



# **NATIONAL RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT OF DISPROPORTIONALITY**

## ***RACIAL EQUITY STRATEGIES, TOOLS AND PROGRAMS***

### **BLACK ADMINISTRATORS IN CHILD WELFARE**

**FEBRUARY 26, 2008**



**This project was made possible through collaboration with Casey Family Programs, whose mission is to provide, improve- and ultimately prevent the need for –foster care.**

## Acknowledgements

The National Research and Assessment of Disproportionality/Racial Equity Strategies, Tools and Programs project purpose is another opportunity to identify promising practices that are addressing disproportionality and disparities in the treatment of children of color.

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- Arizona
- Florida
- Kentucky
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- Oklahoma
- Texas
- Los Angeles County
- New York City

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Ernestine F. Jones, Project Director

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# **National Research and Assessment of Disproportionality/Racial Equity Strategies, Tools and Programs**

## **I. Executive Summary**

National attention has steadily increased about the need to address this nation's responsibility to respond to the issue of the overrepresentation of children of color, especially African American children, in the child welfare system. While much attention is being given to reunification or permanent outcomes, many remain in care for longer periods of time as evidenced by the 20,000 youth who age out of foster care each year. "Families of color receive fewer services and they experience lower reunification rates than white children."<sup>1</sup> While work has begun in a number of places around the country, this underlying problem continues to present challenges that need to be confronted.

The federal government has increased its expectations for state performance with more intensive reviews and audits of the work being done in the states to reduce the number of children in out-of-home care or to prevent children from coming into care.

African American children are tragically overrepresented in the child welfare system today "Racial disparities are evident at every critical decision point. Children of color enter foster care at higher rates, even when they and their families have the same characteristics as comparable white children and families. They remain in foster care for longer periods of time than white children. Longer stays in foster care contribute to racial disproportionality because they increase their numbers in the system in any given year.

The disproportionate representation and disparities in the treatment of African American and other children of color in the child welfare system have been a major problem and concern for many years. According to Dr. Robert Hill, noted Senior Researcher (Westat), "Disproportionality refers to the difference in the percentage of children of a certain racial or ethnic group in the child welfare system and disparity means unequal treatment when comparing a racial or ethnic minority to a non-minority. This can be observed in many forms including decision points (e.g., reporting, investigation, substantiation, foster care placement, exit), treatment, services, or resources."<sup>2</sup>

Organizations like The Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System and The Black Administrators in Child Welfare (BACW) have partnered in their efforts to bring increased attention to this issue as well as support to groups wanting to work on initiatives to improve the outcomes for children of color. More recently states and some local jurisdictions have been paying more attention to the circumstances and conditions that may be contributing to this problem.

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<sup>1</sup> "Racial Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System, an Analysis of Embedded Inequities," Race Matters, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2002. Page 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality in Child Welfare: An Update," Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System, Robert B. Hill, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Westat, October 2006, Page 3.

A number of states and local child welfare agencies have acknowledged the existence of this problem and have begun to make changes in policies, practices, and methods used to provide services and in the utilization of resources and some are beginning to show some promise in reducing overrepresentation of minorities in their systems.

The focus of this report is to make available to individuals in the child welfare field information about strategies, tools and programs that are being used in nine states and two large cities to support their work to reduce the number of children in out-of-home care or to prevent children from entering care. While in some jurisdictions the stated purpose has not been identified as a special initiative to address the overrepresentation of minority children; in all the represented agencies in this report minority children are overrepresented; the belief is that the actions taken have contributed in a positive way to reducing African American and other children of color in their systems. As a result, the work being carried out has led to some positive outcomes as well as a reduction in the numbers of children of color in out-of-home care. The specific objectives of this project were to provide information about the work that is being done that;

- Addresses the causes as well as the effects of placing African American and other children of color disproportionately in the child welfare system and finding ways to reduce out-of-home placements.
- Captures information about strategies, tools and programs that is positively impacting services to children and families.
- Increases the knowledge, awareness and sensitivity of personnel in child welfare agencies to the cultural issues that affect practice and policy development.
- Makes available to the field information that can be used as a resource and/or guide to initiate actions and changes that may help to reduce disproportionality and disparity in treatment of these children in the child welfare system.

Nine states (Arizona, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Texas) and two large urban jurisdictions (Los Angeles County and New York City) were selected to participate in this project (see Appendix 2 for the list of the states/jurisdictions, the Secretary, Executive Director or Commissioner, and the agency representative). All of the jurisdictions had overrepresentation of African American children in their child welfare systems. They were representative of different regions in the country and of varying population sizes.

The scope of work for this project was divided into two phases. Phase I involved an internet scan and literature review of the work in each jurisdiction that addresses the overrepresentation of minority children, reduction in the numbers of children in out-of-home care and efforts to prevent children from entering care.

In Phase II the Cabinet Secretary or Executive Director responsible for child welfare services for each state or jurisdiction was contacted via a written letter requesting their participation in the project and that they designate a representative to assist in gathering the information about work in their state or jurisdiction. The designated representative was contacted and provided information about the purpose of the project and the process to be used in collecting the information that included identifying information about their

work and participating in a telephone interview to respond to a series of questions provided in a Discussion Guide (see Appendix 1).

The Discussion Guide included a series of questions designed to capture information describing generally the work that was being done to address disproportionality and to identify any outcomes that the agency wanted to achieve. The Discussion Guide included the agency overview, agency tools, internal data sources, community involvement and other documents. The information collected was categorized into the following areas;

- Statistical reports and any data collected on outcomes
- Community engagement
- Management and program changes
- Policy and procedure changes
- Training
- Demonstration projects or new initiatives
- Legislation

The information presented in this report was provided by the agency representative as work that is being carried out in their agencies to support children and families. In this report there is no attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies, tools or programs but is simply a description of the work that has been identified by each jurisdiction as contributing in some way to their efforts to reduce the number of children in out-of-home care as well as reducing disproportionality and/or disparities in the treatment of children and families.

