

July 3, 2018

# Fairfax Successful Children and Youth Policy Team



## Brief History

In December 2012, an assessment of racial and ethnic disparities in contact with Fairfax County's juvenile justice system was released. Among the key findings of this assessment was the pronouncement that Fairfax County lacked a shared, coordinated vision among and across county agencies serving justice-involved youth. To rectify this deficit, members of the Office of the County Executive convened a group of agency leaders, school administrators, and representatives from prominent youth advocacy organizations to participate in a cross-agency policy coordinating body known as the Successful Child and Youth Policy Coordinating Team (SCYPT). The original SCYPT members quickly realized that without elected officials, agency leadership, and a broader range of sectors represented it would be difficult to create meaningful policy change in the child and youth space. To get buy-in from the School Board and county Board of Supervisors, the original team from the County Executive's Office took the findings of the disproportionality report to a joint meeting of the two boards, which each agreed to appoint high-level members to the SCYPT. The team then started fresh, drawing up their new charter and beginning a more intentional process utilizing collective impact principles. The SCYPT's charter was approved at the first meeting of the second iteration of the Successful Children and Youth Policy Team in May, 2013.

## Mission Statement

The Successful Children and Youth Policy Team provides policy and resource guidance and champions the collective efforts of the Fairfax community to ensure all children, youth, and their families and communities have equitable access to quality services, supports, and opportunities to further their success and well-being.

### Location:

Fairfax County, Virginia

### Target age group:

Children and youth in Fairfax County

### Established:

May 2013

### Method of establishment:

Informal, followed by charter

### Organizational home:

Originally the County Executive's Office, now the Prevention Unit in the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services

### Funding source:

Fairfax County government

### Full time employees:

5, all housed in the Dept. of Neighborhood and Community Services

### Members:

Fairfax County Public Schools Members (9), Fairfax County Government Members (10), Community Members (15) [including voices from early childhood, faith-based organizations, families, health care, business, philanthropy, non-profits, higher education, advocacy, and out of school time]

### Meeting Schedule:

No fewer than four times a year, primarily during the school calendar year.

## Target Outcomes & Strategies for Impact

While the impetus for the creation of the Fairfax County Successful Child and Youth Policy Team (SCYPT) was a report on racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system, the SCYPT's mission (see page 1) is much broader than improving a singular system. Developing the vision, mission, and priority outcomes of the SCYPT was a 9-month, multi-step process that included hundreds of community members and representatives from a myriad of stakeholder groups.

This process began with a full-day retreat in 2014 that included dozens of representatives from non-profits, providers, schools, and faith-based organizations as well as members of Fairfax's child, youth, and family-serving departments and agencies. At this convening participants used collective impact principles to discuss community-wide data on how children and youth in Fairfax were doing. While previous child and youth-related collective impact efforts in Fairfax had been focused specifically on education, the SCYPT wanted to emphasize a more holistic approach where behavioral health, physical health, and safety were treated as worthy goals in and of themselves, not just as a means to doing well in school. This retreat yielded a draft vision statement, mission statement, and outcomes. Over several months, the SCYPT elicited feedback on this language from conversations with hundreds of community members. The SCYPT held a day-long community conversation, went to various county conferences, presented at Fairfax County Public Schools' mental health summit and a neighborhood conference of home owners associations, attended staff meetings, all with the goal of getting answers to two questions from as many community members as possible: What do you think of the proposed mission/vision/outcomes? Do you support the proposed mission/vision/outcomes? and; Do you see a role for yourself in this mission/vision and these goals as an individual stakeholder (provider, business community member, etc.)? While community members were primarily supportive, the SCYPT kept meticulous notes to track feedback, the SCYPT's response to that feedback, and any changes made as a result of that feedback. Most changes made reflected the need for language to be more inclusive of all community members. The revised mission, vision, and goals were then returned to the full SCYPT for final approval and to be adopted.

