

**Effective Date:** January 1, 2014

**Contact Person:** Your Agency Planner

**OPERATIONAL DEFINITION:**

Culturally Specific Services

Workforce Solutions (WFS) contracts two culturally specific providers to provide specialized Employment Services (ES) for select African American and American Indian Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) participants. The culturally specific agencies currently selected to provide specialized services are 1) YWORKS, 2) Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (serving African American participants), and 3) the American Indian Family Center, all of which have agreed to serve as agents of change in partnership with Ramsey County, building upon a shared critical consciousness.

Culturally specific ES should be considered within the context of a strength-based approach, meaning that the services incorporate and build on participant, family, community, and cultural assets by providing support, resources, and skills to help participants support themselves and contribute to the welfare of their families and communities. As such, strength-based, culturally specific ES reflect and draw from participants' individual resilience as well as the African American and American Indian traditions of collective resistance against colonization, racism, inequality, and poverty evidenced most prominently by the Civil Rights Movement and American Indian Movement that benefited all communities in the United States.

In particular, *culturally specific* ES means:

1. the contracted agency employs, or intends to employ, management and direct service staff who, in part, reflect the race(s), ethnicities, and culture(s) of the participants;
2. the agency delivers services to increase participants' employability in a manner that both acknowledges and responds to the legacies of historical trauma, racism, inequality, and poverty that have negatively affected African Americans' and American Indians' access to, and success with, education and employment opportunities; and
3. agency services incorporate and build on participants' values, beliefs, worldviews, and traditions, many of which are rooted in or informed by culture and experience.

Racial Disparities Reduction Strategies

The disproportionately high number of African American and American Indian participants on MFIP beyond the 60-month lifetime TANF limit and the disproportionately low number of American Indian participants who meet Workforce Participation Rate requirements under Ramsey County's current system of service delivery substantiate the need for culturally specific ES.

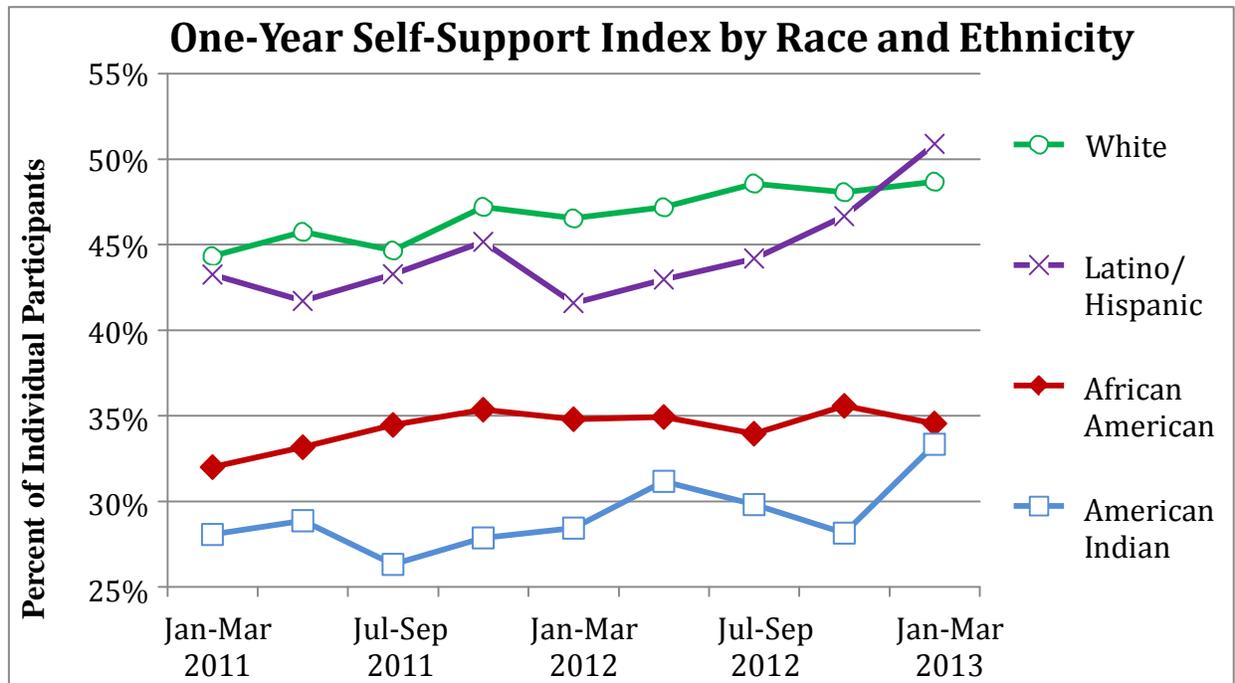
Historically, two MFIP Report Card outcome measures—the Self-Support Index (S-SI) and the Workforce Participation Rate (WPR), both described below)—have reflected the extent of the above disproportionalities. Differences in outcome measures between white participants and participants from other racial/ ethnic groups that are greater than 5 percentage points constitute a *racial disparity* that mandates County and agency attention according to the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) guidelines. Historically in Ramsey County, differences between both African American and American Indian participants and white participants on the S-SI have significantly exceeded 5 percentage points, as have differences between American Indian and white participants on the WPR. This has led Ramsey County to expect all MFIP-ES contracted agencies, including culturally specific agencies, to incorporate racial disparities reduction strategies into their ES delivery.

