



Summit County

CHILDREN SERVICES

Building Families . . . Building Futures

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY &
INCLUSION ACTION
PLAN**

**Message from SCCS
Executive Director,
Julie Barnes,
M.Ed., LSW**



As a part of our new 5-year Strategic Plan, Summit County Children Services (SCCS) is making diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) a priority. We will be working to improve DEI within our organization and in the field of child protective services overall.

Our DEI journey will require deep reflection and a commitment to accountability and respect. The journey will begin with our most valuable asset – our staff – each of whom have the ability and opportunity to directly impact the lives of many children and families we serve each and every day.

Transformation does not happen overnight, and we recognize this as a long-term commitment. To move forward, we must create a workplace culture where diversity, equity, and inclusion are paramount in all we do.

I am encouraged by the team approach we are using to lead our DEI efforts and I am inspired by the forward-looking community of advocates and allies who have made the work of DEI a top priority for many years.

I welcome you to join Summit County Children Services on this journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Barnes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the DEI Action Plan is to lay the foundation for Summit County Children Services (SCCS) to fulfill our commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion. This plan outlines necessary actions and best practices to help the agency execute our shared vision of a more equitable and inclusive organizational culture that exemplifies SCCS' values.

We will use this Action Plan to review and evaluate our progress. We will regularly update the plan to identify additional actions to continue advancing our goals. By monitoring and tracking our DEI focused activities, SCCS will be better positioned to carry out our mission while intentionally supporting our workforce, as well as the clients and community we serve.

Laying the Groundwork

The events of 2020 made it even more clear that as a social services agency, we need to make stronger, sustained commitments to DEI work in order to best serve our clients, the community at large, and the field of social work. Accordingly, SCCS has developed an action plan containing the initiatives we are committing to during the next five years. This DEI Action Plan will be implemented and connected to the agency's newly issued 5-year Strategic Plan. This Action Plan is a living document that represents an evolving commitment on our part. Based on initial internal feedback and our careful consideration, we developed the plan around a racial focus with the understanding that the plan will incorporate any DEI-relevant issues.

In 2020, SCCS began preparing for the agency's new 5-year Strategic Plan. The agency's leadership felt it was important to ensure that SCCS draws on the strength of our wide range of employee perspectives and experiences to support a thoughtful consideration of differences. The agency's Executive Director and Human Resources Deputy Executive Director met with employees of color to hear their concerns and ideas of how to make the agency a more inclusive one, not only for one another but also for the children and clients we serve.

As a result, SCCS made a commitment to focus on the DEI needs of our agency and the community we serve. In the latter part of 2020, SCCS convened a DEI Steering Committee to develop strategies for the agency. The committee is comprised of diverse employees who bring forward their unique perspectives to address the needs of SCCS. In addition, SCCS entered into a contract agreement with **Kelli Scott**, MS, CDM, owner of Scott Strategy Partners, LLC who will be working with the Steering Committee and the Executive Team as the agency's DEI initiatives are developed.



Kelli has a BS in Business Management from Malone University, and a MS in Marketing & Communications from Franklin University. She earned a Certificate in Diversity Management from the Institute for Diversity in Health Management (American Hospital Association in Chicago) and Simmons College in Boston. Kelli served as the Regional D&I Consultant for Trinity Health Care providing Executive Coaching in the area of Diversity & Inclusion prior to starting her own consulting firm. She is currently the Director of Diversity & Engagement at AtriCure, Inc.

This DEI Action Plan lays out SCCS organizational goals which reflect the work we believe is essential in the area of DEI. SCCS will continue to recruit and retain multi-culturally competent employees and build a stronger culture of inclusion. We will work to diversify the community partners with whom we work and our donors to ensure that we are serving our clients in the best way possible.

Creating the Action Plan

Our intent with the DEI Action Plan is to create an action plan that clearly identifies measurable goals allowing for the tracking of our progress, over time. We invite everyone at SCCS, along with our community partners to participate in this effort in our pursuit of practice of social justice and racial equity for which we are accountable.

Improve how we evaluate and measure DEI at SCCS

SCCS will set clear goals against which we measure our progress. And, to measure that progress, we need metrics, regular assessments, and transparency.

To accomplish this, SCCS will:

- Clearly define what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to our agency;
- Implement the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics to set our baseline intercultural competence;
- Establish and use metrics and assessments to identify progress and gaps; and
- Document our progress on our agency's internal and external webpages that will house all data related to this Action Plan.

Create accountability for DEI actions

To make the progress we desire, we need to both set clear goals and establish accountability structures.

