
CALENDAR YEAR 2022 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

ANNUAL REPORT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: Department of Family Services

Equity Lead(s): Melanie Fenwick, Erin Clark, Linda Hernandez-Giblin, Stephanie Pegues, Gretchen Soto, Jeanetta Vinson

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EQUITY IMPACT PLAN REPORT

Review your department's Equity Impact Plan for CY 2022 at [Equity Impact Plans | Topics \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#). Using that plan, add each goal below and describe: 1) what was done to make progress toward the goal, 2) with whom (partners), and 3) how work toward this goal was measured/evaluated and the results. If you have data for the performance measures in your CY 2022 Equity Impact Plan, report them. Add more goals as needed.

Goal 1: Implement Our Comprehensive Communication and Engagement Strategy to Increase Knowledge and Application of an Equity Lens

Goal 1 Progress: During the last year, DFS has continued to execute a multidimensional, values-driven campaign to educate and inform staff about equity and how it relates to our work. To support this equity-minded culture, another 25 staff members participated in the Race the Power of an Illusion training, and 70 participated in the Advancing Racial Equity Government's Role training. These staff members represented all levels and divisions within DFS.

A virtual book club series, using the book "The Sum of Us" by Heather McGhee, was piloted with a diverse DFS learning community committed to deepening their understanding of structural racism and inequality. Ten staff members participated in the pilot. Specific learning outcomes were not measured in the pilot.

The DFS Equity Hub was developed as a communications center for the department's equity work. The SharePoint site is a one-stop shop of resources, best practices, and tools to help DFS advance equity, as well as access relevant data about disparities in the Fairfax community. The site is dynamic life and is updated with information as it happens. It is updated regularly to introduce new resources and learning and reflect changes in our approach to service delivery, learning experiences, and information about what we have implemented.

The department's equity guiding statement was reviewed and improved so that it more closely reflects the organization's learning that has happened in the last two years and describes our unique role in Fairfax County's effort to achieve equity.

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The DFS Human Resources Team worked to standardize the language used on recruitment and hiring materials related to the DFS values. Information about One Fairfax and the department's commitment to equity is included on all recruitment announcements to bring our values to light early in the hiring process and select candidates that align with our organization and job requirements. An equity statement is included on all hire letters and position-specific questions related to equity are also incorporated into the interview.

Goal 2: Build Internal Capacity to Consider Equity in Decision Making and Planning

Goal 2 Progress: In 2022, the DFS Senior Management Team (SMT) of 25 leaders, engaged in a structured dialogue series with an external Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Advisor. This engagement explored individual and team commitments and resources to actualize DFS's equity plan across and within the DFS ecosystem. SMT leaders observed a significant paradigm shift and reported valuing dialogue and self-examination as key components to operationalize equity for the department.

An equity analysis tool was developed to support the work of DFS to identify potential impacts of legislation, policy and practice changes on the diverse communities of Fairfax County and the team members who provide services to them. The tool serves as a framework for evaluation and decision-making regarding departmental policy and business process changes being proposed by units, programs, divisions, and offices in DFS for review and analysis. The framework was developed to create a process for how our policy and practices changes are considered. This framework will be leveraged for critical analysis to ensure DFS makes informed recommendations that reflect agency values and clear understanding of who benefits and who is burdened by the changes being made at DFS that have an impact on the broader community.

A workgroup of twelve DFS staff members from all divisions and staff levels conducted research to raise the Department's awareness of how we see certain populations – particularly men of color – in our work throughout DFS. Through training, research, and analysis, the workgroup identified a gap in how we engage with men, and more specifically, men of color. The group presented a white paper describing the gap and recommendations to further shape our approach to working with men of color who seek our services as caregivers of children and adults. The recommendations will be integrated into equity practices across the department in current and future planning, and the tenets of the white paper will be incorporated into the department's Strategic Framework and the 2023 Equity Impact Plan.

The DFS Human Resources Team improved interview practices to reduce interview bias. Hiring Managers receive a diversity count to ensure each hiring panel is reflective of the candidates being interviewed. Hiring Managers also have a list of position-specific equity related interview questions to use. The questions help to select candidates that align with our organization and job requirements.

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As part of the child welfare redesign, the Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) team is now fully engaged in the integration of the Safe & Connected practice model across all seven CYF programs to have more parity in Child Protective Services. The Safe & Connected practice model strengthens cultural competence, clinical practice to achieve equitable outcomes for children and families.

The SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan is a strategic plan for aging services. In early 2022, a Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults was administered to gather data against a nationally benchmarked survey. DFS was intentional about building a community input phase into the development process to ensure full representation of the community's voice. The community input phase included town halls, community gatherings, focus groups, and key informant interviews from diverse groups of people. The Adult & Aging/DFS equity workgroup leadership was consulted for input in both the survey and the community input phases. That input, along with quantitative survey results and qualitative input from diverse community sources, will inform the development of the SHAPE the Future of Aging strategic plan by May 2023.

Goal 3: Interdepartmental Stakeholder Engagement to Identify Intersections and Improve Practices and Services

Goal 3 Progress: The Disabilities Rights and Resources (DRR) unit has been instrumental in advocating and serving as a resource to those with a disability. During the last year, the DRR unit maximized stakeholder engagement by developing and providing a county-wide learning series focused on the intersections of race, immigration, and disability. Some of the sessions were Disability Etiquette and Inclusion, the History and Discrimination Against Immigrants, and a screening of "Crip Camp" which tells the story of the Disability Rights movement in the United States.

Goal 4: Implement Economic Mobility Project to Support Low Income Families with Pathways to Economic Opportunity

Goal 4 Progress: DFS has been collaborating with other Health and Human Service agencies and external partners to support the Guaranteed Income pilot. The Guaranteed Income (GI) pilot program is still in the design phase and the design team is in the process of soliciting non-profit partners to administer the GI program, which will provide a wide range of supportive services to help families achieve greater economic mobility. The Economic Mobility Design Team includes five community advisors with lived experience in each of the county's Opportunity Neighborhoods. A project manager was hired to further develop the GI project which is now projected to launch in winter 2023. As the GI pilot progresses through the implementation phase, DFS will assess the outcomes of the pilot in concert with the Fairfax County's Chief Equity Officer.

Was other equity-related work completed in addition to the goals above? If so, please describe.

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The Domestic and Sexual Violence Services (DSVS) division has incorporated an educational component into their onboarding process that focuses on historical oppression and violence. The DSVS team is working to define domestic violence through an equity lens and using the Volunteer Voices monthly newsletter to cultivate seeds of equity and justice.

The Public Assistance and Employment Services (PAES) division is examining data to ensure the PAES workforce reflects the diverse community served and to ensure clients have equitable access to the SNAP program. During the last year, the PAES team has used an equity lens to analyze the impact of certain Medicaid and Refugee Cash Assistance policies on underserved communities. They continue to collaborate with the Virginia Department of Social Services to make policy changes to ensure equitable access for people facing vulnerability.