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Introduction

Mission

The mission of the Michigan Coalition for Race Equity in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice is to reduce racial disproportionality and disparities in Michigan’s Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems through a data-driven approach.

Coalition Members

The Coalition includes a cross section of Michigan’s children and family services leadership, juvenile justice leadership, members of the judiciary, state legislators, state and local officials, public and private agency leaders, educators, health and child welfare professionals, philanthropic leaders, and advocates for our state’s children and their families.

Coalition Supporters


Coalition Coordinators

Coalition activities are guided and coordinated through the Michigan State Court Administrative Office’s Child Welfare Services division (SCAO), Public Policy Associates, Inc. (PPA), and the Michigan State University School of Social Work (MSU SSW)
Problem Statement and Rationale for Action

National and Michigan-specific studies have shown that minority children, especially African-American children, stay in the child welfare system longer and are far more likely to exit the system without reunifying with family, being adopted, or achieving some other type of permanency. Minority children experience more maltreatment while in care and are more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system. A child’s placement in foster care correlates with a heightened risk of homelessness, unemployment, incarceration, substance abuse, and other negative outcomes. The disproportionate number and disparate treatment of minority children within Michigan’s child welfare system has lifelong consequences.

The cost to our children, families, and the state if current trends continue demands comprehensive review of relevant data coupled with clear action to address disproportionality and its root causes in Michigan. To that end, Michigan stakeholders have formed the Michigan Coalition for Race Equity in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice. The Coalition will recommend strategies for policymakers, civic leaders, and civil servants concerned about disproportionality and disparity in Michigan’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
Saginaw Demonstration Project

Charge

Saginaw County will engage in a Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) reduction plan that will begin with data collection to determine the extent and nature of DMC and provide a baseline of DMC data for future monitoring. Key activities will include:

- Using the DMC model from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), key juvenile justice data will be collected and the Relative Rate Index will be determined for each of the major decision points in the juvenile justice system.
- A similar data collection and analysis for child welfare disproportionality (CWD) will be followed utilizing decision points in the child welfare process that are set by federal and state laws.
- A local Steering team will be established and data collected will be made available to the steering committee/leadership group for assessment, planning and implementation purposes.
- The project will be coordinated with the Supreme Court’s State Court Administrative Office-Child Welfare Services Division as the effort to reduce DMC in the child welfare and juvenile system takes place at the state level. Data collected will be offered to enhance ongoing statewide efforts to assess the available data and identify the intersecting points between child welfare and juvenile justice cases.
- Based on the previously issued Michigan reports, plans will be developed and implemented to address racial disparities that include measurable objectives for policy or practice change.
- Results will be evaluated to determine the impact of implemented actions to reduce disparities in the child welfare system.
- Findings and progress will be monitored and annually reported.
- Possible private and public funding sources will be identified and explored to create sustainable efforts.
To achieve its mission, the statewide Race Equity Coalition formed four topical workgroups: (1) Data & Assessment, (2) Policy, (3) Training, and (4) Funding. Each workgroup consists of various coalition members, supporters, and staff. Each workgroup has specific objectives that inform the full Coalition. These objectives are based on the Coalition’s project timeline.

Data and Assessment

Workgroup Charge

Review data and assessment recommendations in previously issued Michigan specific child welfare and juvenile justice reports. Advise Coalition regarding data system/assessment reforms to identify racial and ethnic disparities and the contributing causes of those disparities. Recommend better data collection methods for dual wards who have contact with both child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Assess and identify the underlying causes of racial/ethnic disparities.

Accomplishments

- Reviewed data and assessment recommendations in previously issued Michigan specific child welfare and juvenile justice reports.
- Developed, vetted, and ratified a data collection plan with definitions for decisions points, data elements, and other demographic and case data.
- Compiled and reviewed state and county level reports, which included Relative Rate Indexes for each child welfare decision point by county and race/ethnicity for 2010-12 and for each juvenile justice decision point by county and race/ethnicity for 2010.
- Conducted preliminary discussions about the different data systems used for juvenile justice and child welfare data and the obstacles to collecting and analyzing data about youth who are dual wards and those who are not dual wards but are served sequentially or simultaneously by the two systems.
- Developed recommendations for better data and analysis related to dual wards.
• Discussed the relationship between data collected, possible underlying causes of disproportionality, and subsequent assessment.

