

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 18, 2023  
To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
From: Child Support Services, Jim Sullivan, Director  
Subject: Child Support Services 2022 Annual Report  
File Type: Informational Report

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This informational report provides a report on how Child Support Services set and achieved its 2022 goals.

**POLICY**

This report aligns to Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	<a href="#">Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity &amp; Health</a>
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**BACKGROUND**

[File 22-104](#) amends Chapter 108 to require that “annually, by April 30 of each year or sooner, each Milwaukee County department leader and/or their designee(s) shall provide a written and oral report outlining their year-end results to a Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors committee. The reports shall, at a minimum:

- (a) Indicate the year-end goals the department set in the prior year
- (b) Share the rationale and relevance of the department’s performance metrics (i.e. explaining why they are “SMART” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, and extending) and how they align to the county’s racial equity strategy, if applicable)
- (c) Report the department’s year-end results relating to the goals it had set, and
- (d) Provide a thorough analysis clearly articulating why goals were significantly exceeded, met, or not met.
- (e) Explain the department’s progress in creating a departmental-level strategic plan that aligns to the countywide strategic plan and provide an update about future plans to revise and enhance the departmental-level plan in the year ahead.”

## **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3A: Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities
- 3B: Enhance the County’s fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

Alignment to the above strategic objectives is articulated in response to the questions below.

## **BODY**

1. **What were the top 3 goals of your department/office 2022? Please explain why they are “SMARTIE” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, and equitable) and how they align to the county’s racial equity strategy.**
  - o **Goal 1: Develop specific methods to measure the success of departmental processes and procedures.**

Child Support Services’ primary goals are based on our Federal funding target metrics for: (1) establishing paternity; (2) establishing orders, (3) collecting the child support ordered and (4) collecting arrears.

National and state studies show that establishing paternity and child support reduces child poverty rates, betters educational and behavioral outcomes for children and increases child food security, health and housing stability. Additionally, a 2022 research paper by the Wisconsin Institute for Research on Poverty found that receiving child support is associated with higher earnings as an adult. Meeting our target metrics therefore aligns to 3A of our Strategic Plan.

However, with a caseload of over 116,000, we realized we needed to develop ways to measure the success rate of various procedures in helping to achieve these goals. An important benefit of this is to be able share this information with employees so they can measure their own successes and see how their efforts help the department and Milwaukee County families. Because our KIDS database is unable to provide this information, we needed to develop our own data reports.

- **Goal 2: Pay equity and staff retention.** Staff retention efforts continue to be focused on involving Child Support employees in the success of the department and creating an environment where they are engaged. An additional important concern we are trying to address is pay compression. We have been unable to fill several positions because our compensation offer is too low. However, we cannot offer higher compensation without paying the new employees ahead of current employees. Our goal for 2022 was to review all positions and see where we could increase compensation, using a racial equity lens. This goal aligns with 1A and 2C of the Strategic Plan, particularly since most of our staff is made up of women and minorities.
- **Goal 3: Community outreach.** The pandemic limited our former Community Outreach. Our goal in 2022 was to bring it back to pre-pandemic levels and find more opportunities. Pre-pandemic community outreach included Case Conferences with the Milwaukee Justice Center (MJC), Parenting Conferences in our office, Child Support in Your Neighborhood and our Fatherhood Family-focused, Interconnected, Resilient, and Essential (Fatherhood FIRE) program. This program helps fathers with parenting, relationship and employment assistance. Possible new opportunities included working with Drug Treatment Court.

This aligns to strategic objective 2A. We needed to customize how and where our services were delivered in order to advance health equity.

## 2. To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2022? Please explain.

- a. Goal 1: We are now able to measure and compare the following data:
  - i. Use/scheduling of Court calendars
  - ii. Timeliness of court filings
  - iii. Court results and amount of hearings needed to accomplish these results

This allows us to determine what areas we need to work on and what projects have been successful. (e.g., calling participants before court and before genetic testing appointments has increased attendance, and decreased the need for adjourn dates). We have also been able to change court scheduling to adapt to various changing needs (e.g., making room for scheduling the new 767.804 actions).

These efficiencies allow us to serve the Milwaukee Community better.

- b. Goal 2: Implemented pay equity adjustments in conjunction with HR support. Retention has been difficult, but we have had success in having our entry level employees advance to greater roles (and pay) within the department. For our 2023 budget we were able to make room within our budget to allow for compensation increases for current employees to help with wage compression. The actual increases have not been implemented yet because we wanted to do

them in conjunction with the new payroll structure including the elimination of steps.

c. Goal 3: Community Outreach.

Child Support in Your Neighborhood was on hold due to the pandemic. We are anticipating its return in 2023.

The Fatherhood FIRE program in Year 2 enrolled 326 fathers. The Fatherhood FIRE program provides employment training, relationship, and parenting classes to help become a better partner and stronger parent. Our community outreach efforts for this program were greatly hindered by the pandemic during the first quarter of 2022. We resumed our efforts in April 2022 and attended events in the community on a weekly (or more) basis for the remainder of 2022.

Parenting Conferences in coordination with the Milwaukee Justice Center were brought back after a 2-year hiatus. These are now done by ZOOM and a CSS Attorney is assigned weekly. We also have an Attorney assigned to handle daily outreach from any Milwaukee area legal clinics, and one Attorney is assigned to an afterhours legal clinic each week.

Brand new this year is a coordinated effort with Drug Treatment Court. We have an Attorney specifically assigned to work with any individuals from that court with questions and their case(s).

3. What factors *enabled* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

Diligent staff effort and the existence of shared training experiences and familiarity with goals around equity system wide.

4. What factors *hindered* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

The continuing pandemic was a big factor for our outreach goal. Parenting Conferences for example involve in person meetings in small spaces with the family in the courthouse to get the necessary papers served and signed. The continuing health crisis and masking requirements made this difficult. Additionally, high staff turnover and the priority on training new staff was the focus instead of developing programs.

5. What is the status of your department/office in developing its strategic plan?

Child Support Services currently has a draft plan undergoing review.

**FISCAL EFFECT**

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

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**ATTACHMENTS:**

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