

Diversion First Cross-Systems Initiative Calendar Year 2024 Equity Impact Plan



Leadership Sponsor: Lisa Potter

Name: Diversion First

Brief Description of the Initiative: Diversion First offers alternatives to incarceration for people with mental illness, substance use disorders and/or developmental disabilities, who come into contact with the criminal justice system, mostly for low level offenses. This countywide initiative provides a continuum of services and programs designed to meet the needs of this population at various intervention points, with the goal providing assessment, treatment and needed supports. Diversion First is designed to prevent repeat encounters with the criminal justice system, improve public safety and promote a healthier community. This effort involves strong collaboration across multiple agencies, including health and human services, public safety and the courts.

Context:

Those served through Diversion First are historically marginalized populations, including people with mental illness, substance use disorders and/or developmental disabilities, and people with a history of justice involvement.

Behavioral Health Equity is the right to access quality health care for all populations regardless of the individual's race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or geographical location. This includes access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services for mental and substance use disorders (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Jun 10, 2021). Individuals in these population often have disparate access to quality behavioral health services, and disproportionate representation in the justice system.

Nationally, people with mental illness are significantly over-represented in the justice system and are 9 times more likely to be incarcerated than hospitalized. Individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) who are in the criminal justice system tend to have longer jail stays and higher recidivism rates than people without SMI. Additionally, incarceration can worsen mental health, highlighting the need to prevent individuals with severe mental illness from being incarcerated whenever possible, and to connect individuals who were formerly incarcerated to behavioral health care to avoid future justice involvement. While the percentage of individuals with behavioral health issues who are incarcerated varies, Fairfax County saw a 21% decrease in the jail behavioral health population with misdemeanor charges from 2015 to 2022.

Many people who need behavioral health care are not aware of services or how to access them, and/or may not access services due to stigma. Increased awareness and community engagement are needed to reduce stigma and increase access to care.

In addition, it is often challenging to gather and analyze cross-system data. To provide the most effective and efficient services, it is vital to have a clear understanding of who is accessing services, disparities and gaps in programming and outcomes.

Key Stakeholders:

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board	Diversion First Leadership Group
Fairfax County Police Department	Diversion First Stakeholders Group
Sheriff's Office	
Fire and Rescue Dept.	
Dept. of Public Safety Communications	
Court Services	
General District Court	
Circuit Court	
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court	
Department of Housing	
Public Defenders Office	
Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney	
Office of the County Attorney	
Department of Information Technology	
Office of Public Affairs	
Department of Housing and Community Development	

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Goal 1: Review and analyze Diversion First data for equity and to identify disparities.

Key Equity Driver(s): Community Safety and Justice; Community Health and Wellbeing

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus:

6. Community and public safety that includes services such as fire, emergency medical services, police, health, emergency management and code enforcement that are responsive to all residents so that everyone feels safe to live, work, learn, and play in any neighborhood of Fairfax County.

10. A health and human services system where opportunities exist for all individuals and families to be safe, be healthy and realize their potential through the provision of accessible, high quality, affordable and culturally appropriate services.

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Healthy Communities; Safety and Security (SS); Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability (ESRFV)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy ESRFV 4. Use all available sources of data to identify and understand emerging and existing vulnerabilities in order to proactively engage impacted residents, identify service gaps and efficiently allocate resources.

ESRFV 6. Implement a standardized, coordinated approach to data collection and sharing among county agencies and contracted service providers that incorporates best practices for data governance.

SS 5. Bolster programs and resources that reduce recidivism and support successful offender re-entry programs into the community

Actions	Stakeholders	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
1a. Disaggregate Diversion First data across programs to determine potential disparities among populations served (including those diverted from potential arrest) and enhance efforts to decrease missing demographics.	Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, Fairfax County Police Dept, Sheriff’s Office, Dept. Public Safety Communications, Fire and Rescue, Courts	Diversion First Data and Evaluation Manager	2024	Data disaggregated and analyzed; # of program reports analyzed; decrease percentage of missing demographics.
1b. Review data in Data Quality and Outcomes Workgroup.	Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, Fairfax County Police Dept, Sheriff’s Office, Dept. Public Safety Communications, Fire and Rescue, Courts	Data Quality and Outcomes Group	2024	Data is reviewed and shared; # of meetings where data is reviewed.
1d. Identify opportunities to review data for specific services and programs to help inform equity practices and areas in need of improvement.	Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, Fairfax County Police Dept, Sheriff’s Office, Dept. Public Safety Communications, Fire and Rescue, Courts	Data Quality and Outcomes Group	2024	Inventory program data collected and review ability to analyze with an equity lens
1e. Continue work on processes for cross-system data for program evaluation, equity review and quality improvement.	Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, Fairfax County Police Dept, Sheriff’s Office, Dept. Public Safety Communications, Fire and Rescue, Courts	Diversion First partners, to include Department of Information Technology	2024	Increased and enhanced processes for cross-system data collection and enhanced capacity for analysis.

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Goal 2: Enhance engagement of Diversion First Stakeholders and continue to build connections with underrepresented populations and communities.

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Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy ESRFV 1. Develop targeted marketing and outreach strategies, in coordination with community-based partners, to proactively engage residents facing vulnerability.

ESRFV 10. Build upon the existing framework and county agency cross-collaboration efforts in order to ensure a comprehensive system that connects residents facing vulnerability to the information and services they are seeking regardless of which organizational door they enter.

Actions	Stakeholders	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
2a. Amplify efforts to engage various groups/populations that are reflective of individuals and families served through Diversion First and are representative of the community.	Diversion First partners, Community	Diversion First partner agencies, Director of Diversion Initiatives	2024	Outreach and engagement, to include community organizations and people with lived experience and their families
2b. Increase opportunities to seek feedback from people served through Diversion First programs and services.	Diversion First partners, Individuals served	Diversion First services	2024	Quantify through surveys, interviews, and input from individuals served
2c. Promote community presentations, stakeholder groups and other opportunities for community involvement.	Diversion First partners, Community	Diversion First partner agencies	2024	Increased involvement/participation in stakeholder events
2d. Increase awareness of programs, services and access points for diversion services.	Diversion First partners, Community	Diversion First partner agencies	2024	# of media/social media posts, brochures, articles developed

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Goal 3: Promote cross-system awareness and build capacity to consider equity in planning and decision making.

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Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Healthy Communities; Safety and Security (SS); Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy SS 14. Work collaboratively to increase access to services and identify alternatives to adjudication and incarceration (e.g., diversion programs, specialty dockets) while protecting victims' and witnesses' rights.

Actions	Stakeholders	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
3a. Increase capacity of Diversion First partners to consider equity across the system through increased data review and quality improvement efforts in cross-system workgroups.	Diversion First partners agencies	Director of Diversion Initiatives Diversion First partner agencies	2024	Increased focus on equity in team meetings and workgroups.
3b. Increase coordination related to Diversion First partner agencies and equity plans to enhance opportunities and alignment.	Diversion First partners agencies	Director of Diversion Initiatives	2024	Coordinated efforts with partner agencies and enhanced alignment.
3c. Identify trainings, webinars, best practice briefs and communities of practice related to equity in the intersection of behavioral health and justice.	Diversion First partners agencies	Director of Diversion Initiatives	2024	# of trainings, webinars, best practice briefs/documents shared with partners.
3d. Explore GIS mapping to determine needs for programming disadvantaged or underrepresented areas of the County.	Diversion First partners agencies	Data Analytics Team	2024-2025	Mapping is more consistently used as a tool for program planning and expansion.