



Dane County Executive  
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**TO:** Department Heads  
Elected Officials

**FROM:** Joe Parisi, Dane County Executive  
Sharon Corrigan, Dane County Board Chair

**SUBJECT:** Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative

**DATE:** June 10, 2014

Our vision for Dane County is a fair and just place where all our residents have a safe and healthy place to live, learn, work, and play. Ensuring that all residents in Dane County have access to opportunities and resources must be a core function of government. It is important that we systematically consider our own practices to identify any changes needed to address disparities that may exist in services and outcomes.

#### *The Problem*

As you know, according to the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families Race to Equity report released last fall, large racial disparities and inequities persist in Dane County in almost every aspect of life. It is imperative that this situation be addressed now. People of color are predicted to represent between 50 and 75 percent of Dane County's total population growth from 2010 to 2040, at which point the majority of Dane County's population will be people of color.

#### *Past Progress*

Dane County has made great strides in programs to address racial disparities, including – but not limited to - the Birth to 3 Program, school-aged wrap around services, and reforms to reduce disparities in the criminal justice system. This year, the Big Step Program will help prepare low-income and disadvantaged persons for employment in the trades. That said, new programs and initiatives will have the greatest success if they are part of a larger framework and countywide strategy.

#### *Future Steps*

Looking forward, the Dane County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved Res. 284, 2013, Dane County Equity Initiative (attached) which creates an interagency staff team to develop a strategic action plan for county government to address the root causes of racial inequity over the next 1, 3, and 5 years. Public Health Madison & Dane County and the Office of the County Board will facilitate this effort. Key staff will be Angela Russell from PHMDC and Colleen Clark Bernhardt from the County Board Office. We fully support this effort and the work of the core Equity Team.



*What We Need From You*

We need your commitment and assistance to transform the way we do business. We are asking you to dedicate one of your staff to be a member of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Team.

The Equity Team will have a two-hour kick off meeting in July. The team will continue to meet approximately monthly throughout the summer and early fall, with greater commitment of time coming later in the year and in to 2015.

**Please email the name and contact information of your department's team member to Colleen at [clark.colleen@countyofdane.com](mailto:clark.colleen@countyofdane.com) by June 20<sup>th</sup>.**

*The Goals:*

The goals for the Equity Team will be to:

- 1) analyze data regarding inequities in Dane County;
- 2) develop and implement an equity impact model to inform policies and practices that consider equity impacts in county government plans and decision
- 3) determine how the services provided by each department might have an impact on equity
- 4) conduct outreach and engage communities regarding best practices; and
- 5) develop a strategic action plan for Dane County government to address racial inequity.

We know and appreciate that you and your staff work hard to meet the needs of the people of Dane County. We anticipate that the important work of the Equity Team will result in recommendations that will allow us to better serve the entire Dane County community. Thank you for your willingness to commit to this critical effort.