Department of Family Services (DFS) CY 2023 Equity Impact Plan

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Departmental Equity Guiding Statement:

Consistent with the principles of the county's One Fairfax Policy, the Department of Family Services (DFS) recognizes systemic oppression and institutional racism have contributed to disparities in opportunities for county residents. In recognition of race as a defining social construct in America that gives birth to all the other "-isms", we are committed to addressing institutional racism as a component of our charge to support the safety, health, and wellbeing of residents of our community. Our team intentionally creates, implements, and revises existing policies, practices, and procedures to alleviate disparities in service delivery and to promote equitable outcomes for those receiving our services.

We unequivocally reject racism, violence, and bigotry in all its forms, including the systemic oppression directed at people of color and other marginalized identities that have been woven into the fabric of policies, procedures, and practices. While we have specifically called out some forms of bigotry such as racism and xenophobia, we intentionally and collectively advocate for each person's right to physical and psychological safety, justice, and access to opportunity.

The goal of our equity focused work is to improve outcomes for all people, regardless of singular or intersecting identities. Addressing racial equity, social equity, and rejection of bigotry in all its forms allows DFS to develop goals and outcomes that will result in improvements for all people, and centers strategies based on equitable practices. DFS is committed to advancing beyond its oppressive, systemic underpinnings to critical self-examination and reflexive practice.

Context:

Our mission centers us on the community we serve. Recognizing race as a defining social construct in America that gives birth to all the other "-isms", we are committed to addressing institutional racism as a component of our charge to support the safety, health, and wellbeing of residents of our community by protecting and improving the lives of all children, adults, and families through assistance, partnership, advocacy, outreach, and quality services. We interact with and assist clients across all life domains with innumerable intersections of identity.

A review of DFS client demographics reveals that many clients fall into multiple groups that are often underserved or under-represented. While considering the context of disparities in our work, the DFS Equity team will work to identify the intersections of special populations and improve the delivery of supportive services by increasing staff understanding of bias in the provision of services.

DFS expresses our understanding of intersectional using the ADDRESSING framework (Hays, 2011;2016) to move beyond one-dimensional conceptualizations of identity to an understanding of the complex, overlapping cultural influences each of us. The ADDRESSING framework enables us to better recognize and understand the multiple, intersecting cultural influences as a multidimensional combination of **A**ge, **D**evelopmental and acquired **D**isabilities, **R**eligion, **E**thnicity and Racial Identity, **S**ocioeconomic status, **S**exual orientation, **I**ndigenous heritage, **N**ational origin, and **G**ender.

- **Age and Generational Influences** – includes not just chronological age, but also generational roles that are important in a person's culture. For example, the role of eldest son in many

cultures carries specific responsibilities, just as being a parent, grandparent, or aunt brings with it culturally based meanings and purpose. Age and generational influences also include experiences specific to age cohorts, particularly experience that occurred during the cohort's childhood and early adulthood (i.e., the formative years).

- **Developmental or other Disability** – the broad category of disability includes disability that may occur at a time during a person's lifetime, for example, because of illness, accident, or stroke. Developmental disabilities are specifically those that affect a person's development from birth or childhood.
- **Religion and Spiritual Orientation** – In North America, the largest religious minority groups are Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist, and there are many small groups. Although some members of Christian religions (e.g., Mormon, Seventh-Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, and fundamentalist Christian) think of themselves as minority groups, they are still Christian groups and as such have privileges that non-Christian groups do not have. Similarly, some individuals with atheistic beliefs consider themselves part of a minority group; however, atheists still benefit from privileges related to the dominant sector.
- **Ethnicity and Racial Identity** – In the United States, the largest groupings of ethnic and racial minority cultures are Asian, South Asian, Pacific Islander, Latino, and African American. Also included are people who identify as biracial or multiracial and people of Middle Eastern heritage who are experiencing racism and other oppressive attitudes and behaviors from the dominant culture. Within each of these large cultural groupings, there are many specific groups. The definition of these cultures as minority groups is specific to the United States; what constitutes a minority group depends on the country and its dominant culture.
- **Socioeconomic Status** – usually defined by education, occupation, and income. Includes people who have lower status because of limited formal education and the occupations and lower income that usually go along with less education. This focus is on people who are living in poverty, often in rural and inner-city areas.
- **Sexual Orientation** –includes people who identify as lesbian, gay, and bisexual. In the United States, sexual minority groups often use an acronym that includes additional groups, such as LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, ally or asexual), but because some of these groups are more related to gender, they are grouped under the influence of gender identity.
- **Indigenous heritage** – people of Indigenous, Aboriginal, and Native heritage. As of 2018, Virginia has seven federally recognized Native Americans tribes. Native American residents make up a population. In our community, non- natives have more power and advantages over their native counterparts.
- **National Origin** –includes immigrants, refugees, and international students. Language is often a strong cultural influence related to national original, but it may also be related to the identity domains of ethnic and racial identity, Indigenous heritage, and disability.
- **Gender** –includes women and people of transgender, transsexual, intersex, gender questioning, androgyne, and other gender-nonconforming identities.

