

Environmental Justice is a priority for the Public Health Institute's Center for Wellness and Nutrition's (PHI CWN) **Health Equity & Racial Justice Platform**. We recognize that environmental injustices impact low resource and marginalized communities often first and more acutely. We are committed to elevating, educating, and advocating for environmental justice to lead us towards a more equitable future. PHI CWN promotes community involvement in planning and decision-making at the local, state, and national levels by working with communities, decision-makers and a variety of collaborative partners to improve the environmental quality of neighborhoods. It is essential for decision-makers to be accessible to all community members. Environmental injustice anywhere, poses a threat to environmental justice everywhere! Through meaningful involvement, community members can make informed decisions and take actions that lead to justice for all.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." This **Environmental Justice Priority Brief** is intended to promote the vitality of building cleaner, safer and more equitable environments that support a healthy nation where wellness is achievable for all.

KEY TERMS

Fair Treatment - The principle that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic or a socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences.

Environment - Includes the natural, ecological, physical, social, political, aesthetic, and economic environment.

Environmental Wellness – Having clean, well-cared for settings that promote good health, comfort, and less anxiety.

Place-based Principles - Policy, Systems and Environmental Changes that are community-driven, community-focused, and community-supported.

Meaningful Involvement – The public should have opportunities to participate in decisions and contribute feedback that affects their environment and health.


Climate Resilience – The ability to anticipate, prepare for, cope with, and respond to natural disasters, and public health trends as it relates to the vulnerability of neighborhoods that are disadvantaged.



ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE:

 Indicates actions that CWN is currently taking.

Educate and advocate for the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies that support wellness for all:

- Consider sustainable transit policies and built environment solutions that support safe physical activity.
- Advocate for political and local community solutions (e.g., clean water access, food sovereignty, clean air).
-  Acknowledge and educate others about the historical causes and ongoing socio-structural systems that perpetuate environmental inequalities and unequal distribution of climate risks.

Invest in community resilience and local sustainable environmental solutions:

-  Promote strengthening of communities through increased civic engagement by working with communities to ensure they can identify, for themselves, what environmental justice looks like.
- Work with local civic groups to identify environmental improvement projects and support community-led initiatives.
- Support and facilitate community action committees where residents most affected by the inequities can identify pressing environmental issues, explore solutions, and develop a plan of action.
- Recognize that local communities, nonprofits, and local governments may need capacity building to face these challenges.
-  Strengthen direct partnerships with community residents in neighborhoods that have been historically disadvantaged and most affected by environmental issues to guide and improve resource allocation.
-  Support local agriculture (e.g. farmers' markets, farm to fork, farm to table, and resources to support indigenous and BIPOC farmers)

Improve local measures/indicators of environmental health and inequalities:

- Improve data collection and communication measures so community residents can track the status of environmental justice in their communities.
- Support initiatives that incorporate environmental justice assessments and equitable climate resiliency measures into planning and infrastructure considerations.

As part of our **Health Equity & Racial Justice Platform**, PHI CWN is committed to continuing the actions and activities indicated above that are currently a part of our work, looking for new opportunities to continue exploring ways to address root causes, and increasing strategic collaboration and partnerships to work towards environmental justice for all. This **Environmental Justice Priority Brief** is created and shared to support ongoing discussions regarding key environmental inequities and provide examples of equitable strategies to assist communities, decision-makers, and a wide range of collaborative partners in working on environmental justice issues. CWN envisions continued dialogue utilizing racial and health equity framework and resources. We believe together we can create a more equitable, healthy, and thriving world.