

The SOCAC racial equity review policy and procedure is adapted from the [Racial Equity Toolkit](#) developed by the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#).

Background

The SOCAC acknowledges the harm and systemic oppression of historically marginalized groups at the hands of Oregon’s governmental institutions and system partners. These systems include education, child welfare, criminal justice, health and disability services, and other systems where an over representation of marginalized populations exists. The SOCAC strives towards equitable consideration of policies and distribution of resources to address disproportionality in communities.

Racial equity tools are designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions, including policies, practices, programs, and budgets. It is both a product and a process. Use of a racial equity tool can help to develop strategies and actions that reduce racial inequities and improve success for all groups.

Too often, policies and programs have been developed and implemented without thoughtful consideration of racial equity. When racial equity is not explicitly brought into operations and decision-making, racial inequities are likely to be perpetuated. Racial equity tools provide a structure for institutionalizing the consideration of racial equity.

From the inception of the system of care, government at the local, regional, state, and federal level has played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequity. Despite progress in addressing explicit discrimination, racial inequities continue to be deep, pervasive, and persistent across the country. Racial inequities exist across all system of care indicators, including in education, child welfare, juvenile justice, housing, behavioral health and disability services. Without intentional intervention, system of care partners will continue to perpetuate racial inequities. The SOCAC has the ability to implement policy change at multiple levels and across multiple sectors to drive larger systemic change. Routine use of this racial equity tool explicitly integrates racial equity into SOCAC operations and decision making.

Leading with race

As described by GARE¹,

“Within other identities — income, gender, sexuality, education, ability, age, citizenship and geography — there are inequities based on race. Knowing this helps the [system of care] take an intersectional approach, while always naming the role that race plays in people’s experiences and outcomes.

- *To have maximum impact, focus and specificity are necessary. Strategies to achieve racial equity differ from those to achieve equity in other areas. “One-size fits all” strategies are rarely successful.*
- *A racial equity framework that is clear about the differences between individual, institutional and structural racism, as well as the history and current reality of inequities, has applications for other marginalized groups.*
- *Race can be an issue that keeps other marginalized communities from effectively coming together. An approach that recognizes the inter-connected ways in which marginalization takes place will help to achieve greater unity across communities.”*

Policy

The following questions will be discussed and satisfactorily answered prior to any Council decision (see Appendix A). In circumstances where an immediate decision is needed, the abbreviated procedure may be used (see Appendix B).

- Proposal: What is the policy, program, practice or budget decision under consideration? Does the policy, program, practice or budget decision center the expressed needs of youth and family? What are the desired results² and outcomes³?
- Data: What’s the data? What does the data tell us?
- Community engagement: How have youth and families been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?
- Analysis and strategies: Who will benefit from or be burdened by your proposal? What are the strategies for advancing racial equity or mitigating unintended consequences?
- Implementation: What is the plan for implementation?

¹ <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/about/our-approach/race/>

² Results are at the community level are the end conditions we are aiming to impact.

³ Outcomes are a measurement of the intended result. Measures respond to questions quantity (How much?), quality (How well?) and impact (Is anyone better off?).

- Accountability and communication: How will SOCAC ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?

Policy and Procedure Review

The SOCAC racial equity review policy and procedure will be reviewed bi-annually with Council Bylaws. The SOCAC will discuss whether the racial equity policy and procedure has had the intended effect of reducing inequities or improving equity to determine whether changes are needed to the policy and procedure.

Appendix A: Racial equity worksheet

Proposal: What is the policy, program, practice or budget decision under consideration?

1. What is the name of the proposal under consideration?

LC 429 related to council composition (2025 legislative session)

2. Does it center the expressed needs of youth and family?

Yes – related to additional youth and family representation on the council.

3. What are the desired results⁴ and outcomes⁵?

The System of Care Advisory Council (SOCAC) will increase our partnership with people who have used Oregon’s child serving systems by doubling the number of youth members and family members who are appointed to the Council. The system of care model requires that youth and their families are full partners in care at the service, policy, and funding levels. In order to improve the level of partnership between state agencies, community-based providers, youth, and their families, the SOCAC needs more family and youth voices at our tables. Increasing family and youth representatives on SOCAC will help the system of care better identify the effectiveness and efficacy of services and supports directly from families and youth using those resources in their communities.

