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Albany County, New York

2020–2025 EQUITY AGENDA STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT

Prepared by The Center for Human Services Research



CENTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University of New York

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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the Equity Agenda Strategic Planning report for Albany County, New York. The initial phase of this project established an Equity Planning Group (EPG) comprised of County department representatives, hosted listening and learning sessions and group discussions with the County departments, analyzed County government workforce demographics, and interviewed employment agencies. The second phase of the project, detailed here, developed countywide strategic components and priority areas as well as goals and objectives for participating County departments.

Moving forward, the Equity Agenda Coordinator within the Albany County Department of Human Resources will continue working with the County departments to continuously refine the Equity Strategic Plan, including its successful implementation. We recommend engaging with the community at large for their input regarding the inequities they experience and their feedback to inform and improve the plan as needed. Additionally, developing strategic planning benchmarks and metrics, as well as establishing a coordinated monitoring system, is critical for the successful implementation of this strategic plan. Finally, budget allocation and objectives are needed.

Acronyms

| | |
|--------------|---|
| ACDFA | , Albany County Department for Aging |
| ACDMH | , Albany County Department of Mental Health |
| ACDOH | , Albany County Department of Health |
| ADA | , Americans with Disability Act |
| CASSP | , Child and Adolescent Service System Program |
| CDL | , Commercial Driver's License |
| CDTA | , Capital District Transportation Authority |
| CHSR | , Center for Human Services Research |
| CIT | , Crisis Intervention Team |
| CNA | , Certified Nursing Assistant |
| DA | , District Attorney |
| DCYF | , Department for Children, Youth & Families |
| DPW | , Department of Public Works |
| DSS | , Department of Social Services |
| EPG | , Equity Planning Group |
| HR | , Human Resources |
| LEAD | , Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion |
| LPN | , Licensed Practical Nurse |
| MAT | , Medication-Assisted Treatment |
| NYS | , New York State |
| PD | , Public Defender |
| RFB | , Request for Bid |
| RFP | , Request for Proposal |
| SIM | , Sequential Intercept Model |
| SNAP | , Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program |
| SUNY | , State University of New York |
| VMMSG | , Vision, Mission, Services, and Goals Dashboard Public Health Performance Management System |

Introduction

The Albany County Equity Agenda Strategic Plan grew out of a study of Albany County Human Services departments conducted by the Center for Human Services Research (CHSR) at the University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY) in January 2016. The study revealed that, while some County departments have begun to recognize and address issues of equity, there was a general lack of understanding of equity issues and minimal planning to enhance equity within the County. The feedback obtained from the County departments that participated in the study set the stage to involve additional departments in the development of a countywide equity strategic plan.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING AN EQUITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Governmental bodies play a significant role in creating and maintaining disparities in service provision, economic investment, education outcomes, and many other areas of people's lives. Current inequities can be attributed to and are sustained by historical systemic and structural practices and policies that perpetuate patterns of exclusion.¹ The government can, therefore, play a critical role in addressing these inequities by promoting and facilitating equitable policies and practices.²

Definitions of Key Terms

Diversity For both phases of this project, the definition of diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, Albany County embraces a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance, and political affiliation. Our definition also includes diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values.³ Affirming diversity is the active rejection of stereotypes and bigotry based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, ability, or lifestyle.

Equity To achieve our goal of preserving a diverse community that promotes equity, Albany County has defined equity as the state where all people are able to achieve their full potential in life. It includes the systematic fair and just treatment of all people, where factors such as racial-ethnic background, national origin, gender, sexual identity and gender expression, disability, age, religious affiliation, and place of residence do not determine outcomes in people's lives.⁴

Inclusion Understanding that diversity, equity, and inclusion are associated concepts, the Albany County Equity Agenda Strategic Plan has defined inclusion as the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate in programs, services, and civic life. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.⁵

¹ Government Alliance on Race & Equity. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/about/our-approach/government/>

² Center for Human Services Research (CHSR), University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY). (2018). Albany County Equity Agenda: Data Findings/Report.

³ UC Berkeley Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, Glossary of Terms. Retrieved from <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary#diversity>

⁴ The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2014). Race equity and inclusion action guide: Baltimore, MD. Retrieved from https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF_EmbracingEquity7Steps-2014.pdf

⁵ Kapila, M., Hines, E., Searby, M. (2016). Why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Matter. The Independent Sector. Retrieved from <https://independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/>

| | |
|---|---|
| Implicit Bias | Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. |
| Adverse Childhood Experiences | Adverse childhood experiences are potentially traumatic events that can have negative lasting effects on health and wellbeing. |
| Disproportionate Minority Representation | Disproportionality occurs when a particular racial or ethnic minority group's involvement with a system is significantly higher or lower than that group's representation in the general population. |
| Bridges Out of Poverty | Bridges Out of Poverty ⁶ is a specific training curriculum that uses the lens of economic class and provides concrete tools and strategies for a community to alleviate poverty based on hidden rules of class, resources, family structure or language. |

Albany County Demographics

According to the 2017 American Community Survey⁷ five-year estimates, the Albany County population was 308,580 in 2017, an increase of 1.44% compared to the 2010 census. Current estimates indicate that Albany County has fewer males (48.4%) than females (51.6%), a consistent trend in the last eight years. Other Albany County population characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Albany County Demographic Information

| Population Characteristics | Population | Percentage |
|---|------------|------------|
| Total of Population (2013-2017 ¹) | 308,580 | 100% |
| Female | 159,293 | 51.6% |
| Male | 149,287 | 48.4% |
| Total of Population (2010 Census ²) | 304,208 | 100% |
| Female | 157,128 | 51.7% |
| Male | 147,076 | 48.3% |
| Population Percent Change | + 4372 | 1.44% |
| Employment Status (16 years and over ¹) | 257,424 | |
| In labor force | 168,098 | 65.3% |
| Not in labor force | 82,326 | 34.7% |
| Households ¹ | 125,376 | |
| Median Household Income ¹ | 62,293 | N/A |
| Poverty Rate ¹ | 36,325 | 12.4% |
| Children under 5 years ¹ | 15,646 | 5.1% |
| Children under 18 years ¹ | 58,158 | 18.8% |
| Adults 65 years and over ¹ | 48,135 | 15.6% |
| Female | 27,768 | 57.7% |
| Male | 20,367 | 42.3% |
| Speak a Language other than English ¹ | 37,145 | 12.7% |
| Speak English with limited proficiency | 12,567 | 4.3% |

Sources:

