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# CALENDAR YEAR 2023 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN

## ANNUAL REPORT

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Department Name: Diversion First

Equity Lead(s): Lisa Potter

Date: December 19, 2023

### EQUITY IMPACT PLAN REPORT

#### **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. The Diversion First Equity Impact Plan is reviewed in this workgroup, along with program specific data to help inform program operations and decision making. In addition, many Diversion First programs hold monthly meetings where data, to include equity data, is routinely reviewed and discussed. For example, a 2023 review of the data indicated that there were a number of records where race was "unknown" or was missing. While it can be challenging to capture this data for services provided to people in the midst of a behavioral health crisis, there are also programs in which there is more time to ensure accurate reporting. As a result of the data review, teams have reviewed their business processes and have enhanced efforts to accurately reflect demographic data.

#### **Goal 2: Increase engagement of Diversion First Stakeholders, and continue to build relationships with underrepresented communities and organizations**

During 2023, County staff involved in Diversion First provided numerous presentations to community groups, were involved in a number of media requests and interviews, and hosted site visits. All of these events provided opportunities to increase knowledge and understanding of diversion efforts in the County, and increased community and stakeholder involvement. Additionally, in 2023, many agencies engaged in various social media campaigns and other community campaigns to highlight programs available to residents throughout the County. Engaging underrepresented communities/organizations is an area that needs more targeted efforts, and it has been carried forward on the 2024 Equity Impact Plan.

Multiple Diversion First cross-system workgroups were held to review program operations and procedures, in addition to data. Workgroup membership includes County leaders, managers and administrators and staff providing front line services. In addition, program materials were intentional about including images that are reflective of the County's diversity.

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Diversion First partner agencies have their own department-level Equity Impact Plans, many of which involve staff training on diversity, equity and inclusion. In addition, a number of national organizations provide training/webinars on a variety of DEI topics applicable to the population served, and many Diversion First stakeholders have attended training/national webinars to increase awareness, knowledge and skills for equitable service delivery and engagement with Diversion First populations.

### **Goal 3: Increase capacity for cross-system data collection and review**

Diversion First involves multiple County agencies, with numerous programs and services offered to people with mental illness, substance use disorder and/or developmental disabilities. Cross-system programs involve multiple agencies and data systems. Efforts continue to advance to collect, analyze and review data specific to program metrics, to include disaggregated data. Diversion First partners continue to work closely with the Department of Information Technology (DIT) to automate data collection and reporting processes. In addition to a Merrifield Crisis Response Center data application, which was automated and includes data variables that are critical to applying an equity lens, agencies have partnered with DIT to develop numerous products. The Community Response Team's Referral App and business intelligence tool were refined, and an application for the County's Co-Responder Teams was developed. These applications will assist in future program analytics and will facilitate greater individual level and system level analysis. Also in 2023, there were a number of Diversion First representatives on the County's Data Analytics group.

In 2023, County staff also participated in a Stepping Up Community of Practice (CoP), comprised of jurisdictions across the country. The Stepping Up initiative aims to address the overrepresentation of people with behavioral health issues in local jails. This CoP, and extension of a 2022 cohort, focused on equity indicators, exploring practices and policies that impact racial equity. Throughout the CoP, counties discussed jurisdiction and program policies, services successes and challenges, stakeholder engagement and tracking prevalence indicators for individuals with behavioral health issues who are incarcerated, as well as pre and post arrest options and services. The CoP, hosted by the Council of State Governments Justice Center, in partnership with the National Association of Counties and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation, provided an opportunity to learn about equity practices across the country. Through this CoP, a number of Fairfax County efforts were affirmed. For example, community-based programs offering services in every part of the county, such as the existing Co-Responder program, Community Response Team, Jail Diversion Team and behavioral health treatment services, is a recommended practice to amplify equity practices. In addition, Diversion First services that focus on social determinants of health (e.g., housing, food security, financial stability, health care access), such as specialty dockets, reentry and care coordination and case management services, are an important element of advancing equity. In terms of practices to enhance locally, there are opportunities to focus on data elements such as connections to care post jail release.

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### **Goal 4: Promote cross-system awareness and build capacity to consider equity in planning and decision making.**

Over the past several years, Fairfax County agencies and stakeholders have worked together to enhance the local behavioral health crisis response system. This system is aligned with national best practices and state legislation and efforts to divert from potential arrest. Behavioral health crisis response in Fairfax County involves collaboration between the CSB, FCPD, Fire and Rescue Department (FRD), Sheriff's Office, and Department of Public Safety, Communications (DPSC), as well as regional community-based programs.

The behavioral health crisis response system is an evolving landscape and was further enhanced on July 1, 2023, with the local implementation of the Virginia law commonly referred to as "Marcus Alert", named for Marcus David Peters, a young, Black biology teacher who was killed by Richmond police during a mental health crisis in 2018. The law requires public safety and behavioral health agencies to coordinate responses and divert individuals in crisis to behavioral health care, including a Regional Crisis Call Center (RCCC, which also doubles as the regional 988 answering point), whenever possible. The Marcus Alert also requires localities to triage 911 calls related to behavioral health to identify level of urgency and appropriate response. The Marcus Alert emphasizes "Equity at Intercept 0," focusing on availability of community services to meet the needs of Virginians of color and other minority groups.

The Fairfax County Co-Responder Program is an essential element of the local behavioral health crisis response system, which also includes the Mobile Crisis Unit (operated by CSB Emergency Services), and regional mobile crisis services funded by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and operated by community providers. During the past year, the County's Co-Responder Program was expanded, increasing the number of teams days of operations. Teams include an FCPD Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trained police officer and a CSB clinician who respond to 9-1-1 calls for services that involve behavioral health issues. Co-Responder Teams collect data for community-based responses, and this data is reviewed by a cross-system team on a regular basis.

In 2023, DPSC and the CSB strengthened the public safety-behavioral health partnership, co-locating CSB clinicians/Behavioral Health Liaisons (BHLs) within DPSC's 9-1-1 Center to support Fairfax County's Behavioral Health Crisis Response System. Having these and others public safety and/or behavioral health responses supports an equitable response and linkage to care throughout the entire County.