Policy

Workgroup Charge

Review program policy recommendations in previously issued Michigan specific child welfare and juvenile justice reports. Review national reports and evaluations of programs in other states concerning the reduction of child welfare and juvenile justice disparities. Recommend evidence based interventions that have potential to reduce racial/ethnic disparities. Identify successful program interventions and strategies to reduce disparities developed by Michigan demonstration projects. Recommend evidence based interventions that have potential to reduce racial/ethnic disparities. Identify and recommend potential interdisciplinary collaborations that may improve outcomes for families and youth of color.

Accomplishments

• Compiled a list of recommendations from previous Michigan reports.
• Identified some of the current DHS initiatives and activities that may have an impact on reducing disparities.
• Reviewed and discussed the findings from the Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect
• Developed some preliminary recommendations for further consideration after reviewing county level data.

Training

Workgroup Charge

Review staff development/training recommendations in previously issued Michigan specific child welfare and juvenile justice reports and the Dwayne B Modified Settlement Agreement. Review national reports and evaluations of training strategies in other states to reduce child welfare and juvenile justice disparities. Recommend specific training practices to reduce child welfare and
juvenile justice disparities. Examine specific training needs for those making “first contact” with youth and families (Child Protective Services and law enforcement).

**Accomplishments**

- Compiled a list of recommendations in previous reports.
- Developed some preliminary recommendations about supporting *Knowing Who You Are* facilitators in Michigan who can deliver training at low cost on an ongoing basis.
- Documented the positive value of *Knowing Who You Are* training.
- Identified audiences that would need to receive the training if provided more broadly throughout the state.
- Documented results about “pitfalls, traps and what to avoid” in planning and developing training related to race equity and diversity.
- Identified some of the existing resources for diversity training that may be available from the various partners involved in serving children and families in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

**Funding**

**Workgroup Charge**

Review data and funding recommendations in previously issued Michigan specific child welfare and juvenile justice reports. Review national reports and funding strategies in other states to reduce child welfare and juvenile justice disparities. Review potential for integrating/coordination of current streams available to maximize support services for children, youth and their families involved in the child welfare system. Assess potential for public/private funding partnerships.

**Accomplishments**

- Reviewed and compiled a list of funding recommendations in previously issued Michigan specific child welfare and juvenile justice reports.
• Discussed several potential funding strategies including foundations, legislative support, state agency collaborations, and tribal organization support.

• Determined that it will be able to review the underlying causes of disproportionality and program recommendations developed to address those causes only upon receipt of relevant findings and recommendations from the other Workgroups.
Saginaw Project Timeline

Original Learning and Action Plan

- **Phase I** – Identification (October – May 2012): A DMC data subcommittee is established and sources of data regarding DMC in Saginaw County are identified, enhanced, and data is provided to the DMC Steering Committee.

- **Phase II** – Assessment (June – August 2012): A DMC assessment subcommittee is established to study any underlying causes of DMC (if DMC is identified in the identification phase).

- **Phase III** – Intervention (September – December 2012): A DMC Reduction Plan is developed, following a review of the process and results to this point. The plan development will be done in consultation with the Department of Human Services, the Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice, SCAO- Child Welfare Services, and the Saginaw County DMC Steering Committee and System of Care partners. January 2013 – June 2014- The DMC Reduction Plan is implemented.

- **Phase IV** – Evaluation (January 2013 – September 2014): Evaluation of the Saginaw County DMC Reduction Project is conducted.

- **Phase V** – Monitoring (January 2013 – June 2014): The DMC Steering Committee continues to collect DMC data and meets to monitor any changes noted in DMC relative rate indices (RRI).
Operational Definitions
(Sources noted in footnotes)

Note: Definitions are for purposes of this Coalition as a common starting point for our work; there are many different definitions for several of these terms which are all widely accepted.

Disparity: Unfair or unequal treatment of one racial or ethnic group by the decision making community as compared to another racial or ethnic group.¹

Disproportionality: A particular racial or ethnic group is represented within a social system at a rate or percentage that is not proportionate to their representation in the general population.²

Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC): Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s term for minority youths’ contact with the juvenile justice system; formerly referred to as Disproportionate Minority Confinement before OJJDP began looking at minority youths’ broader involvement with the juvenile justice system in 2002. For purposes of this Coalition we will use DMC-JJ and DMC-CW to differentiate systems.

Dual Wards: Youth with involvement in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Out of Home Placements: Placement into foster care or a juvenile detention facility (encompasses both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems).

Overrepresentation: A particular racial or ethnic group is represented within a social system at a rate higher than their representation in the general population.³

Race: Race is not “…a biological or genetic category, but rather, a way of interpreting differences between people [that] creates or reinforces inequalities.

