
CROSS-SYSTEMS INITIATIVE ANNUAL REPORT

CALENDAR YEAR 2024

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cross-Systems Initiative Name: Diversion First

Lead(s): Lisa Potter

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CROSS-SYSTEMS INITIATIVE PLAN REPORT

GOALS

Goal 1: Review and analyze Diversion First data for equity and to identify disparities.

The Diversion First Data Quality and Outcomes workgroup is comprised of members of county agencies involved in Diversion First programming and operations, to include the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB), Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD), Sheriff's Office, Fire and Rescue, Public Safety Communications, Courts and Department of Information Technology. In 2024, Data Quality and Outcome subgroup meetings were held, which allowed for more targeted review and analysis. These focused reviews of specific service data generated input from program partners to help inform business practices and opportunities for improvement.

For example, the partners involved in the Merrifield Crisis Response Center (MCRC) met multiple times for an in-depth review of MCRC data, to include demographics. An MCRC Equity Analysis showed similar trends to the previous year. In fiscal year (FY) 2024, among individuals who were diverted from arrest and had their race or ethnicity identified, 38% were non-Hispanic White and 27% were non-Hispanic Black; 17% were Hispanic or Latino, and 10% were non-Hispanic Asian; Non-Hispanic Multi-race individuals constituted 5%, while those identified as Other race made up 3%.

Diversion First partners also contributed to the County's recently launched Safety and Security dashboard, providing data/demographics related to individuals diverted from potential arrest.

One of the items on the 2024 Equity Impact Plan was to enhance efforts to decrease missing demographic information, which can be challenging to capture when an individual is in the midst of behavioral health crisis. As a result, the percentage of missing demographic data decreased from 15% to 9%, and this will continue to be an area of focus.

Also in 2024, Diversion First partners worked closely with the Department of Information Technology to enhance technology tools for the Co-Responder and Community Response Teams. These enhancements will help to improve cross-system program data collection and analysis.

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Goal 2: Enhance engagement of Diversion First Stakeholders and continue to build connections with underrepresented populations and communities.

The behavioral health crisis response system, spanning Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Intercept 0-1, is an integral part of diversion efforts. This system involves significant collaboration and coordination between the Community Services Board (CSB), Fairfax County Police Department, Fire and Rescue Department, Department of Public Safety Communications, Sheriff's Office, regional partners, and public safety entities within the County (i.e., police departments, fire and rescue departments and public safety answering points [PSAPs] in the towns, cities, and institutions of higher learning).

The past year marked the first full year of local implementation for the Marcus Alert law, which is aligned with the County's behavioral health crisis response system. The Marcus Alert requires public safety and behavioral health entities to provide a behavioral health response to behavioral health situations, whenever feasible. It also involves coordination between PSAPs (911) and Regional Crisis Call Centers (RCCCs). RCCCs also serve as 988 answering points, providing 24-7 support and resources for behavioral health. Individuals who contact 988 can now access Spanish services in Spanish and translation services for 240 other languages; specialized services for LGBTQ+ youth; young adults; and the Veterans Crisis Line.

The crisis response system also includes County-operated Mobile Crisis Units, Co-Responder Teams, regional mobile teams, and behavioral health liaisons (clinicians located at the County's 911 center). In addition, post-crisis teams, comprised of clinicians, fire and rescue medics, and peer recovery specialists (individuals with lived experience), respond throughout the community.

During the past year, the crisis response system has provided services to residents throughout the community, primarily in residential locations. This work has led to increased outreach and engagement with vulnerable residents with behavioral health issues, as well as their families, and has increased awareness of and access to services. Crisis response services, to include behavioral health crisis resources through 988, have been promoted through social media, brochures in multiple languages, Board of Supervisor's newsletters, agency communications, and local news outlets. Police officers, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), 911 call takers and clinicians have also educated residents about resources and routinely distribute 988 pockets cards in the community.

A Behavioral Health Crisis Response Leadership Group meets quarterly to review data and processes, focusing on diverting people from the public safety system to care whenever feasible. In addition, Diversion First partners provided numerous internal and external presentations and training about resources available in the community. The Fairfax local crisis response is a commitment to the national effort to provide "right care, right time, right place" interventions throughout the community.

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Goal 3: Promote cross-system awareness and build capacity to consider equity in planning and decision making.

In addition to regularly scheduled multiagency team meetings, a number of groups were convened to address issues related to diversion. An Adult Detention Center (ADC) Collaborators group, including the CSB, Sheriff's Office staff and partners with lived experience, developed an action plan to strengthen coordination and processes associated with jail-based behavioral health, reentry services and connection post release from incarceration. These meetings led to enhanced communication approaches, workflows and development of additional resource materials (in English and Spanish). This work will continue in 2025.

In addition, the MCRC Leadership Group met monthly, the Diversion First Data Quality and Outcomes group launched a new process to review metrics at a program level, partner equity leads consulted on multisystem issues, and partners worked together to advance Diversion and Community Reentry Center efforts as part of the Judicial Center Complex Redesign.

Diversion First partners also participated in regional, state and national groups, webinars and conferences to both contribute and learn about best practices. Fairfax County continues to participate in the national Stepping Up initiative as one of 51 counties designated as an Innovator County. Fairfax Diversion First partners participate in quarterly calls with other Innovator Counties to share best practices and challenges. Equity has been a theme in numerous meetings and will continue to be a focus in future meetings. Of note, some jurisdictions have struggled with an ongoing countywide commitment to equity, highlighting the tremendous advantage of One Fairfax and our local commitment.

In 2024, Fairfax County was one of three jurisdictions featured in a published RAND Corporation research study, *The Road to 988/911 Interoperability Three Case Studies on Call Transfer, Colocation, and Community Response*, designed to serve as a resource for jurisdictions considering local implementation. With information gleaned from a site visit and interviews with partners, the study featured details related to 988/911 interoperability in each of the three jurisdictions, agency roles, and decision points that can affect the way 911/988 calls flow through local systems. The study also identified facilitators, barriers, and equity-related considerations of each jurisdiction's approach, as well as lessons learned from implementation. The study, which also emphasized services for specialized, vulnerable populations, indicated that Fairfax benefitted from state legislation and guidelines, existing Diversion First efforts and relationships, and the strength of the continuum of care in Fairfax, and noted that shared definitions and the large group of stakeholders across the county, towns and cities were challenges that the locality addressed during planning efforts. Fairfax partners also presented on a National Association of Counties webinar, National Association of Counties *Advancing Crisis Communications* webinar to highlight study findings and implementation considerations.