Using this intersectional approach to understand the complexity of individuals, our team intentionally creates, implements, and revises policies, practices, and procedures to alleviate disparities in service delivery and to promote equitable outcomes for those receiving our services.

Within the context of DFS's Equity Plan, it is critical that the value and strengths of the communities being served are a key factor when moving to implementation of any equity related strategy. Our communities are resilient and have unique strengths. As an agency, we are committed to working in partnership with communities across the county to achieve positive outcomes of economic opportunity, safety, health, and wellness.

DFS leaders are driven by our collective values and focus on inclusion, making space and amplifying the voices of everyone in the workplace and community. Equity is embedded in everything we do. Through an array of capacity development methods, DFS leadership and staff will continue to engage

in dialogue, introspection, and analysis to reduce racial inequities to achieve equitable outcomes for the community and workforce. Major areas of equity-focused work in DFS include the following:

Economic Mobility Project to Support Low Income Families with Pathways to Economic Opportunity

While Fairfax County is one of the richest counties in the nation, many residents struggle with meeting basic needs such as food, healthcare, and housing. In 2020, 72,584 people lived below the poverty level. Of those, 43,475 were people of color[1].

While America long ago declared a "War on Poverty," and billions have been invested to address these issues. Over the last five years the median income in Fairfax County has increased by 13%[2], however inflation has increased at about the same rate, while poverty rates have jumped up to 7.1%[3].

The current system penalizes individuals for making economic progress and does not provide strong enough outcomes. The "Benefits Cliff" is a well-documented phenomenon where low- income families lose eligibility for public assistance as their earned income increases.

Guaranteed income is a solution proven to increase economic mobility, ensure greater economic freedom, and improve health and wellbeing. A guaranteed income is a monthly, cash payment given directly to individuals. It helps low-income families even out the financial ups and downs, such as an unexpected car repair or reduced work hours, that prevent them from making ends meet. It is unconditional, with no strings attached and no work requirements. It gives individuals the freedom to make the choices that are best for their families.

SHAPE the Future of Aging

According to the U.S. Administration on Aging, the number of adults older than 65 years of age is expected to increase to 72 million, boosting the aging population in this country to 20 percent by 2030. Fairfax County is currently home to 398,982 residents aged 50 and older. The number of County residents aged 65 and up will increase to nearly 233,000 by 2035, a gain of 54 percent.

Dramatic growth in the older adult population brings both challenges and benefits. Older adults have disabilities and health problems. Many live alone, often in houses unsafe for their occupants. Those who can no longer drive may lose connections to friends and services. Some live on reduced incomes. Some become targets of criminal activity. Community members with disabilities face challenges accessing services that others would not face.

Thanks to improvements in health care and healthier lifestyles, people in their 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s are living longer and better. They travel, they study, they volunteer, they start businesses. They use modern technologies. They engage with the arts. They patronize local restaurants and shops. They vote. With some social and physical supports, they can remain active in their communities for many years to come.

SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan, a long - term strategic plan, will guide how the county allocates resources for services and programs that benefit these populations and make the community a friendlier and more livable place for them. SHAPE stands for Services for Older Adults & Family Caregivers, Housing & Neighborhood Supports, Access to Mobility Options, Personal Well-Being and Economic Stability and Planning. As DFS engages in a review of policies, practices, procedures and programs, this aspect of our clients will be a focus to ensure equitable access.

Engaging Men of Color

Data on men and boys served by the Department of Family Services highlights two distinct disproportionalities that impact male engagement, particularly engagement of males of color. The percentage of male clients served by DFS differs depending on the program of interest. While the percentage of males served in each program can vary greatly, the percentage of males in

the DFS workforce is disproportionately small. Males make up just 13% (n=1021) of the DFS workforce. Representation matters, particularly when men seeking services are required to participate. With a small percentage of the DFS workforce being males, it can be difficult for male clients to find staff that they can relate to and who can understand male-specific needs and circumstances.

