

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 19, 2024

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

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

Subject: Department of Health and Human Services 2023 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report

This informational report provides a report on how DHHS set and achieved its 2023 goals.

POLICY

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

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health
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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 goals is articulated in response to the questions below.

BODY

1. What were the top 3 goals of your department/office 2023? 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: Racial Equity- Further develop staff Racial Equity knowledge and skills, enact policy and practice changes in line with Racial Equity principles, promote diversity and inclusivity within DHHS's workforce, and integrate Racial Equity into collective impact initiatives, building upon past efforts.
 - GOAL 2: No Wrong Door/Integrated Services and Care: Enhance service availability and accessibility, increase integration between Children & Family and Adult systems of care, and improve physical service access by strategically locating facilities nearer to vulnerable populations.
 - GOAL 3: Population Health and System Change: boost funding and investment in preventive measures, foster partnerships within human services systems to tackle health outcomes, prevention, and structural racism, and allocate resources to areas of the community where vulnerable residents live.
2. To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2023? Please explain.

GOAL 1: Racial Equity

2023 Goal: - DHHS was successful in continuing to increase knowledge and skills in Racial Equity, in implementation of policy changes across a variety of internal policies, and in making equitable choices about placement of DHHS services and investments.

Increasing Racial Equity Knowledge and Use of Tools

- The DHHS Workforce Training and Development team was awarded a \$100,000 grant from the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services to support Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training expansion to the provider network.

Implementation of Racial Equity in Policy and Practices Across Service Areas

- DHHS staff applied Racial Equity learnings to improve practices in recruiting, retaining staff, participant access, and policies. Changes include fairer hiring interviews and allowing experience substitution for educational requirements in job descriptions.
- An example of equitable practices is the expanded utilization of programs employing community members with lived experience in the Credible Messengers Program. In behavioral health, community members with mental health or substance use experience joint clinical teams to build relationships and support participants. Similarly, in youth justice, community members with lived experience mentor young people, fostering meaningful relationships. These models promote equity for residents facing barriers to employment, benefiting program participants.
- Another tangible example of Racial Equity in practice is Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging's (AAA) new Dine Out Program that expanded in 2023 and garnered awards and local media recognition. This program expansion added local minority owned restaurants to enhance the list of senior dining offerings. Diners could choose delicious and culturally-diverse options while supporting minority-owned restaurants such as Daddy's Soul Food & Grille, Orenda Café, and Antiqua Latin Inspired Kitchen.

Placing Resources Closer to Vulnerable Populations and Investment Around Coggs

DHHS has intentionally shifted resources and invested in areas where most of its participants reside. This includes investments in and around the Marcia P. Coggs building, the new Mental Health Emergency Center (MHEC), the Milwaukee County Mental Health Clinic in Shafi Plaza, and the Behavioral Health Access Clinic North (located within Milwaukee Health Services, Inc.).

- Coggs Building – In 2023, DHHS broke ground on a new Marcia P. Coggs Health and Human Services Center, located at 1230 W. Cherry Street, just north of the current DHHS building. Milwaukee County will soon have its first building tailored to deliver health and human services, removing physical

barriers and enhancing access to resources addressing social determinants of health for our community.

- Housing around Coggs – In June 2023, DHHS celebrated a groundbreaking for 120 new single-family homes in the King Park neighborhood to increase BIPOC homeownership.

GOAL 2: No Wrong Door/Integrated Services and Care

2023 Goal: DHHS has observed a steady rise in the utilization of essential programs owing to enhanced accessibility. Furthermore, DHHS has been actively relocating services to be more proximate to participants and streamlining internal processes across various care systems. However, the department's capacity to ensure access has been hindered by staffing challenges and insufficient funding for contracted providers, particularly amidst the significant inflation experienced in 2023.

Details:

Increased Utilization of Key Programs

DHHS has continued to increase accessibility for its programs, leading to more residents being served across several programs.