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

⁶ Payne, R.K., DeVol, P.E., Smith, T.D. (2006). Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Albany County population data reflect a somewhat racially and ethnically diverse population. The population is comprised primarily of White alone (not Hispanic or Latino) individuals (76.0% in 2010 and 73.0% in 2017). Black or African American alone (not Hispanic or Latino) individuals are the largest minority group in the County (12.0% in 2010 and 11.7% in 2017). Hispanic or Latino (of any race) and Asian alone (not Hispanic or Latino) are the minority groups with the largest population increase between 2010 and 2017 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Albany County Population by Race and Ethnicity Comparison

| Race | 2017 ¹ | | 2010 ² | |
|---|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| | # | % | # | % |
| White alone (not Hispanic or Latino) | 225,210 | 73.0% | 231,152 | 76.0% |
| Black or African American alone (not Hispanic or Latino) | 35,996 | 11.7% | 36,396 | 12.0% |
| Hispanic or Latino (of any race) | 17,534 | 5.7% | 14,917 | 4.9% |
| American Indian and Alaska Native alone (not Hispanic or Latino) | 310 | 0.1% | 453 | 0.1% |
| Asian alone (not Hispanic or Latino) | 19,734 | 6.4% | 14,500 | 4.8% |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone (not Hispanic or Latino) | 118 | 0.0% | 88 | 0.0% |
| Some other race alone (not Hispanic or Latino) | 429 | 0.1% | 569 | 0.2% |
| Two or more races alone (not Hispanic or Latino) | 9,249 | 3.0% | 6,129 | 2.0% |
| Total | 308,580 | 100.0% | 304,204 | 100.0% |

Sources:

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

While the Albany County population as a whole only increased by 1.44% between 2010 and 2017, these data suggest that the Albany County population has been increasing in minority diversity in the last eight years. This trend further emphasizes the need for Albany County to develop an Equity Agenda Strategic Plan that focuses on inclusion, equity, and diversity in order to improve the provision of services to the county residents. Additionally, Albany County government is committed to hiring and retaining a workforce that closely represents the population of the county.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Albany County Equity Agenda Strategic Plan outlines a set of priorities that are aligned with the County's vision of preserving a diverse, healthy, and caring community that promotes social justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, economic equity, and protects the environment where all residents, businesses, and organizations have access to opportunities that nurture success. The strategic priorities, goals, and objectives established in the plan include work done over the past two years with the contribution of commissioners and representatives from the Albany County Departments and Offices and the CHSR team. The Equity Agenda Strategic Plan represents the second phase of a two-phase project. The first phase established a coordinated effort to address identified areas of inequity within and across Albany County government departments with a specific focus on the County government workforce. The findings from the initial phase have been reported in detail. The second phase of this project builds upon the findings from the initial phase to create an initial strategic plan, that allows the Albany County Departments to be more agile and effective in meeting their specific goals and make changes as needed.

The Albany County Equity Agenda Strategic Plan provides a roadmap for the County to establish a common objective for County departments to incorporate equity into their missions, decision-making processes, and provision of services. This strategic plan includes both countywide and departmental goals and objectives to be completed within five years (2020-2025).

PROJECT COMPONENTS

The initial phase of this project established the Equity Planning Group (EPG), comprised of representatives from a majority of Albany County Departments, tasked with developing an Equity Agenda Strategic Plan for the County.

The EPG divided the strategic planning process into two phases. The first phase of the process was focused on the Albany County workforce to address the need to reflect the County population and address the service provision disparities in the County. During this phase, the departments shared information related to their definition of equity, the importance of equity in the workplace, disparities and inequities within the County workforce, the use of data to guide equity efforts, and the existing barriers in the process of implementing policies and activities related to equity. In December 2018, the first phase of the Equity Strategic Plan concluded with a report containing general descriptions of the multiple activities engaged in by the EPG and a comparison of data between the County population and the Albany County workforce.⁸ During this phase, CHSR supported the Office of the County Executive in the following activities:

Phase 1:

Recruitment of Participating County Departments⁹

The EPG was comprised of representatives from a majority of County departments. A full list of participating departments can be found in Appendix A. As previously stated, the formation of the EPG occurred as part of the initial phase of this project.

Listening and Learning Sessions and Group Discussions⁹

During the initial phase of this project, the CHSR facilitated five meetings of the EPG to build the capacity to create an Equity Agenda Strategic Plan. During these meetings, information and training were provided on equity principles, best practices on implementation, and how governmental bodies can use the principles and practices of equity in their work. These meetings also provided the opportunity for County departments to highlight their ongoing equity activities and explore how to build on their initiatives. Additionally, the CHSR team facilitated two semi-structured group discussions with EPG members to explore how equity impacts service provision within County departments and the County workforce with a focus on employee hiring and retention practices, barriers to hiring and retaining a diverse workforce, and strategies for creating a more diverse and representative workforce.

Identifying Inequities in Albany County

EPG discussions identified inequities that exist in Albany County related to health, education, income, and mental health. These inequities in Albany County follow nationwide trends, including poorer health outcomes for people of color, higher rates of smoking and homelessness in individuals with serious mental health problems, and lower graduation rates for students in urban school districts compared to those in suburban school districts. Additionally, since Albany County spans a large and geographically diverse area, inequities arise related to where individuals live. Place-based inequities may include issues for rural residents in accessing social services that are often based in the city of Albany. Furthermore, place-based inequities lead to disparities in Albany County employment, since many County jobs are located in the city of Albany and may not be easily accessible for residents of rural areas in Albany County.

As a result of this project, all departments participating in the EPG have begun to address equity issues within their departments. Many County departments, particularly those related to human services, have been addressing race- and place-related inequities for some time and are at advanced stages of policy and service delivery changes. They offer services at non-profit agencies and other community locations to increase accessibility and place frontline community workers in high-need neighborhoods and rural outpost stations. Examples of equity activities in County departments can be found in Appendix B. Other departments are new to this process and are learning about how to address equity, looking to more experienced departments for leadership and guidance.

The second phase of the project, detailed in this report, focused on the development of the strategic components – mission statement, vision statement, guiding principles, goals, and objectives – and the ongoing strategic plan related to equity issues that widely affect service provision within Albany County departments. This phase provides the necessary framework for Albany County, including County departments, partners, and the community at large to work together to reduce the disparities in the provision of services and improve the quality of life for County residents. During this phase, CHSR supported the Office of the County Executive in the following activities:

⁸ Center for Human Services Research (CHSR), University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY). (2018). Albany County Equity Agenda: Data Findings/Report.

Phase 2:

Plan for Equity

Once the first phase of the project was completed, and data was gathered related to service provision and the County workforce, and the general population, CHSR and the County Executive's Office reviewed all documents submitted by Albany County Departments participating in the EPG to identify common themes. After a series of meetings between the CHSR team and the County Executive's Office, four components of the strategic plan ; mission statement, vision statement, guiding principles, and goals.

Feedback from Albany County Departments

Following the creation of the main components of the strategic plan, a document containing the mission statement, vision statement, guiding principles, and goals were distributed to the departments with a request for their feedback. The feedback received from the departments was positive, allowing CHSR and the County Executive's Office to continue developing the main objectives of the strategic plan.

