



SUN Service System Theory of Change

Adopted January 2014

Context

This theory of change describes the SUN Service System's overarching approach for achieving our goal of academic and economic opportunity and success for all children and families. We put forth this theory to set a foundation for alignment, decision-making, action and accountability that is clear as to our intent, our role and our commitment to equity with a focus on racial justice.

We recognize the need to eliminate disparities based on race, ethnicity, national origin, English language proficiency, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, source of income, geographic location of residence, familial status, disability, age, physical and mental illness, and other factors. We focus on racial justice particularly, but not exclusively, in our commitment to equity because of the level of disparities that exists between White communities and communities of color across all indicators and institutions. The data are clear. A few prominent examples in Multnomah County from the *Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile* report by the Coalition of Communities of Color and Portland State University are:

- Educational attainment is stratified by race. While only 7% of Whites did not graduate high school, 30% of communities of color did not.
- Poverty levels among communities of color are at levels at least double those of Whites. The child poverty rate, collectively, is 33.3%, while that of White children is 12.5%.
- Health disparities, while unevenly distributed across communities of color, average out to result in significant disproportionality. Low birth weights among communities of color are 37% worse than for White babies.
- Juvenile detention rates are much worse for children of color. Children of color are 50% more likely than White children to be held than released into the community once they engage with the police.¹

The racial and ethnic demographics of our community are rapidly changing. According to U.S. Census Bureau projections, America will become a majority-minority nation in 2043, with the older population continuing to be primarily White and the young and working-age populations being predominantly racial/ethnic minorities.² In Multnomah County in 2010, 44% of the over 150,000 children ages 0-17 were non-White – an increase of 30% from 2000.

¹ Curry-Stevens, A., Cross-Hemmer, A., & Coalition of Communities of Color (2010). *Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile*. Portland, OR: Portland State University. Retrieved from www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org/docs/AN%20UNSETTLING%20PROFILE.pdf

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *Projections show a slower growing, older, more diverse nation a half century from now*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html>

Inequities affect everyone in our community, regardless of race or income. They lead to high-cost social and health service and criminal justice system expenditures and, most significantly, to lost economic output. The public benefit from preventing students from dropping out amounts to more than \$209,000 per “new graduate” over his/her lifetime including increased tax revenues and savings from reduced healthcare costs, reduced criminal activity and lower welfare expenditures.³ In 2012, over 2,400 students in Multnomah County should have graduated on time with a regular diploma but did not. The losses add up to millions of dollars for each cohort of students and are compounded every year we choose not to adequately address these inequities.

These racial inequities and their impact, along with the alarming growth rate of poverty across races in our community, highlight the need and urgency for us to continue the effective work we have been doing together in the SUN Service System. We also must prioritize the review and continual improvement of our efforts to ensure that we are making the most progress possible towards success for all students within our collective resources and capital.

SUN's Vision and Mission

Vision

A community that effectively engages and supports all children and families so they are healthy, educated and prosperous.

Mission

Collaborate to create an efficient system of supports that provides equitable opportunities for every child and family to thrive.

Our Beliefs

To fully understand SUN's theory of change, it is important to know the shared beliefs that serve as a foundation for our effort.

- We believe that **all children and youth have the ability to learn** and that we have an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure the opportunities and supports across our community that ensure educational success.
- We believe **our lives are interconnected and we have a shared destiny** – we are all impacted when some experience hardship and inequities, and we all benefit when members of our community are successful and healthy.
- We believe that **we have the knowledge, experience, wisdom and resources already present** in our community to change the odds so that all children and families have the same chance to succeed in life.
- We believe that communities, youth, parents, educators, social and health service providers and community-based organizations have unique and important solutions to improving outcomes for our children and systems. Our work will only be successful if we **create the conditions for**

³ Alliance for Excellent Education. (November 2011). *The high cost of high school dropouts: What the nation pays for inadequate high schools*. Retrieved from www.all4ed.org

authentic, meaningful engagement and empowerment of all members, particularly those who are most affected by poverty and racism.

