
CALENDAR YEAR 2023 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: Department of Family Services (DFS)

Equity Lead(s): Melanie Fenwick (Departmental Equity Lead*); Division Equity Leads: Keesha Coke, Linda Hernandez-Giblin, Daniel Mekibib, Stephanie Pegues, Jeanetta Vinson

Date: November 30, 2023

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Review your department's Equity Impact Plan for CY 2023 at [Equity Impact Plans | Topics \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#). Using that plan, fill in each 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 in your CY 2023 Equity Impact Plan, report them. Add more goals as needed.

Goal 1: Implement Our Comprehensive Communication and Engagement Strategy to Increase Knowledge and Application of an Equity Lens

Goal 1 Progress:

The Department of Family Services (DFS), in partnership with the Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE), the Fairfax County Chief Equity Office and other Fairfax Human Service agencies, conducted a survey to assess the knowledge, skills, and experiences of DFS employees related to race and equity. Survey results were shared with the DFS Equity Team and Senior Management Team, and additional analysis was completed by the DFS Data Analytics team. Our results show almost all DFS employees surveyed agree that there is value in understanding the impacts of race and how those impacts are felt in our work. Employees of all races and ethnicities believe strongly in the importance of addressing racial inequities.

Areas of increased focus in 2024 will be building comfort and competence when discussing race and identifying examples of institutional racism, communicating more deeply and transparently into the organization about the commitment and concrete actions taken to improve workforce equity, and increasing the number of employees who serve as advocates and supporters of the value of discussing and examining the impacts of race and how it applies to our work.

DFS continues to use the ADDRESSING framework (Hays, 2016) * to move beyond one-dimensional concepts of identity to understand the complex and overlapping cultural influences which ultimately impact perspectives related to equity. This approach begins with an emphasis on understanding the effects of diverse cultural influences on our own beliefs, thinking, behavior, and worldview. A curriculum and eLearning course was developed to educate and inform new and existing staff on this framework

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supporting the foundation of ensuring that equity is interwoven into every aspect of the department's work.

The DFS Equity Team designed and developed a monthly learning series focused on the critical analysis of equity related content for staff at all levels. The series will begin in 2024 with a focus on cultural humility. The content will be accessible to all staff, regardless of their level of knowledge or experience with equity issues. It is essential for all DFS staff to have a strong understanding of cultural humility to provide equitable services to all clients.

*Hays, P. A. (2016). *Addressing cultural complexities in practice: Assessment, diagnosis, and therapy* (3rd ed.). American Psychological Association.

Goal 2: Build Internal Capacity to Consider Equity in Decision Making and Planning

Goal 2 Progress:

Building our internal capacity for equity in decision-making and planning is an ongoing process that has required a holistic and sustained commitment, continuous learning, and a culture that values inclusivity and fairness. As part of this effort, the department created and adopted an equity-focused Framework for Proposed Legislation, Policy, and Business Process Changes. This decision-making framework explicitly ensures that diverse perspectives are included and serves as an equity impact assessment. The framework has guided discussion and analysis on several department strategies and proposed legislation to include (but not limited to) DFS Compressed Work Week Policy, SHAPE the Future of Aging Plan, Volunteer Solutions Orientation practices, and work on the County's legislative position for women's reproductive health. As more policies and practices are evaluated using the DFS Equity Analysis tool, we will have a more equitable and just organization.

As part of the child welfare redesign, the Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) team has integrated the Safe & Connected practice model across all seven CYF programs. The Safe & Connected practice model strengthens cultural competence and clinical practice to achieve equitable outcomes for children and families and has been fully integrated into the Child Welfare Institute Onboarding Academy. Principles of equity have been interwoven throughout the CYF continuum of services, including a group decision making process to have more parity in Child Protective Services.

The Adult & Aging Division continues to lead the SHAPE the Future of Aging strategic plan in partnership with the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging. Since the plan's approval by the Board of Supervisors in May 2023, initiative development committees are active in partnership with stakeholders. Initiative development and implementation are driven by data trends, community feedback and are informed by an equity framework. Staff are using the DFS Framework for Proposed Legislation, Policy, and Business Process Changes to guide discussion and analysis within SHAPE implementation committees.