To accomplish this, SCCS will:

- Implement a DEI Steering Committee comprised of a multi-disciplinary team of employees;
- Hire a contract consultant who specialized in the area of DEI;
- Provide resources to ensure that DEI initiatives are implemented;
- Guarantee regular communication from the DEI Steering Committee and Executive Team regarding DEI initiatives;
- Tie DEI initiatives to the agency's 5-year Strategic Plan to ensure accountability from all departments within the agency; and
- Identify and train all staff on topics that directly impact DEI initiatives.

Invest in our employees

SCCS will work to employ a diverse workforce and ensure that all employees feel welcome and valued. We will embrace inclusive behavior, actions and services that will support our clients of all backgrounds.

To accomplish this, SCCS will:

- Improve existing DEI leadership skills by providing specific training to supervisory staff;
- Assess and overhaul the recruitment and hiring process so it prioritizes DEI as well as minimum qualifications and fit for our environment;
- Ensure that professional development opportunities are inclusive for our employees of color;
- Further invest in training, giving our employees valuable skills; and
- Ensure that employees of color have access to promotional opportunities at the agency.



**67% OF JOB SEEKERS CONSIDER
WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AN
IMPORTANT FACTOR WHEN
CONSIDERING JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

Source: Glassdoor

Conduct training and launch agency-wide programming

DEI work requires humility and a commitment to listening and learning. Training and providing programming tailored to the unique needs and perspectives of SCCS are central to improving our culture.

To accomplish this, SCCS will:

- Assess and update the training curriculum for SCCS, as well as thinking more expansively about existing programming, such as heritage months;
- Create a widespread culture of DEI through training for staff and community partners, including foster parents; and
- Ensure messages and actions with community partners and clients demonstrate that we are accepting and inclusive of all people.

Making It Happen

SCCS aspires to develop, promote and sustain a culture and reputation for being an organization grounded in equity that leverages diversity and inclusion in all we do. We will employ external partners to enhance our understanding, skills and expertise around DEI, but also look inward to understand better each other and our respective backgrounds. We are working with intention to advance DEI in the most meaningful ways. We seek to empower each employee to articulate a clear understanding and each of their roles in advancing our work.

The first and most crucial step was gaining commitment from the SCCS executive leadership team which includes the Board of Trustees, Executive Director and Executive Team members

For the success of this DEI Action Plan, management will set an expectation that all employees must support and promote DEI. Regular updates at agency management meetings and access to the agency's DEI Consultant will be critical to ensuring that these messages are heard and implemented.



MORE THAN 50% OF CURRENT EMPLOYEES WANT THEIR WORKPLACE TO DO MORE TO INCREASE DIVERSITY.

SOURCE: GLASSDOOR

As we advance our DEI work in a meaningful way, we will **build** trust and safety by engaging with employees, and ensuring that we nurture our **talent**, and create a culture that supports retention of our employees.

Employees are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to fully engage in the work. Additionally, the NASW Code of Ethics clearly outlines the requirements for social workers to advance the needs of social justice in their work.

“Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. “Clients” is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.”

NASW Code of Ethics Preamble

Best Practice Approach

Consistent with the agency’s philosophy for Child Welfare Protection, SCCS will apply best current practices in each of the key DEI Initiative listed below.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a quality management philosophy that encourages all team members to continuously ask what can be done better. By employing this strategy, SCCS is able to achieve best practice in the area of DEI. “Continuous quality improvement is firmly grounded in the overall mission, vision, and values of the agency/system. Perhaps most importantly, it is dependent upon the active inclusion and participation of staff at all levels of the agency/system, children, youth, families, and stakeholders throughout the process (National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and Casey Family Programs, 2005)”.

It is our hope that this DEI Action Plan will be an inclusive tool to encourage input on these initiatives, as well as a means to foster collaboration with our community to achieve these goals. Our intent is to create an action plan that clearly delineates our goals in a measurable way, allowing for the tracking of our progress, as well as failures, over time. We invite everyone at SCCS, along with our community partners to participate in this effort in our pursuit of social justice and racial equity for which we are accountable. The following graphic helps to understand the approach SCCS will employ on this journey.



Key DEI Initiatives

Organizational Commitment

SCCS is committed to becoming a leader in diversity, equity & inclusion.

1. Promote diversity from the Executive Director as she leads the agency's DEI Steering Committee.
2. Involve senior leadership team (or all management) in DEI efforts.
3. Provide cultural competency training to all employees of the agency.
4. Develop succession plan to increase diversity at all levels of the agency that matches SCCS' commitment to diversity.
5. Direct agency resources to DEI efforts.
6. Set expectations for inclusive behavior and an inclusive environment.

Work Climate & Culture

SCCS is committed to fostering a work culture that values the diversity of our employees and seeks to promote equitable and inclusive policies and practices.