The results gathered from the states and jurisdictions represent a combination of information gathered from the internet search, documents sent by the designated contact person, information provided in the Discussion Guide and from telephone interviews with the designated contact person by two doctoral students.

The internet review revealed that some jurisdictions utilize their state planning process to discuss services or programs that focused on reducing the number of children in out-of-home care such as through increasing adoptions and others identified actions specifically aimed at addressing the overrepresentation of minority children in their child welfare systems.

The internet review also revealed that some states were given direction by their state legislatures and others developed plans that grew out of community involvement in their agency work that led to new initiatives.

In nearly half of the jurisdictions there was a legislative enactment that was significant in stimulating or supporting the initial work. All of the jurisdictions spent considerable time and effort engaging the community in their work. Different methods were used such as task forces, advisory committees or oversight committees. In each instance there was a requirement that a written report is completed presenting the findings and that they make recommendations about what work would be needed to begin to address the problem.

Some states included their efforts in their State plan. Nine of the States provided training to staff members including training sessions on addressing cultural awareness and undoing racism. Eight of the States and jurisdictions used Family-to-Family as part of their strategies, programs and tools to address disproportionality in their locations. All of the States and jurisdictions used unique projects and eight of them used special tools. These are discussed in detail in the report. Although the reduction in overall numbers of children in care cannot be attributed solely to the use of these tools it does show evidence of these states and one jurisdiction moving in a positive direction.

In this report the activities referred to as special tools include case practices that are used by social workers to engage families and others in a participatory process where plans and decisions are being made about the care of children. For example tools such as Team Decision Making, Family Group Decision Making and Family Team Meetings engage extended family and community members, where appropriate, in the case planning process. One strategy that was used in most of the jurisdictions was cultural awareness training. The training that was used most often was the Undoing Racism<sup>3</sup> training that was viewed as having a positive impact on the participants. It was consistently reported as the underlying source for enhancing staff awareness and understanding about institutional racism and its influence on child welfare. When followed by other training such as the Casey Family Program, “Know Who You Are” training as happened in Texas, staff felt that it was more helpful.

Five states (Arizona, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, and Texas) and one jurisdiction (Los Angeles County) showed a reduction in the number of children in care from fiscal year 2006 to 2007. These states also showed a reduction in the number of African American children in care during this same time period. Los Angeles had the largest reduction with the overall decrease being 2468 fewer children, with 1100 fewer African American children in care in 2007.

An important component in the work that is being done is tracking and reporting the data on the status and numbers of children at key points in the system. Tracking the number of children that enter the system is an important indicator of what is happening to children in the jurisdiction that come to the attention of the agency. The statistical information on children entering care is inconsistent. Kentucky focused on reducing the number of children who were entering the system and their data show that this has occurred between 2006 and 2007. Similar patterns can be observed in Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas and Los Angeles. At the same time there were increases in children entering care in Arizona, Florida and New York between 2006 and 2007. In either case the data can be used for further planning with respect to case practices and services.

Six of the eleven jurisdictions have had legislation that supported their work. In most instances the legislation was used to establish oversight groups that were charged with the responsibility to track the outcomes or to develop a plan of action with the expectation of follow up status reports.

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<sup>3</sup> “Undoing Racism Training,” The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Developing community partnerships has been adopted as a key strategy in all of the jurisdictions. Each has used the approach that is most effective in developing their community relationships. All believe that developing these relationships supports sustainability of the work that needs to be done.

The Family to Family community-based strategy was yet another way where eight of the eleven jurisdictions demonstrated a common approach to bring together the families and communities to more effectively use resources to keep children with their families and out of the child welfare system.

Much can also be said about the impact of changing casework practices used by agencies to deliver their services. The willingness of government agencies to adopt new casework practices has proven to be most effective in reducing the number of children coming into the child welfare system. The tools that have been used are given different titles but the common element present in each of these tools has been the requirement that parents along with other family members be directly involved in the decisions and planning for the care of their children.

Finally training was identified as a key element used to influence the attitudes and behaviors of management, social workers and community partners. The “Undoing Racism” training, most frequently used, was conducted in Kentucky, Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas and New York.

A question that remains is whether the positive direction that appears to be taking shape will continue and will it continue to impact in a meaningful way the numbers of minority children still in out-of-home care. What has been shown by the states included in this report is that some progress is being made and where that is occurring there are some common activities – community partnerships, state planning, cultural awareness training, using the Family to Family strategies and special case practice tools - that are being carried out in those states.

The information in this report suggests that states and jurisdictions that focused their work in the following areas appear to be better equipped to keep their processes moving forward. The strategies, tools and programs that appear to be particularly helpful are:

- 1) Developing legislative support for the work that needs to be done to address disproportionality and disparity in treatment of minority children and ensuring that a system of accountability is put in place early in the process;*
- 2) Building community partnerships and enhancing public awareness that is important for insuring sustainability of the commitment of resources;*
- 3) Developing evidenced-based casework practice tools for staff to ensure that the services are achieving the desired outcomes and that the results are being documented; and*

***4) Supporting staff with training that enhances their cultural awareness, knowledge and understanding about institutional racism and its implications for child welfare services that will under gird and solidify the process needed to achieve long term reform of the child welfare agency.***

Because of the limitations in the data gathering for this report, no definitive conclusions have been drawn about the effectiveness of the strategies, tools or programs. This report does, however, clearly identify some strategies (Community Engagement, Family to Family and Legislation) and case practice tools (Team Decision Making and Family Decision Making) where there are a significant number of states and jurisdictions that have used them for a period of time so that some outcomes can be associated with improvements that may ultimately impact disproportionality.

