

CROWNSVILLE HOSPITAL MEMORIAL PARK EQUITY STATEMENT

Overview

Anne Arundel County envisions an equitable¹ and just world, where Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park “honor[s] and preserve[s] the history and legacy of the Hospital, and those who were institutionalized during its operation, by creating a space where people can heal through the natural beauty of the site and access multi-needed resources and services.” (Executive Order No. 61)

Crownsville Hospital was a racially segregated facility, initially named “Maryland Hospital for the Negro Insane,” where unconscionable acts were committed against hundreds of Black Americans. It served to perpetuate the confinement, subjugation, alienation, and terrorization visited upon African-Americans during slavery. These acts had a devastating impact on the overall health and well-being of the patients, their families, and the Black community - including a legacy of trauma, and, for some, death.

The practices utilized at Crownsville Hospital were harmful to men, women, and children with mental health challenges. These practices contributed to the enduring fear, stigma, and misinformation associated with mental illness.

Anne Arundel County seeks to repair these harms by its stand against injustice and inequity and its commitment to reconciliation and restoration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INJUSTICE AND INEQUITY

Anne Arundel County acknowledges that:

- In 1911, the State of Maryland established the separate and unequal “Hospital for the Negro Insane” (hereafter referred to as “the Hospital”).
- The first twelve patients, who were Black men labeled as “insane,” built the first buildings on the property; they slept on the bare ground and weathered the elements until the building was completed.
- The “Hospital” remained racially segregated until 1963. In 1949, white patients were present at Crownsville but were housed in separate facilities from Black patients.
- Black children were housed in these facilities alongside adults without adequate care or protection.
- Black patients were improperly housed, clothed, fed, and cared for while at the facility.
- Medical experimentation on Black patients and others at Crownsville was cruel, brutal, and inhumane. They endured lobotomies, were injected with malaria, and underwent painful procedures such as pneumoencephalography (drilling a hole in the skull and draining fluid around the brain) and the insertion of metal probes into their brains to reach temporal nerves.

¹ “Equity”, in its simplest terms as it relates to racial and social justice, means meeting communities where they are and allocating resources and opportunities as needed to create equal outcomes for all community members. “Equity” further recognizes each person has different circumstances and needs, meaning different groups of people need different resources and opportunities allocated to them in order to thrive.” (United Way of the National Capital Area)

- Over 2,000 Black patients, known and unknown, died at Crownsville Hospital and many were buried on these grounds.
- Black patients were routinely exploited and leased to work neighboring farms for “pittance” wages.
- Black citizens in Maryland and the region were faced with mental assault over decades. They were forced to live with the impending threat of being sent to Crownsville and feared State action that would deprive them of their freedom without due process and diminish their ability to address their mental health.
- The eventual hiring of Black staff improved the standard of care for Black patients. They honored the humanity of the Black patients despite the inhumanity and employment discrimination they faced at Crownsville.

Anne Arundel County’s commitment to an equitable and just County, and to the redevelopment of Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park reflect our intention to honor and preserve this history by acknowledging the lives of those who suffered, and wrongs committed against them.

COMMITMENTS TO AN EQUITABLE FUTURE

In the redevelopment and management of Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park, the County will take measures to make it a welcoming, safe, and healthy environment for all to freely participate in its cultural life. Given the site’s history, racial reconciliation, restorative justice, and wellness will be touchstones in the design, future use and operation of the Park. **To ensure that our actions reflect our intentions, the County commits to:**

- Prioritize the history of Crownsville with respect to African-Americans and persons with mental illness, to ensure that barriers to their access and full participation are addressed;
- Utilize an equity lens² in making decisions regarding access, programming, services, and opportunities associated with the site to ensure that no groups are unintentionally excluded, marginalized, or harmed by governmental action at the site;
- Identify opportunities to enhance our collective understanding of racism, ableism, intolerance, inequity, and injustice, as well as the institutional structures perpetuating them, in order to prevent the replication of these harmful structures at Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park (hereafter referred to as “the Memorial Park”).
- Maintain dedicated spaces at the Memorial Park “Park” for an accurate narrative of the history of Crownsville Hospital and the continued need for racial equity work in the County.
- Ensure that former patients, employees, and their descendants are afforded opportunities for meaningful representation and participation on any board(s), commission(s), or entity(ies) authorized to manage the Park’s activities and affairs.
- Solicit organizations, staff, donors, board members, volunteers, partners, and service providers that reflect the diversity and breadth of the County’s communities.

