



**DIVERSITY,
EQUITY &
INCLUSION**

SAGINAW COUNTY COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Action Plan 2021-24

The Importance of Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

On behalf of the SCCMHA Board of Directors, we affirm the importance of advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at SCCMHA. Expanding the diversity of our workforce and providing training and other resources to elevate the competencies of our staff on matters of race and culture will greatly assist in better engagement, and the experience of treatment and support services uniquely provided by our system of care to those we serve, their families and the greater Saginaw community.

We congratulate our CEO, Administration, DEI Action Team and all the staff for their

participation and cooperation in this initiative of the last three years. We look forward to future accomplishments being made and extend our thanks and appreciation to those who have worked tirelessly to advance SCCMHA in being a more diverse and inclusive organization.



TRACEY RAQUEPAW

Chair, SCCMHA Board of Directors

SCCMHA Policy Review Through a DEI Lens

At SCCMHA, we have investigated ways to adjust our policies through a DEI lens to stay on target with our Action Plan.

To achieve this, we have employed an Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) tool to bring the DEI lens to the annual agency policy review process. The EIA tool was developed by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) through the Office of Race Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Office of Equity and Minority Health, being co-authored by Yesenia Murillo and Jegede Brenda.

As you are no doubt aware, SCCMHA has voluminous policies that guide the services we provide and the work we do, and the annual review of our policies can be a time-consuming endeavor.

Kristie Wolbert, Executive Director of Clinical Services and Programs, has been leading the effort to use the EIA tool in the review process, along with key clinical staff leadership, including Charlotte Fondren, Monique Taylor-Whitson and Kentera Patterson. It was determined to start with the policies that have the most direct impact on the people we serve. Eleven such policies have been reviewed using the EIA tool thus far.

There is still much work to do in training staff and institutionalizing the use of the EIA process to expand the work to other SCCMHA policies. This is work we will continue to do going forward.

To learn more about policy review efforts, [click here.](#)



SAGINAW COUNTY
COMMUNITY MENTAL
HEALTH AUTHORITY

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*Back row (L to R): Andrew Fergerson, Jennifer Keilitz, Ryan Mulder, Ernie Ahmad, Fred Stahl
Front row (L to R): Monique Taylor-Whitson, Kristie Wolbert, Sandra Lindsey, Kentera Patterson, Melissa Gutzwiller*

SCCMHA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan Report 2021-2024

From the beginning, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan was always rooted in finding ways to better serve the racially and culturally diverse populations served by SCCMHA, starting with the health disparities for persons of color revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic that persist to present day. These disparities specifically include access to appropriate levels of care for persons of color as well as concerns about the experience of care they do receive, and obstacles to improving health outcomes. In response, SCCMHA and other Community Mental Health Service Programs (CMHSP) in the 21-county Mid-State Health Network (MSHN) PIHP Region have been monitoring these disparities and simultaneously working on strategies to address them.

At the time our planning was just getting underway during the early months of the pandemic, our attention was further engaged by the disparate social injustice of treatment by police in the high-profile murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. SCCMHA, like many other organizations in Saginaw, put forth a written statement publicly condemning these events and calling for social justice and our staff participated in related local protest marches. What we learned

about COVID-19 disparities and these tragic events and their impact on persons of color, led to a decision to establish a DEI initiative at SCCMHA. Our initiative was informed by our staff, Board of Directors and Citizen's Advisory Committee through surveys, focus groups and presentations. This collective input then led to the development of the first three-year SCCMHA DEI Action Plan for 2021-2024. It is the DEI work over the last three years that we are sharing in this published report.

When people in need of help seek it, and see people that look like them or people that are sensitive to, informed about, and respectful of racial and cultural differences, the engagement of these folks in treatment makes all the difference.