4. What areas will the decision impact?

Pregnancy and post-natal

Health care systems

Early childhood intervention

Housing and other social determinants

Behavioral health services

Child welfare

Intellectual/developmental disability services

Juvenile justice

☐ Other:

Education settings

⁴ Results are at the community level are the end conditions we are aiming to impact.

⁵ Outcomes are a measurement of the intended result. Measures respond to questions quantity (How much?), quality (How well?) and impact (Is anyone better off?).

Data: What does the data tell us?

1. What geographic areas will be impacted? If impacting specific counties or regions, please list.

Statewide

- ☐ Metro areas
- ☐ Rural areas
- ☐ Other:

2. What are the racial demographics of those living in the identified geographic areas?

[See 2023 Census Data.](#)

3. Quantitatively, what do we know about existing racial inequities, including root causes.

Race/ethnicity data is incomplete and inconsistently collected across systems, but Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native or multi-racial identified youth are under-represented in mental health, behavioral health and intellectual disability, /developmental disability services (Castro-Ramirez et al., 2021).⁶ Causes of this underrepresentation are generally believed to be lack of access to care, social determinant related barriers, lack of culturally/linguistically responsive workforce, medical racism⁷ and ableism,⁸ and stigma and distrust in institutions and publicly funded services (Castro-Ramirez et al., 2021).⁹ Subsequently, Black, Hispanic and AI/AN identified youth are over-represented in child welfare and juvenile justice systems due to institutional bias, racism, and lack of access to preventative services (Cantey et al., 2022).¹⁰

4. What SOC outcome measures are related to this proposal?

Not applicable – this decision is related to council composition.

⁶Castro-Ramirez, F., Al-Suwaidi, M., Garcia, P., Rankin, O., Ricard, J. R., & Nock, M. K. (2021). Racism and poverty are barriers to the treatment of youth mental health concerns. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 50(4), 534-546.

⁷ Ortega, A. N., & Roby, D. H. (2021). Ending structural racism in the US health care system to eliminate health care inequities. *Jama*, 326(7), 613-615.

⁸ Petersen, K. H., & Chase, A. J. (2023). Ableism in medicine: disability-related barriers to healthcare access. In *Cases on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the Health Professions Educator* (pp. 19-40). IGI Global.

⁹ Castro-Ramirez, F., Al-Suwaidi, M., Garcia, P., Rankin, O., Ricard, J. R., & Nock, M. K. (2021). Racism and poverty are barriers to the treatment of youth mental health concerns. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 50(4), 534-546.

¹⁰ Cantey, N. I., Smith, L. W., Sorrells, S. F., Kelly, D., Jones, C., & Burrus, D. (2022). Navigating Racism in the Child Welfare System. *Child Welfare*, 100(2), 163-184.

5. Have we asked the right questions of the right people? What are the data gaps? What additional data would be helpful for analyzing the proposal, and how will this data be obtained?

We have asked the youth and family representatives currently in appointed seats, and heard from other members of the SOC youth advisory committee who have strongly advocated for more appointed seats on SOCAC specifically reserved for youth and family with lived experience. Currently, only 4 out of 25 appointed seats (16%) on the Council are reserved for youth and family members with lived experience in the system. If passed, youth and family members would represent a quarter (27%) of appointed seats.

There is lack of research and statistics on the impact of medical racism and medical ableism.

Community Engagement: How have youth and families been engaged?

1. Who will be most affected by this decision?

Youth and family representatives on the council, those interested in appointed membership, and all members of the SOCAC.

2. How have these youth and families been engaged in development of this proposal?

LC 429 was drafted at the request of youth and family representatives who currently serve on SOCAC and the SOC Youth Advisory Subcommittee.

3. What do youth and family have to say about the burdens and benefits of this proposal?

Current family and youth representatives feel their voices are often overshadowed by other system leaders and providers on SOCAC. Intimidation, fear of retaliation, or lack of confidence may prevent youth and family from speaking up in public meetings with so many other professionals. Doubling youth and family members on the Council will increase voices with lived experience who have voting power, and reduce the stress of current members who feel they must represent all families and youth with similar challenges in the state.

