

DANE COUNTY EQUITY INITIATIVE

Dane County, Wisconsin is often cited as one of the best places to live in the United States –however– we are also listed as one of the most racially disparate counties in our nation. Since 2007, Dane County has been addressing racial disparities (including all people of color) in the criminal justice system. We applaud the past work of the Dane County Task Force on Racial Disparities in Criminal Justice (2009), as well as the work of the Dane County Juvenile Justice Disproportionate Minority Contact Solutions Workgroup Report (2009). Those reports and recommendations have been utilized as a critical tool as we move forward with initiatives and projects to lower racial disparities in criminal justice.

It is time to expand these efforts to systems that lie outside the halls of criminal justice. The recent fall 2013 *“Race to Equity”* report from the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families details the sobering reality facing African Americans in Dane County. Across eight different categories, inequities exist at every age and in every aspect of life, including: economic well-being, family structure, education, child welfare, juvenile justice, health, housing and the adult criminal justice system.

The county has initiated several programs to help to address these inequities, including:
Established the Early Childhood Zone to help kids and their families have toward a successful start in life and integrate human services with school services.

Created a full-time Equity Coordinator/Program Analyst position in the County Board office to address inequities across County government and in the community, including staffing the Criminal Justice Council, its Racial Disparities Subcommittee and the Poverty Commission.

Established the Racial Disparities Working Group a permanent subcommittee of the Criminal Justice Council.

Establishing a pilot restorative justice Community Court in a selected neighborhood that uses neighborhood resources to resolve potential misdemeanors before charging, and lessens involvement in the criminal justice system while increasing the community well-being.

Developing the “Big Step” apprenticeship program to train low-income and disadvantaged persons for jobs in the building trades.

While these initiatives are a solid start, Dane County must expand its efforts on uncovering and addressing the sources of inequities. In addition, Dane County must work to meet the needs of communities of color, immigrants, and low-income families and individuals and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to realize their full potential. The County is the governmental body responsible for many local services, from human services, to highway maintenance, to public safety and criminal justice. It is time for county government to consider its role in addressing equity in everyday operations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors requests Public Health Madison & Dane County and the Office of the County Board to work with a staff team including, but not limited to the Office of the County Board, the Office of Equal Opportunity, the Department of Administration, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Land and Water Resources, the Office of Economic & Workforce Development, the Department of Planning and Development, the Department of Public Works, Highway and Transportation, the Sheriff’s Office, and the Veteran’s Services Office to:

1. Address the root causes of racial inequity over the next 1, 3 and 5 years through development of a strategic action plan for county government, to include equity impacts in annual budget development.
2. Enhance equity via effective and active engagement of the communities that are impacted by county policies. Engaging residents and forging partnerships towards equity in all decision making.

1 3. Analyze and highlight the inequities in Dane County:

2 -collect and summarize key indicators in multiple sectors, using the Race to Equity report as a starting
3 point;

4 -share information with the County Board, County Executive's office, County agencies, and the public
5 -work with the existing efforts to coordinate data and to focus those efforts on equity indicators

6 4. Develop and implement an equity impact model to inform policies and practices that consider
7 equity impacts in county government plans and decisions.

8 5. Determine how the services provided by each department might have an impact on equity.
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10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the staff team seek input from individuals knowledgeable about
11 racial inequities, including community stakeholders, and consider approaches used in other
12 communities that have adopted this approach. The staff team should work with the City of Madison's
13 Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative to identify opportunities for alignment and to minimize
14 duplication of efforts.
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16 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the staff team share the strategic plan and make recommendations
17 with the Executive Committee of the County Board, the County Executive, and the Equal Opportunities
18 Commission by September 1, 2014.
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20 Submitted by Supervisors Stubbs, Bayrd, Wegleitner, McCarville, Kolar, Rusk, Solberg, Zweifel,
21 Hendrick, Krause, Pan, Matano, Dye, Levin, Miles, Salov, Clausius and de Felice, March 20, 2014.

22 Referred to EXECUTIVE, HEALTH & HUMAN NEEDS and PUBLIC PROTECTION &
23 JUDICIARY and BOARD OF HEALTH.
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