Our service improvement strategy for the diverse populations of people we serve is now coupled with our DEI Plan. The SCCMHA DEI Action Plan of the last three years is

continued on the next page

the examination of and commitment to the diversity of our workforce, as well as raising the expectations of cultural competencies particularly among our clinical and program staff that provide direct treatment and support services. What we know from the healthcare research is that when people in need of help seek it, and see people that look like them or people that are sensitive to, informed about, and respectful of racial and cultural differences, the engagement of these folks in treatment makes all the difference. Early on in our DEI plan development, we recognized that our staff makeup in terms of racial and cultural representation did not match that of the populations of people we serve. We were also very aware that healthcare staff shortages coming off the pandemic would add to our challenge of increasing workforce diversity and that we were not alone in this experience as a healthcare agency.

Similarly, staff that provide administrative or support functions for people served by our system, also need knowledge to become racially and culturally informed to engage them more effectively or to act on their behalf.

Then too, as our workforce becomes more diverse, we all need knowledge to appreciate the differences between each other in a respectful and honest way. We must work through the biases we all carry and come together to celebrate the strength our diversity brings to SCCMHA and in turn to the populations of people we serve, their families and the greater Saginaw community.

This report will highlight the progress we have made over our first three years of our DEI initiative. The report works to identify our achievements and address how we can continue to grow in the future as we work to establish SCCMHA as a more racially and culturally diverse, informed and competent organization. We think it is important to look back at where we started, what we accomplished and where we are heading next.

DEI Communication and Core Values

SCCMHA has worked tirelessly to ensure that our vision, mission and core values reflect our efforts to improve diversity, equity and inclusion within the agency.

Due to this, much of our messaging to our staff and the people we serve has been adjusted or revised to demonstrate what we have accomplished as described in our three-year DEI Action Plan.

On the SCCMHA website, we have created a page highlighting DEI, featuring our DEI Action Plan, notes and documents from previous meetings and the definitions for diversity, equity and inclusion, among others.

We also remain committed to regular staff email messaging about the progress in addressing aspects of the DEI Action Plan goals, most recently committing to quarterly staff updates regarding DEI. Staff have also no doubt seen the messaging on National Celebrations each month that include racial, cultural and sexual/gender identity, a large number of disability celebrations and professional celebrations.

To see our DEI page, [click here.](#)

We also have included information regarding our racial and cultural competency in our operating principles.

To read about this information, [click here.](#)

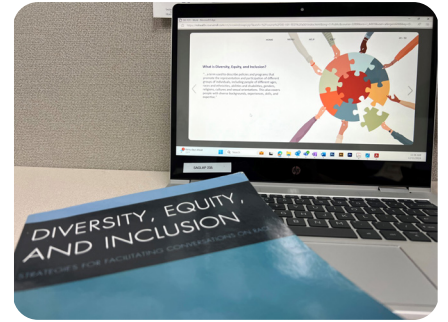


Staff Undergoes DEI Training In-Person and Online

To further the education of SCCMHA staff, in-person DEI 101 training has been a requirement and conducted for the past couple of years. With staff turnover and new hires, the production of an eLearning training module was undertaken by the SCCMHA Continuing Education Department, with MPHI as the



producer and Dr. Paul Elam consulting on the development. The eLearning DEI 101 video training production was completed at the end of FY 2024 and is now the method of training provided to new hires in the first 90 days of employment and for refresher training of more tenured staff.



Additional training for supervisors and directors in how to facilitate conversations on DEI with staff has been provided by Dr. Paul Elam.

To learn more about the development of the DEI training, [click here.](#)

Communication Plan Connects Staff to DEI Goals

To ensure consistent and reliable communication for any updates or new developments with the DEI Action Plan, we have put together a communication plan that will outline how to connect with staff as we move toward the goal of making SCCMHA a more inclusive and welcoming organization where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

In this communication plan, we will reach out with quarterly updates that highlight any efforts that we may push out to staff concerning training, events or other need to know information.

We will also share our helpful tools and resources that will engage staff in DEI-related practices to gain a better understanding on how we can all collectively support DEI efforts both at SCCMHA, as well as in our community.



