Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders in the Era of COVID-19: *Impact of the Pandemic on Healthcare Workers from Communities of Color*

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Chief Executive Officer & Executive Vice President

American Psychological Association

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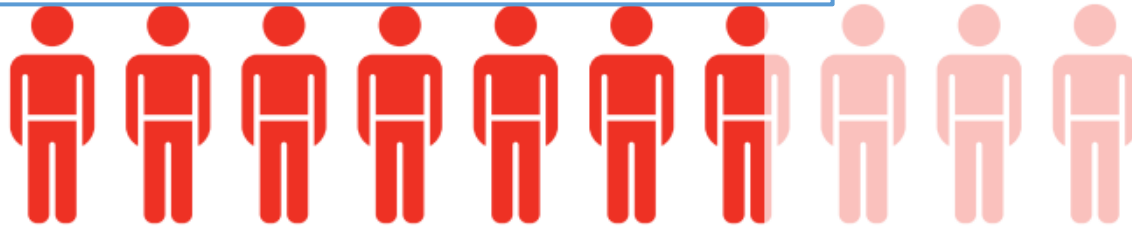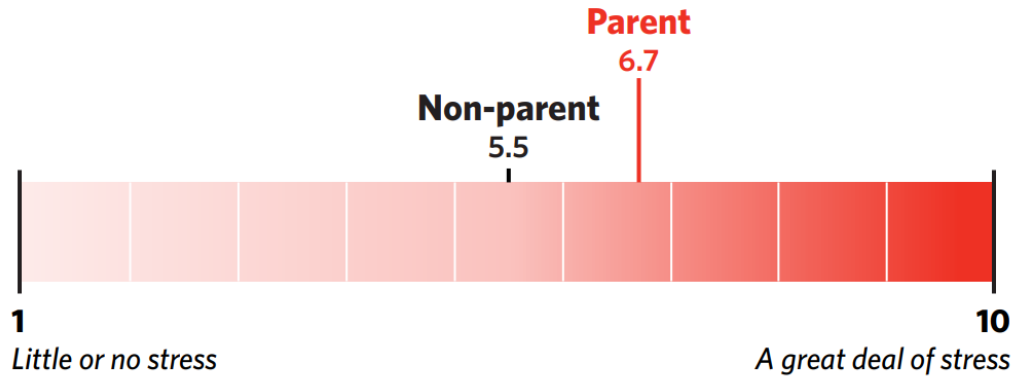*The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*

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DECEMBER 14, 2020

'A Perfect Storm'

Extreme Levels of Stress across the Nation

PARENT VS NON-PARENT AVERAGE REPORTED STRESS LEVELS RELATED TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Parent
6.7

Non-parent
5.5

1
Little or no stress

10
A great deal of stress

Nearly 7 in 10 Americans (67%) say the government response to coronavirus is a significant source of stress.

6x increase in percentage of U.S. adults (18-29 yrs.) who reported symptoms of psychological distress.

3.7% (2018) → **24%** (2020)

JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

(JHU Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2020)

TOTAL CASES	AVERAGE DAILY CASES PER 100K IN LAST 7 DAYS	TOTAL DEATHS
14,823,129	60.1	282,785
+186,215 New Cases		+1,532 New Deaths

U.S. COVID-19 Cases and Deaths (reported to CDC since January 21, 2020)

The Health Care Workforce

The Health Care Workforce (HCW) Faces Additional Stressors

- Contracting COVID-19 themselves

- Job burnout (health care system overburdened)

- Lack of or inadequate PPE and equipment (e.g., ventilators)

- Repeated exposure to people who are suffering (compassion fatigue)

- Isolation from families and loved ones

- Direct and vicarious trauma

- Feelings of responsibility and guilt

- Stigma from others (around potential infection)

- Moral injury: (in)action that violates personal moral codes

With Devastating Implications

THANK YOU HEALTHCARE HEROES

'Healthcare Heroes': Problems with media focus on heroism from healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic

Washington Post – Oct. 6, 2020
Doctors die by suicide at twice the rate of everyone else. Here's what we can do.

