

CWAC Racial Equity Meeting  
August 24, 2021 Minutes

**Attendees:** Dagenè Brown, Daniel Fitzgerald, Elke Hansen, Howard Lee, Jasmine Ferrer, Jennifer Seward, Prestina Singleton, Relunda Washington, Molly Uhe-Edmonds, Mari Christopherson, Wendy Ingersoll, Charles Montario-Archer, Yeni Rojas, Heather Dorsey, Sylvia Fonseca, Sheila Riley, LaTasha Roberson-Guifarro, Jere Murry, Monica Mosley-Cantrell.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Motion by Latasha Roberson; Seconded by Elke Hansen; Motion Approved

**Membership Discussion:**

New participants joined and introduced themselves and where they work to the committee. There was a distinction made relative to voting members vs non-voting members. The committee was also asked if they hadn't provide their contact information to be added to the roster. The committee was informed that they needed to complete their trainings for compliance to the group with the exception of the Open Meetings Act training where the link had not been fixed. Dagenè also requested a workgroup be formed to develop bylaws for the committee. Lourdes stated that she has some examples of bylaws that she will share send to Dagenè, who will follow up with the committee on a final draft to vote on.

**Workgroup Updates:**

Education Campaign workgroup stated that they have not have an opportunity to review the footage and will attempt to pull a meeting together with the other members to strategize how they should move forward with the review. Racial Equity Curriculum met to discuss a potential curriculum. The workgroup decided that they will be some independent research and the team will report back out of the findings. A question was posed to "what is a racial equity curriculum?" Dagenè reported that the workgroup is working to identify what a curriculum would consist of, and that currently nothing is available specific to child welfare. Monico stated that they are specific curriculums are available and requested that her team is keep in the loop on what the planning with all the other trainings required to be delivered by the department. A request was made to OLPD to share any other curriculums that they may be aware of. Monico stated she will attempt to pull the resources together and get it over to the group.

**Regular Updates:**

Dagenè provided an update and the link of the upcoming R3 NOFO through ICJIA that funds agencies doing working in different area across the state. It was also reported the final DEI plan has been submitted to the Director and is awaiting approval. Relative to the GO's training, it has been decided by DCFS Leadership that that training will be provided to POS agencies if they so choose to adopt the training. However, the GO's training is specific to the state and there will not be a requirement that the CBPs have to complete this training. Casey's Racial Equity Improvement Collaborative is upcoming and Dagenè will share with the group information from the convening.

Paula Truitt-Alohan, PEP Administrator, provided an update of the PEP. She is working to revitalize action teams across the state. She has been working with each region to discuss the need for collaboration with our community partners. Ron Wynn has returned to assist with building up the action teams to assist with the required community/action teams support. Data has been requested from each region for the university partners to determine a baseline. Once received, the data information will be shared with the committee.

James Bracy provide the committee with an example of work that stemmed from his action team; LAN 79 – Progressive Partners. The Action Team was instrumental in getting 'fictive kin' added into policy and procedure. The action teams use racial disproportionality data to determine strategies around

permanency. The fictive kin initiative focused on the goal of remain home. The team has partnered with IDOC to give presentations to parents. They have already provided a presentation to birth fathers and working to deliver presentations to birth mothers. The team is in the midst of reestablishing their Action team due to staff losses and will reconvene meeting their meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in September. Dagenè reported that the Department received communication regarding a pilot for incarcerated birth mothers to assist with them completing their portion of the service plan and visitations. James reported that Judge Balanoff is also interested in this initiative, and James will reach out to determine if the Judge can be a part of the Transformation or Action Teams. Heather Dorsey from the courts offer to be of assistance for any correspondence that needs to get to the courts. Latasha discussed her experiences working with the Action Teams and the necessity to have judges and attorney involved. Howard Lee offered to provide assistance if the Action Team wanted Judge Balanoff to participate by either providing a proposal or the Judge's email address; will send email James Bracey. A request was made a request for a list of the Action Teams Leader across the state for the purposes of collaboration. Paula stated she would provide once a list is formulated.

#### Next Steps:

What is it as a collective group we want to focus on?

- There should be a continuation to the training in addition to the Implicit Bias Training; not a one and done but completed over the course of 18 months.
- The IB training was more of an introductory, needs to be more for the child welfare workforce.
- Create a racial equity analysis in the day to day practice. Providing a tool to right question to push the agenda of racial equity; referenced GARE Rubric. Kimberly Casey offered to share some resources with the committee for review to determine a start point.
- IB training was good and began discussions within their teams; follow up for a SME to have inspire frank discussion with staff.
- An avenue for cases to be lifted up, because people don't have the content knowledge to deal with the work in a race informed lens. Prior was an IEPA form, but not heard of its use in years
- Inclusion of other agencies that intersect the Department.
- Review some strategies from and make some decisions about how we move forward.
- Non traditional Action Teams to work regionally.
- Staffing shortage in Illinois affecting the quality of service.
  - CWAC Workforce committee is looking at recommendations that include degrees that are accepted, the waiver process, and equity in pay. Invitation for others to join; reach out to Monico Whittington Eskridge or LaTasha Roberson-Guifarro. Recommendations were requested for review; LaTasha stated that she would share.
- Why does it take so long to get permanency in Illinois? There are different where there is bias, stereotypes, and/or racism built in that impact calls made to the hotline. Propose a list of strategies that address hotline reporting disproportionately.
- ISBE is doing a disciplinary equity partnership; along with IB training they are doing empathic instruction, allowing teachers to recognize implicit bias. ISBE and DCFS combined facilities' staff should have access to the same types of trainings offered on both sides; the inconsistency leads to an unfairness with staff challenge working with youth.
  - Concern for education surrogates appointed who do not know our youth yet making important decisions about disciplinary, IEP, and special education services. People who do know the youth, DCFS and/or caseworkers are not allowed to be the surrogates. Partner with the ISBE to address this issue relative to how surrogates are appointed, the qualifications, etc.
- Stand alone curriculum to be use in the higher learning arena across majors, e.g. education, criminal justice to discuss the decision points in a case, and bias and disproportionality impact those points at different stages in a case and include the outcomes afterward.

- Child protection mediation programs (two in existence), that brings the family together, similar to a CFTM but with the inclusion with mediators in the court. Proposed to have more youth involvement in those programs; youth can learn about their case from a legal perspective, as well voice their thoughts.
- Stakeholders from court should be involved in the conversation and trainings; permanency happens in court and decisions are being made out of bias.
- Disproportionate representation of youth of color with mildly mental retardation diagnosis in their psychological; should address how the youth of color are evaluated.
- Opportunity to have workgroups to work on local and specific items and report back to the bigger committee.
- Have data to present to the group.
- Challenge to reimagine this work; THINK BIG.

Next Meeting Schedule Date:  
October 26, 2021