Using Inclusion and Belonging to Optimize Organizational Culture

To further engage with staff and learn more about those who make up our diverse workforce, we are planning a series of staff events over the next year. These events will invite our staff to educate each other about their cultural backgrounds, related traditions and other aspects of family and individual identity that make them unique.

Each quarter of the year will feature one event with varying themes related to DEI and will provide different forms of engagement and education for staff.

To learn more about the upcoming events and the ERGs, [click here.](#)

Diversity and Inclusion Awareness Day

Friday, February 7, 2025

The introduction of the year's events, this day will be an opportunity to learn more about what diversity and inclusion look like in our agency. We will educate staff about topics such as unconscious bias, inclusive leadership and provide Q&As with supervisors who are leading DEI initiatives with their teams.

Activities planned:

- Breakout sessions focused on the real world application of DEI in the workplace
- Cultural showcases for staff to share their cultural heritage through any means they wish

DEI Conversations, Engagement and Facilitated Dialogue

One of the main factors integral to the success of the DEI Action Plan is engagement and ongoing conversation and collaboration from and among the SCCMHA staff.

Conversations about DEI are not always the easiest to have, however, there are ways to approach topics, build trust and understanding and learn from each other.

Examples include the ice-breaking activities and worksheets provided by Kristie Wolbert, Executive Director of Clinical Services and Programs, **[which can be found here.](#)** (Staff Only)

These worksheets provide prompts on DEI questions and related subjects to support conversational engagement with your coworkers on race, culture, age, gender, sexual identity and disability diversities that we encounter at work with each other, with those served by SCCMHA, their families, community partners, as well as in our everyday private lives.

We encourage staff to be patient and respectful of this work, because it can be uncomfortable and feel unfamiliar, no matter if the conversational engagement is situational, casual among colleagues or occurs in more formal staff settings or meetings.

Some agency leadership, department supervisors particularly, have already been working to facilitate such conversational staff engagement, but they cannot move the effort forward without staff participation. Staff will be served well in this activity if their intent is respectful, genuine, curious and patient.

What we are seeking in these conversations is the creation of safe spaces to share, listen and learn. Ultimately, we want staff to be mindful of the same approach when working with or encountering the diverse populations of persons we serve, their families and the community.

To learn more about what some supervisors do, [click here.](#)



DEI Action Team and Workforce Diversity Officer

The DEI Action Plan Team was established in 2023 to help propel the goals of our three-year DEI Action Plan forward and to find more ways to help shift the culture at SCCMHA with an eye toward building on DEI practices. This team replaced the Workgroup that was previously in place to build the Action Plan. We thank them for their hard work in putting SCCMHA on the path to becoming a more inclusive agency and increasing the diversity of our workforce.

DEI Action Plan Team Members

- Ernie Ahmad
- Andrew Ferguson
- Melissa Gutzwiller
- Jennifer Keilitz
- Sandra Lindsey, CEO
- Ryan Mulder
- Kentera Patterson
- Fred Stahl
- Monique Taylor-Whitson
- Kristie Wolbert

Beginning in calendar year 2025, the DEI Action Team will continue to work with Dr. Paul Elam to build the next three-year DEI Action Plan for FY 2025-2028. The other important development will be his coaching of a new internal leader once hired for this important work – a Diversity and Workforce Development Officer – which will report to both Sandra Lindsey, CEO, and Fred Stahl, Director of Human Resources.

SCCMHA has once again included the cost of this position in the FY 2025 Budget. This new position will oversee the implementation of the next DEI Action Plan. To support and guide DEI principles at SCCMHA, this position will assist with recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce and improve overall workforce culture.

This position was included in the last DEI Plan, but we did not receive qualified candidate applicants and so the minimum qualifications for the position will be reviewed and modified this month for reposting.

To learn more about this position as currently written, [click here](#).