The percentage of males of color served by DFS differs depending on the program of interest. It is important to note that, in most programs analyzed, males of color are overrepresented. In all programs analyzed, white males were underrepresented. To highlight a few points, African American or Black males make up 10% of all males in Fairfax County, yet they account for 16% of males served by Adult and Aging and 28% of males involved with Employment Services. Asian males make up 19% of all males in Fairfax County and yet they account for 36% of all males served in employment services. Hispanic males make up 16% of all males in Fairfax County and yet they account for 36% of all males served by Child Protective Services and 43% of all males served by the ADAPT program. On the other hand, White males make up 60% of all males in Fairfax County and yet make up 26% of all males served in employment services and just 16% of all males served by the ADAPT (Anger & Domestic Abuse Prevention & Treatment) program. Males in need of DFS services are disproportionately males of color.

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

System-Level Infrastructure:

- Support from the Data Analytics Unit to disaggregate and analyze population specific data
- Support from Divisional Business Analysts to collect and analyze population specific data
- Support from the Department of Human Resources regarding hiring
- Collaboration with the Commission on Aging to develop the SHAPE The Future of Aging Plan
- Collaboration with Department of Housing and Community Development to improve equitable approach to interdepartmental practices and services
- Collaboration with Health Department to improve equitable approach to interdepartmental practices and services
- Collaboration with Department of Neighborhood and Community Services to improve equitable approach to interdepartmental practices and services
- Collaboration with Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board to improve equitable approach to interdepartmental practices and services
- Collaboration with Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court to improve equitable approach to interdepartmental practices and services

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, One-Year American Community Survey, PUMS (Public Use Microdata Sample) data, Retrieved From: https://data.census.gov/.

[2] U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2020, One-Year Community Surveys, Table S1901 *Income In the Past 12 Months,* Retrieved From: https://data.census.gov/.

[3] U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2020, One-Year Community Surveys, Table S1701 *Poverty Status In the Past 12 Months,* Retrieved From: https://data.census.gov/.

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES CALENDAR YEAR 2023 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

Goals	One Fairfax Area of Focus	Actions	Stakeholders	Timeline	Resources and Supports	Responsible Parties	Performance Measures
1. **Implement Our Comprehensive Communication and Engagement Strategy to Increase Knowledge and Application of an Equity Lens**	18	1.1 Continue executing a multidimensional, data and values-driven campaign to educate and inform staff about equity and how it relates to our work. 1.1.1 Develop curriculum to educate and inform new and existing staff on the framework supporting the foundation of our equity work 1.1.1.1 Engage staff to assess implicit bias in all contact with people who seek DFS services, particularly men of color. 1.1.2 Expand Equity Book Club focused on collective action and institutional/structural racism 1.1.3 Develop learning opportunities focused on critical analysis of equity related content for staff at all levels 1.1.4 Develop platforms for employees to feel a sense of belonging in DFS 1.1.5 Increase staff understanding of	All DFS Staff and integrate contractors	Q1 – Q4 CY2023	DFS Equity Team, DFS Equity Leads, DFS SMT, DFS Communications Team, IT Team, and Professional Training and Development Team, Chief Equity Officer.	DFS Equity Team, DFS Professional Development and Training team, all people in DFS with supervisory responsibility	• *Pending measure* - percent of staff indicating strongly agree and agree on "I have a basic understanding of concepts related to racial equity" • *Pending measure* - percentage of new employees in their first six months agree racial equity is valued in DFS • Percentage of book club participants who can identify institutional racism as it relates to human services • Number of DFS-related equity training • Launch of an Employee Resource Group • Survey administered and results analyzed

			attending to masculinity, race, and socioeconomic status in the provision of services				
		1.2	Evaluate the structure of the DFS Equity Impact Team to ensure effective coordination and alignment of equity work across the department	All staff	Q1 CY2023	DFS Equity Team, DFS Equity Leads, DFS SMT, DFS COMM Team	DFS Equity Team, TBD Equity Team Workgroup, DFS SMT
		1.3	Work with the One Fairfax office and GARE to conduct a survey of employee's knowledge, skills, and experiences related to race and equity.				
2. **Build Internal Capacity to Consider Equity in Decision Making and Planning**	10,18	2.1	Use a data and values-driven approach to shaping the strategic work of the department to center on equity. 2.1.1 Continue structured dialogue series with DFS SMT. Focus discussions on aligning the DFS vision for equity with overarching issues in human services. Reflect on group learning and identify opportunities for change to policies and practice. 2.1.2 Fully implement the DFS Equity Analysis Toolkits for Legislative Review and Business Process Changes in all divisions and Offices of the Department to evaluate critical decision points and policy changes.	All staff	Q1 – Q4 CY2023	DFS Equity Team, DFS SMT	DFS SMT and Program Managers	• Number of DFS SMT and Program Managers demonstrating a deep level of understanding about barriers to opportunity and embedded racial inequities in their special area of focus— including critical data and information about how inequities are produced and how they can be reduced to impact positive outcomes for County residents serviced by DFS • *Pending measure -* percent of strongly agree and agree with the survey question