- We believe to achieve more racially and economically just outcomes in our community we must build the **cultural responsiveness of our policies and actions** across the entire SUN Service System. **Culturally specific services are critical** in this effort because integration of these targeted strategies builds the responsiveness of the entire system.
- We believe **integrating racial justice at all levels** and offering additional opportunities to communities of color, immigrants and refugees will allow us to achieve our vision for academic and economic success for all.
- We believe that by creating a **shared countywide system of care** that geographically organizes universal and culturally specific services, and that employs a school-based and school-linked delivery approach, we will improve delivery of social and support services for children and families and reach our community in the most effective and equitable way.
- We believe a **strong infrastructure of integrated systems and high quality, evidence and practice based programming** will result in academic and economic success for students and families.
- We believe that **no single organization or sector alone can achieve systemic educational success or family self-sufficiency for all youth and families**. Leveraging resources and aligning efforts across schools, public entities and community organizations will create collective impact on these shared goals, as well as reduce duplication and create efficiencies in our systems.
- We believe **addressing the root causes of poverty and racism** and targeting efforts to support the communities that have been historically affected by these conditions, will decrease disparities in outcomes for individuals living in poverty, people of color, immigrants and refugees.
- We believe that **resource allocation demonstrates our priorities and our values**. Allocations, funding levels and investments in the system must align with our commitment to eliminating the root causes of disparities affecting people living in poverty, communities of color, refugees and immigrants.
- We believe that to achieve our goals, we need to act on the systemic as well as the individual level. **True collaboration at the leadership, governance and decision-making levels will allow us to collectively impact our shared goals** and share investment, risk and accountability to achieve the maximum return from our partnership.
- We believe that **this work requires that we all demonstrate courage and openness to difficult conversations so that the truth can be told** without being tempered or silenced by fear. Often we avoid speaking the truth about racism and classism in order to keep the peace.
- We believe that to achieve the transformation of systems and individuals we seek, we must understand the barriers to change, create the space necessary to think and reflect, promote shared power, maintain our energy and enthusiasm – and, most importantly, **dare to believe it is possible**.

SUN Service System Theory of Change

Research shows that there is a strong positive correlation between the academic success of youth and long-term economic success. It is also clear that to achieve significant change in educational or economic outcomes it is necessary to address the root causes of these conditions - poverty and racism - not just ease the impacts on children and families. With that understanding and our beliefs as a foundation, the SUN Service System theory of change is that:

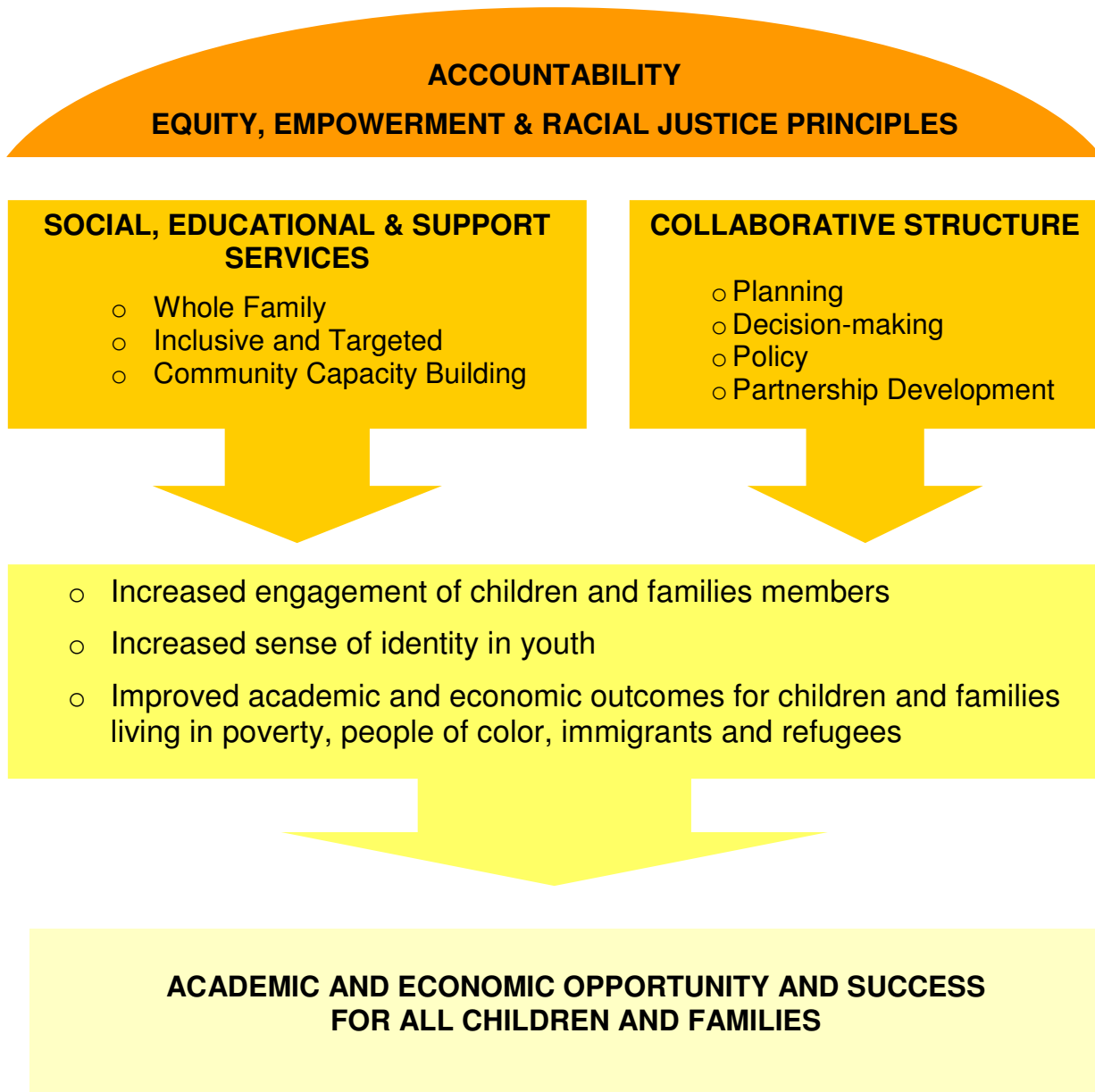
We will improve the wellbeing of our entire community by collaborating and integrating strategies and services that have been shown to improve educational and economic outcomes for people of color and those living in poverty.

The role of SUN's system of care is to align, focus and improve services and efforts across SUN's sponsoring organizations and the community to have a collective impact on education and prosperity. The resources and opportunities offered in the system address children and families holistically, attending to their educational, social and basic needs. At the system and policy level, SUN employs a collaborative structure in which the partner organizations and institutions share vision, planning, decision-making, investment, and outcomes.

A number of approaches - how we design, deliver, govern and evaluate the system services and structures - are essential to our theory of change. These approaches are:

1. **Application of the principles and concepts of equity, empowerment, and racial justice** at all levels (individual, community and system), paying particular attention to planning and decision-making. This includes incorporating strategies for partnering with communities in culturally responsive ways in addition to offering services and programs. Empowerment is implemented through community capacity building efforts at both the community and civic infrastructure levels of the system.
2. **A whole-family approach** for impacting both child and adult success. We support children holistically so they complete school, thus improving the long term economic success of our community. We also provide resources and opportunities to their parents and other adults so that they are healthy and successful, thus supporting children's development and learning, and contributing to the broader wellbeing of the community.
3. **Inclusive strategies** that address the needs of both the dominant and the marginal groups, ensuring that the universal system is culturally responsive and equitable.
4. **Targeted services** that offer context-specific support to those most affected by disparities. Targeted services within the SUN Service System include those that are specific to communities of color, people living in poverty and to sexual and gender minorities.
5. **Accountability** of the system and its partners with clear measures and reporting mechanisms to the community.

