



October 21, 2021

Road Map Bulletin: A Deep Dive into Strategy #4

Happy Thursday, Mount Sinai Community –

You may have noticed that our last couple of bulletins were anchored on one overarching theme: **community**. Today, we are excited to introduce the next *Road Map for Action* strategy—Strategy Four—which also shares this focus:

Build connection and community within the Mount Sinai Health System to adopt a racial equity culture.

Strategy Four builds upon Strategy Three, which we [discussed](#) a few weeks ago, by further strengthening a community dedicated to racial equity within Mount Sinai. It's a great goal—but also a tall task. Here's how the lead for Strategy Four, **Pamela Abner, Vice President and Chief Diversity Operations Officer**, told us she is going to tackle the challenge.



The primary objective for Pam and her team will be **listening to colleagues from across the Health System to “get at the heart and soul of what individuals in our organization feel,”** and then using that feedback to inform our overall actions to advance racial equity. Importantly, Pam cautions that there will not always be a one-to-one,

direct link between these conversations and immediate change. Instead, she says that collecting this information will “reveal the organization’s culture to itself”—and once that happens, we’ll know what work must be done to make a

difference. In other words, all of these efforts will inform what organizational changes are made and sustain those changes going forward.

One example of this work, which is already underway, is expanding the monthly “Chats for Change” program, which we regularly highlight in the *Bulletin*. This series of events was originally created by the Department of Medical Education (MedEd) at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai to explore topics of racism, based on the notion that in order to respond to racism and to be anti-racist, we must engage in dialogue, learning, and action. Pam and her team are working with MedEd to broaden that focus and include topics of interest to staff at all levels of the Health System. Future topics will include how to deal with a patient exhibiting racist behavior, managing difficult conversations about racism, and how we are best able to connect with marginalized communities. In Pam’s words, this will **allow Chats for Change to become a “vehicle that sparks conversations around racism and social inequities,” with the goal of uncovering how racism and other forms of social oppression intersect with individuals’ work at Mount Sinai.**

Pam and the Strategy Four work group are also focused on strengthening **Mount Sinai’s No Tolerance policy for racist behavior** and encouraging all members of the Mount Sinai community to report any instances of racism and bias they experience or witness. We all need to do our part, and we can only start addressing these issues when we call them out and document them. To support this effort, Pam’s workgroup has brought together an interdisciplinary team with representatives from the compliance, legal, labor relations, risk management, and patient experience departments, along with representatives of staff from varying levels of the Health System.

Importantly, as a reminder, if anyone does experience or witness any racist behavior, they can confidentially report the incident by calling our Compliance Hotline at 800-853-9212 or following the steps outlined in the graphic below.



We Stand Together Against Racism and Bias.

If you are a staff member or student:

For patient related matters, submit a report in the **Safety Net** desktop application.

For other matters, you may refer to your manager or Human Resources. To submit a confidential report, you may call the **Compliance Helpline: 800-853-9212** or **scan the QR code** with your smartphone.

If you are a patient:

For all matters, you may call the **Compliance Helpline: 800-853-9212** or **scan the QR code** with your smartphone to submit a confidential report.



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Their first goal is to audit the process for reporting an instance of racism or bias from a staff member's perspective, so they can identify ways to create a transparent and streamlined process. Key to that work will be ensuring that the reporting mechanism acknowledges the pain racist words and actions create—both in the immediate instance and when stories are repeated as part of the reporting process. While we cannot reduce the harm created by the initial racist comment or action, this work will, according to Pam, **“break down those secondary barriers, so folks are able to share their stories in a safe manner and help us inform the organizational change that must happen.”**

Throughout all of this work, Pam and her team will continue to rely on Mount Sinai's [Diversity Councils and Employee Resource Groups](#)—like the Heritage of Latinx Alliance (HOLA) Employee Resource Group, which we discussed last week, and the Committee to Address Anti-Asian Bias and Racism (CAABR)—to provide feedback, host important conversations, build a community focused on racial equity, and communicate to all levels of the Mount Sinai community.

The hope is that as we learn and grow more as a **community**, more conversations to break down barriers and build equity will start to emerge across the Health System. History has shown us that when new faces and new voices are empowered to speak freely and without fear, **real** transformation begins to take hold.

We are not alone in this focus on racial equity and its intersection with health care. In fact, just this week, the New York City Board of Health [formally declared racism a public health crisis](#). This formal designation has important consequences, which we will dive into in an upcoming *Bulletin*—but it also underscores the importance of the work we are undertaking right now within Mount Sinai to become an anti-racist institution.

If you want to be part of these conversations, community building, and change making, we encourage you to join an event in the coming weeks:

Chats for Change: What Does it Mean to be “Woke”? — Join facilitators **Ann-Gel Palermo**, DrPH, MPH, Senior Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and **Alia Barnes**, MPH, Integration Program Manager at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, on **Tuesday, October 26, at noon** for a discussion on the term “woke,” which originated in the United States and refers to having an awareness about racial prejudice and discrimination. But is being woke enough to achieve racial equity? Join us as we explore what it means to be “woke” at this moment in time. [Register via Zoom](#).

Patient Experience Forum: “Equity and Patient Experience: Let’s Keep Talking About It!” — Join **Arthur Gianelli**, Chief Transformation Officer of the Mount Sinai Health System and President, Mount Sinai Morningside, and **Erica Rubinstein**, Vice President of Service Excellence and Patient Experience, on **Tuesday, October 26, at 3 pm** for a deep dive exploring how we can sustain equitable experiences for all our patients. [Join via Zoom](#), and enter passcode **237196**.

[Road Map for Action](#)

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