# **National Research and Assessment of Disproportionality/Racial Equity Strategies, Tools and Programs**

## **II. Introduction**

National attention has steadily increased about the need to address this nation's responsibility to respond to the issue of the overrepresentation of children of color, especially African American children, in the child welfare system. According to the preliminary FY 2006 estimates there were 510,000 children in the foster care system (AFCARS data submitted for FY 2006; 52% male and 48% female; 32% were Black-Non Hispanic; 40% were White – Non Hispanic; 19% were Hispanic; 2% were Asian-Non Hispanic; 2% were AI/AN –Non Hispanic; 2% were unknown /unable to determine; 4% were two or more-Non Hispanic and there were 0% Hawaiian/PI-Non Hispanic.)<sup>4</sup> According to this same report, 303,000 children entered care during this same period and 289,000 children exited care. While much attention is being given to either returning children to their families or moving them into permanent living arrangements, many still continue to remain in care for longer periods of time. No where is this more evident than each year where 20,000 youth age out of foster care.

State and local agencies are faced with the ongoing challenges of not only resolving the problems of the most vulnerable families in crisis with children that have been neglected or abused but with fewer resources and supports to help them. Well intentioned leaders who are responsible for crafting legislation, programs, policies and practices have failed to improve services that are evidenced by the continued overrepresentation of minority children in the child welfare system. Adding to and complicating this problem is the growing shift in the racial and cultural make-up of the populations in this country. Making a commitment to put in place systems to reduce disproportionality has the potential to not only reduced out-of-home placements but can lead to greater cultural sensitivity and understanding of the families and children that are being served.

The federal government has increased its expectations for state performance with more intensive reviews and audits of the work being done in the states to reduce the number of children in out-of-home care or to prevent children from coming into care. African American children are tragically overrepresented in the child welfare system today. "Racial disparities are evident at every critical decision point. Children of color enter foster care at higher rates, even when they and their families have the same characteristics as comparable white children and families. They remain in foster care for longer periods of time than white children. Longer stays in foster care contribute to racial disproportionality because they increase their numbers in the system in any given year.

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<sup>4</sup> See AFCARS Report, [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/afcars/tar/report14.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report14.htm). The new AFCARS data for 2007 only report children served as of September 30, 2007 (496,000), with no demographic data.

Families of color receive fewer services and they experience lower reunification rates than white children.”<sup>5</sup> While work has begun in a number of places around the country, this underlying problem continues to present the challenges needing to be confronted.

The disproportionate representation and disparities in the treatment of African American and other children of color in the child welfare system have been a major problem and concern for many years. According to Dr. Robert Hill, noted Senior Researcher (Westat), “Disproportionality refers to the difference in the percentage of children of a certain racial or ethnic group in the child welfare system and disparity means unequal treatment when comparing a racial or ethnic minority to a non-minority. This can be observed in many forms including decision points (e.g., reporting, investigation, substantiation, foster care placement, exit), treatment, services, or resources.”<sup>6</sup>

Organizations like The Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System and The Black Administrators in Child Welfare (BACW) have partnered in their efforts to bring increased attention to this issue as well as support to groups wanting to work on initiatives to improve the outcomes for children of color. More recently states and some local jurisdictions have been paying more attention to the circumstances and conditions that may be contributing to this problem.

How to confront the many issues associated with this problem is the challenge for governmental agencies. Poverty, drugs and other substance abuse, child abuse, domestic violence and mental illness are considered by most experts to be contributing factors underlying the conditions that often result in the need to remove children from their families. Acknowledging these potential causative factors makes it essential that different strategies, tools and programs be used by organizations and communities as they try to bring about positive outcomes for children. A number of states and local child welfare agencies have acknowledged the existence of this problem and have begun to make changes in policies, practices, and methods used to provide services and in the utilization of resources and some are beginning to show some promise in reducing overrepresentation of children of color in their systems.

### **III. Overview**

Focus of this project

It is important that the work being done by child welfare agencies in some states that is having a positive impact be shared with others. Where such work is taking place, especially related to strategies, tools, and programs and where these have been developed

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<sup>5</sup> “Racial Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System, An Analysis of Embedded Inequities,” Race Matters, The Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2002. Page 1.

<sup>6</sup> “Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality in Child Welfare: An Update,” Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System, Robert B. Hill, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Westat, October 2006, Page 3.

to assist staff in achieving better outcomes, that information should be shared with others working in the child welfare field. The focus of this report is to do just that, to make available to individuals in the child welfare field information about strategies, tools and programs that are being used in nine states and two large cities to support their work to reduce the number of children in out-of-home care or to prevent children from entering care. While in some jurisdictions the stated purpose has not been identified as a special initiative to address the overrepresentation of minority children; in all the represented agencies in this report minority children are overrepresented; the belief is that the actions taken have contributed in a positive way to reducing African American and other children of color in their systems. As a result, the work being carried out has led to some positive outcomes as well as a reduction in the numbers of children of color in out-of-home care. The specific objectives of this project were to provide information about the work that is being done that;

- Addresses the causes as well as the effects of placing African American and other children of color disproportionately in the child welfare system and finding ways to reduce out-of-home placements.
- Captures information about strategies, tools and programs that is positively impacting services to children and families.
- Increases the knowledge, awareness and sensitivity of personnel in child welfare agencies to the cultural issues that affect practice and policy development.
- Makes available to the field information that can be used as a resource and/or guide to initiate actions and changes that may help to reduce disproportionality and disparity in treatment of these children in the child welfare system.

### Scope of the work

Nine states (Arizona, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Texas) and two large urban jurisdictions (Los Angeles County and New York City) were selected to participate in this project (see Appendix 2 for the list of the states/jurisdictions, the Secretary, Executive Director or Commissioner, and the agency representative). All of the jurisdictions had overrepresentation of African American children in their child welfare systems. They were representative of different regions in the country and of varying population sizes.

