

# Diversion First 2022 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, co-occurring 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 include 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.

Various populations, often based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and economic status, have disparate access to high-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/Office to Prevent and End Homelessness
- Public Defenders Office
- Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney
- County Attorney's Office
- Department of Information Technology
- Office of Public Affairs
- Diversion First Leadership Group
- Diversion First Stakeholders Group

## DIVERSION FIRST 2022 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

| Short-Term Goals  | One Fairfax Area of Focus | Actions   |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| <b>1. Review and analyze Diversion First data for equity</b>  | 6, 7, 10, 17              | 1a. Disaggregate Diversion First data to determine disparities among populations served   |
|   |                           | 1b. Review data in Data Quality and Outcomes Workgroup and share with Diversion First partners  |
|   |                           | 1c. Review demographic data for people diverted from potential arrest   |
|   |                           | 1d. Identify opportunities to review data for specific services and programs to help inform equity practices and areas in need of improvement                         |
|   |                           | 1e. Increase capacity of Diversion First partners to consider equity across the system  |
| <b>2. Provide opportunities for more diverse community/stakeholder input and involvement in Diversion First</b> | 6, 7, 10, 17              | 2a. Actively engage various groups/populations that are reflective of individuals and families served through Diversion First and are representative of the community |
|   |                           | 2b. Connect with other jurisdictions to identify best practices for broad stakeholder participation and community engagement  |
|   |                           | 2c. Actively seek feedback from people served through Diversion First programs and services   |
|   |                           | 2d. Provide resources and materials in various formats to populations that do not have routine access to resources (i.e., print, electronically)                      |
|   |                           | 2e. Ensure that Diversion First publications are representative of Fairfax County's diversity   |