

June 1, 2020

Devereux Friends and Family:

I should have written this letter two years ago, on my first day in my new role. I wish every president & CEO inherently understood this was the first letter he or she needed to write on their first day in office. It should not have taken the horrific murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other Black men, women and children across centuries to bring us to this national moment of reckoning. The price paid by the Black Community for the deafening silence of those in power has been far too high, for far too long.

Institutionalized racism and systemic oppression are real and they're killing our fellow Americans. My own lived experience makes it impossible for me to feel what this means to a significant group of our employees, clients, families and friends. I cannot imagine the degree of pain, anger and fear this causes them, but I do know that silence is unacceptable. Remaining silent in the face of racism is the same as condoning it. I do not condone it. Devereux will not condone it.

Devereux denounces racism in all forms. The historic oppression of Black Americans is woven deeply into the fabric of our nation, and it is far past time to unravel those threads and cut them out at their source – most especially when their source lies within us. This will be exactly as difficult as it sounds. We can begin by listening, learning and consciously choosing a different path.

At Devereux, we recognize the terrible impacts of personal and institutional racism on our communities every day. It hurts many of the children and families we love and care for in our programs. It hurts many of our fellow employees. We know racism and system-level inequalities are responsible for creating unsafe neighborhoods, under-funded schools and a widening lack of access to healthcare and other basic resources. As a result, many families live within a cycle of multi-generational poverty and trauma – not because of the content of their character, but because of the color of their skin. This is not where we are supposed to be as a nation. Institutional racism has been allowed to flourish for so long it has morphed from a social and economic problem into a public health crisis of devastating proportion.

As a nonprofit behavioral healthcare provider to some of the most vulnerable and underserved communities in our nation, Devereux is in a unique position to become a meaningful advocate for broad, system-level change – but first, we must change ourselves. Devereux is committed to racial justice as an employer and a healthcare provider, and that means we must constantly evaluate where we are falling short and do better. I don't have all the answers today, but I can commit to investing the resources – financial and human – to the honest evaluation of where we are, and what we must do.

In the coming weeks, we will work directly with our clients and employees impacted by the ongoing civil unrest across the nation, and the racism at its root. In the coming months and years, we will focus on doing the real work of listening and learning, with an open mind and heart, and investing in equality. Our organizational efforts to combat structural racism will

not be advanced by empty words. Rather, we will partner directly with our employees, clients and families to establish specific and measurable key performance indicators around diversity and inclusion at all levels, compensation and job satisfaction, and parity in treatment outcomes.

We cannot undo the injustices that have brought us to this place, but we can stand together, united as a Devereux community by a shared commitment to social justice – and to building a better future. We can express solidarity with our Black colleagues and clients and show them love and support, especially in these very dark days. We can rise above politics and self-doubt and connect to our shared humanity.

If what we have been taught across the arc of our lives and our history has been unjust, we can learn anew, and change for the better. We can recommit ourselves to active participation in the social contract that knits us all, one to another. We can create a collective understanding that the greatest responsibility for healing the deep wounds of the Black Community falls to those with privilege and position. We can be accountable and do the right thing.

For justice, and for peace.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl Clark II". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

Carl E. Clark II
President and CEO
Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health