New York Times – July 11, 2020
'I Couldn't Do Anything': The Virus and an E.R. Doctor's Suicide

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Of nearly 6,800 COVID-19 hospitalizations between March and May 2020, 6% of infections were among HCWs. Of those HCWs, 36% were in nursing-related occupations and 73% had obesity.
(MMWR, Oct. 2020)

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR Suicide Prevention

Key drivers of burnout include: workload, work inefficiency, lack of autonomy and meaning in work, and work-home conflict.

Examples:
Using Science-based Strategies to Protect HCWs' Mental Health

- **Build resilience** in HCWs by acknowledging challenges they are facing and providing resources.

- **Identify traumatic stress early,** follow up with HCWs who miss work, and offer support.

- **Infuse mental health** considerations into policies and procedures that involve HCWs.

- **Provide psychologically safe forums** in which HCWs can make sense of their experiences.

Brooks et al. (2020); Greenberg (2020); McCanlies et al. (2018)

Communities
of Color

e Are Living in a Racism Pandemic,' Says APA President

Challenges for Communities of Color Exacerbated during COVID-19

STRESS IN AMERICA 2020: A NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Americans More Commonly Report Stress About Police Violence Toward Minorities

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

% SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF STRESS

2020
59%

2016
36%

People of color are more likely than white adults to report **significant stressors** in their life as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., basic needs).

APA's Stress in America 2020 Report

Among people of color, more than 2 in 5 (44%) report **discrimination is a significant source of stress** in their life, compared with 38% of people of color who said the same in 2019.

APA's Stress in America 2020 Report

Putting Communities of Color at Greater Risk for...

Contracting COVID-19

Among 79 counties identified as hotspots during June 2020 with sufficient data on race, a disproportionate number of COVID-19 cases among underrepresented racial/ethnic groups occurred in almost all areas during Feb–June 2020.

Becoming seriously ill from COVID-19

Nonelderly Black, Hispanic, and AIAN adults are more likely than Whites to report fair/poor health (e.g., asthma, diabetes, heart disease, obesity).

Challenges related to COVID-19 testing and treatment

Blacks, Hispanics, AIANs, and Native Hawaiians/ Pacific Islanders are more likely to be uninsured, face other financial barriers, and report no usual source of care compared to Whites.

Putting Communities of Color at Greater Risk for...

Economic & Health-related Employment Risks

Nearly a quarter of Blacks and Hispanics (24%) are employed in service industries compared to 16% of Whites. Communities of color are at increased risk for job loss, loss of income, and COVID-19 exposure due to the nature of their jobs.
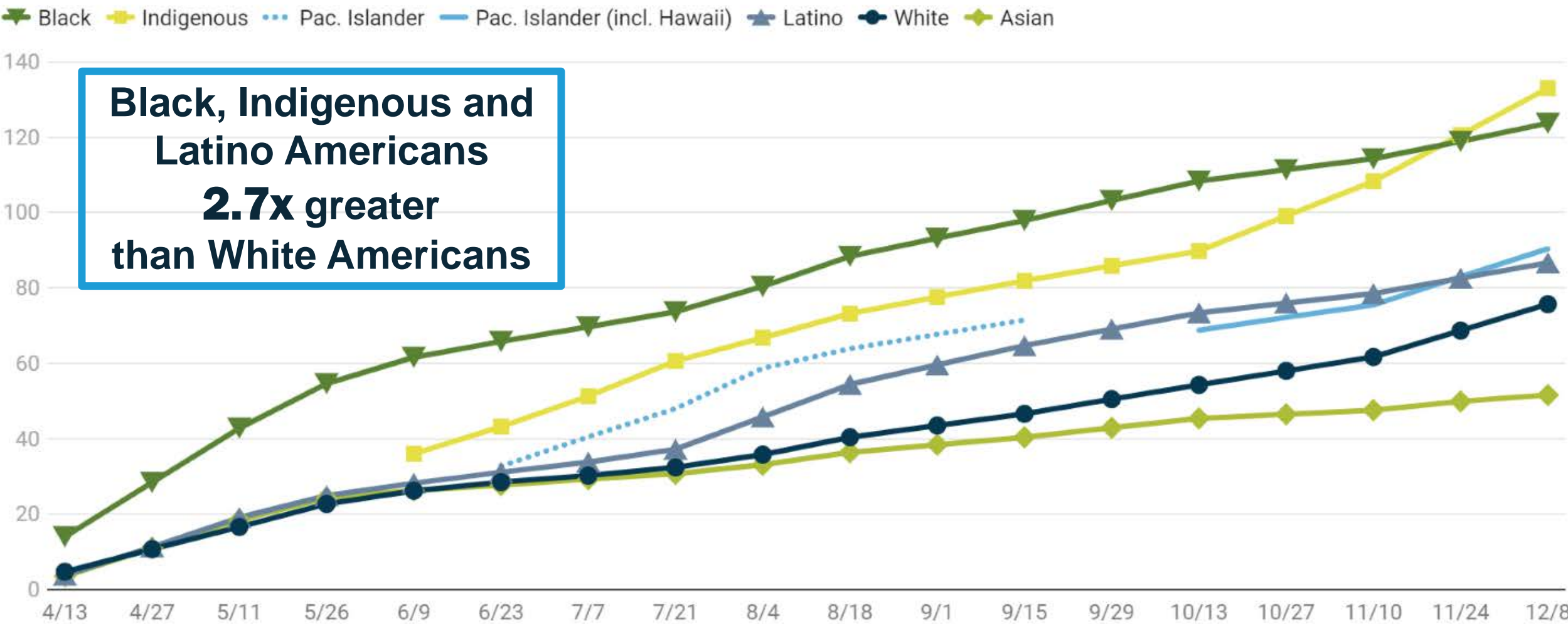
Increased Psychological Distress

