

# Advancing Race Equity in TANF via Training & Staff Development

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ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**  
Office of Family Assistance

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Research shows leaders have a key responsibility to provide resources and organizational support to enable others to use their talents.\* This toolkit is an overview of how Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) leaders can create resources and develop concepts to successfully advance race equity, using training and staff development. By including race equity principles, TANF block grants can thrive and have a positive impact on communities.

\*Landry-Bourne, T. (2022) *Exploring the phenomena of applied strengths-based leadership and the five exemplary leadership practices to amplify employee engagement within social services.*



Racial equity is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color. Ø

– What is Racial Equity, Key Terms and Concepts, Race Forward

## Staff Training & Development to Advance Race Equity

Consider three phases to work towards eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone.

### Phase 1

Create a common language with partners and stakeholders and begin dialogues to assess community and organizational needs for race equity.



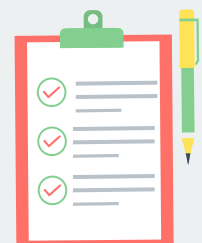
### Phase 2

Share findings with key decision makers, and identify training and staff development options and a framework for decision making.



### Phase 3

Create a sustainable action plan to start advancing race equity in TANF with training and staff development.



## Understanding Race Equity Needs



- ✓ Define terms and establish a shared language for dialogue
- ✓ Engage community and staff in feedback loops using:
  - Interviews
  - Surveys
  - Intersectional workgroups, committees, etc.
- Conduct community and organizational race equity assessments and gather data:
  - ✓ • Review agency documents, websites, and existing training
  - Review existing administrative data and research

### Create a Common Language

For race equity initiatives to be most successful in TANF, we all need to be speaking the same language.



Use vetted sources for common terms, like the [Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\) Equity in Action](#) or the [Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\) Racial Equity Toolkit](#)

Host conversations with TANF administration and leaders, broader agency leadership and key contributors to gather suggested race equity terms for consistent use.

### Resources for Conducting Equity Assessments

#### Review of Organizational Assessments

Journal of Diversity Management, Organizational Assessment

#### Research & Organizational Assessment

GARE, Racial Equity Action Plans

#### Tool for Organizational Self Assessment Related to Racial Equity

The Coalition of Communities of Color

### Examples in Action

[San Francisco Human Services Agency Race Equity Action Plan](#): SFHSA crafted their Race Equity Action Plan through agency and community assessments utilizing resources from GARE. Identifying community needs became the plan's foundation, informed by staff focus groups and strategic partner interviews. The plan describes San Francisco's commitment to establishing common language for shared dialogue on race equity.

[Practitioner's Perspectives Engaging Hispanic Families in New Mexico](#): Research conducted by The Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University used surveys of TANF practitioners in NM to better understand the unique experiences and needs of Hispanic families with low-income. Research institutions can be a powerful partner to human services agencies in supporting efforts to better understand the composition and needs of families with low-incomes and specific populations within.

## Phase 2

# Critical Decision making



- ✓ Engage critical decision makers with race equity landscape information
  - Identify key decision makers, including community members and staff

- ✓ Share TANF program and training race equity findings with key decision makers
  - Using the race equity assessment, identify and discuss potential implications
  - Provide decision makers with options for training and staff development that align with community and organizational needs for race equity
  - Analyze options and inform Phase 3 using a framework for decision making

### Core Values



Ground conversations in five core values that cut across all components of training programs. Described in [A New Key to Success: Guidelines for Effective Staff Development and Training Programs in Human Services Agencies](#) these can serve as a framework for critical decision making.

### Common Strategies to Support Key Decision making

Based on learnings from peer-to-peer discussions on staff training and development with TANF administrators and staff in 2022:



- Determine a frameworks for decision making
- Meaningfully distinguish between equity and equality
- Utilize assessments and research to inform key decisions
- Anticipate a need for direct coaching and implicit bias trainings
- Determine additional foundational training needs
- Continue use of cross-sectional workgroups, or committees
- Include community partners and staff at varying levels in the decision-making process
- Dedicate staffing to drive the work forward

### Examples in Action

Washington State's TANF Time Limits Extensions: Driven by research on disproportionalities in TANF time-limits, the WA State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Economic Services Administration (ESA) engaged "vertical slices" of staff within the division to review the data to pinpoint gaps in staff development, training and processes for implementing TANF time-limit extensions. With staff feedback, DSHS created a customized approach to close the gaps.

The 2017 Evaluation of the Jobs Initiative describes strategies used by six sites in major US cities to test innovations to increase access to good jobs for young people in low-income neighborhoods, including TANF investments. Informed by a cross-site workgroup, the initiative addressed common challenges with employer engagement and equity. To address these challenges, the sites used a combination of strategies including changes to hiring practices, adapting staff guidance/manuals and implementing cultural competency training.

### Putting the Pieces Together

Using the tools, resources and strategies shared above you can:

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- ✓ Support an active commitment modeled by leadership
    - Align great leaders and champions for change with other team members
    - Move dialogue forward to work with the community on race-related issues
    - Incorporate the voices of families as an essential aspect of meeting the needs of the community
  - ✓ Use clear communication, visioning, and action planning to keep staff informed and engaged
    - Develop an impactful action plan, including transparent and continuous communication of progress with leaders, key partners, and community members
    - Continue to gather and analyze data to maintain continuous improvement and evaluate efforts
  - ✓ Develop and implement programs to empower community members to lead and initiate community change to ensure sustainable and lasting progress/change

#### Additional Tools & Resources

- [Advancing EDI, A Toolkit for Leaders](#)
- [Creating a Racial Equity and Social Justice Policy](#)
- [Racial Equity Core Teams](#)
- [How Can You Be An Active Ally?](#)
- [Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity](#)
- [National Equity Atlas: Racial Equity Index](#)



It can be challenging to know where to begin to implement staff training and development that centers on race equity in TANF. The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) has a [customizable race equity planning worksheet](#) that provides a suggested framework to start promoting equitable economic mobility for all families.