

County of San Diego
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Outcomes for Fiscal Year 2021-2022



12/21/2023



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Introduction

The County of San Diego (County) has reimagined the way we do business. In 2022, the General Management System (GMS) and Strategic Initiatives underwent a transformation and expansion of values with a continued commitment to integrity, excellence, and sustainability, and a new focus on equity, access, and belonging. Enterprise-wide, each County group and department operationalized these values through strategic and operational planning, evaluation and accountability, continuous collaboration, and employee investment and satisfaction with community engagement at the core of the work we do. This renewed framework supports our vision of *Live Well San Diego*.

The County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Child Welfare Services (CWS) Diversity and Inclusion Committee is comprised of staff across all programs and staffing levels who have a passion for creating a work culture that is diverse and equitable, as well as serving the community to ensure children and families are safe, healthy, and thriving. In 2022, the committee completed, recorded, and presented the outcomes of the challenging yet necessary work of addressing barriers and inequities for employees and the families we serve. The focus for this fiscal year's (FY) committee is quality over quantity supported by the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) goals framework. Four subcommittees are focusing on staffing, recruitment, retention, training, enhancing services to children, youth and families, establishing permanent connections, and partnerships with the legal system.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work supports our CWS Safety Enhanced Together (SET) practice framework and the six core values that guide our work within the community to ensure that every child grows up safe and nurtured. This practice supports the CWS value of recognition and appreciation of differences, as well as creating a workplace culture characterized by reflection, responsiveness, and shared responsibility. The six core values of SET are as follows:

- 1) Relationships With Children, Youth, and Families Are the Foundation
- 2) Collaborative Partnerships with Kinship and Resource Families
- 3) Helping Children and Youth Achieve Their Full Potential and Develop Lifelong Relationships
- 4) Shared Responsibility with Community Partners
- 5) A Strong Working Relationship with the Legal System
- 6) A Workplace Culture Characterized by Reflection, Appreciation, and Ongoing Learning

CWS strives to ensure equity in the wellbeing and strengthening of children and families. Accompanied by the community to co-create the Child and Family Well-Being department and leveraging the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) will continue to help guide the process while remaining open to possibilities. Recognizing the DEI work for FY 2020-21 was a first step in addressing historic systemic and structural racism that exists in large institutions. Ongoing efforts and goals for FY 2022-23 around diversity, equity and inclusion highlights are below.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Outcomes for Fiscal Year 2021-2022

Community Engagement

CWS is committed to creating an equitable impact guided by Safety Enhanced Together (SET) values. SET Value 4 guides us toward shared responsibility with community partners. We value the importance of building and maintaining trusting relationships with partners to support the priorities and values of this framework.



- CWS Community Outreach Liaison (COL):** In 2015, the creation of the COL position helped to develop trusting relationships with the community, community partners, and faith-based organizations to improve communication and collaboration. The COL increases cultural awareness and responsiveness of regional staff, community partners, and service providers through DEI and community engagement efforts. The impact creates greater access to available and diverse community resources that addresses core issues families face as they engage with the CWS department. Specific efforts include support of collaborative prevention workgroups, facilitation of mandated reporter training that is culturally responsive and addresses racial disproportionality, and consulting with staff on DEI efforts when working with diverse communities.

Community Outreach Liaison Engagement	FY2020-21	FY2021-22
Mandated Reporter Training	9	35
Community Meetings	54	117
Community Events/Education/Support	23	79
Central Region Staff Training/Support Cultural Responsiveness and Racial Disproportionality	53	38
Service Provider Training/Liaison	6	66
Foster Parent Training/Support	1	1

- Improved Support of Placement of Children with Relatives:** Kinship placement of youth is up by 5% from FY2021 to 40%. In FY2022, placement of African American/Black youth in kinship care increased from 20% to 29%, and since FY2019, there has been a 10% increase in youth placed with kin as a first placement to 16%.



- Improved Recruitment of Diverse Resource Families:** With a goal of increasing diverse resource homes to ensure children are comfortable and safe, CWS conducted an analysis of the racial and ethnic makeup of current Resource Family Approval homes and developed a specific recruitment plan to work with communities of color.

- The Foster and Adoptive Resource Family Services team coordinated 35 community recruitment events targeting LGBTQ+, special needs, African American/Black, Latina/o, faith partners, grandparents, and refugee families.

