



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** June 25, 2020

**TO:** Members of the Police Civilian Review Panel

**FROM:** Gentry Anderson  
Management Analyst I, Office of the Independent Police Auditor

**SUBJECT:** The One Fairfax Policy and How the Police Civilian Review Panel Promotes It

The purpose of this memo is to inform the Police Civilian Review Panel (Panel) of the One Fairfax policy and how the Panel promotes the policy through its work. Additionally, there are three recommendations for the Panel's consideration to further promote One Fairfax.

### **One Fairfax:**

One Fairfax is a social and racial equity policy jointly implemented by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the Fairfax County School Board in 2017. The policy provides a framework based on equity for all decision-making in the county, ranging from transportation and land use to recreation and education. The goal of the policy is to ensure equitable access to opportunities and success regardless of an individual's race, gender, ability, or income.<sup>1</sup> The implementation of the policy has helped identify gaps and opportunities to enhance social and racial equity within the county.

### ***The History***

Efforts that eventually lead to the implementation of the One Fairfax policy started in the 1990's and focused on identifying inequities that could be addressed at the agency level. As time progressed, the issue was reviewed in broad scope with an institutional and structural focus to effectively target and confront racial and social inequalities.<sup>2</sup>

A report detailing an institutional analysis of the Fairfax County Juvenile Justice System was published in 2012 to address growing concerns of disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system.<sup>3</sup> The analysis showed that the issue of disproportionate minority

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<sup>1</sup> Fairfax County Government, [Fairfax County Government]. (2017, November 21). *One Fairfax: Social and Racial Equity Policy* [Video] YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TaqbUgpvcU&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TaqbUgpvcU&feature=emb_title)

<sup>2</sup> One Fairfax. (N.D.) *Mileposts In the Fairfax Journey to Achieve Equity*. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/Assets/images/one%20fairfax/mileposts-to-one-fairfax-graphic.jpg>

<sup>3</sup> Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2012). *Disproportionate Minority Contact for African American and Hispanic Youth: The Story Behind the Numbers and the Path to Action*. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/pdf/institutional-analysis-disporportionality-criminal-justice.pdf>

contact was a systemic issue that needed to be addressed and corrected by multiple agencies. At this time, there was also a shift in focus from the issue of disproportionality to the solutions of equity and opportunity.

The One Fairfax resolution was approved by the Board of Supervisors in July 2016, and it affirmed the county's commitment to racial and social equity and directed the implementation of a policy. In November 2017, the One Fairfax policy was approved by the Board of Supervisors. It requires that equity be considered in the planning and decision-making process at all levels of county government for the delivery of county services and programs. This includes equity in operations, delivery of services, implementation of programs, and engagement opportunities.

### ***The Policy***

The policy outlines 17 focus areas where equity can be promoted. These focus areas encompass all services delivered by the county such as economic and work force development, transportation, education, health, public safety, and criminal justice.

The policy highlights five strategies to achieve equity within the focus areas:

- Community Engagement: foster an open dialogue, promote inclusive participation, and break down barriers that limit participation
- Training: build skills to promote social and racial equity with a focus on implicit bias and institutional and structural racism
- Applying Equity Tools: authorize equity impact analyses and disparity studies to ensure the measure the county's progress in furthering social and racial equity
- Racial and Social Equity Action Plan: set goals and make plans and take action to promote one Fairfax
- Accountability Framework: publish data and performance measure to evaluate goal achievement

Fairfax County Government and Fairfax County Public Schools will work together to lead and coordinate the county's effort in equitable planning and decision-making. The policy specifically calls for county volunteer Boards, Authorities, and Commissions, such as the Panel, to "promote stakeholder engagement and input in support of equity informed planning and decision-making."<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Policy in Practice***

Upon the implementation of the One Fairfax Policy, the Board of Supervisors appointed Karla Bruce as Chief Equity Officer to lead the county's effort towards achieving the goals of One Fairfax. To ensure that the One Fairfax policy is being operationalized, multiple studies have

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<sup>4</sup> One Fairfax Policy.(2017, November 21)  
<https://wcmtrain.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/pdf/one-fairfax-policy.pdf>

been conducted to address inequities in opportunity, wellness, and health. A study facilitated by the Office of the Independent Police Auditor and conducted by the University of Texas at San Antonio is currently underway to examine the racial disparity in use of force incidents that occur within the county. The One Fairfax theme was integrated into the proposed countywide strategic plan which sets unified goals and vision for the future of Fairfax County.

### **How the Panel Promotes One Fairfax:**

The Panel's mission as stated in its Bylaws is to enhance police legitimacy and to build and maintain trust between the community, the Board of Supervisors, and the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) by reviewing certain FCPD investigations to ensure the accuracy, completeness, thoroughness, objectivity, and impartiality of the investigation. The Panel's mission and work promotes the One Fairfax policy specifically related to Focus Area 6 of the One Fairfax Policy and embodies the themes of access, accountability, and engagement.