Individual Meetings with Albany County Departments

Individual meetings were conducted with Albany County Departments that participated in the EPG between May 2019 and August 2019. During those meetings, both CHSR with Bakary Janneh, a representative of the County Executive's Office discussed the different strategic components with each department and supported the departments in the process of developing their individual goals and objectives. The main purpose was to develop strategic goals and objectives from the ground up. Department leaders were instructed to meet with their employees, discuss the different strategic components, and to create goals and objectives according to their internally assessed equity needs in order to improve service provision. Completed goals and objectives from the departments were reviewed by the CHSR and the County Executive's Office, and written feedback was provided to every department.

Creating the Strategic Plan

Following receipt of the individual goals and objectives from all participating Albany County departments, the CHSR and the County Executive's Office created the 2020-2025 Albany County Equity Agenda Strategic Plan. The Equity Strategic Plan is organized into three overarching sections: 1) Countywide Strategic Components; 2) Countywide Strategic Priority Areas, and 3) County Department Goals and Objectives for Incorporating Equity.

Countywide Strategic Components

MISSION

Albany County maintains a compassionate, progressive, collaborative, and inclusive government that provides its residents with quality public services to support a healthy, safe, equitable, and vibrant communities.

VISION STATEMENT

Albany County is a diverse, healthy, and caring community that promotes social justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, economic equity, and protects the environment so that all residents, businesses, and organizations have access to opportunities that nurture success.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Inclusiveness We are committed to providing equitable opportunities to all.

Integrity We meet our commitment in an honest, respectful, fair, and ethical manner while providing comprehensive and professional services.

Collaboration We work together effectively within the organization and with other governments, private entities, and community partners to promote civic engagement.

Accountability We are responsible for all our actions and interactions with each other and the public.

Transparency We are committed to the disclosure of information and an open decision-making process.

Fairness We serve all residents of Albany County by promoting equity in access to applicable services.

Equity Lens We use transformative frameworks in policymaking, program development, program implementation, and evaluation to identify opportunities for empowerment and recognition that produce unbiased access, treatment, and outcomes for all.

Countywide Strategic Priority Areas



EQUITY

Albany County will promote equity by understanding and addressing the root causes of inequities and providing access to services and opportunities in a way that addresses the needs of the residents:

1. Increase focus in underrepresented areas
2. Strengthen local, state, and federal advocacy efforts
3. Promote a climate of inclusiveness and diversity within the workforce
4. Assure equitable access to services and opportunities for all residents and employees
5. Promote education and participation in contracting opportunities



REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE

Albany County government has a commitment to diversity and inclusion and will recruit and retain a representative workforce that reflects the demographics of the County:

1. Update and review job descriptions for gender and culture appropriateness
2. Review and enhance regulations that protect against all forms of pay discrimination
3. Streamline the application process for employment
4. Expand and adapt recruitment efforts to attract applicants and interns from diverse backgrounds



EQUITABLE ADMINISTRATION OF LAWS AND JUSTICE

Albany County will embody equitable administration of laws and justice by promoting a safe environment where the rights of all residents are respected and valued:

1. Advocate for the creation of a Mental Health Court
2. Advocate for changing policies and laws that negatively impact businesses and residents who have been historically underrepresented
3. Provide Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for law enforcement and related fields
4. Combat the impact of the opioid epidemic, from a prevention, treatment, and recovery perspective
5. Engage in environmental advocacy and protection



ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP

Albany County will be responsive and transparent in its obligation to provide services and resources to all residents:

1. Foster a climate of inclusiveness and diversity in the workforce
2. Use social media and public forums to promote County services and open, transparent communication
3. Incorporate compliance guidelines and when possible offer notifications in multiple languages.



EFFECTIVE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Albany County has a wide range of resources from its highly trained employees, information technology, and access to equipment. The County will deploy and continuously evaluate ways that efficiently utilize their maximum potential:

1. Explore various technologies that aid the implementation of services.
2. Utilize municipal expertise to address shared issues
3. Identify community partners who can provide valued services
4. Identify barriers to participating in County projects for those who have been historically underrepresented



COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

Albany County will embody collaborative governance by encouraging civic engagement with the community and private sectors where common goals exist:

1. Improve public health outcomes by optimizing collaborative partnerships
2. Reduce barriers to employment for those who receive public assistance benefits by engaging new partners to offer educational/vocational training, job readiness/job skills training, and work placements
3. Partner with local educational institutions



TECHNOLOGY INNOVATIONS

Albany County will integrate technology innovations to promote information transparency and accessibility:

1. Increase public internet access
2. Become more green and efficient
3. Modernize and expand access to service in Albany County
4. Reduce the amount of waste disposed of in landfills and waterways



PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Albany County will enhance public and environmental health by developing and implementing initiatives that address health disparities and sustainability of the environment:

1. Advocate for and, when possible, increase access to rural health services
2. Take into account the entire community when determining the impact of implementing new projects
3. Ensure adequate and safe staffing for medical care facilities
4. Reduce the prevalence of toxins and pollution in air and water sources
5. Combat pharmaceutical abuse, from both a prevention and a treatment/recovery perspective



DEVELOP A GREEN ECONOMY

Albany County will develop a green economy by promoting economic growth while ensuring environmental justice and sustainability:

1. Increase the fleet of electric vehicles and the number of public charging stations
2. Expand the Rail Trail and access to non-motorized transportation
3. Reduce pollutants introduced into the Hudson River
4. Reduce cost and environmental impact of waste removal



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Albany County will expand procedures and processes to evaluate and continually improve policies, programs, and services:

1. Add new performance measures in all future requests for proposals and contracts for services that require providers to develop, implement and report on targeting and recruiting priority populations
2. Incorporate cultural competency, empathy, and respect in all areas of service
3. Incorporate public feedback into policies and procedures
4. Implement safety measures for staff and building security
5. Continuously update webpages and public information
6. Digitize information
7. Identify opportunities and prepare for changes

County Department Goals and Objectives for Incorporating Equity

Participating Albany County Departments (see Appendix A) created goals and objectives for incorporating equity into their missions and delivery of services. Some departments had already been addressing equity issues, whereas others are new to viewing their missions and services through an equity perspective. County departments are continuing to expand and refine goals and objectives.

DEPARTMENT FOR AGING

Albany County Department for Aging (ACDFA) strives to maximize choice and self-direction for the people of Albany County as they age. ACDFA is committed to providing access to a comprehensive and coordinated system of supports and services, including information and assistance, congregate meals, home-delivered meals, nutrition counseling, adult daycare, in-home health services, caregiver support programs, and volunteer opportunities.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Add a new performance measure in all future requests for proposals and contracts for services that require providers to develop, implement, and report on targeting and recruiting priority populations that will expand the reach to all eligible Albany County residents.

Objectives:

- ACDFA will draft performance measures and get feedback from our internal legal and purchasing departments and the community, and then will implement the performance measures in the next round of request for proposals.
- Request for Proposals scoring process will reflect the importance of this new performance measure.

Goal 2: Increase outreach activities and access to ACDFA's menu of available programs and services.

