

# Advisory Commission on Reducing the Disproportionate Representation of African American Children in Foster Care

Meeting Minutes  
November 17, 2022

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**Meeting called to order by Chair at 1:03 PM:** Tim Snowden, Statewide Chief Deputy Director Permanency and Intact Services, DCFS

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**Members in attendance:** Dagené Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS  
Latonia Byrd-Williamson, Dept of Juvenile Justice  
Heidi Clark, Dept of Public Health  
Abby Dompke, IL Capital Development Board  
Tanya Ford, Department of Healthcare and Family Services  
State Senator Napoleon Harris  
Pam Hudson, IL Dept of Human Rights  
Dr. Charles Montorio-Archer, One Hope United  
Denice Murray, Adjunct Instructor University of Chicago, Crown Family School of Social Work  
Dana O'Leary, Dept of Labor  
LaTasha Roberson-Guifarro, Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois  
Michelle Shaver, IL Board of Higher Education  
Rachel Turner, Public Member  
Dr. Tamara Fuller, Director, Children and Family Research Center, University of IL at Urbana  
Janelle Washington, IL Community College Board  
Chrystal Wofford, Dept of Aging

**Members not in attendance:** State Representative Mary Flowers  
LaTanya Law, Dept of Human Services  
Tiana McCall, Dept of Commerce & Economic Opportunity  
State Representative Tony McCombie  
Margarita Mendoza, Dept of Corrections  
Dr. Leslie Ward, State Board of Education

**Public:** None

**DCFS:** Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups  
Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Office of Racial Equity Practice  
Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

## Welcome & Roll Call:

Chair Tim Snowden welcomed Members. Darnita Jackson took the roll and determined that a quorum was present.

## Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes were reviewed. Dr. Charles Montorio-Archer entered a motion to approve the meeting minutes dated October 27, 2022. Dr. Tami Fuller seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

## Agenda Overview:

Chair Tim Snowden outlined the day's agenda and meeting structure to include a presentation by Dr. Tamara Fuller and breakout sessions for initial subcommittee discussions to occur.

## Discussion Item #1:

Dr. Tamara Fuller, Director of the Children and Family Research Center at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Campaign presented "Highlights from the Children and Family Research Center – FY2022 Racial Disproportionality Report".

- Dr. Fuller's presentation focused on one chapter of the FY2022 BH Monitoring Report that examines racial disproportionality in the IL Child Welfare System from the following decision points:
  - Which children are screened-in for investigations via the Hotline.
  - Which children are taken into protective custody during the investigation.
  - Which investigations are indicated.
  - Which children are removed from the home and enter Substitute Care including which children remain in Substitute Care longer than 36 months.
  - Which children received Intact Family Services.
- Dr. Fuller emphasized 4 key findings from the FY2022 BH Monitoring Report per the various decision points spanning from 2015 to 2021:
  - Finding #1 – African American children are over-represented at every decision point in the IL Child Welfare System when compared to their representation in the IL child population.
    - Investigative Reports – The absolute values remain consistent over the 7-year span and show the percentage of African American children screened in for investigations were 2 times more than the percentage of African American children in the IL population.
    - Protective Custodies – African American children are overrepresented, but the amount of overrepresentation has consistently decreased over the past 7 years.
    - Indicated Reports – African American children are overrepresented by about 2 times what their representation is in the IL population which has remained consistent for the past 7 years.
    - Substitute Care Entries (children who are removed from the home and placed into substitute care) and which children remain longer than 3 years – African American children are overrepresented in that they are 2 times more likely to be placed into substitute care than their representation in the IL population; however, the absolute values has consistently decreased over the past 7 years. African American children remain in care longer than 3 years at 3 times their percentage in the general child population.
    - Open Intact Family Services cases were also examined. The absolute values show that African American children are overrepresented.
  - Finding #2 – There are large regional differences in the degree to which African American children are over-represented in the IL child welfare system. For every decision point, African American children are overrepresented the most in the Northern Region and the least in the Southern region. The Northern region is where the greatest amount of overrepresentation occurs. Cook and Central regions are in the middle with the Cook region being slightly smaller than the Central region.
    - Investigative Reports – African American children are overrepresented in the Northern region about 3 times more than their representation is in the IL population. Cook region showed values of 2 times more with regards to the overrepresentation of African American children.
    - Protective Custodies – In some years, African American children are taken into protective custody at 5 times the percentage of what their representation is in the IL child population in the Northern region. Cook and Central regions showed values of 2 times the percentage.
    - Indicated Reports – The Northern region has the largest overrepresentation showing values of 3 times more than the represented population in IL for African American children; Central region is in the middle with 2.5 times more. Cook is slightly lower than the Central region with 2 times more and the Southern region has the lowest overrepresentation.
    - Substitute Care – The Northern region has the largest overrepresentation; however, from 2020 to 2021 the values declined from 4.5 to 3.5 times more than the represented population in IL for African American children. Values show Central and Cook regions were about the same in recent years with 2.5 values declining to 2.4 and 2.6 respectively. The Southern region showed 1.3 values in recent years.