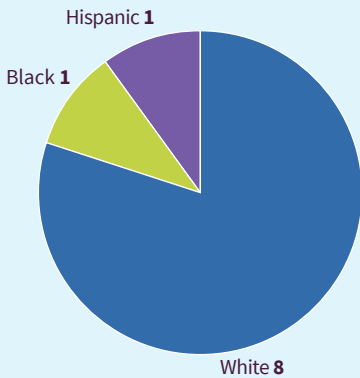
Workforce Diversity Metrics

To track the growth of workforce diversity at SCCMHA, it was important to collect data highlighting the demographic backgrounds of the SCCMHA staff at all agency levels. Over the last three years, we have collected information regarding the race, ethnicity, age and gender of our staff and used this data to help influence recruiting and hiring at SCCMHA.

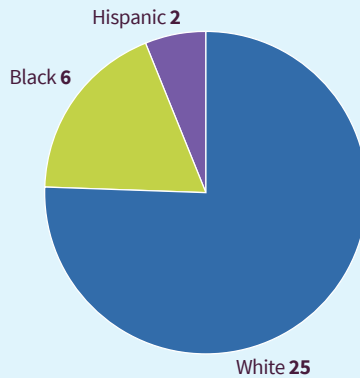
The data gathered by Human Resources has shown marginal improvement in the diversity of our agency. Overall staffing shortages during the past three years has challenged recruitment of professional credentialed applicants, in particular.