Objectives:

- Identify more creative approaches to reach underserved populations within Albany County communities, including those with limited English proficiency, immigrants, refugees, minorities, and low-income older adults.
- Provide access to interpretation and translation services, free of charge, offered to anyone seeking any program or service provided by ACDFA and their contracted providers.
- Focus greater attention on the provision of materials printed in the most common non-English languages spoken in Albany County.
- Create a county-focused annual event for the aging community and increase the number of attendees each year.
- Ensure that the ACDFA website is current, comprehensive, and easy to navigate for individuals with different cultural backgrounds and technical knowledge.
- Develop interactive and visual presentations that can be delivered directly at sites where older adults congregate.

Goal 3: Strengthen advocacy efforts on behalf of our older adults and community providers.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of current events and governmental policy decisions affecting senior citizens.
- Boost lobbying efforts at state and federal levels of government to preserve adequate funding levels and quality of life policies for older adults.
- Provide mechanisms for older adults to become directly involved with advocacy efforts.
- Work with community partners to evaluate mandates and legislation that may adversely impact senior services or the ability to provide them.

DEPARTMENT OF ALTERNATE PUBLIC DEFENDER

The Department of Alternate Public Defender serves any individual who is financially unable to retain counsel without substantial hardship. The Alternate Public Defender's Office is appointed by the Court to represent financially qualified individuals where a bona fide conflict of interest prevents the Albany County Public Defender's Office from accepting the assignment. We represent clients in both criminal and Family Court proceedings from the inception of the case through hearings, trial, and sentencing. The Alternate Public Defender's Office does not generally handle post-sentencing or appellate-level issues; however, we will be assigned to handle sealing applications under CPL 160.59.

Goal and Objectives

Goal 1: The Alternate Public Defender's Office will ensure all residents are aware of their right to representation free of any conflicts of interest.

Objectives:

- Educate rural and underserved communities of their rights to access legal representation.
- Use data to determine where to provide targeted outreach.

DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Department for Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) serves the children and families of Albany County. Albany County is a System of Care community, which subscribes to the Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) core principles: child-centered, family-focused, community-based, culturally competent, least restrictive, and coordinated services for children and their families. A system of care is a coordinated network of effective services and supports for children and families, which are culturally and linguistically competent, build meaningful partnerships with families and youth, and have supportive management and policy infrastructure. DCYF is unique within New York State (NYS), in that services for children from other County departments are consolidated into an independent agency that focuses on integrated services, and strengthening and supporting families.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Adopt a mindfulness-based decision matrix throughout the department.

Objectives:

- Train all staff and provide ongoing training in the following substantive areas to be utilized as strategies for decision making:
 - » Implicit bias
 - » Mindfulness, which is the practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and experiences
 - » Adverse childhood experiences, trauma, and responses
 - » Disproportionate minority representation
 - » Affirming diversity
 - » Bridges Out of Poverty⁹
- Incorporate the strategies for decision making into the practice, supervision, and management of the department's service delivery system.
- Continue to adjust the strategies based on current information and research.

Goal 2: Decrease the propensity of subjectivity in the assessment process.

Objectives:

- Service delivery decisions will be based on the strategies for decision making and pertinent information as opposed to perceived personal characteristics, thereby developing a mindfulness agenda for staff to ensure that their assessments are based on the information provided and that no underlying perceptions have influenced their judgment.

⁹Payne, R.K., DeVol, P.E., Smith, T.D. (2006). *Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities*.

- Develop a template for staff to evaluate any bias that could influence their decisions.

Goal 3: Decrease disproportionality and assure the provision of adequate services to families

Objectives:

- Utilize the strategies for the decision-making process to assess goal setting and treatment planning.

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL SERVICE

The Department of Civil Service has responsibility for all activities mandated by NYS Civil Service Law and other laws, including position classification, examinations and eligible list management, and payroll certifications for the over 65 appointing authorities served. Albany County Department of Civil Service serves employees in all County government departments, eight towns, six villages, ten school districts, seven public libraries, two special districts (Water Purification District and Soil and Water Conservation District), and two authorities (Green Island Power Authority and Airport Authority). We provide services to over 65 appointing authorities and more than 6,500 employees.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Increase the number of African American, Asian Pacific American, Hispanic, Native American, veteran, and rural resident applicants.

Objectives:

- Increase access to print and digital information regarding exam announcements
- Use data to identify areas of high unemployment and implement recruitment services
- Attend neighborhood association meetings
- Meet with guidance counselors at the high school and collegiate levels.

Goal 2: Increase the use of technology and expand social media presence.

Objectives:

- Implement an online exam application system to expand access and facilitate the application process.
- Create a webpage section of frequently asked questions related to civil services exams, services, updates, and other related material.
- Posting announcements on social media to reach a wider audience
- Link information provided with the direct website page source
- Provide electronic educational resources for the public when appropriate
- When appropriate, utilize translation services to reach Albany County residents whose primary language is not English

Goal 3: Remove examination barriers

Objectives:

- Accept credit/debit cards as an acceptable form of payment for exam application fees.
- Waive fees for two exams annually for all Albany County residents.
- Host exams at locations with adequate parking and access to public transportation.
- Use employee data to design an outreach and education program that identifies populations not represented in the workforce to encourage demographic symmetry with census reports.
- Provide materials in the appropriate reading age in print and electronic formats.

Goal 4: Increase public knowledge about the Department of Civil Service

Objectives:

- Contact service agencies and vocation rehab facilities
- Share information about the civil service process and exams with employment programs, high schools, and

colleges

- Work with County departments to update job descriptions and classifications.
- Table at community events including high school, collegiate, and community career fairs

DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

The Department of General Services provides support to all County departments. The services provided include space management, real property leasing, building maintenance, security, communication systems support, vehicle fleet management, acquisition of goods and services, and design, engineering, and project management. The employees of the Department of General Services directly affect the experience of public individuals that come to County buildings. It is the goal of the Department to make sure that they encounter as pleasant and pleasurable a surrounding as possible. General Services does this by keeping the grounds around County buildings groomed and maintained. Staff also ensures that inside each building is safe and maintained at a high level portraying a level of safety to every visitor and employee of the County entering a County building.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: The Department of General Services serves other departments in the County. Our goal is to provide the best possible services regardless of financial restrictions.

Objectives:

- To respond as quickly as possible and fix any issues the department may have to promote a feeling that everyone matters.
- To use whatever means are necessary in order to correct any deficiencies to increase employee morale.
- To develop where possible alternative work environments to aid in productivity

Goal 2: Increase awareness and competency regarding diversity, inclusion, and mental health

Objectives:

- Continued training for all security guards to increase their sensitivity, competence, and awareness regarding their interactions with people from other cultures, people who speak languages other than English, and people with physical disabilities or mental health disorders.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

The Albany County Department of Health (ACDOH) ensures compliance with provisions of the Public Health Law and Sanitary Codes of the State and County. Article 6 of the Public Health Law defines six core program areas, which serve as the basis for local public health work. Built around these core program areas, NYS Regulations require the submission of a State Aid Application that outlines services provided by local health departments. In addition to these regulatory requirements, other sections of Public Health Law directly mandate the provision of services such as control of rabies, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, and tobacco enforcement. Essential services of the ACDOH within each core program area are (1) Family Health, (2) Communicable Disease Control, (3) Chronic Disease Prevention, (4) Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan, (5) Environmental Health, (6) and Public Health Emergency Preparedness. Albany County Department of Health is committed to achieving health equity through the reduction of health disparities.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Maintain and improve organizational excellence within the Health Department.

