

Kentucky's Race, Community and Child Welfare Initiative

The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services is deeply engaged in a system reform effort known as Race, Community and Child Welfare. Casey Family Programs is a key partner in this work with the Cabinet. A key principle of this work is to redefine the community's perception of who makes up the so called "child welfare system".

If you are reading this brochure, you are part of the child welfare system. The child welfare system is made up of family members, neighbors, friends, churches, the mental health system, the legal system, the social service system, the educational system, law enforcement and the healthcare system.

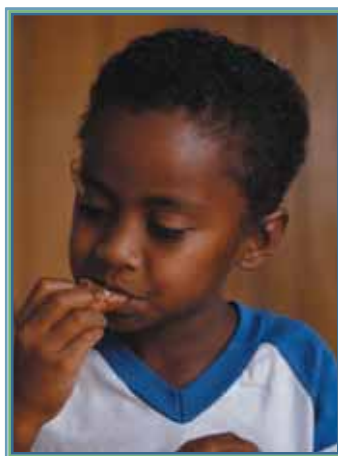
In order to successfully improve outcomes for children at risk through this Initiative, we must:

- have an open discussion of personal, organizational and institutional racism.
- address the predisposed ideas that are reflected in the decisions made in the child welfare system to remove and place African American children while sometimes leaving white children in similar circumstances intact with their families.

First it's important to remember that the "child welfare system" begins and ends with the community. The actions of extended family, friends, community partners, neighbors and churches can go a long way to keep our children safe.

Statistics show that African American children and families are treated differently than white families in similar circumstances. This occurs in contrast to data collected by the National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, which suggests that

What is Disproportionality?



"Disproportionality refers to the differences in the percentage of children of a certain racial or ethnic group in the country as compared to the percentage of the children of the same group in the child welfare system. For example, in 2000, black children made up 15.1 percent of the children in this country but 36.6 percent of the children in the child welfare system."

Source: Hill, R.B. (2006, May). *Synthesis of research on disproportionality in child welfare: An update. Report prepared for the Casey Center for the Study of Social Policy Alliance for Racial Equity.*



African American families are no more likely to maltreat their children than white families in like circumstances. However, there is a great difference between the races in the likelihood that a child will be removed from home and placed in foster care. **Please visit www.jointheconversation.net to read this important study.**

What effects occur when a child is placed in the welfare system?

Disproportional entry into care, longer stays, and poor results have a negative impact on an African American child's well being. It influences their physical and mental health, academic achievement, spirituality, cultural connections, and connectedness to family and community.



What do we mean by Disparate Outcomes?

"Disparity [or disparate outcomes] means unequal treatment when comparing a racial or ethnic minority to a non-minority. This can be observed in many forms including decision points (e.g., reporting, investigation, substantiation, foster care placement, exit, treatment, services, or resources). Research shows that children of color in foster care and their families are treated differently from—and often not as well as—white children and their families in the system. For example, fewer African American children receive mental health services even though the identified need for this type of service may be as great (or greater) for African American as for other racial or ethnic groups."

Source: Hill, R.B. (2006, May). *Synthesis of research on disproportionality in child welfare: An update. Report prepared for the Casey Center for the Study of Social Policy Alliance for Racial Equity.*

How can we make a change?

The challenge of disproportionality and disparate outcomes requires the entire child welfare system to be assertive in assessing their own policies, programs, practices, and beliefs. It requires them to work actively to modify and develop innovative responses that improve both the experience and results for all children and families, both black and white.

What can we do?

- Train and educate the community and stakeholders about institutional and structural racism and its impact in decision-making policy and practice.
- Develop prevention strategies to safely divert children from being referred to the Cabinet who may be perceived to be at risk of abuse and neglect.
- Understand our own racial and cultural biases and battle what could be perceived as institutional racism on a daily basis.
- Collect data by race and determine if there are opportunities to change policy and practice in your own organization, your community and statewide.
- Increase awareness and sensitivity to disproportionality.
- Sponsor and attend Undoing Racism workshops in your community.
- Become involved with a RCCW Leadership Advisory Council in your community.



Please join us in providing better ways to improve opportunities and outcomes for the children of your community.



For more information:
Kentucky Department for
Community Based Services
www.jointheconversation.net

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If their parents treat them the same,
why doesn't the child welfare system?
Please join the conversation!



www.jointheconversation.net