- *Children's Disabilities* – Children's Long-term Support (CLTS) enrollment increased by nearly 40% over the past few years, with current enrollment at approximately 2,400 children and youth in 2023.
- Over 3,400 children were referred to the Birth to 3 Program in 2023, this represents a 26% increase since 2020.
- Adult Protective Services – received 4,047 referrals in 2023, with over 85% of the referrals deemed appropriate for assignment. In addition to abuse, neglect and exploitation referrals, APS supported 52 referrals to our Housing liaison, 223 referrals for Enhanced Multidisciplinary Team Staffing and 66 referrals from State Division of Quality Assurance (DQA) that were reviewed and supported. In addition to the referrals,
- APS supported more than 1,452 annual protective placement reviews, 1,663 Pre-Admission Screening and Resident Reviews (PASRRs), 214 court comprehensive reports. We closely monitored and compensated contracted agencies for serving 288 individuals with court ordered Corporate Guardianship and 100 individuals with court ordered Volunteer Guardianship.

- Outreach and education were provided to 40 groups on when to report and how to report. Staff hosted 10 virtual meetings with an average of 45 attendees at each meeting. These efforts have resulted in stronger community partnerships and increased collaboration when serving Milwaukee County residents.
- Milwaukee County served approximately 8,600 veterans, dependents, and survivors in 2023, an approximate 15% increase from the previous year. Veterans received services including disability compensation claims, pension applications, burial claims, educational claims, Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs (WDVA) state aid grants, eviction assistance services, energy assistance, and a host of other services.

Transitions Leading to Placement of Services Closer to Need

In 2023, Milwaukee County opened the MHEC. The MHEC was intentionally built at 1525 N. 12th Street to ensure it was convenient to access for patients and families as well as countywide law enforcement who often accompany patients to the center. In its first year, MHEC had over 7,000 visits - with nearly the same number of voluntary and involuntary (emergency detention) visits, consistent with the experience at the previous Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Services hospital.

- In June, BHS, in partnership with Milwaukee Health Services, Inc. (MHSI), celebrated the opening of Access Clinic North, 8200 W. Silver Spring Drive, a new location providing mental health and substance use disorder services to the community surrounding the Isaac Coggs Heritage Center. This is the third Access Clinic to open in the past two years.
- The BHS adult Crisis Mobile Team merged services with the Children's Mobile Crisis Team to form one program, rebranded as Milwaukee (MKE) Mobile Crisis. Previously, these separate mobile teams were contacted through different crisis lines depending on the age of the individual needing services. The merger into one comprehensive program delivers easier access to care for adults, youth, and families by providing community members with one crisis number to call for mental health support for all.

System of Care Implementation

- DHHS has continued implementation of its Systems of Care, centering processes to improve access for children and families and for adults.
- The department's programs targeting youth have continued to improve access by operating an integrated phone line and intake process, and by pursuing

other process improvement projects; one outcome of the work has been an increase in dual enrollees across disabilities and mental health:

- During listening sessions, the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) staff identified that disabled children on the cusp of adulthood were at risk of losing benefits and were not being properly supported with transitional youth services. In 2023, the ADRC began working with local school districts in Milwaukee County and established active relationships with Transition Coordinators and has a goal of reaching 20% more children of color for the 2024 school year.
- The ADRC has been awarded the American Rescue Plan Act (ADRC) Independent Living Supports Pilot (ILSP) program funding which will serve 1,700 Milwaukee County residents. The program offers short-term, flexible and limited services and supports for people at risk of entering Medicaid long-term care. It will help improve people's ability to stay in their own homes, potentially easing the increased burden on Wisconsin's long-term care system as the population ages.
- A Community Intervention Specialist-Housing was hired in January 2023 to provide support for families impacted by community violence as part of advancing the No Wrong Door model to bridge the gap in services. The position is a partnership between Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) and Housing Services working collaboratively with partners involved in local violence reduction efforts, providing housing navigation and placement services. Families impacted by community violence are connected with education, employment, health and wellness, and caring connection resources. As a result, for just under \$14,000, 27 families were placed in safe and secure housing last year.
- DHHS has faced difficulties in recruiting for entry-level positions. The department maintains a higher vacancy rate in roles such as Human Service Worker and Crisis Clinician. Efforts are underway to explore adjustments to job descriptions, service models, and recruitment practices to address this challenge and improve retention.
- The department's contracted providers are encountering difficulties in recruiting staff, exacerbated by DHHS's limited capacity to raise rates in line with high inflation levels.