Objectives:

- Develop, implement, and train staff on VMSG (Vision, Mission, Services, and Goals) Dashboard Public Health Performance Management System, an electronic platform to monitor and track the performance of the ACDOH by 2020.
- Develop and implement systems for ongoing workforce training via Learning Management System to ensure staff is able to complete mandated training in a timely manner by 2021.

- Develop and implement standardized staff orientation including leadership curriculum for newly hired staff by the end of 2021.
- Include health equity language and approaches to organizational processes and procedures by 2022.

Goal 2: Implement public health approaches that improve the health and well-being of entire populations and achieve health equity.

Objectives:

- Reduce the prevalence of uncontrolled asthma in Albany County by expanding home-based asthma services by 2022.
- Prevent long-term sequelae of childhood lead poisoning by working with providers and communities to increase screening rates of one- and two-year-olds by 2022.
- Reduce the annual growth rate of sexually transmitted diseases through the engagement of the school district in sexually transmitted disease screening and condom distribution by 2022.
- Increase appropriate referrals for opioid misuse disorder by increasing the number of local providers trained to prescribe medication-assisted treatment (MAT) by 2022.

Goal 3: Improve public health outcomes by optimizing collaborative partnerships.

Objectives:

- Use existing and newfound partnerships to organize, monitor, and evaluate the progress of the Community Health Improvement Plan, as needed, through the end of 2021.
- Increase the department's community engagement activities by strengthening existing partnerships as well as assessing, identifying, and developing new partnership opportunities to ensure a whole-community approach to ensure population health.
- Increase the visibility of the ACDOH by implementing new social media strategies through 2022.
- Expand projects and partnerships using the Collective Impact Framework.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The Department of Human Resources provides personnel support to all County Departments and employees through three divisions: Division of Employee Relations, Division of Personnel Services, and Division of Affirmative Action. The Department provides quality service while maintaining confidentiality, integrity, respecting individuals, promoting teamwork, and focusing on innovation and continuous improvement of service delivery. The Department affirms its commitment to ensuring that all employment and employment-related decisions are based on the principles of equal employment opportunity.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Promote diversity and inclusion.

Objectives:

- Create policies and procedures to address unconscious bias within recruitment and employee interaction with other employees and the public.
- Make a reasonable effort to have department staffing reflect the demographics of the populations they serve.
- Foster an atmosphere of open communication.
- Expand recruitment in underrepresented areas of Albany County.
- Advocate for the removal of unnecessary or outdated job descriptions requirements.

Goal 2: Partner with community and cultural groups to recruit and attract a diverse workforce.

Objectives:

- Expand internship programs to include populations not represented in the workforce
- Advocate for changing the apprenticeship requirements.

- Remove biased language from recruitment and proposal material, so they are gender and culturally appropriate
- Increase funding for department training.

Goal 3: Strengthen communication between the Albany County personnel and those receiving services.

Objectives:

- Provide effective communication training for Albany County personnel
- Promote County resources that assist with conflict resolution
- Encourage open-door policies
- Establish procedures to provide clear goals and expectations of departments
- Create alternate pathways for communication

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

The Albany County Department of Mental Health (ACDMH) ensure that residents of Albany County living with mental illness or emotional disturbance, alcohol and/or substance use problems or intellectual and/or developmental disabilities can attain meaningful improvement in the quality of their lives and overall health, renewed connection to their communities, and lasting recovery so that their personal goals can be achieved. In addition, the ACDMH provides counseling and therapy, care management, crisis and psychiatric services to adults living with behavioral health challenges (i.e., mental health and substance use disorders), and, through state-aid funding contracts with local agencies/programs providing services across the age spectrum and across three disabilities: mental health, substance use, and intellectual/developmental.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To achieve equity and eliminate tobacco-related disparities amongst individuals living with behavioral health challenges, build upon the success of the Adult Outpatient Clinic's tobacco-cessation initiative and expand into other Department of Mental Health programs.

Objectives:

- Survey all existing patients in these additional programs for tobacco use
- Screen all patients in these additional programs for tobacco use
- Offer tobacco-cessation resources and interventions to all those interested
- Integrate tobacco-cessation interventions into treatment planning

Goal 2: In order to achieve equity and diminish the disproportionate representation of individuals living with behavioral health challenges involved with the criminal justice system, ACDMH will build upon the success of longstanding efforts to redirect and divert individuals from unnecessary criminal justice involvement and construct a comprehensive behavioral health/criminal justice system interface that maximizes treatment diversion opportunities, whenever possible and appropriate, and that protects and ensures public safety.

Objectives:

- Continue to implement Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) to map key behavioral health/criminal justice interfaces in the community.
- Regularly provide criminal justice and law enforcement personnel with behavioral health and crisis de-escalation training [e.g., biannual Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for law enforcement; focused training for County security personnel].
- Continue and expand community partnerships designed to maximize opportunities for diversion from criminal justice involvement [e.g., Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)].
- Continue and expand behavioral health treatment and support services for those individuals living with behavioral health challenges who are actively involved in the criminal justice system (e.g., jail-based mental health services; probation/mental health support groups; jail-diversion services).
- Continue to explore innovative and evidence-based opportunities (e.g., Mental Health Court).

Goal 3: In order to achieve equitable access to behavioral health services and diminish the stigma associated with mental health and addiction, especially amongst those individuals in our community already marginalized by their immigrant status, DMH will build upon the success of existing community partnerships and construct a comprehensive system of culturally competent treatment and support services that ensures the behavioral health needs of all Albany County residents are addressed.

Objectives:

- Continue and expand community partnerships designed to diminish stigma and increase opportunities for access to behavioral health services (e.g., U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants/Albany; “Refugee/Immigrant Roundtable”).
- Increase utilization of resources and tools that promote equitable access to the existing behavioral health system (e.g., translation services; “language line”).
- Regularly promote cultural competency training throughout ACDMH services and the Albany County system of behavioral health care.
- Regularly promote understanding of how to navigate the local system of behavioral care (e.g., educate consumers of services, volunteers).

DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION

The Albany County Probation Department is committed to providing quality services to all courts in Albany County by conducting Pre-Sentence and Pre-Disposition Investigations, Intake and Diversion Programs, supervising adult and juvenile offenders at levels determined by validated risk assessment tools, and by providing and participating in alternative sentencing programs. The Department also serves the community by including the victims of an offender’s crime in investigation, case planning, and supervision. The Department also collects court-imposed financial obligations such as restitution, court surcharges, and certain offender fees. Finally, the Department is committed to holding offenders accountable through the employment of graduated sanctions, as well as providing for and referral to skill-building programs and services that emphasize self-efficacy and positive social adjustment. The department also looks to employ merit credits as incentives for positive community adjustment and as a reward for sustained and measurable achievements.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To achieve a violation of the probation rate below the NYS average (11%).

Objectives:

- Increase the use of graduated sanctions and incentives to enable the client to successfully complete their probation.
- Identify and reduce the barriers causing clients to unsuccessfully complete their term of probation.

Goal 2: The Department remains committed to being mindful and responsive to current community issues surrounding law enforcement.

Objectives:

- Provide department-wide officer training in areas related to trauma and its effects, implicit bias, and motivational interviewing.
- Offer a ‘train the trainer’ programs in areas related to trauma, and its effects, implicit bias, and motivational interviewing to allow for department-wide training by our department Instructor Development Certified trainers, increasing the opportunity to train new or current staff.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC DEFENDER

The Office of the Public Defender provides legal representation to individuals who cannot afford legal counsel and have either been accused of crimes in Albany County or for specified proceedings in Family Court, as required by Articles 18-A and 18-B of the County Law. The Office of the Public Defender specifically serves indigent people who require legal representation either for criminal court or family court proceedings within Albany County. Public Defenders zealously

represent clients on misdemeanor and initial felony proceedings in 16 separate City, Town, and Village Courts, as well as all proceedings in Albany County Court. We also represent individuals accused of violating the terms of their probation or parole, and file appeals to the Appellate Division and the New York Court of Appeals. The Public Defender's Office also represents clients in Family Court for custody matters, family offense matters, violations of support obligations, violations of orders of protection, and in abuse and neglect cases.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To create a network and relationships with other service agencies/programs, and to develop streamlined procedures for referring and connecting clients to other needed services

Objectives:

- Continue work to develop relationships with providers/agencies/programs and to identify and expand our "referral network"
- Develop department-wide procedures and protocols for referring/connecting clients with other services
- Utilize our new colleague to help connect clients with services

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is to ensure that all County roadways, bridges, trails, recreation areas, and specific New York State highways are safe and accessible. The DPW prepares and executes plans for the construction, repair, and maintenance of all County roadways, bridges, culverts, trails, and specific State highways in Albany County. The Department ensures they are safe, hazard-free, and accessible for travel. Other departmental responsibilities include plowing and salting County and several State roadways during inclement winter weather, designing and maintaining appropriate traffic signage and signals, maintaining County owned trails and recreation areas and operating the County vehicle maintenance shop.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Increase diversity within DPW workforce

Objectives:

- Work with human resources (HR) to perform public outreach in underrepresented communities throughout the County to fill vacancies within DPW.
- Partner with local commercial driver's license (CDL) and trade schools to find new hires
- Recruit from high schools in underrepresented communities in Albany County
- Work with Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) to make working in DPW's Voorheesville Main Office and subdivisions more accessible to citizens throughout the County

Goal 2: Foster a climate of inclusiveness and diversity in the workforce at DPW

Objectives:

- Work with HR to employ guest speakers to present equity training to DPW workforce yearly
- Survey and brainstorm with employees after training to understand areas they perceive the Department can better foster inclusivity and equity
- Develop a plan to implement equity in the workforce

Goal 3: Promote equity throughout our infrastructure project processes

Objectives:

- Continue to ensure ADA compliance is taken into account on all new infrastructure projects
- Ensure project construction notification is accessible to all members of the community

DIVISION OF PURCHASING

The Purchasing Division is responsible for the purchase of materials, supplies, and services for all Albany County Departments with the objective of obtaining the best quality products and services for the best price, and in a timely

manner. Purchasing is responsible for initiating and maintaining effective and professional relationships with vendors and the various County Department employees, and to serve as the exclusive channel through which all requests for County purchases and price quotations are handled.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To increase the utilization of historically underrepresented businesses by conducting outreach to promote, identify, and remove barriers to participation in Albany County contracting opportunities.

Objectives:

- Continue to develop relationships with minority trade associations and other similar organizations working with the underrepresented business communities. Attend vendor fairs, small group meetings, and disseminate information on how to do business with Albany County.

Goal 2: Work to change laws that create barriers to do business with historically underrepresented businesses in Albany County.

Objectives:

- Work with internal and external agencies to inform them of the barriers that are in place that make it difficult for the historically underrepresented businesses to do business with Albany County.
- Monitor any changes in laws or policies that eliminate or decrease barriers

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is responsible for addressing the social service needs of the poor and working poor, as well as adults who are unable to care for or protect themselves. DSS delivers services that support and protect families and individuals while encouraging self-sufficiency and personal responsibility. The Department offers citizens cash assistance, food buying assistance, temporary housing, employment preparation and training services, daycare and case management to support the transition to more stable, productive lives. DSS also serves the aged and disabled through access to Medicaid benefits as well as assessment and linkage to long-term services and supports. In partnership with the community, DSS is committed to providing excellent service with compassion and respect through the efficient use of resources in a fair, confidential, and dignified manner.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Reduce barriers to employment for those in receipt of public assistance benefits by engaging new partners who can offer educational/vocational training; job readiness/job skills training, including work experience placements.

Objectives:

- Increase the number of partnerships to address barriers to employment
- Target barriers to employment engagement
- Increased participation in employment activities

Goal 2: Obtain and strategically place four kiosks in the community (two at DSS and two in outside community locations) so residents can apply or upload documents for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at their convenience and pace.

Objectives:

- Modernized DSS operations through self-service technology to access SNAP or upload required documentation.
- Improved customer efficiency to save travel and waiting time and be able to efficiently apply for benefits electronically in the areas that community indicators show as inequitable areas of service delivery

Goal 3: Provide targeted application and recertification assistance to the difficult to serve homeless population by having Eligibility Examiners conduct a routine schedule of visits to shelters and provide technical assistance to Shelter Case Workers, so they are better able to support their clients. Certain persons staying at homeless shelters have physical and mental disabilities that prevent them from navigating the DSS benefit system.

Objectives:

- Improved comprehension of eligibility requirements among Shelter Case Workers.
- Enhanced compliance among the difficult to serve homeless population.
- Improved access to benefits and services for the homeless.

Goal 4: Create a culture of trauma-informed service within the DSS environment through skill development and increased staff competency in trauma-informed care to promote continuous improvement of customer service and staff job satisfaction.

Objectives:

- Conduct a self-assessment of internal practices, including a review of existing policies and procedures to assess areas that could better reflect trauma-informed care.
- Conduct a client satisfaction survey to obtain baseline information on client perceptions of DSS interactions.
- Conduct a staff training survey to assess employees' perception of need
- Increase awareness of issues faced by clients and staff, during service interactions, including staff awareness of secondary traumatic stress.
- Utilize training such as trauma-informed care, Bridges Out of Poverty,¹⁰ and customer service skills training to increase awareness, knowledge, and performance among DSS staff

Goal 5: Improve employee job satisfaction by enhancing safety and support through improvements in building aesthetics and supervisory support.