In order to assess progress towards its mission and vision, the SCYPT brainstormed potential indicators of progress for each of the eight community-wide outcome areas. The County's Prevention Data and Evaluation Manager then convened a 'data team' of data keepers from a broad range of agencies and the school system to solidify these indicators. The team, made up of the county's 'keepers and maintainers of existing data' were able to look at the list of outcome

## Outcome Areas & Indicators:

1. Children get a healthy start in life. [early prenatal care, low birth weight, preterm births]
2. Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed. [reaching kindergarten literacy benchmarks, number of publicly-funded, high-quality pre-K slots]
3. Children and youth succeed academically. [1<sup>st</sup> grade reading proficiency, standardized test scores, on-time graduation]
4. Children and youth are physically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally healthy and resilient. [BMI, childhood mortality, teen pregnancy, asthma, oral health, protective factors, student suspensions, stress levels, suicidal ideation, alcohol and drug use]
5. Children and youth are safe and free from violence and injury. [school safety offenses, carrying a weapon, DUI arrests, childhood mortality rates, crimes against children and youth]
6. Youth earn a post-secondary degree or career credential. [number of high school students earning a career credential, diplomas and completion, enrollment, degrees awarded]
7. Youth enter the workforce ready to succeed. [unemployment, employment status, youth not enrolled or in the workforce]
8. Youth contribute to the betterment of their community. [volunteer rates, leadership roles, engagement in faith communities, voter registration]

areas and then speak to what data currently existed that could be used as an indicator, add meaning to that data, and identify what data needed to be gathered or created. The data team then shared this list of available measures and indicators with the SCYPT, and now continuously provides the data and insight that populates the Successful Children & Youth section of Fairfax’s Community Health Dashboard.<sup>1</sup>

Jesse Ellis, the Prevention Manager in the Dept. of Neighborhood and Family Services and coordinator of the SCYPT describes two main ways that the SCYPT uses the Community Health Dashboard: “First, they use the data as a starting point for discussions on identifying key issues and priorities...Second, the data is used to frame issues, provide a baseline assessment, and shape proposals to address issues. So, for our behavioral health work, we’re using SCYPT key indicators as long-term outcome measures for the [behavioral health] plan, and we use the disaggregated data to drive our work to address disparities. For example, Hispanic girls have disproportionately high rates of depressive symptoms [in Fairfax]. So, our plan emphasizes that population in its strategies around health equity.”

## Embedding Equity

From its inception, the SCYPT was committed to addressing racial and social inequities in the county. Over its first 5 years, it has solidified this commitment by facilitating the development of the One Fairfax Policy<sup>2</sup>, which the school board and county recognized with a unique, joint resolution<sup>3</sup> in 2016. Jesse Ellis, the SCYPT coordinator, describes One Fairfax as “a policy that requires the county and the school system to take racial and social equity into account with every decision they make – whether it’s funding allocations or where we put our next bus stop – what impact will that have on racial and social equity and disproportionality?” The policy establishes “shared definitions, focus areas, and processes and organizational structure” to “help county and school leaders to look intentionally, comprehensively and systematically at barriers that may be creating gaps in opportunity.”



In the One Fairfax Policy the county and Fairfax County Public Schools commit to practices and processes aimed at “achieving equity and advancing opportunity for all,” including community engagement, training and capacity building around implicit bias and structural racism, the application of equity tools such as disparity studies, racial and social equity action planning in every department, and the incorporation of an accountability framework for achieving the goals laid out in the action planning process. While the One Fairfax Policy began with children and youth policy, it has expanded to apply to the county as a whole and every policy decision that it makes.

## Point of Contact:

Jesse Ellis, Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services, 703-324-5626, [Jesse.ellis@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Jesse.ellis@fairfaxcounty.gov)

1 [Community Health Dashboard - http://www.livehealthyfairfax.org/index.php?module=Tiles&controller=index&action=display&alias=CILandingPage](http://www.livehealthyfairfax.org/index.php?module=Tiles&controller=index&action=display&alias=CILandingPage)

2 [One Fairfax Policy - https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/one-fairfax](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/one-fairfax)

3 [Joint resolution - https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/pdf/one-fairfax-resolution.pdf](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/pdf/one-fairfax-resolution.pdf)