



# FLASH

## NETWORK

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To whom it may concern,

APRIL 9, 2021

The FLASH Network: The Florida Adolescent/Young Adult Sexual Health Network applauds the efforts by the Office of Extramural Research to review community input on efforts to address structural racism in the biomedical research industrial complex. We are responding to this RFI with comments and recommendations on actions the NIH should take to address health disparities and racial inequities that are perpetuated in research.

Processes within the research process must evolve to meet the needs of communities who have historically been excluded. Ensuring that research staff engages participants in a thorough, accessible consenting process is vital for communities of color. In addition, diversity in the research workforce remains an important aspect of improving the health and wellbeing of Black and Brown communities. Therefore, the NIH and allied government entities must invest in engaging and building educational capacity – increasing collaborations with minority serving institutions at the postsecondary level, engaging students at the secondary level, and funding more opportunities for training and mentorship for new and emerging researchers of color.

Genuine partnerships with communities of research interest, particularly those who are marginalized are essential. As an organization, the FLASH Network advocates for the inclusion of all voices in health-related advocacy, research, and education initiatives. NIH and allied government entities should work hand-in-hand with community members of color, consulting us throughout planning processes, including the selection of funded research, the approval of research methods, and dissemination of relevant results.

Thorough evaluations of these efforts are necessary – not just to ensure transparency and accountability to racialized communities but also to measure the results of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Comparisons of evaluation results should be made with benchmarks selected with input from minority-serving institutions and professional organizations.

Thank you for engaging in this effort, and please do not hesitate to contact FLASH Network leadership at [contact@flashnetwork.org](mailto:contact@flashnetwork.org) should you have any questions or require any clarifications.

Sincerely,

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