

CORPORATION COUNSEL EQUITY & INCLUSION PLAN 2023

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CULTURAL COMPETENCE

1. Increase cultural competence of Permanency Planning and Child Support Agency staff.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Initiative One: Attract and Retain Diverse Staff.

Current Status:

- ✚ Current staff is diverse and meets County guidelines.
- ✚ Utilized the Alternative Selection process to hire two support staff.
 - ✚ One retained and promoted.
 - ✚ One did not pass probation.
 - ✚ Third Alternative Selection process is underway.
- ✚ Despite our department losing a few diverse employees to promotional opportunities elsewhere, we have maintained our overall numbers.
 - ✚ For example, in the last five (5) years, the Child Support Agency (CSA) increased the number of bilingual employees from 16% of the total staff in 2018 to 25% of total staff in 2023. An increase of 9%.

Chosen Target:

- ✚ Improve diversity to come closer to mirroring community clients.
 - ✚ Retain the current diverse staff we have.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

- ✚ Recruitment Improvement.
 - ✚ Presentations to minority law student groups in the fall to explain and publicize opportunities for diverse students in county government.
 - ✚ Established a paid Diversity Summer Clerkship through the State Bar.
 - ✚ Continue to use Alternative Selection for Clerk I-II hiring process.
- ✚ Retention efforts:
 - ✚ Support diverse staff by having regular check-ins regarding the workplace, providing professional development opportunities when available, and creating a safe space for sensitive/difficult discussions.

Measures of Success:

- ✚ Funds for Diversity Clerkship included in ongoing budget.
- ✚ Presentations made at the Law School annually.
- ✚ Recruitment efforts yield an increased pool of diverse applicants.
- ✚ Current diverse staff remain County employees for at least 5 years, or have promoted within the department, if opportunities exist.

Lead Staff Responsible:

- ✚ Carlos Pabellón
- ✚ Eve Dorman
- ✚ Vue Yang
- ✚ Melinda Pierson

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Initiative Two: Train Current Staff to Increase Sensitivity to Issues of Equity & Inclusion.

Current Status:

- ✚ Staff has taken available bias training.
- ✚ Initiated department-wide training for all staff by a nationally recognized speaker on issues of systemic bias.
- ✚ Developed a written practice manual for Perm Plan unit highlighting the need to consider systemic bias and equity at specific decision points in the life of a CHIPS case.

Chosen Target:

- ✚ Create a schedule of ongoing training that is evidence based.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

- ✚ Investigate cost-effective training available for repeated cycles such as the Madison YWCA Racial Justice Series.

Measures of Success:

- ✚ All staff have at least new employee and subsequent yearly training.
- ✚ All staff actively and consistently consider the impact of systemic bias in their decision-making.


Lead Staff Responsible:

- ✚ Eve Dorman
- ✚ Vue Yang

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Initiative One: Develop Diverse Leadership.




Current Status:

-  Our leadership team is diverse.

Chosen Target:

-  Maintain diversity in the team.



Tactics to Close the Gap:

-  Provide current management team with growth opportunities in the form of training and conferences.
-  Offer employees the resources necessary to obtain a promotion through county sponsored leadership trainings.
-  Support Legal Director of Child Support as she develops a countywide mentorship program focused on supporting managers who are women of color.

Measures of Success:

-  *Success.* Our leadership is diverse.

Lead Staff Responsible:

-  Carlos Pabellón
-  Vue Yang

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Initiative Two: Train Current and Future Leaders to Identify Existing Issues Related to Equity & Inclusion.

Current Status:

- ✚ Leadership has taken training offered by the County and seeks other training as offered.

Chosen Target:

- ✚ Identify appropriate training to support leaders in addressing any potential internal issues. Create a schedule of appropriate, ongoing training for leadership and staff.
- ✚ Leaders should also be able to apply methods/practices from training to their work with staff and the public.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

- ✚ Assign someone to identify appropriate training materials.
- ✚ Develop an accountability system to ensure leaders are putting into practice the materials they have learned.

Measures of Success:

- ✚ All leadership staff will have access to high quality training related to equity and inclusion.
- ✚ Leadership staff will be comfortable identifying and calling out explicit and implicit bias in all aspects of practice.

Lead Staff Responsible:

- ✚ Carlos Pabellón
- ✚ David Gault
- ✚ Eve Dorman
- ✚ Vue Yang
- ✚ Melinda Pierson

PROGRAM INNOVATION

Initiative One: Child Support: Increase community outreach programs and increase availability of Child Support staff to areas of Dane County other than downtown.

Current Status:

- ✚ The agency has continuously participated in outreach through the Urban League and other Employment and Training Programs.

Chosen Target:

- ✚ Develop ongoing programs for outreach and increase child support visibility within the community. This may include possible satellite sites, payment kiosks, and additional modes of communication such as texting or email options.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

- ✚ Research the effectiveness of various outreach programs. Identify programs that are practical given our resources.
- ✚ Connect with necessary stakeholders and partners for critical feedback.
- ✚ Improve website by making more material available electronically.
- ✚ Improve communication with the public by utilizing additional modes of communication.

Measures of Success:

- ✚ Increased compliance from participants on all levels: payments, updating information, court appearances, service of process, genetic testing, etc.
- ✚ Increased Federal performance percentage on four measures: support order establishment, paternity establishment, current support collections, and arrears collections.

Lead Staff Responsible:

- ✚ Vue Yang
- ✚ Lisa Bina

PROGRAM INNOVATION

Initiative Two: Child Support: Continue to use discretion where available to prevent adverse outcomes for non-custodial parents.