¹ National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The Race Equity Coalition pre-planning group added “by the decision making community” to the NCJFCJ definition.
² Id.
among them – a political construct. In other words, “race” is an unequal relationship between social groups, represented by the privileged access to power and resources by one group over another.”

**Racial Equity**: A social outcomes picture in which the distribution of society’s resources, opportunities, and burdens are not predictable by race and race is not consistently associated with the incidence of privilege and disadvantage.

**Racial Justice**: The creation and proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

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5 Aspen Institute, Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives, What Do We Mean By Racial Equity? Courtesy of Casey Family Programs Glossary of Terms.

The Six Phases of the Race Equity Project

Note: Pilot counties mirrored the six phase process but at a county, rather than state, level.

Phase One: Orientation and Training

The first phase of the project consisted of training the statewide coalition on issues related to diversity, disproportionality, disparity, and racism. The curriculum used was the Casey Family Program’s “Knowing Who You Are” training. That training ensured that everyone uses a common vocabulary for race equity issues and began the work with an understanding that the purpose of the initiative is to provide equitable opportunities for all children. The orientation and training experience provided a specific point of reference on addressing unequal opportunities by race.

Phase Two: Data Collection and Identification

This phase develops the capacity, infrastructure, and a systematic approach for collecting and analyzing child welfare and juvenile justice data on an ongoing basis to determine if racial disproportionality and disparate treatment are occurring at specific decision points at the state and county levels. A matrix was developed to analyze data at key decision points to determine if there appear to be statistically significant differences in decisions based on race and ethnicity. Sites that produce statistically significant differences in decision making will be targeted for assessment, intervention, evaluation, and monitoring based on this data-driven approach.

One objective of this initiative is to improve the methods and resources dedicated to collecting detailed data about the general population and subpopulations that come into contact with Michigan’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
**Phase Three: Assessment**

After the Identification Phase is complete, the collection of additional quantitative and qualitative data will determine the factors and mechanisms that contribute to any observed disproportionality. After the Identification Phase of the process provides the statewide coalition with a description or account of the extent of minority overrepresentation, the Assessment Phase will provide an in-depth examination of how and when disproportionality occurs. The assessment will involve a search for the factors that contribute to disproportionality, with the goal of developing strategies or interventions to reduce it.

During this Phase, the Coalition will assess the underlying causes of disproportionality and disparate treatment, and analyze the barriers, challenges, and opportunities for addressing the problems linked to CWD. At a state level the coalition will be guided through a process to identify and answer critical data-related questions about racial disproportionality and disparate treatment in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

**Phase Four: Intervention**

Ensuring equal opportunity means not only ending intentional discrimination, but also creating opportunities to eliminate discrimination by removing barriers to systemic improvement. Once the coalition or a jurisdiction completes the Assessment Phase, efforts will shift to selecting and implementing intervention strategies to reduce CWD. During the Intervention Phase, the coalition will develop intervention plans that serve as a road map for how the state will reduce minority overrepresentation at a systemic level in the local child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

CWD intervention and reduction strategies will be funded in three categories corresponding to the different audiences for which they are designed:

1. Direct services, which target at-risk or system-involved youth, their families, and communities

2. Training and technical assistance, primarily for child welfare personnel
3. System change, which strives to modify aspects of the child welfare system that may contribute to CWD

For each category, PPA will help identify the applicable CWD factors; discuss strategies (i.e., programs, services, and activities) for addressing CWD; and highlight characteristics, principles, and procedures associated with successful programs to eliminate CWD.

**Phase Five: Evaluation**

The applicable interventions will be evaluated to determine if they have successfully addressed the underlying causes of disproportionality and disparate treatment by reducing the statistically significant differences in decision-making that were found during the Identification and Assessment Phases. Both process and outcome evaluation will be used to assess the effectiveness of the interventions. Overall, the evaluation will assess the effectiveness of each intervention in achieving its goals and objectives, and help to determine whether modifications of the interventions are necessary.

**Phase Six: Monitoring and Reporting Out**

Monitoring and reporting out involve assessing information over time and looking for patterns in the data. The purposes of monitoring CWD on an ongoing basis are at least threefold:

1. The ultimate question that the coalition and jurisdictions must answer is: Has CWD been reduced? Whether such a change is directly attributable to specific CWD efforts is a secondary issue that requires a specific evaluation, but the first issue is determining whether a high rate of CWD has been reduced and whether the rate of CWD is increasing or decreasing over time.

