
EQUITY IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

CALENDAR YEAR 2024

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: Department of Code Compliance

Equity Lead(s): Tina Quick, Ben Aiken

Date: 11/22/2024

EQUITY IMPACT PLAN REPORT

DEPARTMENTAL GOALS

Review your department's Equity Impact Plan for CY 2024 at [Equity Impact Plans | Topics \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/equity-impact-plans). Add each departmental 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 listed in your CY 2024 Equity Impact Plan, report them. Add more goals as needed.

Goal 1: Capitalize on engagement and outreach opportunities which provide proactive education to the community about the importance of code and safety requirements.

Goal 1 Progress:

During 2024, DCC participated in approximately 14 multi-agency/partnered events, including: Earth Day, Barron's Lumber Remodeling and Homeshow, Braddock District Council, Northern Virginia Apartment Association Hoarding and Mental Health Seminar, Faith Communities in Action, Joint Training Academy (2 JTA Cohort and 2 Deeper- Dive Sessions), 2 Community Days at Fairmont Garden Apartments, and conducted a Culmore Outreach Presentation in coordination with staff from DPWES.

12 editions of our Code Compliance Corner newsletters were distributed to Board of Supervisors Offices and posted to the DCC website. 15 of DCC's websites and associated flyers were either updated or newly created. We also collaborated to provide social media content with LDS as part of their campaign to support customers seeking building permits. At the time of drafting this report, we received nearly 74,000 website views from 38,000 active users.

DCC did not yet establish a formal feedback mechanism but is working on ways to gather routine feedback through forms or other survey tools. We hope to establish this in 2025. While no specific system was developed, we continue to use ad-hoc feedback from community engagements and customer service interactions to ensure this intelligence is brought back to DCC leadership for informing future training/development/operational updates.

Goal 2: DCC staff will increase staff awareness of equity challenges facing the County and DCC.

EQUITY IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

CALENDAR YEAR 2024

Goal 2 Progress:

In 2024, 15 equity focused training and development opportunities were held – hosting Equity Team Meetings, as well as all-staff trainings including: DCC Equity & Communications material, Moral Injury/Compassion Fatigue offered by CSB, De-escalation Training, Addressing Low-Risk but High-Conflict cases for yard signs and bamboo, as well as training by the Fairfax Animal Shelter/Animal Protection Police.

We continue to include an equity emphasis through both our existing and expanded training programs. This year, 6 staff completed DCC New Investigator Training and we had 9 participants in the pilot for DCC-wide equity training.

In January 2024 we updated the DCC Job Announcement Template to ensure that language expressed our commitments to providing equitable service. We also updated DCC Position Description(s) to reflect equity through value commitments and physical capability requirements.

Our Departmental Equity Team grew this year, welcoming new membership and incorporating the former Communications and Public Engagement workgroup so that we can intertwine training and organizational development with the functional operations and communications changes we are implementing. One of our Equity Team members was accepted to and is now attending Inclusive Leadership by Leadership Fairfax. This strengthens our capacity for internal training and continues our ability to grow awareness in our agency.

Goal 3: DCC will continuously evaluate casework - including requests for legal action and investigative protocols - to ensure that actions taken are aligned with DCC's commitment to seeking voluntary compliance and not creating unnecessary hardships.

Goal 3 Progress:

18 of our internal procedures were revised or newly created this year. With a goal to reduce the requests for legal action and increase the number of cases deemed voluntary compliance (i.e., where violations were identified but the responsible party voluntarily abated the issue(s)), at the time of drafting this report, DCC has closed approximately 4,700 cases this year. Of these, 254 cases included a request for legal action, resulting in a 95% voluntary compliance rate.

As mentioned in our progress under Goal #1, above, we did not complete work on a feedback mechanism for members of the public but are advancing this in our 2025 workplan.

Finally, DCC plans to evaluate the path to voluntary compliance and how to accurately capture achievement in future performance metrics, with a goal of fewer cases being escalated to the next sequential waypoint in the enforcement process. This provides efficiency while also emphasizing

EQUITY IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

CALENDAR YEAR 2024

the role of discretion for staff throughout the compliance process, offering the ability to meet customers where they are and providing services consistently based on circumstances presented.

