
ANTONIA APOLINÁRIO-WILCOXON

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An immigrant of African descent from South America, I am multi-lingual, and bi-cultural, I have successfully navigated multi-sectors in the US for over 30 years. I worked in international finance for a commodities trading corporation doing business in Brazil. I convened a community-wide planning process to address the early childhood mental health needs of Head Start children and families, with groups including parents, service providers and funders, generating change in clinical practices that are still in place. I led efforts in organizational change by engaging senior managers in additional professional development to support outcomes accountability and develop/reinforce cultural competency among line staff. I am an effective, intentional change agent who cares deeply about facilitating the voice of those otherwise silenced, to bring about transformation of systems.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Strategic lifelong learner
Capacity builder to results-driven action
Disciplined and flexible problem-solver
Policy Development/Implementation

Authentic community engagement practitioner
Budget development and management
Empowering Adaptive leadership
Sustainable systems improvement

WORK HISTORY

Principal Consultant/Owner, Equity Strategies, LLC, Hopkins, MN (2019 – Present)

Equity Strategist, Effective, Intentional Change Agent, Committed to Community-Centered Engagement. Trauma Informed Master Trainer/Coach Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs Interface Trainer of Presenters), Art of Host Practitioner, TOPs facilitator.

Assistant Professor, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, Schools of Graduate and Professional Programs School of Public Health. Minneapolis, MN (Fall 2020-)

Community Engagement Specialist, Ramsey County, St. Paul MN (11/2018 – 10/2019)

Interagency loan to lead engagement for the City of St. Paul, St. Paul Public Schools and Ramsey County.

Community Relations Director, Minnesota Department of Human Services – St. Paul, MN (2011 – 2018)

As the director of community relations for the largest state agency in Minnesota, I provide leadership and resources to agency wide efforts to connect with communities for building sustaining relationships that result in better access and healthy outcomes for cultural and ethnic communities impacted by disparities. I actively participate in the equity community in the Twin Cities engaging in learning, teaching, discussions, and resources identification to benefit the work of the council and of the agency in eliminating health and human services disparities.

Key Achievements

- Legislatively mandated Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (CECLC) enacted in the 2013 Minnesota Legislative session to advise the commissioner of human services on achieving equity for all those who call Minnesota home. Their recommendations align with and influenced a number of ongoing efforts at the agency.
- The agency adopted an administrative health equity policy to guide all actions in its operations, codifying the CECLC's recommendations.
- A successfully funded Bush Foundation community innovation grant introducing authentic community engagement in the agency in the context of social determinants of health, adverse childhood experiences and historical trauma.
- The expansion of community engagement by agency wide hiring of community engagement staff throughout the agency.
- Coordinated participation of an advisory community council for a state level economic cost-benefit study for achieving health equity in Minnesota that demonstrated correlation between health disparities and a decreased Minnesota workforce in partnership with the University of Minnesota/Program in Health Disparities Research

and the Roy Wilkins Institute.

Disparities Reduction project manager, Office of Management Support and Development (OMSD/DHS). – St. Paul, MN (2006 to 2011)

Leading agency wide initiatives on Integrated Services for At-Risk Adults and Disparities Reduction

Key Achievements:

- Led an agency wide working group to identify 85+ program measures where disparities existed in access or outcomes on DHS services delivered. Identified gaps, leveraged research, service, and education to meet senior leadership directives.
- Initiated and created the Disparities Reduction Advisory Committee (DRAC): a predecessor to the CECLC, convening monthly authentic community engagement discussion disparities with DHS employees and community members. Meetings provided an opportunity to bring together diverse perspectives advising DHS on disparities reduction.
- Oversaw the launch and implementation of policy language that created the Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (CECLC) in partnership with community.

Grants Program Manager, Assuring Child Health and Development (ABCDII)/Great Start Minnesota Project, Minnesota Department of Human Services, St. Paul, MN (2004-2006)

A national grant from the Commonwealth Fund, with technical assistance of the National Academy for States Health Policy (NASHP) aiming at early childhood social emotional screening to identify challenges early and intervene to return young children to typical development. The program provided critical capacity building for clinicians, parents, medical providers and the community on the importance of social emotional healthy development

Key Achievements:

- Led advisory committee to the grant. Members were key stakeholders who provided guidance, support and resources for the success of the grant project.
- Traveled around the state of Minnesota to disseminate training, aiming at improving the capacity of mental health clinicians, early childhood family educators, and primary care providers
- Partnered with the MN Department of Health/Minnesota Children with Special Health Needs and the Minnesota Community Initiative Foundations.
- Provided quarterly reporting to the McKnight Foundation, which funded the MN Community Initiative Foundations
- Received certificate of recognition from the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) for “Exceptional work supporting the healthy mental development of young children and lasting contributions to NASHP.”
- Minnesota was one of five states awarded this grant and continues to lead in this early intervention, early identification initiative.

EDUCATION

Doctorate Degree in Education, Educational Leadership, **University of St. Thomas**, MN (May 2018)

Senior Leadership Institute, **State of Minnesota** (2018)

Humphrey Policy Fellow, **Humphrey School of Public Affairs**, University of Minnesota (2010/2011)

Emerging Leaders Institute, **State of Minnesota** (2007)

Master’s Degree in International Management, **University of St. Thomas**, MN (December 1990)

Bachelor’s Degree in Economics, **Federal University of Espirito Santo**, Brazil (August 1978)

HONORS

5th World Conference on Remedies to Racial Ethnic Economic Inequities **Dr. Cida Barreto Award**, Vitoria, ES, Brazil (2018)

International Leadership Institute: **Social Justice Citizen Award**, Minneapolis, MN (2018)

School of Public Health **Community Partners STAR Award** recipient, University of Minnesota (2015)

My Brother’s Keeper Award from Q Health Connections for her commitment to the health and well-being of communities. Minneapolis, MN (2013)

National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) **certificate** for “Exceptional work supporting the healthy mental development of young children and lasting contributions to NASHP.” Washington, D.C. (2007)

OTHER EXPERIENCES, PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Chair, Center for Resilient Families, University of Minnesota/Federal Grant (2017 – present)
Member, Public Health Administration and Policy Community/Alumni Advisory Board, U of MN (2014 – present)
Member, Program in Health Disparities Research Advisory Board, U of MN/Medical School (2011 – present)
Member, Children, Youth and Family Consortium, University of Minnesota (2016 – present)
Unaffiliated Member, Institutional Review Board, University of Minnesota (2016-2017)
Past member (MN Governor Appointment) Minnesota Board of Social Work (2003-2014)
Languages: Portuguese (Native speaker), English, Conversant: Spanish, some French and Italian