2. When rates of CWD change, adjustments can be made in the intervention strategies, e.g., by selecting new targets, making sure that past CWD reduction are not lost, and ensuring that the system is managed in a consistent manner.
3. Monitoring and providing feedback of simple data may encourage change. Positive results provide tremendous encouragement for CWD efforts. The ongoing monitoring of CWD rates keeps the issue alive and fuels the urgency to reverse CWD.
Summary of Prior Michigan Reports

Equity: Moving Toward Better Outcomes for All of Michigan’s Children


This report resulted from a legislative mandate in the 2005 DHS budget bill. That law required the advisory committee to examine the overrepresentation of children of color at each stage of the child welfare process, beginning at the point of entry into the system. At the time the report was prepared, African-American children in Michigan represented slightly less than 18% of all children in the state, yet more than 50% of the children in out-of-home care.

The advisory committee found that despite no evidence that African-American and Native American children were abused or neglected more than other children, they were more likely to be under state supervision. Once under state supervision, they generally fared worse than other children, being more likely to be removed from their homes, less likely to reunite with their parents, more likely to have multiple out-of-home placements and spend a longer time in care, and more likely to be adjudicated in the juvenile justice system or waived to adult courts.

The committee made 11 recommendations, including:

1. DHS should identify all potential state and federal funding sources and use them as flexibly as is permissible to ensure culturally proficient, home- and community-based services.

2. DHS should maximize Title IV-E funding to ensure that Michigan draws down all possible federal funds, and use any additional funds for initiatives to improve culturally proficient practices.

3. DHS should pursue a Title IV-E waiver to expand innovative prevention and family support programs to prevent unnecessary out of home placements.
4. DHS should contract for an external review of its child welfare policies, procedures, programs and contracts to discern whether they disadvantage children and families of color.

5. DHS should develop and enforce policies and practices that create a culture of inclusion, embrace diversity, and engage families and communities of color.

6. DHS should adopt policies and practices that actively engage families as partners.

7. The legislature should appropriate the necessary resources to strengthen community-based services and to expand the number of DHS eligibility and family independence specialists.

8. Michigan should focus its resources on the most vulnerable families.

9. DHS should build community support for addressing overrepresentation in the child welfare system by engaging community partners in efforts to raise public awareness of the impact of disparities.

10. DHS should establish a committee with representatives from the public and private sectors to monitor and assess the state’s progress in reducing the overrepresentation of children of color in Michigan’s child welfare system, and informing public policy.

11. Local DHS offices and private child welfare agencies should establish workgroups to implement new culturally proficient policies and practices, and develop the data, information-gathering, and reporting tools needed to track issues of racial disparity.
Race Equity Review: Findings from a Qualitative Analysis of Racial Disproportionality and Disparity for African American Children and Families in Michigan’s Child Welfare System


This is a DHS-funded follow up report on Recommendation 4 in the report summarized just above. The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) led a team of national experts, local leaders, and stakeholders that examined racial disproportionality in the child welfare systems in Saginaw and Wayne counties during the spring and fall of 2007. The team designed and implemented a qualitative Race Equity Review (Review) to assess the institutional features of the child welfare system that directly produce or contribute to racial disparities. The team studied DHS, private agency, and court practices. The Review also looked at the needs of youth who are involved simultaneously in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system.

The Review team made nine recommendations, including:

1. DHS must build the internal leadership capacity to ensure that the agency functions in a fair and responsive manner.

2. DHS must use relevant, reliable, and data-driven management practices to achieve race equity.

3. DHS must clearly articulate and implement a case-practice model that translates DHS’s philosophy into policies and practices.

4. DHS must correct policy misinterpretations that disadvantage children and families of color. Further, DHS must build the capacity to regularly evaluate the equity of the agency’s policies.

5. DHS’s risk assessment tool must be examined and its implementation improved.

6. Resource providers that contract with DHS must provide fair and equitable services.
7. DHS must build external partnerships in working for equity.

8. DHS should collaborate with the courts to improve the quality of legal oversight. Courts should track their performance on child welfare and juvenile justice cases by racial/cultural groups.

9. Michigan’s child welfare and juvenile justice system leaders must work collaboratively to explore policies and practices that meet the specific needs of dual-ward youth.


