

# Glossary of Terms

*Adapted from external sources, The Colorado Health Foundation uses these working definitions in carrying out its mission to bring health in reach for all Coloradans.*

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**Anti-racism:** Actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, and set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.

**Belonging:** It exists when there is an unwavering commitment to not simply tolerate and respect difference, but to ensure all people are welcome and feel they belong. It means more than just being seen, and entails having a meaningful voice and the opportunity to participate in the design of social and cultural structures, including the right to contribute to, and make demands on, society and political institutions. (**Othering:** A set of dynamics, processes and structures that cause marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities.)

**Colonization:** Some form of invasion, dispossession and suppression of a people. The invasion need not be military; it can begin – or continue – as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban or industrial encroachments resulting in the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants, often legalized after the fact. The long-term result is institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is, by nature, an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized. Ongoing and legacy colonialism impact power relations in most of the world today.

**Cultural appropriation:** Theft of cultural elements – including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. – for one’s own use, commodification or profit, often without understanding, acknowledgement or respect for its value in the original culture. This results from the assumption of a dominant culture’s right to take others’ cultural elements.

**Diversity:** A range of individual differences, including but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical and mental ability, faith practices and socioeconomic class. It also encompasses different political preferences, geographic perspectives, and elements of lived experience such as immigration or veteran status, among others.

**Health:** The ability to engage in and enjoy a vibrant life – a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or sickness.

**Health equity:** It exists when there are no unnecessary, avoidable, unfair, unjust or systemically-caused differences in health status.

**Identity:** An individual’s sense of self, defined by: 1) a set of physical, psychological and interpersonal characteristics that is not wholly shared with any other person, and 2) a range of affiliations (e.g., ethnicity) and social roles. Identity involves a sense of continuity, or the feeling that one is the same person today that one was yesterday or last year (despite physical or other changes). Such a sense is derived from one’s body sensations, body image, and the feeling that one’s memories, goals, values, expectations and beliefs belong to the self.



**(Intersectionality:** Recognizes people identify with multiple forms of identity markers, such as race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation [for example, a person might identify as Latino and transgender]. These identifiers do not exist independently of each other, and they combine to create different modes of discrimination, privilege and pride.)

**Implicit (unconscious) bias:** Negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness, and affect individuals' attitudes and actions, creating real-world implications.

**Institutional racism:** The ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for white people and oppression/disadvantage for people of color.

**Microaggressions:** Verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative slights and insults to the target person or group. They generally occur as accidental, offensive statements or insensitive questions directed at people of color and others with identities holding less power and privilege in their day-to-day interactions by individuals who are unaware they have engaged in a demeaning way.

**Oppression:** The systematic suppression of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic and political benefit of the more powerful group. Rita Hardiman and Bailey W. Jackson state that oppression exists when the following four conditions are present: 1) the oppressor group has power to define reality for themselves and others, 2) the target groups take in and internalize the negative messages about them and end up cooperating with the oppressors (thinking and acting like them), 3) genocide, harassment and discrimination are systematic and institutionalized, so individuals are not necessary to keep it going, and 4) members of both the oppressor and target groups are socialized to play their roles as normal and correct.

**Power:** The ability to do something or act in a particular way, and direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.


**Race and ethnicity:** Race is a human-made social construct with no biological foundation. The idea of ethnicity is also human-made, and is based on a common set of beliefs, traditions and customs. There is no universal agreement on how to describe these two concepts.

**Racial justice:** It exists when there is not only the absence or alteration of systems that create and perpetuate racial disparities in areas including health, education and wealth, but the presence of transformed and fundamentally different systems that operate on behalf – and inclusive – of communities of color.

**Structural racism:** The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of white domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society, including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric.

**White fragility:** The defensive reactions that white people have when their racial worldviews, positions or advantages are questioned or challenged.





**White privilege:** The unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed upon people solely because they are white. Some who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.

**White supremacy:** The belief that the white race is inherently superior to other races and that white people should have control over people of other races, as well as the social, economic and political systems that collectively enable white people to maintain power over people of other races.