Additional funds, however, are available annually to selected culturally specific agencies for their efforts directed at reducing disparities that, starting in 2014, will be measured along four MFIP outcomes (Self-Support Index, Workforce Participation Rate, Paid employment, and Length of time on MFIP, all of which are detailed below). The selected culturally specific agencies will work with WFS administration and other community leaders to participate in an ongoing process of formally evaluating and refining their racial Disparities Reduction Strategies (DRS) services.

#### *Self-Support Index (S-SI)*

Starting in April 2014, the S-SI will be a primary DHS indicator of disparities. It tracks whether, one year after being on MFIP, participants do one or both of the following for three consecutive months: 1) work an average of 30 hours or more hours per week, or 2) no longer receive the cash portion of their monthly grant (as a result of increased household earned or unearned income) without exiting MFIP by reaching their lifetime limit or being sanctioned. In essence, the S-SI measures the extent to which families increase their income or retain full-time employment so as *not* to qualify for MFIP cash assistance.

In the most recent measurement period (January-March 2013), the current system of service delivery in Ramsey County achieved a one-year Self-Support Index for white MFIP parents that was 14.1 percentage points higher than that for African American participants and 15.4 percentage points higher than that for American Indian participants. In both cases, the difference is greater than 5 percentage points and constitutes a disparity mandating attention.



#### *Workforce Participation Rate (WPR)*

WPR is the federally mandated work activity performance requirement for cases paid by the federal TANF program. In the most recent measurement period (January-March 2013), for the approximately one-third of MFIP cases who are included the measure, the current system of service delivery in Ramsey County achieved a WPR of 27.0% for American Indian cases and 45.5% for white cases, yielding a difference of 18.5 percentage points. This difference constitutes a racial disparity. (The WPR for African American participants was 43.8%, which is within 5 percentage points of that of White participants and thus *not* considered a racial disparity.)

#### *Paid Employment*

Ramsey County has added an MFIP outcome starting in 2014 for culturally specific agencies to measure the percent of all MFIP adults working who have accumulated fewer than 60 of their 60-month lifetime limit on TANF. On average per month in 2012 within Ramsey County, 21.6% of American Indian participants were employed, whereas 27.3% of white participants were. This difference of 5.7 percentage points constitutes a racial disparity. (The percent of African American participants employed was 31.9%, which is not only within 5 percentage points of whites, but also higher than that of white participants.)

#### *Length of Time on MFIP*

Ramsey County has also added an MFIP outcome starting in 2014 that considers the percentage of the County's caseload that has accumulated fewer than 60 of their 60-month lifetime limit on TANF in relation to the percentage that has accumulated 60 or more by race/ ethnicity. On average in the Ramsey County MFIP caseload during 2012, the ratio of the percentage of all MFIP parents exhausting their lifetime limit who were African American (52.2%) relative to the

percentage of all MFIP parents with less than 60 months who were African American (35.0%) was 1.49 (the result of 52.2% divided by 35.0%). In comparison, the ratio of the percentage of all MFIP parents exhausting their lifetime who were white (21.5%) in relation to all MFIP parents with less than 60 months who were white (21.3%) was 1.01 (the result of 21.5% divided by 21.3%). The difference between 1.49 and 1.01 is greater than 0.05, constituting a racial disparity.