The scope of work for this project was divided into two phases. Phase I involved an internet scan and literature review of the work in each jurisdiction that addresses the overrepresentation of minority children, reduction in the numbers of children in out-of-home care and efforts to prevent children from entering care. Information that was reviewed included their state plans for child welfare, training plans, information about new initiatives, their Chafee plans, research and special reports and other documents that were produced to bring attention to issues of disproportionality.

In Phase II the Cabinet Secretary or Executive Director responsible for child welfare services for each state or jurisdiction was contacted via a written letter requesting their participation in the project and that they designate a representative to assist in gathering

the information about work in their jurisdiction. The designated representative was contacted and provided information about the purpose of the project and the process to be used in collecting the information that included identifying information about work in their jurisdiction and participating in a telephone interview to respond to a series of questions provided in a Discussion Guide (see Appendix 1).

The responses were the result of the internet search, information provided in the Discussion Guide and from telephone interviews with the designated contact person by two doctoral students. The Discussion Guide<sup>7</sup> was electronically mailed to the designated representative usually within ten days after their introductory contact by the Project Director.

The Discussion Guide included a series of questions designed to capture information describing generally the work that was being done to address disproportionality and to identify any outcomes that the agency wanted to achieve. The Discussion Guide included the agency overview, agency tools, internal data sources, community involvement and other documents. The information collected was categorized into the following areas;

- **Statistical reports and any data collected on outcomes**
- **Community engagement**
- **Management and program changes**
- **Policy and Procedure changes**
- **Training**
- **Demonstration projects or new initiatives**
- **Legislation**

#### **IV. Internet and Literature Review**

The internet review revealed that some jurisdictions utilize their state planning process to discuss services or programs that focused on reducing the number of children in out-of-home care such as through increasing adoptions and others identified actions specifically aimed at addressing the overrepresentation of minority children in their child welfare systems. The requirement that each state develop a child welfare plan is a federal requirement that gives them the opportunity to say how they want to use their resources but it can also be used to focus special attention on problems such as the overrepresentation of African American children and other children of color. For this report we are including services identified for either purpose. We believe that services that achieve these outcomes will ultimately benefit minority children because most children are better off if they can remain with their families and in their communities and that children remain in out-of-home care for the shortest period of time.

The internet review also revealed that some states were given direction by their state legislatures and others developed plans that grew out of community involvement in their agency work that led to new initiatives. In Table 1 the activities or initiatives that were

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<sup>7</sup> Appendix 2, BACW Discussion Guide

most often identified are listed. In slightly more than half of the jurisdictions there was a legislative enactment that was significant in stimulating or supporting the initial work. All of the jurisdictions spent considerable time and effort engaging the community in their work. Different methods were used such as task forces, advisory committees or oversight committees. In each instance there was a requirement that a written report is completed presenting the findings and that they make recommendations about what work would be needed to begin to address the problem.

<b>Table 1 Race Equity Strategies, Programs and Tools</b>											
<b>Type of Activity</b>	<b>AZ</b>	<b>FL</b>	<b>KY</b>	<b>MI</b>	<b>MN</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>NC</b>	<b>Ok</b>	<b>TX</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>NY</b>
<b>Legislation</b>	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
<b>Community Partnerships</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>State Plan</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Training*</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>Faith-Based</b>	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		
<b>Family-to-Family</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>Special Tools</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Unique Projects</b>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

\* Includes training sessions addressing cultural awareness and undoing racism.

In Table 2 the number of children in care during 2006 and 2007 shows a slight decline in five of the states and one jurisdiction, Arizona, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Texas, and Los Angeles. Some developed plans in 2005 and 2006 that talked about the need to simply reduce the number of children in care. Others produced reports like Michigan’s “Disproportionality in Child Protective Services” and North Carolina’s, Managing Disproportionality in Child Welfare in Guilford County, specifically talked about the need to address overrepresentation of African American children in child welfare. No matter the focus of their report, the goal sought by each jurisdiction was aimed at helping children to remain with their families in their communities.

In this report the activities referred to as special tools include case practices that are used by social workers to engage families and others in a participatory process where plans and decisions are being made about the care of children. For example tools such as Team Decision Making, Family Group Decision Making and Family Team Meetings engage extended family and community members, where appropriate, in the case planning process. In these meetings they identify resources and services that are needed to support the child and put together a plan to carry out the work needed to help the family resolve the problems. On the other hand Structured Decision Making is used as an assessment tool to assist the social worker in determining the level of risk and safety for a child. One strategy that was used in most

<b>Special Tools</b>
<b>Team Decision Making</b>
<b>Family Team Meetings</b>
<b>Structured Decision Making</b>
<b>Multiple Response System</b>
<b>Family Group Decision Making</b>
<b>Alternative Response Services</b>

of the jurisdictions was cultural awareness training. The training that was used most often was the Undoing Racism<sup>8</sup> training that was viewed as having a positive impact on the participants. It was consistently reported as the underlying source for enhancing staff awareness and understanding about institutional racism and its influence on child welfare. When followed by other training such as the Casey Family Program, “Know Who You Are” training as happened in Texas, staff felt that it was more helpful.