- **CWS Office of Equity:** The CWS Office of Equity coordinated BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Human Library that addressed unconscious bias and created a brave space cultivating a trauma-informed, compassionate, and empathetic workforce. Conducted roadshow for Faith in Motion partners, specifically six African American/Black churches in Southeastern San Diego for the recruitment and support of relative caregivers and resource/adoptive families.
- **Faith in Motion:** Faith in Motion is a collaboration between CWS and faith-based organizations driven by the need for youth in foster care to maintain or obtain safe and supportive relationships during the family reunification process and establish permanent, lifelong connections as they mature and thrive in their local communities. We have engaged over 30 faith partners.
- **Mandated Reporter/Community Supporter Trainings:** Mandated Reporter trainings were centralized in November 2020 in efforts to provide consistent and the most up-to-date information to the community and incorporate culturally responsive content. Monthly trainings and outreach for community agencies delivered since January 2021. Bi-monthly mandated reporter trainings occur virtually and are available to any community partner who is interested in attending. In addition to the standing training schedule, in-person and additional virtual trainings are available upon request. A centralized email inbox is available for ease of communication. For the FY 2021-22, 33 mandated reporter trainings were completed for our community partners.
- **Explore DEI Training for Caregivers:** The CWS Office of Equity has collaborated with the Grossmont Community College Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Care Education Program to bring the BIPOC Human Library workshop to resource families. A Human Library aims to address people's prejudices by helping them to talk to those they would not normally meet. It uses a library analogy of lending people rather than books.

- **Improve Recruitment and Retention for Caregivers of Color:** This effort ensures that kin or resource parents understand and respect cultural heritage and can care for children in foster care. Approximately 70% of the homes evaluated were relative/NREFM homes. With the implementation of Binti (Foster Care Software), collection of data on ethnicity is now possible; we will be tracking and measuring this data.

San Diego County Newly Approved RFA Homes FY 2021-22	
American Indian	1%
Asian	3%
Black	12%
Decline to State	3%
Hispanic Latinx	34%
Middle Eastern North African	0%
Multiple ethnicities identified	5%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1%
Other not listed	3%
Unable to determine	1%
White	38%

System Improvements

SET Value 1 guides us toward the foundation of the work that points to relationships with children, youth, and families. Using a systems design framework and approach, we can deconstruct historically inequitable policies and practices and move toward sustained process improvements.

- **Equity Impact Statements:** Equity impact statements inform legislators of the effects of policies on communities of color or other marginalized communities so that they can take steps to decrease disparities or avoid increasing disparities. The CWS Office of Equity has created Equity Impact Statements for Board Letters in partnership with Behavioral Health Services, Resource Family Approval, County Counsel, and the Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board. In support of a key Board priority: equity in the budget; the CWS Office of Equity provided evidence based justification to forecast the need as well as the equity impact anticipated for the Office of Financial Planning’s Five-Year Financial Forecast.

- Family Support Liaison Program (FSLP):** FSLP aims to reduce the disproportionate number of African American/Black children in the child welfare system by strengthening the relationship between CWS and families to create better environments and outcomes. This contract focuses on providing specialized assistance to San Diego families who represent distinctive cultural, ethnic, and linguistic populations. Families served by the FSLP link to available community, social supports, and other resources intended to increase family stability. Implemented in May 2021, the program expanded to North Regions in December 2021. Addressing the disproportionality of African American/Black children in CWS has been a continued priority and the program will begin working with African American/Black families countywide. This program will also be available to immigrant and refugee families in the future.

FSLP July 2021-June 2022	
Total Referrals	326
Total Enrollments	111
Family Closed Successfully	66
Prevention	96

- CWS LGBTQ+ Workgroup:** The CWS LGBTQ+ Workgroup was formed in 2015 to bring social workers and community partners together monthly to discuss and implement best practices to serve families with youth who identify as LGBTQ+ and support for colleagues who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. The workgroup strives to promote affirmation and inclusivity where all identities are respected and valued. In FY 2022, to support CWS social workers in their understanding and documentation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression, implementation of a training will take place in FY 2023. The workgroup also coordinated a LGBTQ+ Human Library workshop for newly hired and promoting social workers to address unconscious bias in both service delivery and workplace culture. Members of the workgroup were instrumental, as Subject Matter Experts, in developing curriculum for the Cultural Responsiveness Academy (CRA) LGBTQ+ Series launching in FY 2023-24 and expressed interest in facilitating classes.