Objectives:

- Painting and new carpeting on floors in the building.
- New faucets throughout the building.
- Installation of badge scanners in stairwells.
- Utilization of self-service kiosks in DSS reception.
- Assure that the building is clean and repairs are made in a timely manner.
- Increase the visibility of the security presence in the reception area.
- Enhance and expand training and support of agency supervisors to improve their commitment to schedule regular supervision with their subordinates and enhance consistent support of and messaging to staff throughout the agency.

SHAKER PLACE REHABILITATION AND NURSING

Shaker Place Rehabilitation and Nursing Center (Shaker Place), formerly the Albany County Nursing Home, serves residents of Albany County and the surrounding areas and is conveniently located in the town of Colonie. The Department of Residential Health Care Facilities provides excellence in long-term care services to the people of Albany County and surrounding areas. Shaker Place provides a nurturing atmosphere staffed by qualified and compassionate individuals who are able to offer innovative health care through complex medical services and a comprehensive approach.

Shaker Place has already made progress toward their goals and objectives; outcomes are included below.

Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Goal 1: Increase staffing and improve recruitment for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA)

Objectives:

- Work with staff and local SEIU 1199 union to increase wages for staff.

¹⁰ Payne, R.K., DeVol, P.E., Smith, T.D. (2006). *Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities*.

Goal 2: Ensure public transportation to the facility has a schedule that works for employees, especially on the weekend mornings.

Objectives:

- Work with staff and CDTA regarding bus pick up and drop off schedule.

Goal 3: Increase cultural competency for all staff.

Objectives:

- Provide education to all staff on the importance of cultural competency, empathy, and respect for residents, co-workers, visitors, and family members.

VETERANS SERVICE BUREAU

To assist County veterans and their families in obtaining any county, state, or federal benefits that they are entitled to for their service in the military. Veterans Service Bureau provides many services and resources to the veterans of Albany County. These services include: initiate, develop, and advance claims for county, state, and federal veteran benefits; guide veterans as they enroll in the VA Health Care System; counsel and assist with burial and death benefits for veterans' survivors; coordinate emergency assistance from appropriate agencies; refer veterans and their families to other appropriate programs for assistance; obtaining military records; employment referrals; assistance in securing temporary housing and necessities for the homeless; coordination and maintenance of the Return the FAVOR discount program; honoring outstanding deceased and living veterans; providing outreach to organizations and institutions that service veterans.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Identify/locate veterans within the County.

Objectives:

- Increase outreach to veteran organizations and events
- Identify and connect with minority veterans

Goal 2: Provide services to remote and underserved areas and populations

Objectives:

- Establish remote sites in the western part of Albany County.
- Provide services to the less fortunate veterans in Albany County.
- Coordinate with other County departments that provide services to the veteran population.
- Coordinate the process of outreach and training with other entities that provide services to veterans.

Goal 3: Increase awareness of veteran-related issues, events, and services, including raising awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mental health

Objectives:

- Conduct awareness events related to PTSD and mental health within the veteran community
- Increase participation and collaboration of veteran-related agencies and service providers for referrals and community outreach.

WATER PURIFICATION DISTRICT

The Water Purification District's primary responsibility is to convey and treat wastewater from its eight-member communities— the Cities of Albany, Cohoes, and Watervliet; the Villages of Colonie, Green Island, Menands; and parts of the Towns of Colonie and Guilderland which includes a population of approximately 200,000. In 2017, the average daily flows received were 42.33 million gallons between the two plants. The District also provides final sewage sludge disposal for regional wastewater treatment plants utilizing the District's excess solids handling capacity to generate revenues and defray costs to member communities.

Environmental justice is a critical component to creating equitable policies and practices, as impoverished populations and people of color are more likely to live, work, and play in polluted environments.¹¹ Therefore, the role of the Albany County Water Purification District is important in the overall Albany County Equity Agenda.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Create an outreach program to reach high school children that may be interested in the wastewater treatment industry to expand and diversify the worker pipeline.

Objectives:

- Increase school presentations to high school level students and encourage teachers to take field trips to the treatment plants to introduce students to career potential.

Goal 2: Create an anaerobic digestion process for Albany County. Anaerobic digestion is the process by which organic matter such as animal or food waste is broken down to produce biogas and biofertilizer. This process happens in the absence of oxygen in a sealed, oxygen-free tank called an anaerobic digester.

Objectives:

- Implement an anaerobic digester in Albany County to reduce the cost that is needed to haul and dump or incinerate tons of food and other waste.
- Reduce the amount of animal or food waste that is disposed of in our landfills.
- Protect air and water quality.

Goal 3: Review the procedures and quality of the clean reusable water discharged into the Hudson River.

Objectives:

- Monitor the removal of waste from the influent and the cleanliness of the water from the affluent following the regulations established by the Clean Water Act.
- Ensure the plant is running efficiently and according to the federal guidelines.
- Monitor the chlorine and coliforms that are discharged into the Hudson River.

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY/DEPARTMENT OF LAW

Made up of three bureaus; Civil Litigation, Family Law Bureau, and the Municipal Bureau; the Department of Law serves the corporation of Albany County and its officers. It operates under the provisions of Article 11 of the NYS County Law and Article 15 of the Albany County Charter. The central purpose of the department is to review, enforce and defends all legal issues brought by or against the County, County officers and employees. The department of Law saves the County hundreds of thousands of dollars in outside counsel costs and continues to train and cross-train lawyers to ensure all branches of Albany County Government have access to the legal services that are necessary for them to operate efficiently and effectively while providing the services that County residents utilize.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Improve Law's outreach to the legal community to increase diversity within the department.

Objectives:

- Increase direct outreach to undergrad/law students regarding opportunities in municipal law (including targeting of schools outside of the University of Albany to compete for interns and employees from those schools).
- Diversify internship opportunities (see if the PD/DA have different approaches to securing interns and if there is something to be learned from them; attempt to secure/deploy interns in parts of the Law Department where attorneys are scarce, like Social Services and Mental Health).

¹¹ Natural Resources Defense Council. (2016). The Environmental Justice Movement. Retrieved from <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement>.

- Establish diversity drives and create a designated Law Department contact with organizations such as the Albany County Bar Association, Capital District Black and Hispanic Bar Association, and the Capital Region Women's Bar Association.
- Create a recruitment database of graduates to fill demographic shortfalls within the department

Goal 2: Synchronize County policies on environmental issues regarding County contracts.

