



RACIAL EQUITY BUDGET TOOL

Date Submitted: 7/14/20

Department: Child Support Services (CSS)

Please note: each response field below has a 2,500 character limit.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE CATEGORY 1: DIVERSE & INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

What activities are you doing to attract and retain a diverse and inclusive workforce in your department? What are the associated costs of these activities?

The CSS staff as of January 2020 self-identified as 52% African American, 6% Hispanic, 3% Asian American, .5% Native American, .5% two or more races, and 39% white.

To attract a diverse field of applicants, we have focused on reaching out to our contacts and organizations throughout the city (e.g. the Wisconsin Black Lawyers Association and the Hispanic Lawyers Association) to let them know when there is an opening. We have also reviewed our job requirements to make sure we are not unnecessarily limiting certain applicants from getting through the HR process to the interview (e.g. eliminating the requirement to have a driver's license when possible). This JEQ review will continue for each opening as it arises.

Retention can be difficult because of the pay scale, particularly with Attorneys. The Family Court Commissioner's Office has hired CSS Attorneys for 5 out of 7 of their most recent openings. Additionally, the Clerk of Court frequently hires CSS paralegals for their Clerk positions. However, we view this as a win because it populates the Court system with Commissioners and Clerks who understand CSS.

Our retention efforts have been focused on involving CSS 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 weekly leadership and unit meetings. This has been particularly important during the health crisis with 80% of our employees telecommuting, all our court hearings being held by phone/ZOOM and the resulting changes to all our work processes. Communicating about and involving employees in all these changes has been essential.

Additionally, the CSS "Unity Committee" works to involve our office in a variety of activities from Black History month celebrations to fundraising for the Hunger Task Force and Toys for Tots.

The associated cost of all these activities is management time and employee time.



How do you use professional development and advancement opportunities to advance equity in your department's workforce? What resources are used to support these opportunities for professional development and advancement?

In addition to the county provided training through LMS, we have sent several of our leaders to the Management Development program and Leadership Excellence Academy offered by the County.

As members of Wisconsin Child Support Enforcement Association (WCSEA) and the National Association, we send employees to State and National training and leadership programs and get involved in leadership roles in these organizations.

The Department of Children and Families also provides multiple in person and distance learning opportunities for staff.

In 2019, we formalized our Org chart and sent it to all staff so they could get an understanding of all the different areas in CSS and opportunities that may exist. We also hold bimonthly in person trainings for our staff so that they can better understand other areas of CSS and possible areas of interest.

Part of our annual review process with all staff involves a discussion of interest, goals and training opportunities.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE CATEGORY 2: PEOPLE-FOCUSED DESIGN

How and when have service users, particularly users of color, and other key stakeholders been engaged to inform decisions about your requested budget (Who was involved, what was the forum, what were the results)?

We receive a lot of direct feedback from child support participants (through walk ins, our call center, emails, court hearings, and outreach events). We also work closely with the Milwaukee Justice Center and the Clerk of Court. We also tried to gather feedback via a focus group opportunity for participants in 2020 but it did not go through for a variety of reasons. We intend to try again in 2021.

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families estimates Milwaukee County's caseload population to be 2/3 or more African American and Hispanic. CSS has an interesting role because we represent the State in Family court cases and cannot provide legal advice to either participant. However, it is also essential that we help participants understand the processes and procedures and comply with any court orders.

The feedback we have received from participants tells us that they need help understanding and navigating the system. This is essentially a Procedural Justice issue. For this reason we spend a great deal of time on the following projects:

1. Outreach programs (Child Support in Your Neighborhood)
2. Investigating and Applying for Grants for Fatherhood/Parenting/Job Search programs. (The target population for our Pathways Grant is low income African American fathers)
3. Mediation and other outreach programs through the Milwaukee Justice Center and the Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinics.
4. Working with the Court and the Milwaukee Justice Center to streamline processes for self represented litigants.

When making budget decisions this year, we had to choose whether to defund internal positions or defund our DA Investigator program. The DA Investigator program helps with investigations into high profile cases where significant funds may be involved. Our internal positions are more front line roles. These employees work at the front desk, answer questions by phone and email and work on cases. Since we currently have over 800 cases per CSS employee, we decided that internal positions were more important to the majority of participants. These front line workers help participants get their questions answered.



What are the multi-lingual needs of your department's service users? How do you use your budget to meet these language needs?

We use LanguageLine solutions to communicate with participants. This allows us to communicate with participants speaking 14 different languages. Because it is a phone service, it is very efficient. We also have several bi-lingual CSS staff that interpret when necessary.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE CATEGORY 3: EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

Our employees can be a great resource for innovation and knowing what is working well and what needs work. Have you engaged a diverse group of frontline employees to inform decisions about your proposed budget changes? If yes, how was input solicited, who was involved, and what were the results?

In addition to looking at feedback from county surveys, we do internal surveys on issues that affect our employees. For example, when the DNC Convention was going to make working out of the Courthouse difficult, we surveyed all our employees regarding their transportation options and concerns to determine whether we could temporarily locate elsewhere. We also use our annual goal setting process to discuss possible changes.

The last four months has been a period of great change in our internal processes and procedures. We have used our weekly teams and leadership meetings to get directly engage our employees on what is working, what is not and any new processes that should be tried.

We have also specifically engaged our Racial Equity Ambassadors in discussions about our department culture and any changes.



Describe ways in which racial and economic data was used to prioritize resource distribution. (Data can include sources found in the resources section of this tool, department collected data, or any other relevant data from other sources.)

CSS uses Census data, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families data and OCSE data to determine who and where our participants are located and how to best serve them.

This has led us to create the Child Support in Your Neighborhood outreach program, the Parenting Conference program with the MJC and various educational materials to help parents understand the process. It has also led us to apply for the Federal FIRE grant to provide services to primarily low-income and non-custodial fathers in Milwaukee.



What are the positive or negative racial equity implications of your proposed budget changes? For reference departments may refer to the “Form 1 – Major Changes” tab of your Supplemental Forms 2021 spreadsheet. Any change with identified impacts should be described.

Because of the disadvantaged communities we serve, any cuts in services have negative racial equity implications. As discussed below, we made our decisions based on which cuts would have the least overall effect and maximize available staff and services to the families we serve.

What are the expected benefits and potential unintended consequences to disadvantaged communities of your proposed budget changes?

a. What analysis did you do to determine the expected benefits and potential unintended consequences?

We focused on cutting the services that would have the least overall effect. For example, cutting our DA Investigators will make it more difficult to prosecute felony non-support cases and to work on the high profile cases involving individuals hiding income. We chose to do this instead of cutting additional front line positions that serve the majority of child support participants. We also eliminated our SCIP incentive program. Although this program was a benefit to our employees, we prioritized keeping other positions that could maximize service to participants.

b. What will your department do to mitigate unintended consequences resulting from your proposed budget changes?

We have taken the opportunity of remote work to streamline our operations and use all of our electronic resources. Once we have adjusted to these new processes, it should free up labor time (e.g. scanning documents) and reallocate more time to service our cases and answer participants questions.

Additionally, our loss of DA Investigators will put our Attorneys in the position of doing more financial investigations.