- **Lived Experience Committee:** The Lived Experience Committee was founded and co-facilitated by a CWS staff member with lived experience. All classifications who self-identify as former foster youth, foster alumni, and adoptees convene. The committee reviews policies to ensure that the voice of the child and family are included and serves as a space to discuss strengths and challenges of unique experiences.
- **Community Services for Families (CSF) Parent Partner Meeting:** The CSF Parent Partner meeting occurs quarterly with Parent Partners who provide input on various policies, forms, and special projects as part of the Operational Review Committee process. CWS explains policies that would be important to know when working with parents, and CSF regions receive case coaching and debriefing about bias and transference. Most recently, Parent Partners have provided feedback on FFPSA and Court Report Policy. The next policy is Case Plans.
- **Fatherhood Champion Workgroup:** The Fatherhood Champion Workgroup began in Fall 2020 to identify trends and gaps in services for fathers involved with CWS. This helped with the development of the CRA for Fatherhood Engagement. CRA graduates participate in the committee to continue to advocate for the disproportionality of services toward fathers. The workgroup consists of participants from community based organizations such as POPS, Father2Child, Dads Corps, Vista Community Clinic, Jewish Family Services as well as CWS staff and Child Welfare Development Services.
- **CWS Chief of Social Work Practice:** The Chiefs support DEI efforts by
 - Centering cultural considerations in consultations and Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings
 - Identifying and working through barriers for relative/nonrelative extended family members (NERFM) placement
 - Conducting referral/case reviews with a cultural lens
 - Addressing systems-related challenges and working to increase access to services for youth with complex care needs
 - Strengthening collaborative connections with the Tribal community, Family Support Liaisons serving the African American/Black Community, and interfacing with supports/services serving the LGBTQ+ community

- **African American Leadership Caucus (AALC):** The AALC's goals align with CWS SET Values and their accomplishments include hosting listening sessions for CWS staff who are also caregivers, attending Restorative Practice Circles and retention meetings, serving as African American mentors, conducting presentations for SWIT, collaboration with African American community organizations, participating in community events, presenting to the legal system, serving as members of the Race & Equity Subcommittee, and re-energizing Faith In Motion.
- **Community Response Guide:** CWS collaborated with Casey Family Programs/Evident Change in developing a way to support anyone who is trying to decide if they should call CWS, whether they are mandated reporters or not. It also offers a new way for the community to support families who do not need CWS intervention. The development process contains five stages; we are currently in stage two of the process. At this stage, we are reviewing statutes, policies, practices, and experience through surveys, focus groups, and data analysis in addition to a community service review.
- **Racial Equity Pre-Removal Tool:** A Racial Equity Pre-Removal Tool is an instrument that can help to uncover routine, often hidden and unintentional, inequitable opportunities and outcomes based on how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. It minimizes adverse consequences in policy, protocol, processes, practice, programs, and plans. This tool can be a vital pivotal point for disrupting systemic racism and historical inequities. It is best to use this tool during the decision-making process, prior to enacting removal. The tool is included in the Operational Review Committee process.
- **Increase Family Finding Efforts:** San Diego County is proposing to utilize identified funding allotted through Excellence in Family Finding dedicated to Family Finders. In addition, the County has also designated funding for subscribing to the paid version of White Pages for better search efforts.
- **Ensure Policies, Contracts and Programs are assessed for Bias and Racial Impact:** The Office of Equity served on five Source Selection Committees, which performs impartial, objective, and comprehensive evaluation of proposals submitted to the county seeking to be awarded a contract. In addition, 20 CWS policies were reviewed, and there is representation on the Child and Family Well-Being Community & Stakeholder Engagement Sub-Team to ensure a racial equity lens and provide recommendations to reduce disproportionality and disparities for families.

Staff Development

SET Value 6 enhances and fosters a workplace culture characterized by reflection, appreciation, and ongoing learning. We are a learning organization that values the wellbeing of staff at all levels. We value authentic, strength-based leadership that builds engagement and shared accountability.

- **Leadership Summit:** Quarterly Leadership Summits have begun to include discussions of race, equity, and disproportionality. The 2022 Leadership Summit's theme focused on staff retention addressing Workforce Development Training, Advanced Training Units, DEI, Behavioral Health team, Coaching, and Components for Effecting Clinician Experience and Reducing Trauma.
- **360° Evaluations:** 360° assessments improve transparency and communication by gathering comments and feedback addressing leadership behavior, performance, and progress in the past year. Pilot included evaluations for Director, Assistant Director, Deputy Director, Chief, and Manager. Seven-hundred and fifty-three invitations disseminated and 78% were completed. Leaders scored highest in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Average score 4.7/5.
- **Mentoring Program:** In 2021, CWS created the CWS Mentorship Program. The program provides opportunities for CWS staff to learn about different jobs, career paths, and educational opportunities available in CWS from experienced staff. A diverse group of CWS volunteer mentors representing various ethnicities and job classifications mentored others. Staff interested in participating in the program submitted mentee applications to be matched with staff that best met their interests, as well as if they wanted a cultural match. Twenty-seven mentors matched with 27 mentees, who participated in the first cohort. The program lasted six months and evaluation of effectiveness was assessed through a grant partnership with the University of California San Diego (UCSD). All staff who completed the evaluation said that they would recommend the program. The second cohort expanded to a 12-month commitment based on feedback. After the application and matching process, 30 mentors paired with 41 mentees, with all cultural matching requests fulfilled. UCSD will evaluate.



