

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 20, 2022  
To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services  
Subject: Department of Health and Human Services 2021 Annual Report  
File Type: Informational Report

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This informational report provides an update on how the Department of Health and Human Services set and achieved its 2021 goals as well as communicates its strategic plan.

**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 2021? 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.

- **Goal 1: Systems of Care**

By end of 2021, complete integration initiatives to establish Adult and Children’s systems of care by integrating adult programs into Aging & Disabilities Services, and by integrating the youth justice and youth disabilities areas into Children, Youth, and Family Services.

This goal aligns with the County’s “Bridge the Gap” strategic focus area by working to break down silos to maximize residents’ access to services.

- **Goal 2: Racial Equity**

Throughout 2021, DHHS will continue to educate staff and leaders about racial equity, will identify and modify policies and practices that lead to inequity for our staff and residents. In particular, in the area of contracting – in 2021, leaders will partner with an external evaluator to develop a Racial Equity analysis of DHHS’s contracting practices and recommendations for improvements.

This goal aligns with a number of the County’s strategic focus areas by working on review of policies, practices, and investments within DHHS through the racial equity lens.

o **Goal 3: Services through COVID-19 Pandemic**

Throughout 2021, continue to operate programs and support needs of vulnerable residents that have arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic; in particular, work to address housing and eviction risk needs of residents as well as supporting needs of older residents while balancing unique risks of COVID for the population.

This goal aligns with the County's focus of continuing operations of County services throughout the pandemic. It also aligns with the "Bridging the Gap" strategic focus area by considering what disparities were aggravated by the pandemic and developing services to address those.

2. To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2021? Please explain.

a. **Goal 1: Systems of Care**

DHHS established two systems of care across youths and adults in 2021. Specifically:

- **Development of Aging & Disabilities Services area—**

The Aging & Disabilities Services adult system of care includes the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), Adult Protective Services (APS), and the Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD).

Throughout 2021, staff developed and implemented plans to merge the Aging Resource Center and Disabilities Resource Center into a joint Aging and Disabilities Resource Center. Creating an ADRC aligns with the No Wrong Door model and will serve people throughout their lifespan with services tailored to each individual and care that promotes dignity, regardless of age, gender, race, or socio-economic status. Similarly, the Elder Abuse and Adult Protective Services programs were merged into an Adult Protective Services program that efficiently serves adults across the lifespan.

Integration will continue in phases beyond 2021. The integration of Aging and Disabilities will be evaluated and that will determine the next phase. Aging & Disabilities will continue to work closely with Veterans, Behavioral Health, and Housing to ensure customers are getting connected to services across DHHS.

- **Development of Children, Youth & Family Services area –**

Children's system of care brought together three service areas, including Disabilities Services, Children's Mental Health and Wraparound Milwaukee, and the Division of Youth & Family Services.

All aspects of Milwaukee County Children's services were integrated, including DHHS's collaboration with the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to ensure children in the child welfare system are guaranteed access to services.

By end of 2021, the youth Disabilities Services area, including Birth to 3, Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS), and Children's Community Options (CCOP) Program, joined leadership at the Division of Youth & Family Services to form the Children, Youth & Family Services area. Just like with the adult system of care, this integration will continue in phases and will be evaluated over time.

**b. Goal 2: Racial Equity**

**Education and Awareness**

In 2021, DHHS completed a number of internal initiatives to increase awareness and understanding of Racial Equity throughout its staff. One example of this work was a 21-Day Work-Day Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Challenge to DHHS staff to explore ways to contribute to making Milwaukee the healthiest county in Wisconsin. For 21 workdays, the group provided opportunities to explore different groups and populations of people through videos, articles, TED Talks, movies, and tests to challenge each other on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The initiative culminated in the opportunity to reflect on the various activities and interact with co-workers to gain new perspectives, ideas, and determine ways to help support each individual in their work. By the end of the year, DHHS also secured grant funding that will allow for continued DHHS-wide training for staff and leaders in 2022 via the Creating Equity series.

**Contracting**

One key area of policy and practice that DHHS explored from a racial equity lens was DHHS's process for contracting for services across its programmatic areas. Kairo Communications, led by Dr. Deborah Blanks and Dr. David Pate, was hired to do an external evaluation of DHHS' contracting policies and provider networks to advance Milwaukee County's vision towards achieving racial equity and making Milwaukee the healthiest county in the state. In spring, they released their completed report, "Creating the Catalyst for Transformational Change," which provided valuable insight into racial equity in DHHS contracting. The report served as a lightning rod examination of current contracting policies and immediately inspired change. Starting with public panel discussions in summer featuring the report authors and county leaders, the sessions elevated tough questions and shined a light on institutionalized practices. DHHS was applauded for its courage in looking inward to establish a benchmark and future goal setting. The department continues to work toward racial equity in DHHS contracting with goal achievement as part of the 2025 Future State.

**c. Goal 3: Services through COVID-19 Pandemic**

While the COVID-19 pandemic affected how and where DHHS serves residents, all DHHS programs maintained operations throughout 2021. Many services were modified to keep participants safe or to improve access throughout the pandemic. Other services were specifically developed to meet new resident needs due to the pandemic.

In particular, below are highlights of COVID-19 specific efforts within our Housing and Aging and Disabilities areas:

- **Housing - Eviction Prevention in times of COVID**  
Housing Services partnered with the State of Wisconsin and Community Advocates to address the eviction crisis resulted in \$100 million secured to provide rental assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.
  - Approximately 11,000 at-risk Milwaukee County families were able to stay in their homes
  
- **Housing - Clare Hall**  
Since the start of the pandemic, Housing Services was very active in pandemic response. Through a partnership with the Milwaukee Health Department, 325 homeless individuals were served at a COVID-19 isolation facility at Clare Hall. This facility not only provided individuals with a safe place to isolate and recover, but staff ensured that clients were connected to permanent housing, medical care, mental health treatment, and other needs upon their release.
  
- **Seniors - Meals on Wheels**  
While Senior Centers did not have full operations running due to COVID-19 restrictions, DHHS found ways to meet residents' needs. Through Meals on Wheels and a meal pick up option for congregate diners, approximately 470,000 meals were served to older adults January-October 2021.
  
- **Seniors - Dine Out Program**  
DHHS developed a program that works with minority owned restaurants to provide older adults to new and exciting food options, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner meals.
  - 372 Diners
  - 4,910 Meals received through the program

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

**Alignment to vision** – A key enabler of DHHS's work in 2021 was a clear vision for County government – "By achieving racial equity, Milwaukee is the healthiest county in Wisconsin" – as well as its strategic focus areas: Create Intentional Inclusion, Bridge the Gap, Invest in Equity. This clarity allowed DHHS to understand its role in the overall County vision and created a basis of partnership across County departments. In alignment with the County vision, DHHS developed its 2020-25 Strategic Plan, which serves as a guide for DHHS implementation across goals.

**Mission-aligned staff** – DHHS leaders are continuously humbled by the passion of its staff for serving the most vulnerable residents in the County, and for their alignment to the mission and vision of racial equity and health. This mission alignment is a critical enabler of success as staff are asked to serve residents during times of COVID and continued changes to the department.

**Partnerships** – DHHS has successfully partnered with programmatic partners, other units of government, the business community, and grassroots organizations to be able to deliver quality and innovative programming throughout 2021. In particular, DHHS's contribution to COVID response involved collaboration with the City of Milwaukee, multiple health

departments, private health care agencies, and programmatic partners on the ground. Partnerships will continue to be a critical enabler of success going forward.

**One-time funding from state and federal government** – DHHS was successful in seeking out and receiving a number of one-time grants that allowed it to support services that needed to be modified due to the pandemic, and at times stand up new services that meet residents' new needs. Grants came through state and federal pass-through as well as county CARES and ARPA funds.

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

**Impact of Pandemic** – As many departments and organizations nation-wide, DHHS was hindered by continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic – both in our ability to deliver services and in residents' ability to access services in regular ways. Program leaders have thus been creative about how and where services are available for residents.

**Staff Shortages** – Similarly, like many employers nationwide, DHHS has experienced staffing shortages across our different service areas. This has at times implied that staff have had to take on larger caseloads or have had to prioritize cases by urgency level. Leaders have been working with HR, staff, and other partners to retain and recruit staff into key positions.

Given the ambitious agenda and goals of the Department, leaders have been careful to assess and calibrate the amount of change staff are asked to take on. In certain areas, DHHS leaders have slowed the pace of implementation in order to ensure that staff have proper change management and supports to ensure success.

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

In November 2021, DHHS shared its bold vision for the 2025 Future State in the [2020-2025 DHHS Strategic Plan: Creating Healthy Communities](#).

After a comprehensive planning process which included an assessment of the current state, the team identified 2025 Future State goals as well as a plan on how to get there.

The Strategic Plan is ambitious, laying out how DHHS is going to improve individual and community health by achieving racial and health equity and addressing social determinants of health. This will be accomplished through two distinct strategies that reimagine how services are delivered: Strategy #1: No Wrong Door / Integrated Services & Care; Strategy #2: Population Health/System Change.

The DHHS strategic plan is in alignment with the County's vision: "By achieving racial equity, Milwaukee is the healthiest County in Wisconsin", and the County's strategic focus areas: Create Intentional Inclusion, Bridge the Gap, Invest in Equity.

**FISCAL EFFECT**

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

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Steve Gorodetskiy, Strategic Initiatives Director, Department of Health and Human Services

**PREPARED BY:**

Steve Gorodetskiy, Strategic Initiatives Director, Department of Health and Human Services

**APPROVED BY:**

*Shakita LaGrant-McClain*

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

DHHS 2021 Annual Plan presentation: Attachment 1

DHHS 2021 Annual Plan document: Attachment 2 [website link](#)

DHHS Strategic Plan document: Attachment 3, [website link](#)

DHHS Strategic Plan presentation: Attachment 4

cc: County Executive David Crowley  
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office  
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk  
Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller's Office  
Pam Matthews, Fiscal & Management Analyst, DAS  
Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Research & Policy Analyst, Comptroller's Office