SUN SERVICE SYSTEM THEORY OF CHANGE



Definitions

Community Capacity

Community capacity focuses on 10 areas: active participation, leadership, rich support networks, skills and resources, critical reflection, sense of community, understanding of history, articulation of values, and access to power. Community capacity building puts the concept of empowerment into action.⁴

Culturally Responsive

[A shared definition among SUN partners is currently being developed]

Culturally Specific Services

Services that are designed to meet the specific needs of a cultural population, with recruitment and service delivery targeted to that population.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a social-action process in which individuals and groups act to gain mastery over their lives in the context of changing their social and political environment. Empowerment is implemented through community capacity building.⁵

Equity

Fairness and justice achieved by eliminating differences that are unnecessary and avoidable.⁶ Achieving equity requires transformative actions and processes at the systemic, institutional, and individual levels, with a focus on:

- Eliminating root causes of differences in population success;
- Promoting the conditions necessary for social justice; and
- Providing resources and opportunities for meaningful engagement in planning and decision-making for communities most affected by inequities.

Racial Justice

Racial justice refers to a wide range of ways in which groups and individuals strive to change laws, policies, practices, and organizational culture that reinforce and perpetuate racial disparities. Such efforts work to achieve equitable outcomes in key areas such as service delivery, planning and decision-making, and economic justice for communities of color, immigrants and refugees. In order to promote meaningful engagement and political participation, racial justice elevates and integrates cultural paradigms of communities of color into organizational and civic structures and culture.⁷

Racism

Conduct, words, practices or policies which advantage or disadvantage people because of their culture, ethnic origin or color. Racism is just as damaging in obvious forms as it is in less obvious and subtle forms, and is still called racism whether intentional or unintentional.⁸

⁴ Wallerstein, N. (2002). *Empowerment to reduce health disparities*. Scandinavian Journal of Public Health, 30, 72-77.

⁵ Adapted from Wallerstein, N. (2002). *Empowerment to reduce health disparities*. Scandinavian Journal of Public Health, 30, 72-77.

⁶ Adapted from National Association of County and City Health Officials. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.naccho.org/>

⁷ Adapted from Grassroots Policy Project and Dr. Eddie Moore, Founder and Director of the White Privilege Conference

⁸ Lopes, T. & Thomas, B. (2006). *Dancing on Live Embers: Challenging Racism in Organizations*. Between the Lines: Toronto, Ontario.

- Individual racism: Manifests at the individual level privately as prejudices, unconscious bias, and internalized oppression, and can also appear interpersonally between people in the form of directly perceived discriminatory interactions which are harmful in their subtle as well as overt forms.
- Institutional Racism: Policies, practices and procedures that work to the benefit of white people and to the detriment of people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.
- Structural Racism: A history and current reality of institutional racism across multiple institutions. This combines to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.⁹

Root Causes

The underlying causes of inequities. Root causes of inequities include unjust decision-making, disempowering engagement processes, inequities in living and working conditions; and racism, classism, and other forms of discrimination (sexism, homophobia, ableism, ageism, etc.).¹⁰

System of Care

In systems of care, State, county and local agencies partner with families and communities to address the multiple needs of children and families [sic]. At the heart of systems of care is a shared set of guiding principles that include: interagency collaboration, individualized strengths-based care, cultural competence, community-based services and accountability.¹¹

⁹ City of Seattle. *Racial Equity in Seattle: Race and Social Justice Initiative Three-Year Plan 2012 – 2014*. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.seattle.gov/rsji/docs/RacialEquityinSeattleReport2012-14.pdf>

¹⁰ Balajee, Sonali S., et al., (2012). *Equity and Empowerment Lens (Racial Justice Focus)*. Portland, OR: Multnomah County. Retrieved from http://web.multco.us/sites/default/files/diversity-equity/documents/ee_lens_final-102912.pdf

¹¹ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2008). *Bulletins for Professionals*. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/soc/socc.cfm>