

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Minutes of Meeting
October 19, 2022

Meeting called to order at 9:02AM by: LaTanya Jackson-Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL

Members in attendance: Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian
Sara Block, Ascend Justice
State Representative Chris Bos
Dagené Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS
State Representative Lakesia Collins
Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL
Ronald Davis, Parent Member
Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts
David Esposito, Executive Director at Supportive Housing Providers Assoc. of America
Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law
State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar, Legislative Latino Caucus
Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues, Former YIC
Carla Rogers, Proxy for State Senator Mattie Hunter
Cherie Kesler, Attorney at Law, Village of Savoy
Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender
Kim McCullough-Starks, Healthcare and Family Services
Onie Riley, Former Youth Member
Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office
Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
State Senator Sally Turner

Members not present: Mareema Ali
Paris Bateman
Clarissa Fourman
State Representative Sonya Harper
LaTanya Law
State Representative Camille Lilly
State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas

Public: Dr. Vanessa White, Consultant, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Ashley Deckert, Illinois Collaboration on Youth
D'Laney Gielow, Legal Aid Chicago Observer
Simone Weil, Casey Family Case Programs
Lyman Legters

DCFS: Tamela Atwood, Deputy Director of the State Central Register
Tierney Stutz, Chief Deputy Director of Investigations & State Central Register
Wendy Ingersoll, Intact Family Services

DCFS: Lynette Berry-Weston, Permanency
Kiersten Neswick, CFO, Budget & Finance
Budget & Finance Team
Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Off of Racial Equity Practice
Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups
Lucretia Newman, Legislative Liaison, Office of Legislative Affairs
Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Roll Call:

Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Welcome by the Chairs:

Agenda Overview and Opening Question by Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson-Wilson.

Approval of Minutes:

Ronald Davis entered a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on September 29,2022. Nora Collins-Mandeville seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Topics of Discussion:

- Overview presentation of DCFS State Central Register, IL Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline by Tamela Atwood.
 - Requirements for delegated authority to initiate an investigation.
 - Varying degrees of Intakes, i.e., allegation-based, information only, child welfare services and/or preventative services referrals and connections to community-based services.
- Overview of Investigative Process by Tierney Stutz.
 - Pre-commencement activities, assessment of report made, review of previously known background information and Initial Investigative Plan.
 - Referral assessments and final determination made within 60 days.
 - Final findings on State Central Register and retention codes and notifications of findings as per statute.
- Permanency Overview presentation by Wendy Ingersoll.
 - Placement and Substitute Care/relative Kinship care
 - Permanency goals, permanency planning process and Child & Family Team meetings.
 - Permanency services for the family and snapshot of youth-in-care.
- Overview of Child Welfare Services/Referrals and Intact Family Services by Lynette Berry-Weston.
 - Child Welfare referrals (calls made to the hotline), community linkages or short-term intervention versus Intact Family Services or Intensive Support and other services.
 - Voluntary or court-ordered services per indicated findings and Extended Family Services for unfounded final findings.
- DCFS Budget and Funding Allocation presentation by Kirsten Neswick & the DCFS Budget & Finance Team.
 - Funding sources for FY23.
 - Budget and Headcount for FY19-23
 - FY23 Budget increases and investments.
- Initiative to Improve Permanency Outcomes for Youth-in-Care of Color by Co-Chair Beverly Jones.
 - Reduced the length of time children of color stayed in Foster Care.
 - Increased the number of children who left the system preferably by reunification.
 - 72% of permanency achievements with respect to children of color are reunification, one-third going to the parental side.

Questions/Comments/Proposed Recommendations Noted for Further Discussion:

- What supports/services are provided and/or offered to families during the 9-month adjudication period to help them meet court's expectations to keep children with the family such as housing, substance use, mental health issues that impact the family? Wendy Ingersoll provided information about the integrated assessment process conducted when families come into the system and after a child is removed that provides recommendations and referrals for parents to services such as substance abuse, parenting classes, psychological evaluations, etc. with DCFS contracted providers.