When the CDC urged all Americans to wear a cloth face covering when they left their homes, many Black men expressed concern that following the recommendation could expose them to racial profiling and police harassment.

Black & Indigenous Americans experience highest death tolls from COVID-19

Cumulative actual COVID-19 mortality rates per 100,000, by race and ethnicity, April 13-Dec. 8, 2020

Legend: ▼ Black   ■ Indigenous   ▪▪▪ Pac. Islander   — Pac. Islander (incl. Hawaii)   ▲ Latino   ● White   ◆ Asian

Black, Indigenous and Latino Americans 2.7x greater than White Americans

Note: All intervals are 14 days apart, except for 5/11-5/26, which is a 15-day period. 9/1, 9/29, 10/27 and 11/24 data has been interpolated. Pacific Islander data prior to 10/13 did not include Hawaii, as it was not releasing data; its inclusion resulted in an overall drop in the Pacific Islander rate, which begins a new series at 10/13.

Source: APM Research Lab · Get the data · Created with Datawrapper

Implications

Heightened Vigilance

Race-based Traumatic Stress

Decreased Resilience

Increased Depression and Anxiety

Defined Psychiatric Disorders

Carter (2007); LaVeist et al. (2014); Lewis, Cogburn & Williams (2015)

Strengths and Protective Factors

"Inherent in every community is the wisdom to solve its own problems."

- ## Faith and Spirituality
    - Encourages people to find meaning and purpose during the recovery process
    - Provides community and sense of belonging

- ## Social Support
    - Serves as a buffer from stressors, like racism and exposure to violence
    - Provides stability, information and resources (Intergenerational relationships)

- ## Positive Racial and Ethnic Identity / Socialization
    - Helps people cope with race-based stress and build resilience
    - Promotes a positive self-concept and increased self-esteem

People of Color in the Health Care Workforce

People of Color in the Health Care Workforce: A Unique Intersection of Issues

Being treated differently when in a work uniform vs. not

July 10, 2020
I'm a black doctor. I wear my scrubs everywhere now. It's about protecting myself.

Being in high demand, but not widely available

June 25, 2020
'Bear Our Pain': The Plea For More Black Mental Health Workers

Carrying multiple heavy burdens

- Personal, family and work-related responsibilities
- Experienced discrimination and racism
- Racial implications of their work
- Race-based traumatic stress

To best address the unique needs of health care workers who are from communities of color...