Jurisdiction	Fiscal Year 2006				Fiscal Year 2007			
	Age Range				Age Range			
	5 & under	6 - 11yrs.	12 & over	Total	5 & under	6 - 11yrs.	12 & over	Total
Arizona	2429	1293	1319	<b>5041</b>	2288	1233	1417	<b>4938</b>
Florida	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>n/a</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>n/a</b>
Kentucky	580	442	564	<b>1586</b>	543	412	609	<b>1564</b>
Michigan	7978	6596	10441	<b>25075</b>	8559	6578	9831	<b>24968</b>
Minnesota	3768	2629	8355	<b>14752</b>	3844	2604	8352	<b>14800</b>
Mississippi	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>n/a</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b>n/a</b>
North Carolina	5646	3139	2356	<b>11141</b>	5693	3090	4186	<b>12969</b>
Oklahoma	5312	3380	3131	<b>11823</b>	5659	3332	2908	<b>11899</b>
Texas	12528	7971	8585	<b>29084</b>	12442	7752	8291	<b>28485</b>
Los Angeles	6659	5185	8858	<b>20302</b>	6041	4470	7323	<b>17834</b>
New York	5061	4076	7584	<b>16721</b>	5158	4154	7729	<b>17041</b>

Florida, Michigan and Minnesota data is for the calendar year.  
Kentucky data is for Jefferson County, only.

Four states (Arizona, Kentucky, Michigan and Texas) and one jurisdiction (Los Angeles) showed a reduction in the number of children in care from fiscal year 2006 to 2007. With the exception of Texas these states also showed a reduction in the number of African American children in care during this same time period. Los Angeles had the largest reduction with the overall decrease being 2468 fewer children, with 1100 fewer African American children in care in 2007.

Jurisdiction	Fiscal Year 2006				Fiscal Year 2007			
	Race/Ethnicity*				Race/Ethnicity*			
	White	Black	Latino	Other**	White	Black	Latino	Other**
Arizona	2238	606	2032	165	2135	603	2040	160
Florida	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13324	9613	n/a	360
Kentucky	640	902	n/a	45	662	847	n/a	55
Michigan	12140	12140	1202	584	12698	11768	1251	502
Minnesota	4249	1732	692	2076	7770	3071	n/a	3959
Mississippi	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Carolina	14884	12664	2436	1978	13899	11670	2438	2058
Oklahoma	5526	1951	1634	2712	5514	2012	1753	2620
Texas	9198	8287	10961	638	8618	8354	10842	671
Los Angeles	2773	6958	9992	579	2777	5858	9089	510
New York	651	9522	4828	1720	715	10368	5243	715

Florida, Michigan and Minnesota data is for calendar year.  
Kentucky data is for Jefferson County, only.  
\*Race & ethnicity numbers do not always match the total because age data was not available for some children  
\*\*other includes Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, two or more races, and unknown

<sup>8</sup> “Undoing Racism Training,” The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Although the reduction in overall numbers of children in care cannot be attributed solely to the use of these tools it does show evidence of these states and one jurisdiction moving in a positive direction.

In Tables 4 and 5 the data on the number of children entering care during the same periods of time are shown. An important component in the work that is being done in the jurisdictions is tracking and reporting the data on the status and numbers of children at key points in the system. Tracking the number of children that enter the system is an important indicator of what is happening to children in the jurisdiction that come to the attention of the agency. Tables 4 and 5 provide some insight into the numbers of children entering the system during a two year period of time. Although some state initiatives had been initiated it may be too soon to show a direct effect but the Los Angeles experience may warrant further review.

Kentucky focused attention on reducing the number of children who were entering the system. Using team decision making along with an impartial facilitator all options must be considered before placement outside of the home is considered. To support the return of children they have developed relationships with churches to create neighborhood visitation centers. They noted that “some of their best outcomes are those related to policies for older youth. Their protocols states that for a child to be placed outside their community, management approval is required and must be used as a last resort.”

Children Entering Care									
Table 4									
Jurisdiction	Fiscal Year 2006					Fiscal Year 2007			
	Age Range					Age Range			
	5 & under	6 - 11yrs.	12 & over	Total		5 & under	6 - 11yrs.	12 & over	Total
Arizona	1790	925	1371	4086		1989	918	1474	4381
Florida	10576	5189	4245	20010		8599	4038	3470	22077
Kentucky	306	185	250	741		223	127	239	589
Michigan	2623	1633	1926	6182		3349	2071	2012	7432
Minnesota	2399	1474	4179	11925		2321	1430	4273	8024
Mississippi	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Carolina	3225	1602	1896	9953*		3116	1499	1777	6395*
Oklahoma	3647	1785	1385	6817		3906	1595	1266	6767
Texas	10166	4552	2818	17536		9597	3971	2352	15920
Los Angeles	5476	3128	3115	11719		5257	2944	2942	11124
New York	1880	1514	2817	6211		2250	1812	3372	7434

Michigan and Minnesota data is for the calendar year.  
Kentucky data is for Jefferson County, only.  
\* includes 5 children age unknown (FY06) and 3 age unknown (FY07)

New York and Florida had a higher increase in the number of children entering their systems between FY 2006 and 2007 than the other jurisdictions. New York indicated that they believe that this increase actually began in FY2005 when they experienced a 26% increase in the number of children entering the system. They attribute much of this increase to several high profile incidences involving child deaths that generated a major increase in reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. This upward trend carried over into FY2007 where there was a 1223 increase in the number of children entering care over the previous year.

Children Entering Care								
Table 5								
Jurisdiction	Fiscal Year 2006				Fiscal Year 2007			
	Race & Ethnicity				Race & Ethnicity			
	White	Black	Hispanic	Other*	White	Black	Hispanic	Other*
Arizona	1530	589	1483	484	1564	742	1647	428
Florida	11840	7422	2302	17708	9793	5542	1971	1436
Kentucky	308	400	n/a	33	272	284	n/a	33
Michigan	3476	2559	377	147	4266	2991	417	175
Minnesota	4249	1732	692	2076	4200	1668	700	2156
Mississippi	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Carolina	8007	6990	1311	1051	3009	2282	583	521
Oklahoma	3488	1041	982	2288	3439	1050	997	1281
Texas	5881	4460	6722	473	5035	4201	6194	490
Los Angeles	1630	2953	6758	378	1450	2923	6392	378
New York	229	3822	2186	331	327	4026	2503	579

Michigan and Minnesota data is for the calendar year.  
Kentucky data is for Jefferson County, only.  
\*other includes Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander two or more races, and race unknown.