GOAL 3: Population Health and System Change

2023 Goal: DHHS is implementing transformative changes in Behavioral Health and Youth Justice, the culmination of years and decades of effort. Millions have been invested

in prevention and health promotion, achieved through effective partnerships across crucial service systems. Future challenges include ensuring funding sustainability for projects financed by ARPA.

Details:

System-Changing Transformations Coming to Fruition

- *Child Support Services Integrating in DHHS* - Throughout 2023, DHHS and Child Support Services (CSS) worked together to create greater alignment with the No Wrong Door philosophy focused on a strong family-centric approach to best serve children and families in our community. Effective January 1, 2024, CSS transitioned from a separate county department to a service area within DHHS.
- *Progress on Secure Residential Care Center for Children and Youth (SRCCCY)*– In the works for more than five years, plans are now in motion to develop a SRCCCY to ensure young people will be closer to home and in the care of DHHS’s Children, Youth, and Family Services (CYFS) rather than being placed in the state-run Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake facilities that are hours away from a youth’s support system.
- The SRCCCY will build a system of care that expands the current detention center allowing CYFS to have oversight of interventions and care. An additional benefit is proximity to community partners supporting youth.

Increased Prevention Programming, Including with ARPA Funds

ARPA funding is providing needed resources to bridge gaps in services, allowing DHHS to create innovative programming focused on prevention as well as addressing our community’s most pressing needs.

- DHHS is investing \$86 million in community health through 25 projects. 100% of DHHS’s non-administrative ARPA projects address social determinants of health, including everything from the economic stability that comes with being able to have food stamps matched when used at a local farmer’s market to improving neighborhoods by rehabbing foreclosed homes.
- Another \$3.7million is dedicated to community violence intervention and youth justice programming, with nearly \$1million impacting the 284-youth referred to the Credible Messenger Program. In August, the Credible Messenger Program expanded to include a “Response Team,” a coordinated effort to collaborate with the other Credible Messenger teams to respond to youth public safety situations. In addition, ARPA funds enabled the launch of the first Credible Messenger team to focus specifically on serving girls.

- In 2023, DHHS invested \$18 million in eight housing-related projects. Nineteen homes have been identified for rehabilitation, with eventual sale of the homes being prioritized for first-time homebuyers of low to moderate income. New affordable housing in the suburbs aims to create opportunities to end racial disparities in homeownership.
- DHHS also invested \$2.28 million in Aging and Disabilities Services (ADS), Behavioral Health Services (BHS), and administrative support in 2023. These projects are addressing gaps in behavioral health care, ensuring that projects are effectively implemented and helping Milwaukee County residents avoid losing Medicaid coverage during the period in which reenrollment is required.
- More than 200 professionals have been trained to help county residents navigate the reenrollment period, with a bus campaign and partnerships with community-based organizations to spread the message more broadly.

Primary Prevention/Health Promotion

Through a variety of funding sources, DHHS and the County Executive have invested in several high-visibility health promotion efforts related to health:

- *Placement of Harm Reduction Vending Machines* – Harm reduction is an evidence-based public health strategy to prevent death and lessen the negative consequences associated with substance use. In August 2023, DHHS announced the placement of 11 Harm Reduction Vending Machines to reduce injury and death from overdose at locations across the county, informed by data and need. The machines provide free access to harm reduction and prevention supplies, including fentanyl test strips, nasal naloxone, medication deactivation pouches, medication lock bags, and gun locks. DHHS has also launched the HarmReductionMKE.org webpage and will be placing eight more machines in 2024 to ensure people have access to overdose prevention supplies.
- *Better Ways to Cope* – BHS continues the awareness campaign to address substance use disorder called “Better Ways To Cope.” This multi-faceted campaign drives awareness around County-supported resources and community partners for substance abuse treatment and prevention. Through a competition internal to Milwaukee County, DHHS sponsored seven, three-year projects receive awards totaling \$10.3 million.
- When fully implemented, projects will have more than 15 contracts in place with community-based organizations to address the needs of youth, adults, and older adults in the of areas of prevention, education, harm reduction, treatment, homeless outreach, and medication-assisted treatment.
- *Birth to Three Early Start, Bright Future Program* – The Early Start, Bright

Future campaign ran from mid-March through the end of June and featured increased social media presence, classes to provide tips for parents and families, a celebration event at Milwaukee County Zoo, and summer events at parks throughout the county. Each of these places provided encouragement and educational and social opportunities for parents and their children. Some families went above and beyond as advocates for their children. Birth to 3 developed the Early Start, Bright Future Family Appreciation Award to honor the impact those families made on the entire program.

