

# Diversion First 2023 Equity Impact Plan



**Leadership Sponsor:** Lisa Potter, Director, Diversion Initiatives

**Name:** Diversion First

**Brief Description of the Initiative:** Diversion First offers alternatives to incarceration for people with mental illness, substance use disorders and/or developmental disabilities, who come into contact with the criminal justice system, mostly for low level offenses. This countywide initiative provides a continuum of services and programs designed to meet the needs of this population at various intervention points, with the goal providing assessment, treatment and needed supports. Diversion First is designed to prevent repeat encounters with the criminal justice system, improve public safety and promote a healthier community. This effort involves strong collaboration across multiple agencies, including health and human services, public safety and the courts.

**Context:**

Those served through Diversion First are historically marginalized populations such as people with mental illness, substance use disorders and developmental disabilities, as well as those who are homeless and people with a history of incarceration.

Individuals in these population often have disparate access to quality behavioral health services, and disproportionate representation in the criminal justice system. People with mental illness are significantly over-represented in the justice system. Nationally, people with mental illness are 9 times more likely to be incarcerated than hospitalized. People with mental illness stay four to eight times longer in jail than someone without a mental illness for the exact same charge. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these disparities, with impacts such as isolation, fewer employment opportunities and lack of health insurance and other resources.

Behavioral Health Equity is the right to access quality health care for all populations regardless of the individual's race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or geographical location. This includes access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services for mental and substance use disorders (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Jun 10, 2021).

Historically, it has been challenging to gather and analyze cross-system data, with multiple data systems, lack of data system interoperability, and lack of common definitions for terms used across systems. To provide the most effective and efficient services it is important to have a clear understanding of who is accessing services, as well as gaps in programming and outcomes.

In addition, many people who need behavioral health care are not aware of services or how to access them, and/or may not access services due to stigma.

**Long-term Outcome(s):**

- Cultural and Recreational Opportunities
- Economic Opportunity
- Efficient and Effective Government
- Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability
- Environment
- Health
- Housing and Neighborhood Livability
- Lifelong Education and Learning
- Mobility and Transportation
- Safety and Security

**Key Stakeholders:**

- Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board
- Fairfax County Police Department
- Sheriff's Office
- Fire and Rescue Dept.
- Dept. of Public Safety Communications
- Court Services
- General District Court
- Circuit Court
- Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
- Department of Housing
- Public Defenders Office
- Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney
- Office of the County Attorney
- Department of Information Technology
- Office of Public Affairs
- Diversion First Leadership Group
- Diversion First Stakeholders Group

## DIVERSION FIRST CALENDAR YEAR 2023 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

Goals	One Fairfax Area of Focus	Actions	Performance Measures
<b>1. Review and analyze Diversion First data for equity and to identify disparities</b>	6, 7, 10, 17	1a. Disaggregate Diversion First data across agencies and programs to determine potential disparities among populations served.	Data is collected, disaggregated and analyzed.
		1b. Review data in Data Quality and Outcomes Workgroup and share with Diversion First partners.	Data is reviewed and shared with partners.
		1c. Review demographic data for people diverted from potential arrest.	Data is collected, disaggregated and reviewed.
		1d. Identify opportunities to review data for specific services and programs to help inform equity practices and areas in need of improvement.	Inventory program data collected and review ability to analyze with an equity lens.
<b>2. Increase engagement of Diversion First Stakeholders, and continue to build relationships with underrepresented communities and organizations</b>	6, 7, 10, 17	2a. Connect with other jurisdictions to identify best practices for broad stakeholder participation and community engagement.	Increased connection with other jurisdictions and gather best practices
		2b. Actively engage various groups/populations that are reflective of individuals and families served through Diversion First and are representative of the community.	Increased attendance and participation in stakeholder meetings
		2c. Increase opportunities to seek feedback from people served through Diversion First programs and services.	Quantify through surveys, interviews, and input from people served.
		2d. Promote community presentations, feedback sessions, stakeholder groups and other opportunities for community involvement.	Broaden scope of Diversion First Stakeholders and increase involvement of community members and quantify through participation in stakeholder events.
		2d. Provide resources and materials in various formats to populations that do not have routine access to resources (i.e., print, electronically).	Review of current resource materials and availability and increased access to materials.
		2e. Ensure that Diversion First publications are representative of Fairfax County's diversity.	Review of current publications and commitment to be intentional in future publications.

Goals	One Fairfax Area of Focus	Actions	Performance Measures
<b>3. Increase capacity for cross-system data collection and review</b>	6, 7, 10, 17	3a. Continue work on automated processes for cross-system data for program evaluation, equity review and quality improvement.	Increased automated processes for cross-system data collection and enhanced capacity for analysis.
		3b. Continue efforts to engage with diversion programs across the country and participate in national peer-exchanges to enhance efforts related to analysis.	Enhanced connection with national diversion programs.
		3c. Ensure representation from Diversion First on the Countywide Data Analytics Group.	Representation on County Data Analytics Group.
<b>4. Promote cross-system awareness and build capacity to consider equity in planning and decision making</b>	6, 7, 10, 17	4a. Increase capacity of Diversion First partners to consider equity across the system.	Increased focus on equity in team meeting and workgroups.
		4b. Increase coordination related to Diversion First partner agencies and equity plans to enhance opportunities and alignment.	Coordinate efforts with partner agencies and enhance alignment.
		4c. Increase awareness of programs, services and access points for diversion services.	Increase efforts to highlight programs and access points.
		4d. Explore GIS mapping to determine needs for programming disadvantaged or underrepresented areas of the County.	Mapping is more consistently used as a tool for program planning and expansion.