Goal 4: DCC will use data and feedback to organize work units to build capacity; maintain effective internal and external partnerships; improve responsiveness based on equity considerations; and ensure fair distribution of casework among supervisors and investigative staff.

Goal 4 Progress:

In April 2024, DCC undertook a strategic reorganization of our five existing enforcement districts. This reorganization aligned our enforcement districts with magisterial district boundaries. This reorganization was planned based on historical distribution of caseloads within the magisterial districts, along with challenges faced by Investigators and Supervisors – some of whom were responsible for up to three different magisterial districts – causing confusion between our staff and Board of Supervisors (BOS) Offices who may have been unclear on assignments. This provides both internal equity through fair distribution of caseload volumes, and external equity, offering streamlined communication to BOS and their constituent contacts. To support this implementation, DCC provides messaging through monthly Land Use Aides meetings hosted by LDS, and our staff has now met with all 9 Magisterial District offices to make introductions and ensure that collaborative working relationships are built and sustained between our teams and theirs.

During 2024, we also made notable improvements to our reporting and business intelligence infrastructure using PowerBI. This data and transparency tool helps ensure accountability to performance measures while allowing us to determine the scope of our enforcement actions through an equity lens. For instance, we have already mapped our case data as a layer in conjunction with the Communities of Opportunity Index, offering a visual tool to evaluate the geographic distribution of code violations within the context of vulnerability.

Strengthening interagency relationships and partnership remain key areas of focus for DCC. In 2024, we provided 2 in-person trainings for the Office of the Fire Marshall, as well as several ad-hoc trainings with Community Response Team members to support coordination on hoarding cases. DCC staff attended and presented to FCPD during a weekly CORE crime meeting. The County's Code Officials, including the Director of DCC, met 7 times in 2024, to ensure these key agencies (Office of the Fire Marshall, Land Development Services, DCC) are collaborating effectively. DCC continues to engage regularly in joint-staff settings with areas of delegated authority, including the Office of the Building Official and Zoning Administrator.

We also made progress building additional external relationships. We began participating in monthly Building and Property Maintenance Code Official meetings held as part of an interjurisdictional group including representatives from Northern Virginia and Maryland Counties.

EQUITY IMPACT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

CALENDAR YEAR 2024

DCC leadership and staff are active participants in Virginia Building and Code Officials Association. We met with community advocates, such as Darksky NOVA. DCC leads and organizes the County's Hoarding Committee, which has expanded its membership and participation including with partners from private industry.

Finally, DCC contributed to the establishment of an Illicit Massage Business monitoring and inspection platform, bringing together team members from the Police Department, Fire and Rescue Department – Office of the Fire Marshall, Department of Cable and Consumer Services, Environmental Health, Office of the County Executive, and DCC in a digital space to share information proactively and communicate on cases in this specific, priority enforcement area. This tool provides opportunities to improve collaboration and may serve as a model for future cooperative inspection programs.

COUNTYWIDE GOALS

Not applicable.

OTHER EQUITY-RELATED WORK

This year as part of our proactive approach to internal engagement, we met with representatives for the PlanForward Comprehensive Plan project to consider how DCC has a role in advancing the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. DCC Identified several areas where our work intersects with various elements of the Plan. Aspects of this work is already reflected in our EIP. DCC's interactions with the community often result in meeting people who are in distress and/or need assistance or services. DCC also coordinates response to various healthy housing issues – from basic property maintenance through severe hoarding. Conditions identified by our staff have direct impact on the health of the individuals occupying buildings and structures throughout the County. We strive to facilitate connections to county agencies to provide support to those in need of assistance.

To make more progress through our operations, we are auditing the existing relationships and roles within the County's Hoarding Committee, which includes all agencies with responsibilities for addressing various aspects of these healthy housing challenges. In the coming year, we hope to establish a more consistent and clearly understood network approach to hoarding challenges and more broadly within the realm of healthy housing. Our intent is to ensure that our Investigators along with key partners have a common practice and knowledge of how each domain provides resources which can be applied for residents within the entire continuum of need. These efforts are intended to reduce relapsing behavior, prevent the proliferation of hoarding-related cases, and improve healthy housing outcomes through early intervention.