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The DFS Human Resources (HR) Team continues to partner with department leadership and hiring managers to focus an equity lens on data related to the departments hiring, recruitment and retention efforts. While it's important the workforce reflects the diverse community served, analysis and new strategies are needed to ensure equitable promotional opportunities and retention. The DFS HR Team regularly analyzes, and shares exit interview and hiring data. The data is used by Hiring Managers to develop targeted recruitment and retention strategies to ensure equitable employee engagement and opportunity. Hiring Managers are more intentional when selecting participants for interview panels to include representation from diverse backgrounds and subject matter expertise.

The DFS Equity Impact Team continues to evaluate its charter to ensure the team's structure ensures effective coordination and alignment of equity work across the department.

Goal 3: Interdepartmental Stakeholder Engagement to Identify Intersections and Improve Practices and Services

Goal 3 Progress:

Interdepartmental stakeholder engagement is a valuable tool for creating a more cohesive and effective organization. During the last year, DFS representatives served on cross departmental teams to develop a position statement regarding women's reproductive health and to codevelop an equity assessment for Board Matters.

The Volunteer Solutions (VS) program, which connects volunteers with meaningful opportunities to support older adults, adults with disabilities, and family caregivers, made significant changes to enhance service delivery through volunteers. To foster an inclusive and equitable environment for both volunteers and participants, VS staff executed strategies to increase the recruitment of a diverse cadre of volunteers that reflected the community served. Training was provided to increase volunteers' knowledge and awareness when working with diverse communities.

DFS staff continue to be a critical partner in the Community+ Communities of Opportunity collective impact effort by serving on the Child and Youth Wellbeing and Economic Opportunity workgroups.

Goal 4: Implement Economic Mobility Project to Support Low Income Families with Pathways to Economic Opportunity

Goal 4 Progress:

The Fairfax County Economic Mobility Pilot (FCEMP) is an evidence-based, equity-focused intervention to promote economic mobility and social capital. During 2023, DFS has collaborated with the Department of Finance, Neighborhood and Community Services, the Chief Equity Officer, the Financial Empowerment Center at South County, and the United Way of the National Capital Area to design, implement, and support the FCEMP. The (FCEMP) provides monthly cash payments to eligible, randomly selected

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households—along with optional financial wellness support. Cash disbursements began in October 2023 and will continue through December 2024.

Describe other equity-related work completed in CY 2023 (efforts that advance racial and social equity that your department was involved in within the department or countywide) not in the department's Equity Impact Plan.

The **Domestic and Sexual Violence Services (DSVS) division** has integrated an equity and social justice lens into all parts of their work and is working to increase the diversity of clients in all programs and services. An educational component focusing on historical oppression and violence has been incorporated into their onboarding process for new staff as well as education components advancing cultural humility among all staff. The DSVS team regularly provides outreach and education services to challenge oppression and increase equitable access for underserved communities.

DSVS continues to support digital equity and mitigate barriers to digital access by providing cell phones and data plans to the clients they serve based on need. This is accomplished through a generous donation by a local religious organization.

The **Public Assistance and Employment Services (PAES) division**, in partnership with DIT and the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), distributed 60 Chromebooks to clients participating in the Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW) program who lacked a device to conduct job searches or complete online skills training. This equipment allowed VIEW participants greater access to education and training, and employment opportunities with 72% of the participants who received a Chromebook completing job skills training within the first few months.

To increase access and opportunity, the Employment Services program has begun offering basic digital literacy training workshops to interested job seekers via the county one-stop job centers. In addition, a contract with the Computer CORE nonprofit organization delivers customized intermediate level digital skills training including MS Office training to job seekers 55 and over. These monthly workshops are available to job seekers in the Senior Community Service Employment Program who need to update their computer skills to compete for employment.

Through a partnership with AT&T and the Minority Tech Foundation (MTF) to distribute 150 AT&T-donated laptops to county residents to eliminate barriers to digital access, DFS received 75 laptops via MTF for distribution to Employment Services participants. Distribution began in September 2023 to participants in any Employment Service program who need a device to search for jobs and access job training programs.

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