Evaluation and Research Reports Equity Badge and Online Supplement

Demonstrating a Commitment to Equity through Evaluation and Research

DCYF's Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability's Evaluation and Research (EaR) division is committed to equitable approaches in its research, evaluation, and data practices. To demonstrate this commitment, each of our reports now includes a 'Commitment Towards Equity' badge, indicating how the work advances the agencies strategic priority to eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity for the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

Authors highlight the specific areas of focus the report addresses, to clarify the equity goal of the project. Below are descriptions that elaborate each area and illustrative examples of systematic equity approaches in each of the five areas 1) identifying disproportionalities and disparities, 2) identifying barriers and supports, 3) assessing policies, 4) disaggregating data, and 5) incorporating community feedback to promote equity for the children and families we serve.

1. Identifying Disproportionalities in Resource/ Service Access, and Disparities in Outcomes

Disparities are unequal access or outcomes for one group compared to another group. Understanding disparities in key agency outcomes helps highlight areas needing targeted interventions, ensuring fair and equitable distribution of resources.

This area of focus may involve:

- Analyzing differences in enrollment rates, access to services, and outcomes based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location.
- Understanding how these disparities impact the quality of services received and long-term success rates.
- Examining patterns of service utilization and the factors influencing these patterns to highlight areas needing targeted interventions.

2. Identifying Barriers and Supports to DCYF Resources and Service Access

DCYF is responsible for allocating resources (services, subsidies, information, access) to programs. Focusing evaluation and research on how these resources are distributed can provide insight into (in)equitable barriers and supports.

This area of focus may involve:

- Examining access challenges such as physical accessibility, transportation, language barriers, and digital access.
- Examining enrollment challenges like the complexity of the process, awareness of programs, and eligibility criteria.
- Evaluating support mechanisms, including community outreach programs and partnerships with local organizations, and ensuring equitable resource allocation are crucial for improving access.

3. Assessing Policies, Program Implementation, and Practices that may (1) contribute to disparities or (2) reduce disparities

(In)equity is held and perpetuated in policy, programs and practices. These include disparate impacts or unintended consequences difficult to discern without using an anti-racism analysis to identify in policy, programs and practices.

This area of focus may involve:

- Evaluating existing policies for biases and their impact on different demographic groups.
- Analyzing the effectiveness and consistency of program delivery methods and identifying best practices for inclusive service delivery.
- Establishing mechanisms for monitoring and feedback and continuously improving processes to mitigate disparities.

4. Disaggregating and Controlling for Key Demographic Variables

To accurately assess equity and equality, it is essential to both disaggregate data and control for key demographic variables in statistical models. This approach allows for a detailed understanding of how resources are allocated and how policies and programs impact identifiable groups differently. By disaggregating and controlling for demographic variables, we can identify and address disparities and disproportionalities more effectively, ensuring that our efforts are inclusive and equitable.

This area of focus may involve:

- Collecting detailed demographic data, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability status, and socioeconomic status.

- Disaggregating data to break down outcomes by key demographic variables, providing a clear view of how different groups are impacted.

- Controlling for demographic variables in statistical models to isolate the effects of those variables on outcomes, helping to identify whether observed disparities and disproportionalities persist after accounting for factors such as socioeconomic status or geographic location.

- Analyzing the data using appropriate techniques and presenting it transparently in reports while ensuring data privacy.

- Using these insights to inform targeted interventions and decision-making to improve equity in service delivery.

5. Leveraging Community Voice

Incorporating the community's voice into our processes ensures that the needs and perspectives of those served by the DCYF are considered.

This area of focus may involve:

- Leveraging existing feedback mechanisms from programs and services that directly interact with the community. This includes gathering and analyzing data from surveys, focus groups, and feedback forms conducted by these programs.
- Establishing partnerships with community organizations and stakeholders who have direct contact with the community to gain insights and data relevant to research and evaluation processes.
- Using secondary data sources that reflect community perspectives and experiences by analyzing existing reports, studies, and publications from community-focused organizations and initiatives.
- Scheduling regular consultations with leaders of programs and services that interface with the community and incorporating their insights and feedback into the research and evaluation reports.

Aligning with DCYF's Stated Commitment to Advance Equity

DCYF's commitment to advancing racial equity and social justice is central to our Strategic Priorities, Performance Goals, and Operating Principles. The five areas of focus outlined above directly align with the agency's broader goals to promote equity and dismantle systemic barriers.

By employing these strategies, we ensure that our evaluation and research projects not only reflect but actively support DCYF's commitment to equity. This ongoing effort allows us to identify where inequities exist, understand their root causes, and implement targeted interventions to create more equitable outcomes for the children, youth, and families we serve.

To learn more about DCYF's Strategic Priorities and commitment to equity, please visit the DCYF Strategic Plan and the Agency Performance Page.

The strategies above are derived from a brief published by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE). Learn more here: Racial Equity Research and Resources | The Administration for Children and Families