- *Aging and Disabilities Events* – The ADRC has been increasing education and outreach to the Milwaukee County community and has reached more than 66,000 individuals with information about its services—a 50% increase over last year.

Concerns About Sustainability of Prevention Programs

- Given that a significant portion of the prevention programs developed by DHHS relied upon one-time ARPA funds, there is concern about the department's capacity to maintain these programs beyond 2026. Strategies are being explored to evaluate program outcomes, disseminate their achievements, and identify alternative funding sources.

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

- *Sustained Commitment to Racial and Health Equity* – County leadership has maintained a steadfast vision for improving health outcomes and prioritizing racial and health equity, enabling long-term planning and execution. Additionally, the County Executive's unwavering and impactful public communication on racial equity bolsters DHHS advocacy efforts both internally and externally with partners.
- *Dedicated and Mission-Driven Team* – DHHS leaders are inspired by the dedication of their staff to support the County's most vulnerable residents, as well as their strong alignment with the mission and vision of promoting racial and health equity. This shared alignment fosters the generation of innovative ideas and facilitates changes that resonate with the department's overarching mission and vision.
- *Collaborative Efforts with Human Services Agencies and System Partners* – Recognizing that significant progress in healthcare necessitates collaboration, DHHS has forged robust partnerships within the Milwaukee County human

services system of care. While DHHS plays a significant role as a service provider and funder, program administrators understand the importance of working in concert with the City, State, healthcare entities, system partners, and contracted providers. These partnerships are essential for achieving DHHS's objectives of enhancing participant health and fostering community-wide well-being.

- *One-time Funding for Prevention and Innovation* – As highlighted throughout the document, the availability of one-time ARPA funds has enabled DHHS to allocate resources toward prevention efforts, pilot innovative ideas with potential long-term benefits, and strengthen its infrastructure.

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

- *Staff Shortages and Workforce Changes* – Similar to many employers, especially in healthcare and human services sectors, DHHS and its contracted agencies have encountered difficulties in fully staffing their programs. This challenge has impeded the department's responsiveness and the launch of new initiatives, while also increasing workloads for existing staff, potentially leading to burnout. Leaders are actively devising recruitment strategies and exploring ways to support staff during this period.
- *Community Health Post-COVID* – It is acknowledged that various indicators of community health, notably, public safety, mental health, and education, have declined since the onset of the pandemic. These repercussions pose significant barriers to the well-being of participants and the broader community.
- *Funding and Sustainability Challenges* – Although the one-time ARPA funds have provided remarkable opportunities for programs and innovation, there is growing concern regarding the sustainability of these initiatives beyond 2026. DHHS remains committed to measuring outcomes, engaging with the community, and advocating for funding to sustain evidence-based programs.
- *Funding Rates and Inflation Impact* – With inflation in 2023 surpassing levels seen in the previous decade, numerous DHHS programs are grappling with funding that lags. This poses a particular challenge for DHHS's contracted providers as the department has limited ability to increase rates. Several provider network partners have indicated difficulty sustaining their operations, leading some to discontinue or withdraw from programs.

5. What is the status of your Department/Office in developing its strategic plan? If complete, please upload your plan with this report.

- In November 2021, DHHS published its 2025 Future State in the [2020-2025 DHHS Strategic Plan: Creating Healthy Communities](#).
- In 2024, DHHS will develop its 2025-2027 strategic plan.

6. If not addressed in #5, what are your Department/Office goals for 2024?

FISCAL EFFECT

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

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director
David Muhammad, DHHS Deputy Director

PREPARED BY:

Alyssa Blom, DHHS Communications Manager

APPROVED BY:


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ATTACHMENTS:

2023 DHHS Annual Report Power Point

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Chair, Health Equity, Human Needs and Strategic Planning Committee
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 Director – County Clerk's Office
Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller's Office
Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Sr. Budget and Management Analyst, DAS