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St. Louis Integrated Health Releases Statement in Support of Public Health Efforts to Reduce Impact of COVID-19

ST. LOUIS (July 30, 2021) -- As a network of *patient-centered*, health and public health organizations, we stand with all the medical and lay professionals that care for our communities' health and wellbeing, especially our colleagues on the frontline protecting us all from the proven, deadly impact of COVID-19. Acknowledging lives lost from this virus, the unprecedented dangers of COVID-19 remain significant. It goes without saying, concentrated populations in St. Louis City and St Louis County continue to bear a disproportionate burden of racial disparity. This has been exacerbated by COVID-19, where the cascading impacts should prompt a greater level of humility, support, and response in all.

It warrants attention that the underserved remain overrepresented in both COVID-19 infection and death¹. According to the Department of Health, in the City of St Louis alone, African American residents represented nearly 80% of cases in May and June of 2021; this is double the proportion of January 2021. The overrepresentation continues with data showing African American resident cases at roughly 76% through July 25th². In addition, unlike other waves of the pandemic, the Delta variant is proving to be a greater threat to children, who up until age 12 are not eligible for a vaccine³.

Anchored in these facts and, the recent comments of County Executive Sam Page referenced in a KSDK interview stating, "Black children 12-15 are not getting vaccinated at the same rate as white children. Forty-seven percent of white children have already started the vaccination process and only 16% of Black children have begun⁴" call more attention to this rising challenge.

The endangerment imposed on public health and well-being requires our network to speak up, collectively. To model this action, we as the St. Louis Integrated Health Network denounce hate, racism and xenophobia of any kind directed at any person. The most recent occurrence, experienced by Dr. Faisal Khan during a recent St. Louis County Council meeting, brings into clear focus that doctors, nurses and public health officials continue to be subjected to explicit hate, unmerited threats and intolerable disrespect.

As St. Louis continues to experience high rates of transmission, we lift up a [regional, community-centered educational resource](#)⁵, rooted in keeping those we serve and love prepared through the COVID-19 era. With safety practices that include vaccination options, hand hygiene, mask wearing and appropriate social distancing, we stand by the urgent need to follow public health guidance from trusted leaders in our community.

The pandemic is far from over, but healing must begin. We lean in with the public and our communities, elevating the silenced majority, as we accept the challenge to seed a healed future. This is the fight the St.

¹ [Demographic Data | City of St. Louis \(stlouis-mo.gov\)](#)

² (STLCityDOH) COVID19_Weekly Update_7_25_21.pptx

³ [COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens | CDC](#)

⁴ [Ferguson CEO using personal experience to fuel vaccine outreach | ksd.com](#)

⁵ [PrepareSTL – Preparing the St Louis Region for COVID19](#)

Louis region deserves. IHN's mission⁶ raises the call to action of building a healthier St. Louis, and it is with this intent that we present this statement.

In solidarity,

Dr. Robert Massie

IHN Board Chair

CEO, Family Care Health Centers

Bethany Johnson-Javois, MSW

IHN CEO

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The St. Louis Integrated Health Network (IHN) is a safety-net healthcare intermediary nonprofit. The mission is to provide quality, affordable, and accessible care with an emphasis on serving the underserved. It's membership includes the four FQHCS: Affinia, Betty Jean Kerr People's, Family Care, Care STL Health, Mercy Health System, BJC Health System, SSM Health System, St. Louis County Health Department, City of St. Louis Department of Public Health, Washington University School of Medicine, Saint Louis University School of Medicine, Missouri Primary Care Association, and the St. Louis Regional Health Commission.

IHN believes everyone deserves the opportunity to lead a healthy life. Achieving this aim means paying attention to medically under-served groups who rely on the safety net to get their health needs met. IHN partners with community health centers, hospital systems, public health departments, academic partners, and other safety net institutions that share our mission to close the gaps in care for these groups and to align the many health services and resources that are crucial to their well-being. IHN values racial equity as an essential part of Health Equity. More information can be found at www.stlouisihn.org.

⁶ [Home | Our Work | The Network | Integrated Health Network \(stlouisihn.org\)](#)