As shown in Table 1 all the jurisdictions are using different strategies, tools and programs in their work with families. Descriptive information for each as provided by the states and jurisdictions is included in the states and jurisdictions responses that follow.

## V. States and Jurisdictions Responses

The information presented in this report was provided by the agency representative as work that is being carried out in their agencies to support children and families. In this report there is no attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies, tools or programs but is simply a description of the work that has been identified by each jurisdiction as contributing in some way to their efforts to reduce the number of children in out-of-home care as well as reducing disproportionality and/or disparities in the treatment of children of color.

Information about the agencies is provided in Appendix 2. The information in this report will, hopefully, stimulate interest in obtaining further information about the work in these states. Follow up requests for information about the programs, services, data or other information beyond that presented in the report will need to be obtained from the participating state or local agency. This peer relationship will hopefully result in agencies sharing information and working together to improve outcomes for all children.

### Arizona

In Arizona a “state action plan supported with legislation (HB2024) was passed in 2003 that set the foundation for the legal and financial groundwork for implementing the reform of the child protection system.”<sup>9</sup> An Oversight

Arizona Foster Care Population FY 2007	
2135	(43% Caucasian)
603	(12% African American)
2040	(42% Hispanic)
160	(3% other)

<sup>9</sup> “Action Plan For Reform of Arizona’s Child Protection system,” State of Arizona Report, Janet Napolitano, Governor, June 30, 2004.

Committee was established by the Governor to ensure that reform efforts were implemented. Subsequently a Blueprint for Realigning Arizona’s Child Welfare System”<sup>10</sup> was developed in 2005. A key strategy in the plan was an intentional focus on eliminating disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children of color. Their work emphasized the development of a partnership initiated in Maricopa County that included the local school board, mental health providers, City of Phoenix Human Services Department, churches, and the Juvenile Court that would focus on projects addressing positive outcomes for children of color.

The Child Welfare Agency is divided into six Districts with Maricopa County (Phoenix) being the largest and the initial targeted jurisdiction for focusing their work. Much of their work has been ongoing for more than ten years, including annual diversity conferences. Attention was initially focused on understanding more about the demographics for both staff and the children being served which began with tracking the number of children by race in 1998 and annually comparing the numbers in care with the county population as a whole. In the largest jurisdiction, Maricopa County, 47% of the children are Caucasian 4.4% are Black, 41% Hispanic, 1.9% Native American and 2.5% are Asian.

*Arizona Strategies, Tools and Programs*

*Community Partnership Teams*

*The ERDD Committee*

*Family to Family*

*Team Decision Making*

**Community Partnership Teams (CPT).** In Maricopa County where eight geographic regions were created the strategy of developing CPT with a Community Partnership Specialist who supports the work of the team was created (Avondale, Glendale, Gilbert, North Central, South Mountain, Talavi, Tempe and Thunderbird). Most of the teams publish a newsletter which enhances communication with staff and team members. Community Partners include representatives from the Courts, CASA, juvenile probation representatives, contractors, faith community, schools, community organizations and some businesses. Feedback from the teams is communicated to the appropriate agency level on a regular basis for follow-up when necessary. Special attention was given to having the team membership mirror the ethnicity of the population being served.

**Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity Committee (ERDD).** The ERDD Committee grew out of the Diversity Committee that was formed a number of years ago. It was an internal management strategy used in Maricopa County to give staff the opportunity to share information about their respective cultures culminating in a yearly conference. Much of their work was focused on the historical aspects of racism. It evolved last year into the Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity committee (ERDD) as of July 2008. The membership has broadened to include other

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<sup>10</sup> “Strengthening Families, A Blueprint for Realigning Arizona’s Child Welfare System,” Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families, September 2005.

stakeholders, youth, and resource parents. Initially they met as a group to share information about their cultures and races and began to track routinely data on the children in custody by race. They have now begun the process of reviewing policies to determine whether they are supporting the continuation of disproportionality and/or treatment of children of color.

**Family to Family.** The framework for the Family to Family model is built on the principle that developing a working relationship with the communities is the most effective way to keep children safe and remaining with their families. Arizona applies their work to implementing the four core strategies, “(1) recruiting, training, and supporting resource families (foster and kinship); (2) building community partnerships; (3) Team-Decision making; and (4) self-evaluation using data about child and family outcomes.”<sup>11</sup> As seen in Table 5, page17, in FY 2007 where a total of 4381 children entered care; 1564 Caucasian children entered care (36%); 742 African American children entered (17%); 1647 Hispanic children entered (37%) and 428 other children entered (10%). In the August 20, 2008 Family to Family Progress Review, the number of children entering placement for the first time showed an 8.5% decrease, going from 3276 entering in 2006 to 3126 entering in 2007. “During FY 2007 the number of foster homes in Maricopa County increased from 1069 in the first quarter to 1471 at the end of the fourth quarter.”<sup>12</sup>

In District 1 (Maricopa County) they have, also, focused on;

(1) Decreasing the number of youth placed away from their families due to the implementation of In Home Service Units. These Units will now serve all substance exposed newborn cases regardless of legal status.

(2) Reducing the number of children placed in congregate care. As of June 2008, only 13% of the custody population is in a congregate care setting versus 23% in June 2005.

(3) Previously GIS Mapping indicated that there were 38 zip codes where removals outnumbered resource homes. As of May 2008 the number of zip codes where removals outnumbered resource homes was reduced to 21.