- **DEI Updates with Director/CWS Office of Equity:** DEI updates are monthly sessions focused on topics such as Compassionate Leadership, Trauma Informed Care Practice, and Brave Spaces.
 - 12 sessions: 514 attendees
- **Race & Equity Listening Sessions:** Bi-annual listening sessions with the CWS Director engage staff in DEI discussions across the child welfare system.
 - 7 sessions: 345 attendees
- **Focused DEI Training:** Some training areas of need are historical trauma, intersectionality, and micro-aggressions. Frontline, Foster Care Eligibility, Resource Family Approval, and Polinsky Children’s Center staff will be encouraged to participate to better understand and value cultural differences.
 - “Spare the Rod, Spoil the Child: Abuse vs. Discipline within the context of African American/Black History & Culture”; a training created to look at African American/Black child rearing practices through the lens of African American/Black History was facilitated in April 2022.

Recruitment and Retention

SET Value 3 guides us to help children and youth achieve their full potential and develop lifelong relationships. We are committed to recruiting and retaining a workforce that will enhance the well-being of children/youth and help them to identify and develop meaningful relationships and connections in their communities.

- **Develop Recruitment Plan to Increase the Diversity of the Workforce:**
 - Completed social worker recruitment brochure and distributed to all regions/programs used at a variety of community events, CWS presentations and job fairs.
 - Collaborated with HR at a career fair held at San Diego State University (SDSU) for the Latina Success Conference.
 - Fostering Academic Success in Education (FASE) staff connected with MANA de San Diego to create opportunities for mentorships and internships for FASE students.
- **Introduction of DEI to Bachelor of Social Work/Master of Social Work Title IV-E Students, Social Worker Initial Training (SWIT), Interns and Field Instructors:** CWS Office of Equity provides meet and greets at SDSU and SWIT to provide DEI framework and initiatives prior to hiring and placement in the regions.

- **Collaborate with Universities to Recruit Native American and African American/Black students from the Title IV-E Programs:** CWS develops strategies with university partners to recruit and retain a workforce that understands race, equity and bias to provide family-centered services.

- Establish Speakers Bureau for communities in collaboration with university partners.
- University partners provide lunch and learn events at various County offices.
- Collaborate with and engage five Historically Black Colleges and Universities with online Master of Social Work programs.



- **Retention of CWS Staff:** Exit Interviews help address some of the barriers that are preventing staff from committing to CWS as an ongoing profession.
 - The Exit Interview Pilot launched March 2022 for PSW level staff. An Exit Interview is a voluntary process to seek anonymous input about reasons for leaving CWS due to resignation, transfer, or retirement. Focus areas include quality supervision, workload, training/hiring, remote work, and mental health/secondary traumatic stress.

DEI Goals FY 2022-23

Leadership values the feedback from the CWS DEI Workgroup and Sub-committees regarding items for impact during the fiscal year. Recruitment efforts to form this workgroup included an all-hands-on deck approach to engage staff at all levels to leverage their personal and professional contributions. The workgroup convenes monthly to report out on updates from the sub-committees comprised of staff, community partners, and individuals with lived expertise. The following subcommittees listed below are for the next fiscal year:

Staffing

- **PSW Role Clarity:** The subcommittee provided recommendations to update the job description and classification information. This will help potential applicants have a better understanding of what the role entails including exposure to uncertain, unpredictable, and emotionally charged conditions when interacting with families whose responses could be anger, fear and/or confusion. The role requires the ability to communicate effectively with a variety of individuals representing diverse cultures and backgrounds and function calmly and effectively in situations that require a high degree of sensitivity, tact, and diplomacy.

Enhancing Services for Children, Youth and Families in San Diego

- **Cultural Survey:** The H.E.A.R.T. survey outlines ideas, behaviors and actions that lead to exceptional customer service to offer best-in-nation customer experiences and results. Planning to develop or modify H.E.A.R.T. survey to gain feedback from families and youth about their experience working with CWS, if we honored their culture, and recommendations for improvement of DEI focused services.
- **DEI Contracted Services:** The subcommittee collaborated with a Contracting Officer's Representative to help ensure the Source Selection process places importance on DEI alignment of services.
- **Race and Ethnicity Data:** The subcommittee seeks to determine strategic inquiries of families and enhance understanding of the demographic served by evaluating how race and ethnicity data is captured. In addition, leverage the ability to track services offered and completed.
- **Resources Section for Newsletter:** The subcommittee will add a section on resources to the CWS staff newsletter; for example: in the month of May, which is military appreciation month, provide resources for military families.