1. Focus on SCCS values to align all agency practices.
2. Evaluate our relationships with community partners and build stronger relationships with diverse organizations as a matter of best practice for all children we serve.
3. Evaluate and clarify the role and responsibility of the agency's Diversity Committee, which acts as an advocate and resource for cultural competence at SCCS.
4. Evaluate the agency's complaint process, internal and external, to ensure it is a diversity-sensitive process for resolving conflicts that emerge around race, culture, ethnicity, gender, or other diversity-related issues.
5. Foster a culture of open communication and transparency, and enable forums for discussion of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Learning & Development

SCCS is committed to ensuring a diverse workforce that is prepared to meet the needs of our clients and the community we serve.

1. Prioritize development of a diverse and culturally competent workforce.
2. Regularly assess training needs and provide training equitably to meet current and future workforce needs.
3. Evaluate the agency's process for identifying and implementing training programs for staff.
4. Identify and implement ways to equitably provide opportunities for mentoring, leadership, training, and upward mobility programs.

Recruitment

SCCS is committed to actively recruiting, promoting and retaining a diverse workforce that is reflective of the population we serve.

1. Forecast workforce needs, set strategic diversity hiring goals and measure progress against them.
2. Assess policies and procedures for potential bias in selection and remove barriers to DEI.
3. Create and seize opportunities to hire strategically and opportunistically from targeted diverse populations.
4. Actively reach out to diverse populations in our recruitment process through professional networks, online and social media, diversity websites and other forums to expand our outbound reach.
5. Promote equal opportunity in our selection process through diverse interview/hiring strategies, blind screening, cohort hires, and culturally sensitive language in job postings, interview questions and evaluation criteria.

Retention

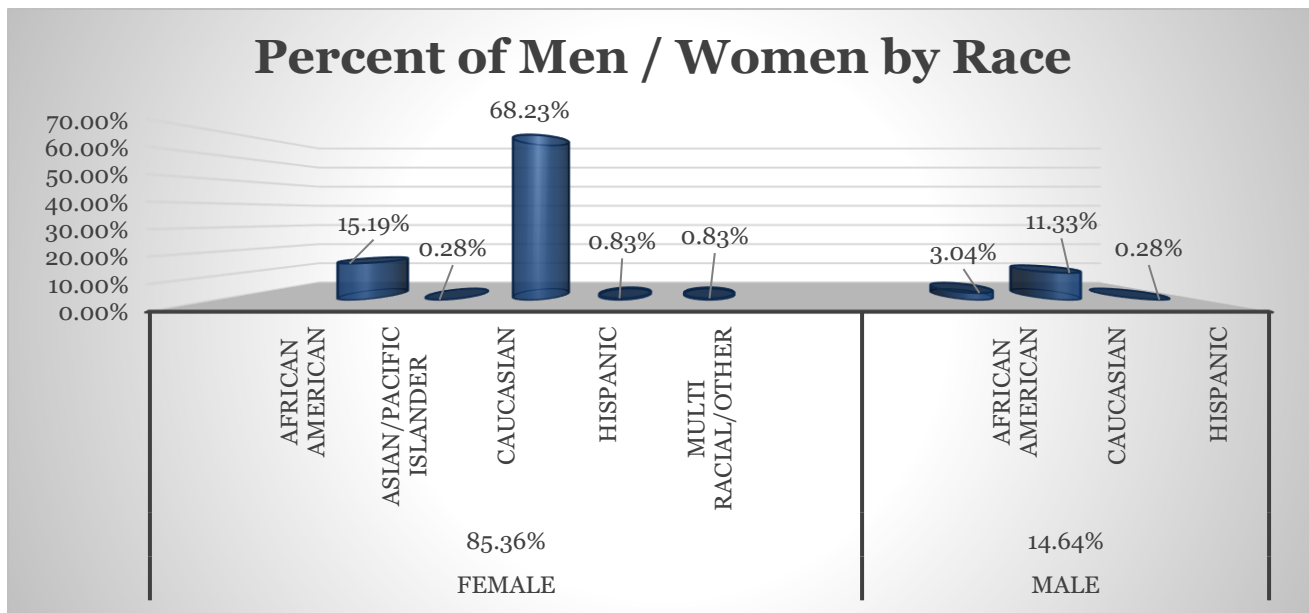
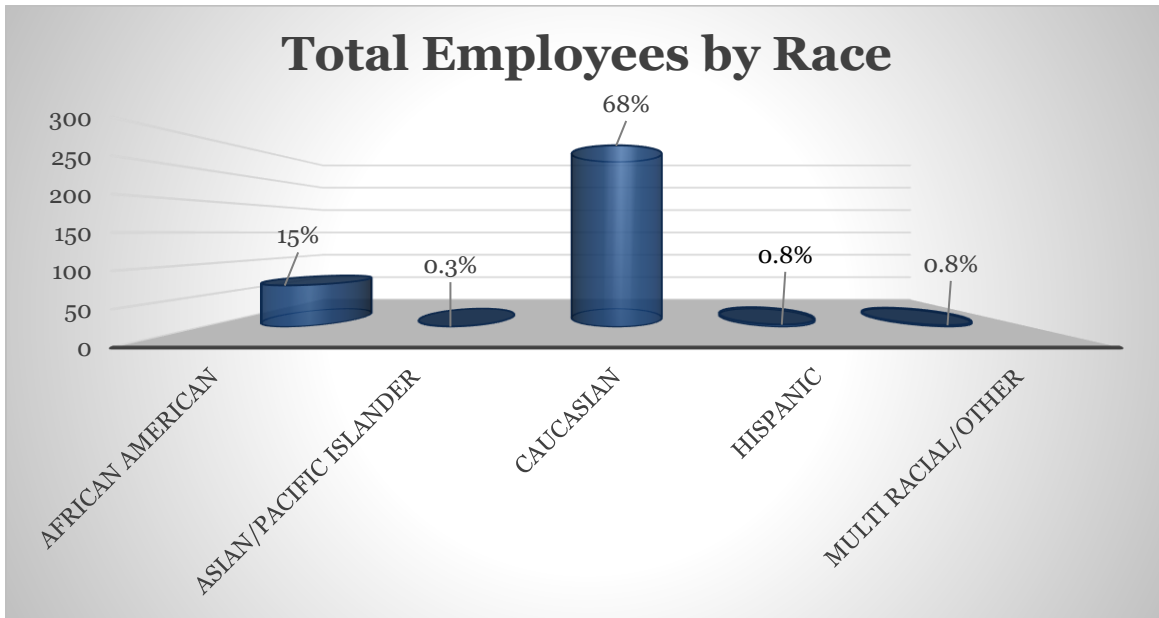
SCCS is committed to proactively retaining a talented, committed and diverse workforce.