District 1 has established a Self Evaluation Team where data is collected and analyzed on initial and emergency placements, removals from congregate care by race and type of placement as well as data on foster and kinship homes. The data collected in FY 2007 indicated that 525 (16%) of the 3295 youth placed in the Department’s custody were removed and returned back home within 72 hours. In FY 2008 of the 3628 youth placed 484 (13%) were returned back home. The plan is to further analyze this data to determine when the removals occur (before or after regular work hours) as well as the cause for removal. To reduce congregate care placements this data is, also, being used to support targeted recruitment campaigns.

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<sup>11</sup> “Strengthening Families, A Blueprint for Realigning Arizona’s Child Welfare System,” Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families, September 2005, page 10.

<sup>12</sup> “Maricopa County, Family to Family Progress Review,” August 20, 2008, Page 22.

**Team Decision Making (TDM).** Community partners have been trained in TDM which is a tool that is used to involve families in placement decisions for their children. As described by the Department, TDM “is a strength-based team guided meeting led by a skilled facilitator who brings together individuals, including family members, children (when appropriate), child protective services, behavioral health professionals, community supports and other significant individuals who have a common interest in the best possible placement and treatment decisions for the child.<sup>13</sup> In Maricopa County there is nineteen staff positions dedicated to TDM. Seventeen are TDM facilitators and two are assistant Program Managers. The training of facilitators has become an integral part of the training in the agency as four staff is capable of training the TDM facilitators. A youth TDM brochure was designed with the help of the Maricopa County Youth Advisory Board and is now provided to youth prior to their attending a Team Decision meeting. Information provided is designed to help them better understand and participate in the meeting.

## **Florida**

The Florida Department of Children and Families (the Department) is addressing disproportionality through the establishment of four statewide initiatives—a review and focus on permanency options for 100 children in out-of-home care the longest; a goal of safely reducing the number of children in out-of-home care by 50% by the year 2012; reforming the foster parent recruitment process to infuse quality; and recruiting adoptive families for 100 of the teens who have been waiting the longest.

<p><b>Florida Foster Care Population 2007</b></p> <p><b>13324 (57% Caucasian)</b></p> <p><b>9613 (41% African American)</b></p> <p><b>n/a (% Hispanic)</b></p> <p><b>360 (2% Other)</b></p>
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The Department acknowledges the disproportionality of African American children in out-of-home care and understands how culture plays an important role in the incidence of maltreatment. Cultural competence training is woven into the statewide training curriculum for both staff and prospective foster and adoptive parents. Compared to other states, in 2002, Florida was among only three other states and the District of Columbia in having the highest child maltreatment rate. In fiscal year 2003-2004 the rate was 32.3 victims of abuse per 1,000 children. It must be noted that Florida established an alternative response system and revised their criteria for accepting allegations for investigations of child abuse, neglect and abandonment. Low risk referrals are now being handled as community referrals with voluntary services offered to families.

A relook and focus on permanency options for the 100 children in out of home care the longest, has revealed that 85% are African American and 62% are African American males. The primary activity being completed is a comprehensive review of each child’s case record in order to identify potential adults, especially relatives that may be able and willing to provide a permanent home to the child through guardianship or adoption.

<sup>13</sup> “Strengthening Families, A Blueprint for Realigning Arizona’s Child Welfare System,” Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Children, Youth and Families, September 2005, page 11.

Since the 100 children were identified in October 2008, three have been successfully adopted and another three are in adoptive placements.

The activities related to the goal of safely reducing children in out-of-home care by 50% by the year 2012 has already resulted in approximately a 25% reduction from January 2007 to December 2008. The Strategic Direction 2009-2011 Plan developed by the Department states a commitment to continue this effort with a sense of urgency. The Plan also documents the need to increase the number of adoptions of African American children with enhanced outreach efforts. These outreach efforts include the faith-based initiatives being coordinated by the Executive Office of the Governor and two child specific recruitment pilot projects sponsored by the One Church One Child program.

The reformation of the process to recruit and retain quality foster parents began in January 2008 when the Department teamed with the Youth Law Center and the Eckerd Family Foundation to brand a recruitment message which spoke to the “right” individuals to meet the needs of not only the disproportionate number of African American in out-of-home care, but also to meet the special needs of all children in out-of-home care. Additional enhancements which occurred as a result of the reformation included an overall increase in the number of quality foster homes retained, and ongoing supports to family foster homes to facilitate an increase in the number of successful reunifications, while creating life long familial connections to youth who are or were in out-of-home care.

The 12-month initiative to recruit adoptive families for the 100 longest waiting teens began in December 2008. Fifteen of the teens in this project are also included in the 100 children in out-of-home care the longest. The data reveals that 55% of the teens are African American and 63% are African American males. Since the inception of the project, six teens have been placed with adoptive families for the purpose of adoption and five more are having pre-placement visits with prospective adoptive families.

As Florida explored other opportunities to combat the issue of disproportionality, the Department decided to take a new approach to planning for the prevention of maltreatment.”<sup>14</sup> The Department developed the Florida State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect: July 2005-2010 to serve as the blueprint, when implemented, for providing for the care, safety, and protection of all of Florida’s children in a environment that fosters healthy social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development.<sup>15</sup>

In the agency’s vision it stated: “that the department will be ethically, socially and culturally responsive; they would partner with community and faith-based organizations; and that they would maintain an analytic and systematic approach to their planning and

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<sup>14</sup> “Florida’s State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect,” July 2005 through June 2010, Page 1.

<sup>15</sup> Florida State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Neglect: July 2005-2010.

performance management.”<sup>16</sup> Training focused on issues related to disproportionality was a part of this plan.