Establishing Permanent Connections

- **Permanency Liaisons:** Permanency Liaisons will identify trends and barriers for youth who do not have a permanent plan of adoption or legal guardianship and make recommendations to improve Agency permanency outcomes for African American/Black youth. DEI Subcommittee for "Permanency and Long-Stayers;" Extensive Relative Search/Family Finding Efforts; Ongoing Permanency Round Tables CWS-wide; Permanency Liaisons in Placement Units.
- **Ancestral DNA Testing:** The subcommittee seeks to coordinate the implementation of offering ancestral DNA testing to Non-Minor Dependents in Extended Foster Care/Polinsky Children's Center/San Pasqual Academy to create cultural connections. Youth attend a consult prior to their 18th birthday to determine interest in utilizing ancestral DNA testing to gain cultural knowledge. Steps include provide a DNA testing kit, walk-through of instructions, support for youth to process results, and set up of next steps in linking youth to cultural heritage and potential familial connections.

Partnering With the Legal System

- **Equitable Access to Legal Services:** This action will support the increase of the courts understanding of family circumstances, challenges, barriers, and issues of equitable access to legal and adjunct services.
- **Access to Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) Immigration Legal Services:** The subcommittee recommends that CWS advocate for SIJS immigration legal services, which is currently not available, causing a delay in permanency for many youths.
- **Access to Language Translation:** The subcommittee recommends that CWS provide additional support for language translation challenges for attorney appointment with specific languages. Address delay in coordination and availability to consult with attorneys outside of hearings.
- **Accessibility Barriers to Court Attendance:** The subcommittee recommends increased accessibility for working families who are experiencing financial challenges to attend court. Other factors to consider, transportation and childcare barriers, also impacts service participation.



Accountability

The use of data can be a powerful predictor of outcomes, as well as a tool to inform future decision-making. As a learning organization, CWS understands the limitations of quantitative data to improve our work and recognizes the value of qualitative data to enhance effectiveness of impact.

The focus on DEI is to improve the entire child welfare system, with some specific outcomes in mind. While there are many areas of focus, some improvements are qualitative and shifts may occur over time. Below are measures that were chosen for year one of implementation of the CWS DEI strategic plan. Future goals and outcomes take shape in conjunction with community leaders.

1. INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF STAFF OF COLOR IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS WITHIN CWS

- The percentage of staff of color in leadership positions increased from 62% to 65% from July 2021 to July 2022.

Ethnicity of staff in leadership* position	July 1, 2021		July 1, 2022	
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	2%	1	2%
Asian	7	15%	6	14%
African American/Black	8	17%	9	21%
Hispanic/Latino	13	28%	12	28%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%
White	18	38%	15	35%
Total	47		43	

*Leadership positions include Director, Assistant Directors, Deputy Directors, Chiefs, Health Planning & Program Specialists, Human Services Operations Managers and Protective Services Program Managers

2. REDUCE DISPROPORTIONALITY BY REDUCING THE PERCENTAGE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE

- From June 2021 to June 2022 the percentage of African American/Black children entering Foster Care changed from 16% to 17%.

Ethnicity of children entering Foster Care	JUL 2020-JUN 2021		JUL 2021-JUN 2022	
Black	131	16%	138	17%
White	231	28%	251	32%
Latino	412	51%	383	48%
Asian/Pacific Islander	25	3%	16	2%
Native American	10	1%	5	0.6%
Unknown	3	0.4%	3	0.4%
Total	812		796	

Source: California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP). Includes first entries in care for more than eight days (Age 0 -17)

3. INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF ALL CHILDREN PLACED WITH KIN BY 5%

- The percentage of kin placements increased from 37.8% to 42.6% from July 1, 2021 to July 1, 2022, an increase of 4.8%. Kin placement is placement with a relative or a close non-family member.

4. INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK CHILDREN PLACED WITH KIN BY 5%

- There was an increase of 6.7% for African American/Black children placed with kin from 29.1% to 35.8% from July 1, 2021 to July 1, 2022.

5. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CAREGIVERS OF COLOR BY 5%

- The number of caregivers decreased from 2238 to 2155 (4%) from July 1, 2021 to July 1, 2022.
- There was only a 1% decrease among caregivers of color during that time period.