Objectives:

- Develop contract language regarding recently developed state and county environmental policies for procurement documents (Styrofoam ban, plastic bag ban for the State).
- Inform and advise County Departments on the effect of local and state initiatives, and work to develop additional methods that could be used to make procurement requests more environmentally friendly.
- Promote interdepartmental cooperation and discussion on community initiatives to prevent unforeseen barriers and bias to public participation. (e.g., Health Department enforces the Styrofoam ban, but may not be aware of how it affects the Division of Purchasing RFB/RFP process.)
- Implement software to monitor contractual and policy requirements.

Goal 3: Pursue government and private organization initiatives that could assist in easing administrative burdens and community access to justice.

Objectives:

- Develop a method for individuals to secure identification that would assist them in getting employment for probation purposes.
- Be a “matchmaker” for organizations pursuing similar goals
- Encourage and explore the use of Shared Service Agreements with other organizations that could more efficiently provide municipal services to the public.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were developed as a result of the activities completed in the second phase of the Albany County Equity Strategic Planning process. These recommendations primarily consist of best practices observed in other County jurisdictions (e.g., King County, Washington;¹² Multnomah County, Oregon;¹³ and Fairfax County, Virginia¹⁴) that have well-established strategic plans focused on equity.

Community Engagement

When considering the development and implementation of practices and policies that are intended to affect the surrounding community at large, it is critical to engage the community for their input and feedback. We strongly recommend holding forums or creating other avenues and opportunities for Albany County residents and workers to have dialogues with Albany County government departments regarding the inequities they experience and their input on how to address these issues. A coordinated effort among departments may be the most effective approach for soliciting community input. The absence of community voices in both phases of this project is a significant limitation of our findings.

Metrics and Benchmarks

While this Equity Strategic Plan presents countywide strategic components and priority areas as well as goals and objectives specific to some individual County departments, it does not provide metrics or benchmarks for monitoring the implementation, progress, or outcomes of the strategic plan. As work continues, these metrics and benchmarks must be developed and utilized. Evaluation of the Equity Strategic Plan should be an iterative process, allowing for continual objective and critical assessment of the progress and outcomes and incorporating community feedback to refine and improve the plan as needed.

Data Collection and Analysis

Collecting and analyzing data related to the Albany County departments were complex tasks during both phases of the strategic planning due to multiple factors. As indicated in the Phase 1 report,¹⁵ one complicating factor of data collection and analysis is related to the pervasive and ongoing issue within Albany County data systems—they do not communicate with, complement, or support each other. Establishing a coordinated system that can monitor strategic planning benchmarks and metrics, workforce trends (e.g., demographics, retention, professional background), and service trends (e.g., evaluation of services, community input) is necessary for the success of the Albany County Equity Strategic Planning.

Budgets

Although this Equity Strategic Plan presents countywide guidance for the creation of more equitable practices and services, it does not include budget allocation or an explanation of how this effort impacts the Albany County budget. Establishing budgetary objectives could help in the implementation of this strategic plan.

¹² Office of Equity and Social Justice, Office of King County Executive. (2016). Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan: 2016-2022. King County, WA. Retrieved from <https://aqua.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/dnrp-directors-office/equity-social-justice/201609-ESJ-SP-FULL.pdf>.

¹³ Multnomah Workforce Equity Coalition. (2019). Multnomah county workforce equity strategic plan: Portland, OR. Retrieved from <https://multco.us/diversity-equity/multnomah-county-workforce-equity-strategic-plan>

¹⁴ Fairfax County, Virginia. (2017). One Fairfax policy. Fairfax, VA. Retrieved from <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/one-fairfax>.

¹⁵ Center for Human Services Research (CHSR), University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY). (2018). Albany County Equity Agenda: Data Findings/Report.

Conclusion

While this report details the results of the second phase of this project and develops an Equity Strategic Plan, efforts are ongoing to expand upon and refine the goals and objectives described here. The Albany County Executive's Office will continue working with County departments to continuously improve this strategic plan to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion within the County.

The CHSR is handing over this project to the Equity Agenda Coordinator in the Albany County Department of Human Resources to facilitate the ongoing development and monitoring of this equity strategic plan.

Appendix A

PARTICIPATING COUNTY DEPARTMENTS

Albany County Executive's Office

Division of Information Services

Shaker Place Rehabilitation and Nursing Center

Veterans Service Bureau

Department of Health

Department of Mental Health

Department of Social Services

Department of Probation

Department for Children, Youth & Families

Department for Aging

County Public Defender

Alternate Public Defender

Office of the County Attorney/Department of Law

Office of Immigration

Human Resources

Department of Civil Service

Department of General Services

Department of Public Works

Water Purification District

Division of Purchasing

Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center

Appendix B

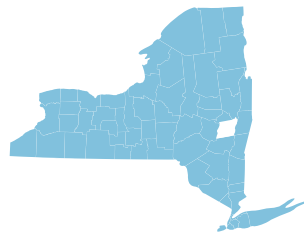
EXAMPLES OF EQUITY ACTIVITIES IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS¹⁶

Note: This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all equity activities across County departments; rather, it includes examples of activities undertaken in various departments.

- A number of training initiatives have been advanced by the County Executive's office, including the Bridges Out of Poverty¹⁷ training, implicit bias training, and strategies to promote a more diverse workforce.
- The Departments of Health and Mental Health undertook data analysis to identify geographic areas that needed to be targeted for outreach and awareness programs.
- The Department of Health developed a Community Health Improvement Plan focused on reducing health disparities within the County and promoting positive health outcomes for residents.
- The Department of Mental Health implemented a tobacco cessation program targeting individuals with mental health challenges who disproportionately use tobacco compared to the general population.
- The Departments of Probation and Children, Youth & Families have a number of initiatives in place related to reducing inequities in their systems and improving service utilization rates for people and families of color.
- The Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center has targeted service growth and outreach to rural areas of the County, which traditionally have been underserved by the Center.
- The Department for Aging added a performance measure to ensure contracted providers are targeting priority populations.
- Less formally, County departments, including the Department of Social Services and Veterans Service Bureau have been discussing the changing needs of their service populations and the best ways to address those needs.
- The Department of Human Resources has been examining hiring practices and how positions across County departments are classified and filled.
- The Department of Civil Services plans to expand posting of exam announcements to reach individuals with no computer or transportation access.
- The County Attorney has been involved in a lawsuit to address issues of pollution and contamination primarily affecting certain low-income neighborhoods within the city of Albany.
- Purchasing provides technical assistance and resources specifically related to the promotion of Women and Minority-Owned Businesses.
- The Department of Public Works has reviewed its hiring practices and provided outreach regarding available positions to local high schools in high-needs areas.
- The Water Purification District is in the process of creating an outreach program to target high school students for available jobs.
- The Division of Informational Service is exploring ways to increase public access to broadband services

¹⁶ Center for Human Services Research (CHSR), University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY). (2018). Albany County Equity Agenda: Data Findings/Report.

¹⁷ Payne, R.K., DeVol, P.E., Smith, T.D. (2006). Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities.



Albany County, New York

2020-2025 EQUITY AGENDA STRATEGIC PLANNING REPORT



CENTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University of New York