

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

A Broader Perspective on “Health and Safety” at YWCA Southeast Wisconsin

In the spring of 2019, Milwaukee County declared racism a public health crisis. That declaration spelled out how the social determinants of health – education and economic opportunity among them – were inextricably linked to systemic racism. You might wonder: what does that have to do with YWCA Southeast Wisconsin?

YWCA is a powerful nationwide movement comprised of a committed network of affiliates. **As part of our mission, all YWCAs focus on three fundamental intersecting areas that impact women’s lives in ways both obvious and stealthy: economic empowerment, racial justice and health & safety.**

While YWCA Southeast Wisconsin is renowned for its long-standing robust programming in the areas of economic empowerment and racial justice, its specific activities related to health and safety have varied over the years. Changing community needs and fluctuating funding sources have contributed to that variation, but **one thing has been steadfast: our core belief that a world of peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all is only possible when women’s health and safety is prized.**

That pivotal announcement in May 2019 was the result of the persistent efforts of dedicated public health advocates, efforts YWCA Southeast Wisconsin – along with many others – was proud to support and promote. We decided to be part of that work because **our distinctive expertise in two areas - economic empowerment and racial justice – can and does affect fundamental social determinants of health.**

Since the spring of 2019, the City of Milwaukee and other Southeast Wisconsin communities, as well as other regions throughout the nation, have also recognized racism as a public health crisis. And, that recognition has begun to reframe the work of a growing number of public health departments and social sector organizations. Our involvement in those conversations deepened our own appreciation for the social determinants of health and their significance to our programming and collaborations.

So, here’s what all that has to do with YWCA Southeast Wisconsin: As our programming and advocacy evolves and grows, the lens we will use to determine “what’s next?” will – even more deliberately than ever before – involve **the social determinants of health for women and their families.** Our commitment to women’s health and safety is, and even more will be, reflected in our economic empowerment and racial justice work.

If you have questions about our approach or recommendations to make, please reach out to us at any time at communication@ywcawis.org.