Current Status:

- ✚ Child support decision making is largely governed by state and federal regulations. There are some areas where there is prosecutorial discretion.

Chosen Target:

- ✚ Increase non-punitive outcomes.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

- ✚ Collaborate with Permanency Planning and Dane County DHS to minimize the negative impact of child support collection on families where children are in out of home care.
- ✚ Review and adjust orders as necessary.
- ✚ Right size orders when it is appropriate.
- ✚ Request reasonable purge amounts at contempt hearings, so that we don't set payers up to fail resulting in a bench warrant and commitment.
- ✚ Continue to identify circumstances under which discretion can be used to minimize negative impacts of child support collection on families.
- ✚ Develop measurement tools.

Measures of Success:

- ✚ A decrease in the number of motions to show cause for contempt.
- ✚ A decrease in the number of bench warrants that are requested and issued.
- ✚ A decrease in the number of requests by payers to negotiate a purge amount.
- ✚ Families are able to reunify more quickly because there is not a child support order creating a barrier to that reunification.

Lead Staff Responsible:

- ✚ Carlos Pabellón
- ✚ Vue Yang
- ✚ Lisa Bina
- ✚ Eve Dorman

PROGRAM INNOVATION

Initiative Three: Collaborate internally on issues related to enhancing Dane County Department of Human Services efforts to unify families.

Current Status:

- ✚ Child Support and Permanency Planning work with Dane County DHS on a case-by-case basis to eliminate child support payments for families with CHIPS cases, where such payments are a barrier to reunification.

Chosen Target:

- ✚ Eliminate all payments as appropriate.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

- ✚ Continue specialized foster care calendar with one attorney who will be able to apply the discretionary factors in accordance with the law.
- ✚ Consider additional strategies to streamline/integrate child support orders and CHIPS orders.
- ✚ Use current Permanency Planning and CSA staff to explore processes to minimize collateral negative consequences to families of child support collection.

Measures of Success:

- ✚ Child Support collection does not delay parent-child reunification in CHIPS cases.

Lead Staff Responsible:

- ✚ Carlos Pabellón
- ✚ Eve Dorman
- ✚ Vue Yang

PROGRAM INNOVATION

Initiative Four: Mitigate the impacts of systemic racism on current practice.

Current Status:

- ✚ Include questions on this issue as part of the application process for all staff department-wide.
- ✚ Discuss systemic bias in the context of individual families/litigation.

Chosen Target:

- ✚ Establish practices that attempt to minimize the impact of systemic bias in decision-making.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

- ✚ Develop and utilize a case staffing structure that highlights potential impacts of systemic bias and offers an opportunity to explore ways to minimize that impact.
- ✚ Consider implementing a case staffing for every new case to address systemic bias.
- ✚ Civil Unit: Train attorneys to be aware of and avoid the dangers of implicit bias when exercising their prosecutorial discretion.

Measures of Success:

- ✚ Staff will be comfortable identifying and calling out explicit and implicit bias in all aspects of practice.
- ✚ Permanency Planning: case staffing outline will be used to discuss specific cases.


Lead Staff Responsible:

- ✚ Eve Dorman
- ✚ Carlos Pabellón
- ✚ Dave Gault
- ✚ Vue Yang

COLLABORATION

Initiative One: Child Support: Continue to work with UW to research and pilot non-punitive programs attempting to bring families out of poverty.


Current Status:

 Currently working with the UW Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP).


Chosen Target:


 Continue working with IRP when and where needed.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

 We are doing this already. Dane County is always a participant mainly because we are in the same city as the University.

Measures of Success:

 *Success achieved.*

 *Maintain relationship with IRP to further influence Wisconsin child support policy.*

Lead Staff Responsible:

 Vue Yang

COLLABORATION

Initiative two: Child Support: Continue collaboration with Children First (CF) to improve job attainment and retention in non-custodial parents.

Current Status:

- ✚ Currently working with Children First program in Dane County. Participation in the CF program is court ordered. Child Support works with the program to ensure orders are entered for participation.

Chosen Target:

- ✚ Continue working with Children First.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

- ✚ Child Support meets the necessary number of referrals to CF per month.
- ✚ Continue to encourage payers to participate as an alternative to more punitive measures.

Measures of Success:

- ✚ Increased compliance with both the CF and Child Support programs.
- ✚ Increased and/or continuous payments for child support based on successful employment and training attained in CF.

Lead Staff Responsible:

- ✚ Vue Yang
- ✚ Lisa Bina

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Initiative one: Increase cultural competence of permanency planning and child support staff.

Current Status:

- ✚ Staff attend trainings as available to support cultural competency. Corporation Counsel supports this training with budget allocations.
- ✚ Perm Plan staff read and discuss books by diverse authors.
- ✚ Perm Plan staff specifically raise and address questions of culture, power, and privilege when discussing cases.
- ✚ Between 2018 to 2023, the Child Support Agency increased the number of bilingual staff from 9 to 14.
- ✚ Legal Directors within our department attend Racial Equity & Social Justice (RESJ) meeting regularly.

Chosen Target:

- ✚ Staff will engage in culturally appropriate interactions with colleagues and consumers.

Tactics to Close the Gap:

- ✚ Continue current efforts related to training in these areas.
- ✚ Increase presence on committees or other groups committed to racial equity and justice, including RESJ.
- ✚ Specific modeling and support of staff as they consider culture in the context of their work.

Measures of Success:

- ✚ Staff will engage in culturally sound practice. Consumers will report that their experiences and perspectives are respected and heard in legal proceedings.

Lead Staff Responsible:

- ✚ Eve Dorman
- ✚ Vue Yang