	2.1.3 Identify consultant services to establish strategic direction in focusing on equity and One Fairfax 2.1.4 Use data collected from survey about employee's knowledge, skills, and experiences related to race and equity to shape ongoing and emerging strategies.					"Leadership in DFS participates in and supports conversations about racial equity." • *Pending measure* - Percentage of diverse candidates hired, retained, and promoted
	2.2 Apply a racial equity analysis to decision making planning, policy, and practice 2.2.1 Identify the intersections of special populations and analyze gaps to improve service delivery and outcomes 2.2.2 Continue child welfare redesign group decision making to have more parity in Child Protective Services 2.2.3 Continue the development of the SHAPE the Future of Aging plan through an equity lens 2.2.4 Report and review diversity data related to hiring, recruitment, retention, and promotion to reduce bias and ensure equitable employment opportunities. 2.2.4.1 Promote Human Services	All staff	Q1 – Q4 CY2023	DFS Equity Team, DFS SMT	DFS Equity Team, DFS SMT, Male Engagement Workgroup, CYF Workgroup, Equity Team/HR Workgroup	

		careers to men of color					
3. Interdepartmental Stakeholder Engagement to Identify Intersections and Improve Practices and Services	10	3.1 Partner with other departments with a similar customer base to map out common strategies for engaging County residents seeking supports from HHHS agencies 3.1.1 Use an equity lens to analyze existing program partnerships and understand gaps to identify potential improvements 3.2 Maximize interdepartmental stakeholder engagement through Disability Rights and Resources (DRR) county-wide learning series	All staff County HHHS Agencies	Q1 – Q4 CY2023	DFS Equity Team DFS SMT	DFS Equity Team, DFS SMT, DFS Managers	• Number of interdepartmental practices and services identified for improvement • Number of sessions delivered as part of a county-wide learning series focusing on the intersections of race, immigration, and disability
4. Implement Economic Mobility Project to Support Low Income Families with Pathways to Economic Opportunity	1	4.1 Partner with county-wide Economic Mobility design team and Contracted design partner to complete the Guaranteed Income (GI) Pilot Design 4.1.1 Participate in end-stage implementation planning process alongside Economic Mobility Subcommittees	County-wide Economic Mobility Committee and County-wide Steering Committee	Q1 CY 2023	County-wide Economic Mobility Design Committee, DFS Economic Mobility implementation planning group, Contracted design partner	DFS Leadership, PAES Implementation Team, and County Equity Officer's Office	• Implementation planning team adapts an equity-focused project design framework into an implementation plan with high fidelity to a project design philosophy to "trust and invest" in low-income families' abilities to make their own best decisions free from county-mandated compliance requirements
		4.2 Lead the implementation of a comprehensive, equity-focused design plan for the GI Pilot alongside county and community-based partners. 4.2.1 Provide information and engage the community in dialogue regarding guaranteed income's role in promoting	County-wide Economic Mobility Committee, residents of Fairfax County	Q2 CY 2023 – Q1 2025	County-wide Economic Mobility group, DFS Implementation team, Contracted implementation and distribution vendor,	DFS Leadership, PAES Implementation Team	

		equitable access to economic security and the county's "trust and invest" approach 4.2.2 Create a closed feedback system between DFS, partner community-based organizations and other service providers to ensure the initiative is best meeting the needs of participating beneficiary households			Community Based Organizations	
		4.3 Finalize and execute a Research and Evaluation plan that is community-engaged and includes quantitative and qualitative components.	County-wide Economic Mobility Committee, residents of Fairfax County	Q1 – Q2 CY 2023	DFS Implementation team, Research and Evaluation partner, Contracted implementation, and distribution vendor	County Equity Officer's Office, DFS Leadership, PAES Implementation Team

Director's Signature: _____