² Internal reference to Tools/Equity Lens Exhibit

- Utilize best practices to provide minority and disadvantaged business enterprises with opportunities to contract or otherwise provide vendor services for the redevelopment and continued operation of the Park.
- Comply with the County non-discrimination/non-harassment policy that “prohibits illegal discrimination against any individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, ancestry, national origin, language, faith-based or religious affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, family/parental status, marital status, age, physical or mental disability, limited English proficiency, and any other protected lawful classifications, attributes or affiliations covered by the county, state and federal laws.”
- Make demographic and other relevant equity data available to the public regarding the Park’s tenants, contractors and vendors, employees, and programs.

EQUITY ASSURANCE TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

In alignment with our Equity Statement, we will utilize various tools and strategies to ensure that all members of Anne Arundel County have fair and equitable access to the community benefits and services established within the “Park”.

The following tools and strategies will support our pledge to promote equity, diversity, inclusivity, and accountability:

Equity Assessment Frameworks

1. **Tools:** Equity scorecard, “Equity Lens” checklist*
2. **Alignment:** Using equity-informed decision-making processes to evaluate all proposals for procurement, contracting, and personnel processes ensures that our programming and partnerships reflect our equity goals and that we are held accountable for making tangible progress.

Community Engagement Platforms

1. **Tools:** Social media platforms and public meetings
2. **Alignment:** Engaging with local communities through these platforms facilitates open dialogue and strengthens relationships, aligning with our objective of elevating historically marginalized voices and harmed communities in meaningful ways that promote justice, restoration, reconciliation, and healing.

Evaluation and Reporting Mechanisms

1. **Tools:** Equity scorecards, annual reports, public reporting platforms
2. **Alignment:** Setting measurable equity goals and communicating results transparently uphold our commitment to accountability and continuous improvement, reflecting on both successes and areas for growth.

Training and Educational Resources

1. Tools: Webinars, online courses, on-site learning experiences

2. Alignment: Ongoing training for board members, staff, and volunteers on racial equity, diversity, inclusion, and cultural humility supports our mission to understand the perspectives and needs of diverse cultures, ensuring that our approaches are sensitive, inclusive, and appropriate.

Data Analysis and Visualization

1. Tools: Data analysis platforms
2. Alignment: Data-informed insights allow us to identify gaps in service delivery and community engagement. Data should be disaggregated by race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other social identity markers. This aligns with the previously stated commitment to actively addressing the inequities and institutional structures that undergirded the history of Crownsville Hospital.

By incorporating these tools within our operational framework, we affirm our commitment to the values outlined in the Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park Equity Statement. This integrated approach will guide our actions, ensuring that we create a healthy and equitable environment for all members of our community.

***Proposed “Equity Lens”**

- What is your proposal, and what are the desired outcomes or results?
- What data are available to support or inform the proposal? What does the data suggest about potential needs, impacts, existing inequities, performance, or gaps?
- How have communities been engaged? What are the demographics (e.g., race, gender, age, ability, socioeconomic status) of the communities currently engaged? What opportunities, if any, do you see to expand engagement? Which communities still need to be engaged (i.e., which communities or demographics are missing from the conversation or are being planned for but not involved in planning efforts)?
- Who will benefit from the proposed action/project/initiative? Which communities will be or may be burdened? How will you advance equity or mitigate unintended consequences?
- What is the plan for implementation? Is the plan adequately resourced?
- How will you evaluate and communicate your results?
- What will be the reporting and evaluation process for this project/initiative?