1. Evaluate the agency's onboarding and new employee orientation processes to ensure a welcoming atmosphere that includes information on the agency's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.
2. Create reward and recognition programs to honor the achievements of all employees that support the mission, contribute to the community and promote diversity, equity and inclusion.
3. Actively and regularly measure employee satisfaction through the Stay Interview process to promote candor and fairness; and evaluate the results and take action for continuous improvement.
4. Conduct exit interviews and apply feedback to improve retention.

SCCS Demographic Data

SCCS collects demographic data in accordance with the reporting requirements from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The categories of data we collect with respect to gender, race/ethnicity, and job grouping are all determined by the EEOC. We recognize that this data is reflective of only certain aspects of diversity and not a complete representation of the diversity of our employees.

The following SCCS data is as of April 1, 2021.



DataUSA* tells us that there are currently 871,000 social workers in the workforce (2017 data) with an average age of 42.3 which is consistent with the average age of this workforce population at SCCS. We also know that this field is dominated by woman.

Additionally, 58.4% of social workers are White (non-Hispanic), making that the most common race or ethnicity in the occupation. And 20.6% of social workers are Black (non-Hispanic), which is the second most common race or ethnic breakdown for social workers.

At SCCS, 75% of all Caseworkers identify as White (non-Hispanic) followed by 21% of our Caseworker population who identify as African American/Black (non-Hispanic). Women also make up 88% of the Caseworker workforce compared to 12% of men.

The purpose of this data analysis is to help identify where SCCS has gaps in representation so as to benchmark directed improvements in the areas of recruitment and retention.

*Information about Data USA**

In 2014, Deloitte, Datawheel, and Cesar Hidalgo, Professor at the MIT Media Lab and Director of Collective Learning, came together to embark on an ambitious journey -- to understand and visualize the critical issues facing the United States in areas like jobs, skills and education across industry and geography. And, to use this knowledge to inform decision making among executives, policymakers and citizens.

Their team, comprised of economists, data scientists, designers, researchers and business executives, worked for over a year with input from policymakers, government officials and everyday citizens to develop Data USA, the most comprehensive website and visualization engine of public US Government data. Data USA tells millions of stories about America. Through advanced data analytics and visualization, it tells stories about: places in America—towns, cities and states; occupations, from teachers to welders to web developers; industries--where they are thriving, where they are declining and their interconnectedness to each other; and education and skills, from where is the best place to live if you're a computer science major to the key skills needed to be an accountant.

Data USA puts public US Government data in your hands. Instead of searching through multiple data sources that are often incomplete and difficult to access, you can simply point to Data USA to answer your questions. Data USA provides an open, easy-to-use platform that turns data into knowledge. It allows millions of people to conduct their own analyses and create their own stories about America – its people, places, industries, skill sets and educational institutions. Ultimately, accelerating society's ability to learn and better understand itself.

Source: <https://datausa.io/about/background>