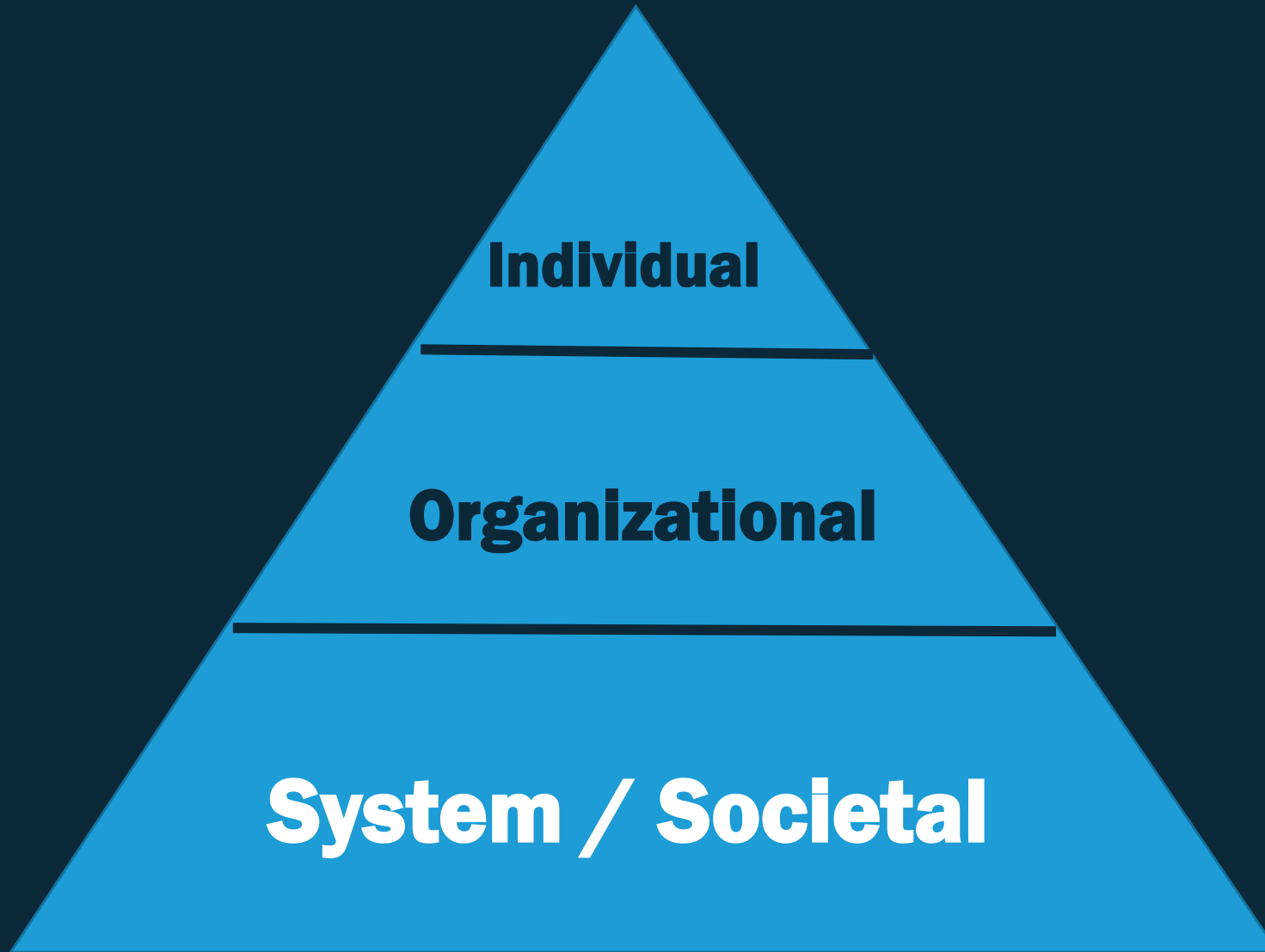we need to **make some conceptual shifts**

in terms of our:

RESEARCH   POLICY   PRACTICE

Health Disparities: Align Research with Reality

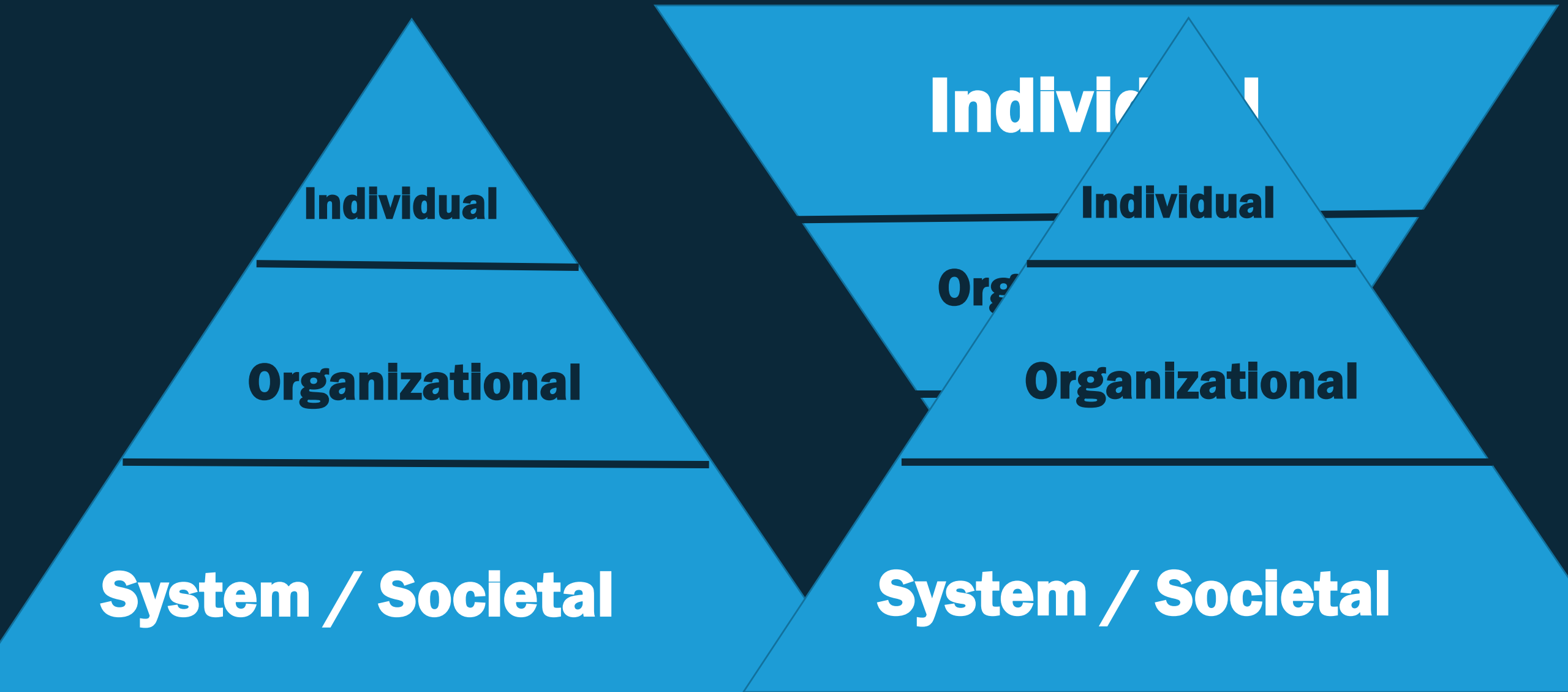**REALITY**

RESEARCH

Individual

Organizational

System / Societal

Individual

Organizational

System / Societal

HOW TO INTERVENE

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

SYSTEM LEVEL

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Normalize conversations around psychological health.**

- **Create multiple pathways to help the greatest number of people. (*One size does not fit all*).**

- Acknowledge the unique challenges facing HCWs who are part of communities of color. (*Additive stress*).