The current statute also requires youth who are “currently or were previously a ward, youth or adjudicated youth, as those terms are defined in ORS 419A.004”. Youth specifically have shared that these terms can be stigmatizing and aren’t well known or understood. If passed the statute would be modified to read youth who are currently or were “involved with the child welfare or juvenile justice system.”

4. What have we heard about the factors that produce or perpetuate racial inequities and intersections of all marginalized identities related to this proposal?

Factors we have heard which may perpetuate inequities include tokenistic involvement of people with lived expertise, reduced awareness and increased stigma, and SOCAC members making decisions with a lack of understanding that people with lived experience provide. [Youth-Centered Strategies for Hope, Healing, and Health](#), highlights several issues that impact access to mental health care for youth who identify as "BIPOC", including high mental health costs, a lack of culturally diverse mental health professionals and inadequate access to community services and supports that promote mental health (McKinney et al., 2022)¹¹. This report recommends engaging youth, especially those from marginalized communities, in needs assessments, program development, implementation and policy-making around mental health and well-being.

5. Is there a need to expand engagement to impacted groups before a decision is made?

Given that engagement with impacted groups has already occurred, SOCAC does not believe additional engagement is needed.

Analysis and strategies: What are the strategies for advancing racial equity?

1. How will proposal increase or decrease racial equity?

Concept won't directly impact racial equity, but passage may diversify council makeup.

2. What are potential unintended consequences? What benefits may result?

Potential unintended consequences could include additional time required for SOCAC decisions using the consensus model, because adding more people to the process will require more discussion and time. The benefit of this slower consensus process will be that Council decisions and actions will be more deeply considered, and more people with lived experience will contribute to solution-generation.

SOCAC will likely require additional funds to support stipends, travel costs, and other investments required to ensure meaningful access and participation in meetings. This can be addressed via the Fiscal Impact Statement connected to the bill, which will allow the SOCAC to request the appropriate funding amount to address this need. The funding will need to be approved by the Oregon Legislature. In the event the bill passes, but funding is not allocated, SOCAC will need to make budget adjustments and seek additional resources to cover additional costs. There is potential for harm if budget does not adequately cover stipends or other compensation measures.

3. Are the impacts aligned with outcomes defined in Step #1?

¹¹ McKinney, S., Ruiz, D., Vázquez, A. M., & Alvarez, M. E. (2022). Youth-centered strategies for hope, healing and health.

Power dynamics may still exist despite participation of additional youth and family members. Ongoing support and technical assistance is needed to help Council fully live into shared value of co-creation with those with lived system experience.

Implementation: What is the plan for implementation?

1. Describe the plan for implementing the decision.

If passed by the legislature, additional youth and family representatives would be recruited and onboarded to SOCAC. Specialized support will be provided by SOCAC's youth and family engagement strategist and contractors as appropriate. Additional tools are needed to decrease racial disparities.

2. Is the plan:

Realistic

Adequately funded

Adequately resourced (staff/time)

Adequately resourced (data collection/reporting/community engagement)

3. If the answer to any of the above is no, what resources or actions are needed?

Accountability and communication: How will SOCAC ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?

1. How will impacts be documented and evaluated? How will we know the anticipated outcomes are achieved and impacted communities experienced the intended impact?

Applications will be submitted to Governor's office. The SOCAC membership workgroup will review applications, and make member recommendations with final appointments confirmed by the Governor. Improvements to meaningful engagement, youth/family leadership opportunities, or impact on the decision-making of the Council may be assessed by contractors hired by the SOCAC. These contractors may require additional funding to complete these analyses.

2. How and when will impacts on racial equity be evaluated and reported?

The DEI Committee periodically evaluates diversity of SOCAC membership, and makes recommendations to ensure it is reflective of populations with multi-system involvement.

3. What communication strategies will be used to ensure public accountability – especially for youth and families most impacted by the decision?

Results will be documented on publicly facing SOCAC website – via SOCAC roster and member biographies.

Appendix B: Abbreviated worksheet

The reality of working in government is that there are often unanticipated priorities that are sometimes inserted on a fast track. Even with a short time frame, asking a few questions relating to racial equity can have a meaningful impact. The following abbreviated worksheet may be used when immediate decisions are needed.

- What are the racial equity impacts of this particular decision?
- Who will benefit from or be burdened by the particular decision?
- Are there strategies to mitigate the unintended consequences?