The Michigan Child Welfare Improvement Task Force (Task Force) included a broad cross section of child and family services leaders, young adults and parents with direct experiences in Michigan’s child welfare system, state legislators, members of the judiciary, public and private agency leaders, educators, philanthropic leaders and advocates, state and local officials, and health and child welfare professionals. The Task Force report contains findings, recommendations and implementation plans to improve the child welfare system. Sections of the report encompass information and recommendations specific to racial/ethnic disproportionality in the child welfare system as well as improving the strategic use of data collection, analysis, and reporting to improve the system’s performance. The recommendations and “Change Priorities” specifically addressing racial equity issues include:

1. Change Priority Number Four: Race, gender, and cultural equity must become priorities for the child welfare system (p 45). The Task Force adopted this recommendation from the 2006 Report (summarized earlier) to emphasize the importance of a commitment to equity.

2. Change Priority Number Five: Engage and empower consumers, children and youth, birth and adoptive parents, families, tribes and tribal organizations to ensure their involvement and voices as decision-makers and respected partners in case planning, program/policy development, service delivery, and systemic change efforts (p 47). The Task Force adopted this
recommendation from the 2006 Report to emphasize the importance of developing an appropriate case practice model that includes collaboration with families and stakeholders in each individual case.

3. Change Priority Number Seven: Improve the strategic use of data collection, analysis, and reporting to improve performance of the system as measured by outcomes for families and children (p 51). The report cites the difficulties faced by DHS and the courts in managing the child welfare and juvenile justice systems due to very limited access to information about the operation of programs, the status of individual cases at the state and county level, and the impact of services on system consumers. The report references the impending October 2012 launch of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) as a means to improve information management. It made specific recommendations for the new SACWIS.

4. DHS and the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) should issue an annual report on outcomes for children and families, race equity, and progress on achieving performance standards outlined in the Task Force report. DHS and SCAO should work collaboratively with local counties, Tribes, and providers to establish data sharing agreements that provide for statewide juvenile justice, child welfare, and homeless and runaway youth databases (“SACWIS plus”). A key action requires DHS and the courts to establish performance standards that will provide the basis for the issuance of an annual report.
The Judicial Crossroads Task Force includes leaders of the State Bar and the business, civic, and political communities. The Task Force comprised the following committees: Court Structure and Resources, Technology, Business Impact, and Access to Justice (ATJ). These committees included over 100 members of the bench, bar, and other communities particularly affected by the justice system.

The ATJ Committee noted in its findings that perceptions of discrimination, insensitivity, and lack of cultural competence concerning minority groups and other diverse populations challenge the credibility, effectiveness, and equitable nature of our judicial process. The committee made the following comments and recommendations:

1. Measures taken to prevent children from ending up in the juvenile justice and abuse and neglect system are cost-effective. Michigan should direct scarce resources to early-childhood community-based services. Children and families of color experience significantly worse outcomes in the child welfare system than do non-minority children.

2. Child welfare policies, procedures, programs, and contracts should be reviewed specifically to determine whether they disadvantage families of color. We must develop policies and practices that create a culture that embraces diversity and inclusion, and that engages families and communities of color.

3. Court systems must train judges and lawyers to serve an increasingly culturally diverse child welfare population more effectively and fairly. This should include educating judges and quasi-judicial officers about implicit and explicit bias, procedural fairness, and the impact of discrimination and stereotyping on court processes. Additionally, court system documents should be reviewed for “Plain English,” cross-cultural, and bias issues.
4. Data must be collected, analyzed, and reported in terms of measureable outcomes for families and children at each critical decision-making point in order to improve the performance of the system.

5. The federal Indian Child Welfare Act should be codified into state law.

6. The institutionalization of partnerships between the Michigan Supreme Court/SCAO and tribal courts, the Michigan Indian Judicial Association, lawyers, and other Indian/First Nation stakeholders will improve meaningful access to justice in Michigan state courts.
Summary of Research Findings

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<td>--</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases Diverted</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases Involving Secure Detention</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases Involving Secure Detention: [Hispanic or Latino]</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases Petitioned</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases Resulting in Delinquent Findings</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases Resulting in Confinement in Secure Juvenile Correctional Facilities</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All statistically significant results involve black or African-American families and youth, unless otherwise noted.
Note: Details regarding likely drivers can be found in the Key Informant Interview Report, Focus Group Report, Survey Results, and Inferential Analysis.

Drivers are listed in order of frequency as reported by focus group and key informant respondents (e.g., upstream drivers were the most frequently reported type of driver). With few exceptions, focus group and key informant respondents did not distinguish between causal drivers of African-American/black versus Hispanic/Latino overrepresentation in Saginaw’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and many recipients described the causal drivers of minority overrepresentation in the child welfare system as being virtually identical to drivers of minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system, especially with regard to upstream drivers.

Upstream Drivers

*Upstream drivers refer to families’ and youths’ experiences before contact with child welfare & juvenile justice systems.*

- Lack of job skills, unemployment, and poverty
- Inadequate or inaccessible family support services
- Fragile community support; lack of pro-social activities
- Disconnection from schools
- Dangerous and dilapidated neighborhoods
- Housing stress and homelessness
- Weakened family structure; dysfunctional; irresponsible parenting
Downstream Drivers

*Downstream drivers refer to families’ and youths’ experiences after contact with child welfare & juvenile justice systems.*

- Differential treatment of youth and families based on race
- Differential treatment of youth and families based on socioeconomic class
- Cultural insensitivity, lack of family engagement skills, and mistrust of the system
- Organizational policies and practices that differentially affect racial/ethnic minorities
- Too few minority professionals working in the system
- Differential treatment of youth and families based on class

Midstream Drivers

*Midstream drivers refer to families’ and youths’ experiences when they first contact with child welfare & juvenile justice systems.*

- Differential reporting of minorities
- Underreporting of child maltreatment and delinquency in rural and white communities
- Retaliatory/malicious child abuse reports in the African-American/black community
Proposed Solutions

Solutions are listed under the corresponding likely racial/ethnic disproportionality drivers. This listing includes solutions that were most frequently identified in focus groups and key informant interviews.

Upstream Driver Proposed Solutions

Inadequate or Inaccessible Family Support Services

- Move investment to front-end services in both child welfare and juvenile justice to maintain children and youth in their own homes. In addition, decrease funding for juvenile detention facilities.
- Develop a parent advocacy program, possibly a peer-to-peer model.

Fragile Community Support; Lack of Pro-Social Activities

- Bring the community together for comprehensive planning to address drivers of disproportionality.
- Enlist community organizations in the solution phase, especially faith-based organizations.
- Develop a comprehensive community-mentoring program for youth, parents, and families.
- Provide more pro-social extracurricular activities for youth with tutoring/school-performance and school-attendance requirements.
- Provide more after-school programs, summer activities, youth employment, and other positive activities for families and youth to participate in together.

Disconnection from Schools

- Address the community’s truancy, suspension, and expulsion issues.
- Conduct interventions for youth early in their education.
- Engage families on how to provide academic support to their children.
- Provide social workers in schools to support youth facing difficult family circumstances. Social workers must ensure confidentiality from peers and parents.
Weakened Family Structure; Dysfunctional; Irresponsible Parenting

- Continue to improve family engagement in service planning and delivery.
- Help parents understand boundaries of corporal punishment, that is, the line between physical discipline and physical abuse.

Downstream Driver Proposed Solutions

Differential Treatment of Youth and Families Based on Race/Class and Cultural Insensitivity, Lack of Family Engagement Skills, and Mistrust of the System

- Provide ongoing training and support to new and existing workers on cultural competency, including practice exercises, cultural competence mentors, and in-depth training that prepares supervisors to monitor and coach their assigned workers effectively on cultural competence.
- Inform system-involved parents of opportunity to file grievances against agencies and make parents aware of how to file a grievance.
- Engage system-involved youth equitably by ensuring that all youth are informed of their eligibility for allowances, scholarships, and other supports.
- Engage youth consistently, frequently, and positively.
- Engage families and youth in implementing racial-equity interventions.
- Equip youth to better communicate their thoughts and feelings to their judge, referee, and/or attorney.
- Streamline paperwork requirements to reduce worker burnout, which negatively affects workers’ capacity to effectively engage youth and families.
- Train professionals on how to cope positively with stress and burnout.
- Train professionals on how to engage youth who experience mental health issues.
- Hire more juvenile probation officers and other professionals who relate to families and youth.
• Facilitate more open and transparent discussions between the juvenile justice system and faith-based organizations.

**Organizational Policies and Practices That Differentially Affect Racial/Ethnic Minorities**

• Mandate “person-centered planning.”

• Determine relative placement eligibility in the best interests of the children by the totality of the circumstances rather than bright-line requirements.

• Streamline the process for relative placement so that children can be placed with relatives who are willing and capable of caring for the children but are unwilling to proceed with foster care licensing.

• Establish judicial oversight and stricter guidelines regarding who is placed on the child abuse registry.

**Mid-Stream Driver Proposed Solution**

**Differential Reporting of Minorities**

• Clarify policy on when physical discipline constitutes physical abuse.