of BIPOC leaders across the public, nonprofit and for-profit sectors. Together we can reimagine and develop new approaches that achieve our goals and live up to our intentions.

CALL TO ACTION

The Compact for Thriving Communities is a call to action committed to:

- Transforming public sector institutional and crisis response systems through a collaborative public policy and advocacy effort.
- Prioritizing housing choice and equity to ensure everyone can thrive in a community they call home.
- Lifting-up and centering the voices and lived experience of people who face the challenges of poverty, health and disability, racism, and discrimination in developing policy and program solutions and in our advocacy efforts for the public sector resources required to address their needs.
- Working to rapidly create the affordable housing with supportive services needed by many of the thousands of people temporarily placed in hotel and motel rooms across the country in response to COVID-19.
- Advocating for the resources we need to provide the affordable housing and services more than 1.1 million individuals and families currently need but lack.

A NEW TIME, A NEW WAY FORWARD

Join the Compact for Thriving Communities to realign priorities and funding for people who our systems have failed.

The long simmering affordable housing crisis, rooted in racist policies and business practices, is a public health emergency. Policy makers are grappling with critical needs including emergency assistance to renters, sustaining public housing, and stabilizing affordable housing. New reinvestment opportunities are emerging to aid in moving away from triage, crisis and institutionalization toward health, choice, equity, and community. Federal, state, and local policy responses to the pandemic can be shaped to lay the foundation for transformation.

The Compact for Thriving Communities advocates for federal policy that supports:

- Equal access to basic housing and service needs through a rental assistance entitlement for the lowest income households with linked services funding.
- Elimination of barriers to accessing housing resulting from the stigma and collateral consequences of involvement with justice, child welfare and other institutional systems.
- Reinvestment of funding from crisis response and institutional systems to expand housing options with services in community.
- Allocation of funding for housing and services sufficient to meet the needs of people facing the intersectional barriers of extreme poverty, health and ability disparities, and racism and discrimination.

The policy and advocacy priorities undertaken over the next year will be set collaboratively by the Compact partners. Together we can remake our communities as places everyone can call home.

Visit communitiesthriving.org to learn more.