**Focus Area 6:** A focus area documented in the One Fairfax policy that is directly related to the Panel's work is documented in Focus Area 6, which is defined in the policy as follows:

*“Community and **public safety** that includes services such as fire, emergency medical services, **police**, health, emergency management and code enforcement **that are responsive to all residents so everyone feels safe to live, work, learn, and play in any neighborhood of Fairfax County.**”*

The Panel builds trust between the community and the FCPD through its review process. When the Panel conducts a review of a completed FCPD investigation, the Panel provides an independent assessment of the investigation to determine whether the investigation was accurate, complete, thorough, objective, and impartial. Through this process, the Panel can assure the complainant and the public that the FCPD's investigation into the complaint was conducted properly, or the Panel can request the FCPD conduct additional investigation. As an oversight body for the FCPD, the Panel helps to build the community's trust and confidence in the FCPD. The Panel's work specifically promotes the One Fairfax policy as encompassed by focus area 6.

**Access:** The Panel's work is conducted in public meetings, which assures access by all members of the community to the complaint process and transparency of the review process. The Panel is an intake venue for complaints independent of the FCPD and Panel members follow the complaint's progress through the investigation process to ensure timely completion of the investigation. In order to provide further access, the Panel distributes brochures to the community, which provide information about the Panel, the complaint process, and include a complaint form. Brochures are available in English, Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese allowing all members of the community, regardless of their native language, can understand the Panel's role in oversight of the FCPD. Through the Panel's public meetings and public reports, the community can observe the Panel's work and see the results of reviews of investigations and inquiries to the FCPD.

**Accountability:** The Panel holds the FCPD accountable by assessing whether investigations into complaints are accurate, complete, thorough, objective, and impartial. If the Panel finds

that an FCPD investigation does not meet these standards, the Panel can recommend additional investigation into the matter. Upon completing a review of an FCPD investigation, the Panel can make public recommendations for the FCPD's consideration. The Panel tracks the FCPD's response to the recommendations and status of their implementation to hold the FCPD accountable and keep the community informed of the Panel's progress on a matrix publicly available on the Panel's website. In addition, the Panel tracks the timeliness of completion of FCPD investigations into complaints and notifies the Board of Supervisors and complainant if there is a delay.

***Engagement:*** The Panel regularly interacts with complainants and the community. The Panel engages with complainants throughout complaint process so that they understand each step and informs them of the status of their complaint. The Panel also engages with the Fairfax community to inform them of the Panel's mission and service. The Panel conducts outreach events to community groups, faith-based organizations, civic associations, and other stakeholder groups.

### **Recommendations on How the Panel Can Further Promote One Fairfax:**

**Enhanced Community Outreach:** The Panel should consider bolstering community outreach efforts to provide information about the Panel's oversight responsibilities and work to enhance transparency and accountability within the FCPD. When conducting outreach, the Panel should consider partnering with entities with similar missions, such as the Communities of Trust and the Independent Police Auditor, to promote unity. The Panel should utilize well established networks and partnerships to reach different organizations and communities within the county, such as the Neighborhood and Community Service's Interfaith community. This could allow the Panel to tap into different communities where outreach has not yet been conducted.

Outreach amid the COVID-19 pandemic may look different than typical in-person outreach events. The Panel could host conference calls or WebEx meetings with different groups to hold virtual outreach events. This could be a more effective and efficient way to conduct outreach. Virtual outreach events could reach a broader audience, as attendees would not need to travel, find transportation, make childcare plans, or make other arrangements to attend outreach events. Conducting virtual outreach events could also be beneficial to Panel Members in the same ways. This recommendation coincides with the One Fairfax policy specific to eliminating barriers to participation and promoting access.

**Panel Membership and Representation:** Panel Members should advocate for the Board of Supervisors to appoint diverse members of the community to the Panel. Encouraging the appointment of individuals who reflect the great diversity in the county, would allow for more enriched and informed Panel discussions and better representation of the community. In addition, Panel Members could advocate for the Board of Supervisors to appoint individuals to the Panel who represent different regions of the county to promote equal geographical representation. Currently, the Panel does not have any members who reside in the Lee, Mason, Mount Vernon, or Sully magisterial districts.

**Training:** The Panel should continue to participate in training opportunities to learn best practices in the field of oversight and network with other oversight practitioners. In the past, Panel Members have attended trainings, webinars, and national conferences hosted by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE). In addition, Panel Members should continue to receive training from the FCPD to understand current policies and procedures and regularly participate in “ride-alongs” with FCPD officers. In the past, the Panel has received presentations from FCPD representatives on topics such as implicit bias, recruiting and retention, and an overview of the investigation process. Panel Members have also participated in ride-alongs with FCPD officers to get a better understanding of the duties of front-line officers. Maintaining knowledge of current best practices within the field of civilian oversight and staying apprised of FCPD operations, policies, and training curriculum will benefit Panel Members when crafting recommendations to the FCPD.