- The Regional RDI for African American children who remain in substitute care longer than 3 years showed a similar trend with the Northern region having the highest overrepresentation at 5 times more than their representation in the IL child population. The Central and Cook regions show values of about 2.7 and the Southern region is the lowest with values of 1.7 in recent years.
  - Finding #3 – Most, but not all, of the overrepresentation of African American children in the IL Child Welfare System is introduced at the Hotline level. The Children and Family Research Center includes the 1<sup>st</sup> Child Welfare decision point, namely, Investigations or which children are screened-in for investigations in their report. The values show African American children are overrepresented among investigations at 2 times their percentage in the IL child population; however, there is a decision that takes place prior to investigations and involves the decision whether to call the Hotline to make a report. CFRC does not have access to Hotline data; however, per the Department, the absolute value for Hotline intakes is about 2.0 for African American children in 2021 meaning African American children are reported to the Hotline at 2 times more than their representation in the IL child population.
    - The amount of overrepresentation continues across every decision point in the child welfare system for African American children at 2 times more than their representation in the IL child population up until the Substitute Care decision point which also includes which kids stay in care for over 3 years. At this decision point, the overrepresentation of African American children increases.
  - Finding #4 – The amount of over-representation of African American children in the child welfare system has been declining over the past few years at the Protective Custodies and Substitute Care decision points.

**Data Requests/Questions from Members Related to Discussion Item #1:**

- Data was requested on the types of calls coming into the Hotline to include a breakdown on who is calling to report and why.
- Q: Are there additional areas of opportunities for intervention and education with regards to Mandated Reporters?
- Q: Is there a breakdown on the overall outcome for those children that stay in care over 36 months and whether disparities exist in termination of rights between White and African American parents.
  - A: Chair Tim Snowden provided information from FY22 in that the majority of those that exit the system are returned to a parent-home environment and that about 18% of all the children that received permanency, 10% were as a result of adoption and 2 to 3% were as a result of guardianship.
  - Dr. Fuller reported that the CFRC will be working per HB2914, Public Act 102-0451, effective 1/1/2022 which mandates an annual Disparities Report for DCFS to be concluded at the end of December, 2022. The report involves looking at disparities in the different types of permanency, i.e., reunification, adoption and guardianship.
  - Dagené Brown reported HB2914 was introduced by State Representative Mary Flowers. The finalized CFRC report would be accessible to the Commission and used as a tool in developing strategies, moving forward with the work before the Commission as well as in determining how well disparities are being addressed.

**Discussion Item #2:**

Chair Tim Snowden provided guidance for the breakout sessions to include discussions around the type of information that is needed per the various subject matter of the subcommittees for review and analysis to begin formulating recommendations. DCFS Representation to include Faith Seals, Deputy General Counsel – Cook Region and Susan Barker, Deputy General Counsel – Central Region for the Legal System and Its Impact to Youth-in-Care Subcommittee and Tracey King, Deputy Chief of Staff for the External Resources and Services Subcommittee.

**Breakout Sessions Began at 2:05PM:**

**Breakout Sessions Ended at 2:35PM:**

**Subcommittee Report-outs:**

- Chair Tim Snowden reported the DCFS Services to Impact Prevention and Reduce the Length of Stay in Foster Care Subcommittee discussed the Department’s current initiatives geared towards prevention and lessening the length of stay in foster care. Future Subcommittee discussions to include the impact of the State’s workforce crisis

and ways to address this issue as a potential barrier. The Subcommittee will meet again prior to the Commission's next scheduled meeting and will present a more detailed report-out to the Commission at that time.

- Dagené Brown reported the Legislative Impact to African American Families Subcommittee discussed recent statutory requirements of the Department to be provided in more detail as well as other legislation that potentially impacts the work of the Commission. Additional discussions were had about collaborating with other State agencies on new and existing legislation as well as other feedback, i.e., HFS and the child support component based upon feedback of situations where child support is terminated when youth come into care before the reunification decisions are made. Denice Murray will present additional questions in writing on behalf of the Subcommittee for response and further discussions.

Legislative Impact Subcommittee requests identified as:

- DCFS Representation from Policy Division to participate in the Subcommittee.
- LaTasha Roberson-Guifarro reported the External Resources and Services to Address Disproportionality Subcommittee discussed the Subcommittee's charges and identified questions to inform their work as well as four main points for future discussion based upon the findings presented by Dr. Fuller. Additional discussions were had about the Department's current efforts for solutions specifically as it relates to technology and the Children 360 solution to identify ways for alignment.
- Chrystal Wofford reported the Legal System and Its Impact to Youth-in-Care Subcommittee met prior to today's meeting and discussed the questions raised during that time with regards to the fact that youth enter and exit the child welfare system via the legal system.

Legal System Subcommittee data requests identified as:

- Data regarding the Department's utilization of codes in SACWIS indicating youth are in substitute care and whether that code changes when there is a court order that authorizes a "right to place" particularly as it relates to instances where African American children remain in substitute care yet have been placed back home via a court order. Is data of this sort collected by the Department and if not, how can this be put into effect.
- Data regarding dually involved youth and their high propensity to enter substitute care or whether the Juvenile Justice Judge orders youth into care to include the total number of occurrences specifically as it relates to African American children.

Additional discussions were held on ways to empower the parents as they navigate through the court system as this might have an impact on the youth that come into care and the length of time they spend in the system.

**Public Comment:**

There were no members from the public present.

**Next Steps/Actionable Items:**

- Subcommittees to send data requests to Darnita Jackson.
- Subcommittee meetings to be conducted outside and between meetings of the Commission.
- Subcommittees to consider the decision points/findings outlined during Dr. Fuller's presentation to determine ways in which to positively influence.
- Subcommittees to provide updates to Commission during the next meeting on areas of focus and proposed action items.
- Subcommittees to develop 3 to 5 concrete, measurable, impactful recommendations to move forward on within the next 8 months.
- Commission to identify 8 to 12 State-wide recommendations for change and support.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:52 PM.