Management to Staff Race/Ethnicity Comparison

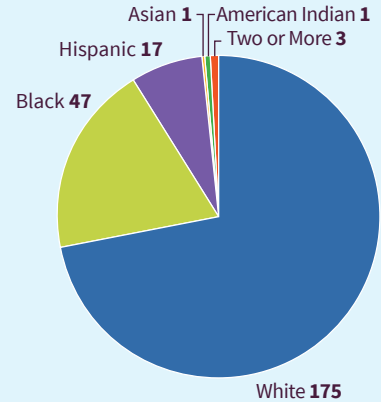
DIRECTORS 2021



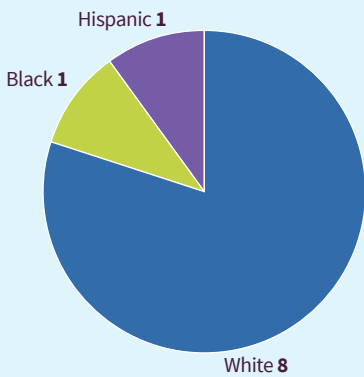
SUPERVISORS 2021



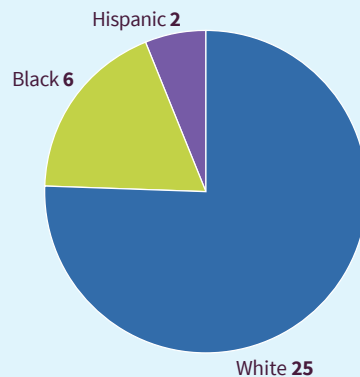
STAFF 2021



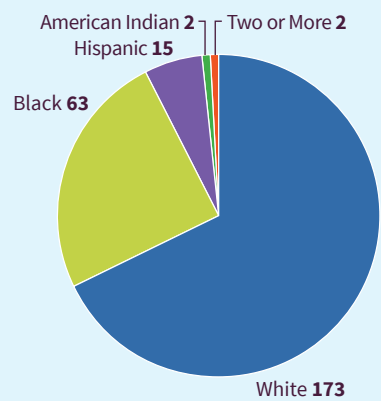
DIRECTORS 2022



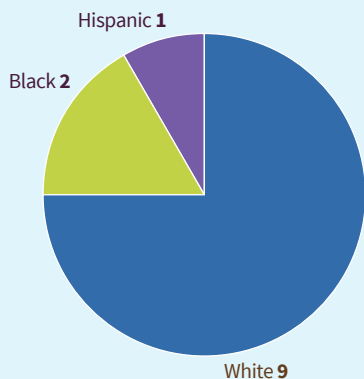
SUPERVISORS 2022



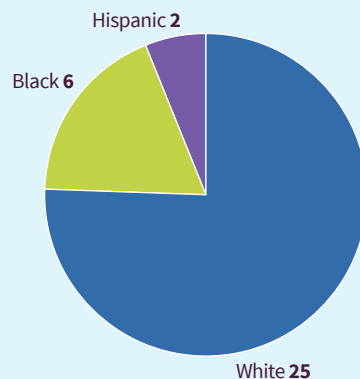
STAFF 2022



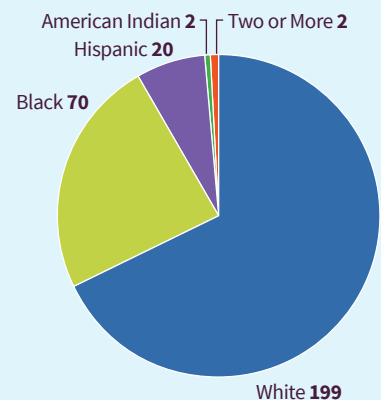
DIRECTORS 2023



SUPERVISORS 2023



STAFF 2023



■ White
 ■ Black
 ■ Hispanic
 ■ American Indian
 ■ Two or More

A Work in Progress

By no stretch is the work at SCCMHA done regarding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. That said, we are proud of the work we have accomplished to date and will build upon the work described in this report.

As we move forward in 2025 and begin working on the next goals of our DEI Action Plan, we look at such things as expanding the access to our eLearning DEI 101 training to our contracted provider network agencies and their staff, and regular monitoring of the racial and cultural metrics of the diversity of our workforce. We will be holding quarterly staff events to celebrate the diverse backgrounds of our staff. With a revised job description, we will be seeking applicants for our Workforce Diversity Officer, so we can hopefully hire a great candidate in the second quarter of this year. Our contract with Dr. Paul Elam will extend into the late spring of 2025 and a good portion of his time will be mentoring and coaching the new hire.

Staff communication on our work will continue to be issued at least quarterly and shared with our Board of Directors, our Citizen's Advisory Committee and posted to our Website in the DEI section under the About Us tab located at www.sccmha.org.

My special thanks to the members of the SCCMHA DEI Action Team and our engaging leader, DEI expert and coach Paul Elam, PhD., and to the staff supervisors leading in the space of facilitated DEI staff conversations in formal and informal staff settings. Thanks to Jennifer Keilitz and the Continuing Education Department staff for their countless hours of organizing DEI staff training and related cultural competency training over the last few years, and the work of last year on the production of the DEI 101 eLearning module. My thanks as well to Kristie Wolbert and her team of professional staff doing the hard and time-consuming work of agency policy review using the EIA tool to bring the DEI lens to this process.

Thanks to Melissa Gutzwiller and Ernie Ahmad for your leadership and outreach to our staff to inform the planning for quarterly staff events

for pure joy and may I say fun, in gathering to learn, share and celebrate the racial and cultural identities of our staff. Thanks to Ryan Mulder for keeping the DEI Action Team organized and to Andrew Ferguson for communicating our progress and reminding us monthly in email broadcasts about National and State Celebrations on Race, Ethnicities, Behavioral Healthcare, Physical Healthcare, Disability Groups and their issues, and recognition for licensed and unlicensed healthcare disciplines among our workforce.

Last and far from least, on behalf of the DEI Action Team, our thanks to every staff member for your participation in DEI training and opening your hearts and minds to better understand the role of race and culture in your professional and personal lives and in the lives of those we serve. Your efforts in ways large and small make our organization a wonderful place to work and for those of you that are newer hires, we want you to feel welcome and included. This work cannot be done without your cooperation and willingness to help us move the Saginaw Mental Health Authority, together with our Provider Network and business partners, into a bright DEI future. Though aspirational, nothing would signal success like one day soon for SCCMHA to be regarded as a DEI leader and model for other behavioral health agencies across the region and in our great state.

Sincere regards and thanks,



SANDRA M. LINDSEY
Chief Executive Officer