- With regards to the data presented during the DCFS Budget Overview, it was unclear as to why the Norman fund increase of \$2 million dollars was not included as part of the appropriated Family Preservation increase of \$11 million dollars. Jason House advised the increase for Intact Family Services is included in the amount appropriated for Family Preservation and while there are some Intact Families who may qualify for Norman assistance, this is not a requirement to receive Norman cash and housing locator assistance.
 - Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson-Wilson requested line-item breakdowns of budget increases and investments for FY23 to be shared during the next meeting in November.
 - Additional points for further discussion include the 39% increase to Foster Care indicated in budget overview, why this occurred and line-item breakdown information to be received at the next meeting to identify the lack of support for families.
- Identify when decisions are made for children who will appear before the attention of the court system for purposes of analyzing the trajectory and implementing a monitoring and quality assurance-based system that allows for continued growth and development.
- Revise the Mandated Reporter training to avoid disproportionate number of reports; decisions being made by reporters stemming from implicit biases. Dagené Brown reported that per the passing of HB3100 the Mandated Reporter Training will now include implicit bias training.
- Revise the Investigator training and the extent implicit bias factors into how investigations are handled.
- Revisions to criteria for Intact and the decisions involved whether case is appropriate for Intact or court intervention.
- Analyze the percentage of cases in which investigators deem family has enough supports and protective factors in place therefore there is no risk, and no action needs to be taken, how is this being monitored?
- Consider ways to develop oversight systems and trainings particularly at decision points that allows for self-checks of implicit biases.
- Determine to what extent race factors into decisions to seek court involvement in cases where families are noncompliant to Intact Family Services. Is court involvement warranted? How are decisions being monitored?
- Consider the higher burden on people who cannot locate or identify resources that can pass placement clearance which disproportionately affects certain communities in terms of how CAPU randomly assigns POS agencies; Randomized system used for foster care placements creates burdens for families and case management staff as well as waste and loss.
- Review placement data after removal to determine how far are children placed away from their home of origin regardless if it is kinship or non-relative and whether there is racial disparity in that area.
- Identify decision points referenced in Disproportionality reports released within the last two years for framework to formulate goals to be reached over a period of time.
 - (1) Tamara Fuller, Michael Braun, Satomi Wakita, Kyle A. Adams III, University of Illinois, School of Social Work, Children and Family Research Center, Racial Disproportionality In the Illinois Child Welfare System (Oct. 2020),
 - (2) Northern Illinois University, Center for Child Welfare and Education, DCFS Northern Region Permanency Enhancement Project, FY 20 Annual Report – July 2019 to June 30, 2020
 - (3) Kim, H., Wildeman, C., Jonson-Reid, M., & Drake, B. (2017). Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment Among US Children. American Journal of Public Health, 107(2), 274-280.
- Dagené Brown reported DCFS is working to improve data collection processes as part of Data Governance and Organization to Support Equity and Racial Justice Act along with other agencies to ensure data is inclusive, accurate and reliable with the development of the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) and the ability of families to self-identify.

Public Comment:

- Ashley Deckert of Illinois Collaboration on Youth asked the Task Force to consider recommending a blind process pilot at the SCR/Hotline level due to black children being twice as likely as other races to be reported to the hotline. Dagené Brown reported this recommendation is currently included in the DCFS Racial Equity Blueprint plan and plans to move forward with this initiative.
- Ashley Deckert asked about the capability for individual offices to do data requested pools or data grabs surrounding their decision points. Dagené Brown suggested the Task Force collectively decide what data is needed for review to allow the data requests to be made while the CCWIS system is being built.

Action Items:

- Email Co-Chairs with Meeting Agreement additions, suggestions, questions, comments or recommendations.
- Review the Disproportionality reports and articles sent to Members via email in preparation for the Overview of the CFR Report by Tamara Fuller on November 9, 2022.
- DCFS Budget & Finance Team will provide more detailed information regarding the agency's budget for FY23 to include line-item information regarding increases and investments on November 9, 2022.

- Will break out into small groups to discuss the data, decision points and recommendations.

Meeting Adjournment:

Dagené Brown moved to adjourn the meeting. David Esposito seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:25AM.