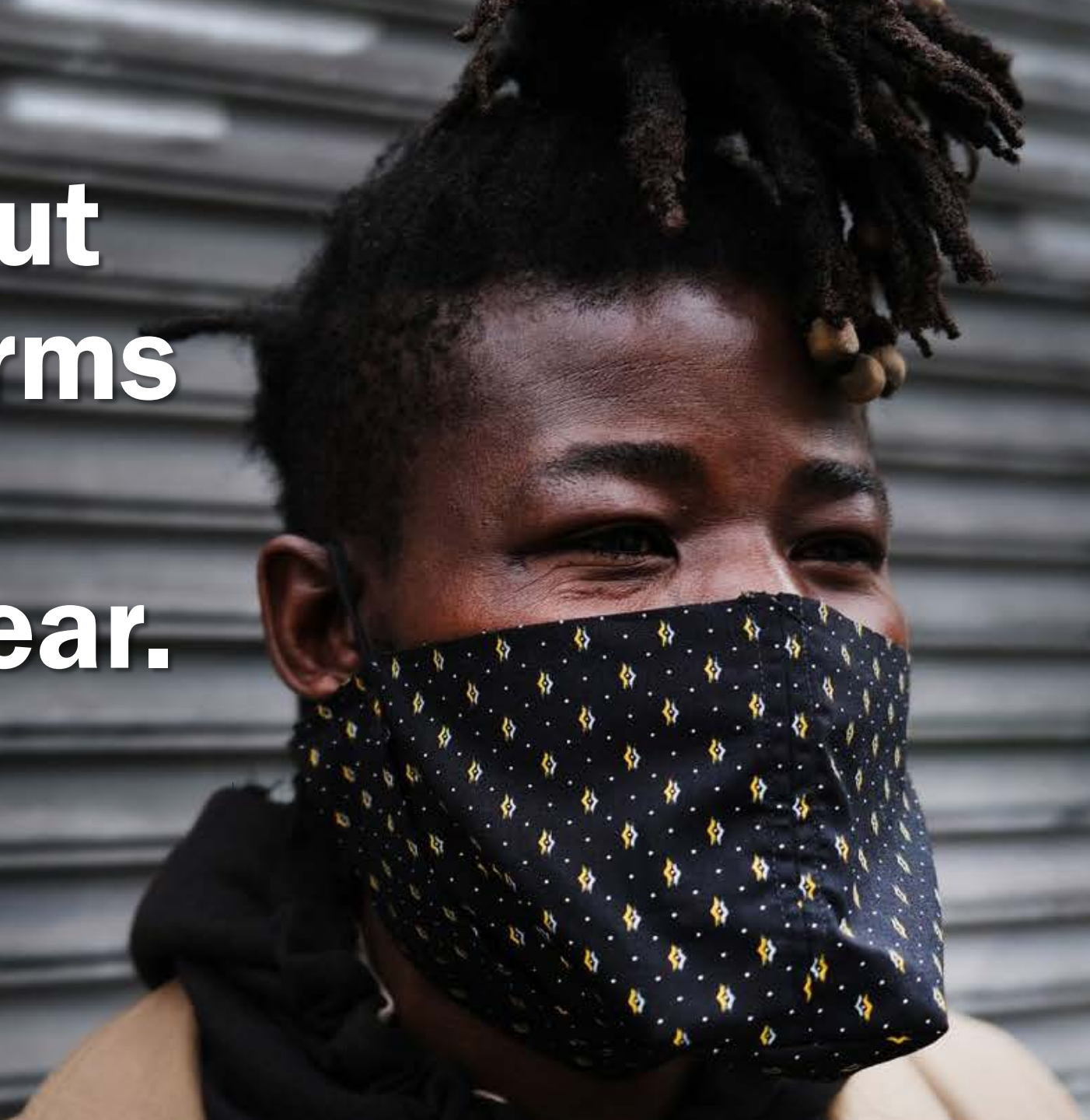- Recognize the diversity that exists *within* communities of color. (*Not a monolith*).

**Think about
All the Forms
of PPE
People Wear.**

Trauma Plays out Differently for Different People.

This is not only about **getting through today,** but ensuring we are positioned for the **tomorrows to come.**

Thank you.

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AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION