

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 22, 2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Child Support Services, Jim Sullivan, Director

Subject: Child Support Services 2021 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report

---

This informational report provides a report on how Child Support Services set and achieved its 2021 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>
--	---

**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.
  - o Goal 1: Maintain core services during pandemic. The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families estimates Milwaukee County's case population to be 2/3 or more African American and Hispanic. Our lobby needed to remain open and staffed to allow for participants to make child support payments without being charged fees. A large portion of our participants do not have bank accounts, social security numbers or charge cards. For some, cash or cashier's check are the only way they can pay support. Having our office lobby open for our front desk staff to facilitate these payments was essential to continue support for families and to avoid late fees (or arrears) for the paying participant. Being open also allowed for people to speak to a caseworker in person about their case, support, lien, and options for such resulting in quicker resolutions of participant concerns. This aligns to strategic objective 2A. We needed to customize how our services were delivered in order to advance health equity.
  - o Goal 2: Pay equity and staff retention. Pay equity is being addressed by reviewing and analyzing pay across the department and working with entry level employees to encourage career advancement. Staff retention efforts have been focused on involving Child Support employees in the success of the department and creating an environment where they are engaged. This involves our "Celebrate the Week" emails, our monthly department newsletter and our leadership and unit meetings. We have formed a Best Practices group comprised of non-management members of each unit within the department to discuss

possible changes and process improvements. Our Unity Committee works to involve our office in a variety of activities from Black History month celebrations to raising funds for Hunger Task Force and Toys for Tots. This aligns to strategic objective 1A and 1B.

- Goal 3: Community outreach. Not everyone can get to the Child Support office during business hours. The Child Support in Your Neighborhood program allows participants to come to a location to ask case workers questions about their case.
- Child Support Attorneys volunteer at legal clinics throughout the city to assist participants with legal questions related to child support.
- Fatherhood Family-focused, Interconnected, Resilient, and Essential (Fatherhood FIRE) program helps fathers with parenting, relationship and employment assistance. 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 2021? Please explain.

- a. Goal 1: Child Support Services' lobby has been open throughout 2021 for walk-in and appointment traffic. It was important to continue to have the office open for payments, receipt of motion and other paperwork and case questions. Our front desk staff works from the office every day to provide this support for participants.
- 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.
- c. Goal 3: Child Support in Your Neighborhood was on hold due to the pandemic. We are anticipating its return in 2022.

Our Child Support Attorney volunteers were able to provide services through Zoom throughout 2021.

The Fatherhood FIRE program in Year 1 enrolled 214 participants. The Fatherhood FIRE program provides employment training, relationship and parenting classes to help become a stronger parent.

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. The remote nature of work (in some cases), staffing and retention challenges.

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

Child Support Services (CSS) had to jettison our existing strategic plan in 2020 when the pandemic hit in favor of focusing core efforts on the needs of many vulnerable families who depend on our services. This remained the focus of CSS in 2021. We have not yet developed a new strategic plan, beyond focusing on core CSS services and aligning our efforts to the County vision.

**FISCAL EFFECT**

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

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

[james.sullivan@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:james.sullivan@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

[kathleen.murphy@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:kathleen.murphy@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

**PREPARED BY:**

Jim Sullivan, Director, Child Support Services

Kathleen Murphy, Legal Counsel Administrator, Child Support Services

**APPROVED BY:**

Jim Sullivan, Director, Child Support Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**



cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk  
Allyson Smith, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk