REDUCING RACIAL DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE

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RACIAL DISPARITIES

• Black and Native American children overrepresented at all points along the child welfare continuum
  • Reported and investigated more often for abuse and neglect
  • Placed out of home more often (33% of children in foster care are black)
  • Longer stays in foster care
  • Less likely to receive adequate services
  • More likely to stay in system and age out of it
BY THE NUMBERS

Out of 641,646 reported child victims in the United States:

- 133,838 were African American (21% of child welfare population vs. 14% of general population)
- 9,039 Native American (1.5% vs. 1%)
- 150,762 Hispanic (24% vs. 26%)
- 279,332 White (43% vs 50%)

Rates per 1,000 children

- African American, 13.8
- Native American, 14.8
- Hispanic, 8.1
- White, 10.7

LARGE NUMBERS OF FAMILIES AFFECTED

26.3% of all children investigated

Approximately 1 in 2 Black and Native American children investigated during childhood.

Children on public insurance experienced child welfare involvement at more than twice the rate of children with private insurance

Association of child welfare involvement with poverty accounts for some, but not all, of the disparities
LEADING CAUSES OF DISPARITIES

- Professional biases in decision-making
- Structural inequities
- Higher rates of economic disadvantage
- Increased scrutiny of populations
- Systemic biases towards punitive rather than ameliorative interventions
- Lack of access to quality and culturally competent services

MICRO-AND MACRO-LEVEL REFORMS

- Reforms needed in child welfare, but also in the systems working alongside and interacting with the child welfare system:
  - Courts
  - Schools
  - Mental health services
  - Housing
  - Policing
  - Community resources
  - Jobs and family income
CHANGE ON THE MICRO-LEVEL

- Workers should examine their own racial and cultural biases
- Strive to reduce how such prejudices influence their work
- Make sure that staff and clients of different cultures and races are given a voice and chances for mentorship and leadership
- Partner with underrepresented groups and communities to create services that best meet their needs
- Advocate for reforms that counter bias and correct inequities
- Call out unfair practices

CHANGE ON THE MACRO LEVEL

- Gregory Owens:
  - Retired after a career that includes 34 years working for New York government. Continues to work on initiatives to eliminate race-based disparities and promote justice and fairness.

- Jessica Pryce:
  - Professor of Social Work at Florida State University and the Executive Director of the Florida Institute for Child Welfare

- Eric Fenner:
  - Managing Director for Casey Family Programs, leader of Race Equity Improvement Collaborative
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