**Child Specific Recruiting (CSR).** Child specific recruitment efforts include placing children on Florida’s statewide exchange and the national exchange, Adopt Us Kids, local Heart Galleries, and local media efforts such as a newspaper column or local news show that shows a “Wednesday’s

*Florida Strategies, Tools and Programs*

*Child Specific Recruitment Plans  
Community Alliances  
One Church One Child*

Child”. In addition, the new 12-month statewide initiative for Florida’s 100 Longest Waiting Teens developed and is training counselors to use a six-month individualized child-specific recruitment plan. The six set of monthly activities include a comprehensive review of the case file for the purposes of determining a placement chronology and contacts with potential adults who had prior connections with the child such as the former caregivers, a coach, a relative, a neighbor or the child’s counselor. Workers have been trained in a workshop platform at local and regional training settings regarding these child-specific individualized recruitment plans as well as the necessary child preparation casework activities needed for these teens. Since the program was initiated in December 2008, six children have been adopted or placed permanently with a family.

**Community Alliances (CA).** In July 2000, House Bill 2125 became effective as FS 20.19 (6) and mandated that; (a) “The Department shall, in consultation with local communities, establish a community alliance of stakeholders, community leaders, client representatives and funders of human services in each county to provide a focal point for community participation and governance of community-based services.”<sup>17</sup> The purpose of the CA is to support the Department of Children and Families (DCF) with the “intent to encourage communities and other stakeholders interested in the well-being of children to participate in assuring that children are safe and nurtured.”<sup>18</sup> The Community Alliances are independent entities that are established in the different counties throughout the state.

The CA in the Northeast (Jacksonville) area has focused their work in child welfare around the concept of sustainable change in the community and changing the culture of the child protection workers. The plan has been developed in two phases. In phase I, which is underway, they are focused on changing the culture and the diversion of children from the child welfare system. The focus is on:

- Using team-based decision making;
- Developing neighborhood centers;
- Reducing the caseloads and speeding permanency;
- Co-location of investigative and prevention staff and
- Engaging the community in the process.

<sup>16</sup> Florida Department of Children and Families, “Mission Statement” October 17, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Florida Department of Children and Family Services, “The Role and Intent of Community Alliances in Florida, March 6, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Developing the Phase II work plan is scheduled to begin in January 2009. The intended outcome is to implement a plan for radical change in their foster care system that will protect the safety and well being of the children and families and to have children remain with their families with supports where needed. The work to be carried out in Phase II is focused on;

- Eliminating licensed foster care and replacing it with short term professional respite homes. Foster homes as they currently operate would no longer exist. These homes would provide short term respite for birth families or relative caregivers while services are being provided to enable the birth parent to resume their parenting responsibilities;
- Utilizing a single comprehensive service plan; and
- Developing comprehensive programs on Domestic Violence, Substance abuse and Mental and Physical Health issues.

Although there are Alliances operating throughout Florida, each Alliance is charged with the responsibility of developing the appropriate plan for their county and not all are focused on the same services. Alliances may establish workgroups to address specific issues. The legislature mandated seven core members that includes a representative from the County government and the Children’s Services Council and requires collaboration and communication between service agencies, families and advocates. “Community Alliances provide for resource utilization and development, needs assessment, establishment of community priorities, development of outcome goals, provision for community education and advocacy, and promotion for prevention and early intervention services.”<sup>19</sup>

**One Church One Child (OCOC).** OCOC was introduced in the Florida State Statutes in 1990. The Legislature passed the One Church One Child Corporation Act, S.409.1755 F.S. It was created to aggressively advocate on behalf of children in the state’s foster care system that were in need of permanent homes. “It operates as a non-profit corporation with a Board of Directors appointed by the Governor working in partnership with churches, local businesses and agencies. During fiscal year 2008, the OCOC’s major accomplishments were; ten families were approved for adoption, nine children were placed for adoption, and six additional children are in the placement process, eight adoptions have been finalized, thirty-seven families were trained, and fifty families were referred directly to Community Based Care (CBC) and provider agencies for training and preparation.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “The Role and Intent of Community Alliances in Florida, Framework for Community Alliances,” Florida Department of Children and Families, Community –Based Care, March, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> One Church One Child of Florida, Inc. “Summary on the Status of the Corporation” Annual Report to the Legislature: Fiscal Year 2007-2008, September, 1, 2008.

## *Kentucky*

In Kentucky attention has been focused on overrepresentation of African American children in the child welfare system since 2004 when they responded to an invitation to participate in the Casey Family Program Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Reducing Disproportionality and

**Jefferson County Foster Care Population  
FY 2007**

**662 (42% Caucasian)**  
**847 (54% African American)**  
**n/a (Hispanic)**  
**55 (4% Other)**

Disparate outcomes for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare system. From this initial work the decision was made to target 11 counties where African American children are overrepresented. They have focused on Jefferson County (Louisville), the most urban and heavily populated area in the state. In the 2000 census African American children represented 19% of the overall population but they made up 53% of the children in out-of-home care. Jefferson County has implemented a county wide public awareness campaign to inform and educate the community about the issue of racial disproportionality. A local advertising agency designs messaging to increase awareness and understanding of the public about this issue. The messaging includes the establishment of a website at [www.jointheconversation.net](http://www.jointheconversation.net).

A plan was developed for a comprehensive project to target racial disproportionality in the child welfare system. The initial response to the public was a report that was released entitled “Kentucky’s Race, Community, and Child Welfare Initiative.”<sup>21</sup> In this report they defined regularly used terms and responded to key questions, provided the most recent statistics and set forth a strategy for engaging the public in their efforts to address this problem. The agency established a five pronged approach to address the problem;

- 1) Building community awareness through discussion and joint decision making with community partners.
- 2) Educating professional staff through several venues.
- 3) Changing practice by disseminating Casey’s Family to Family principles.
- 4) Coordinating efforts between branches of government to maximize resources.
- 5) Engaging in continuous self-evaluation by examining race impact and progress.<sup>22</sup>

***Kentucky Strategies, Tools and Programs***

***Family to Family***  
***Neighborhood Places***  
***Neighborhood Visitation Centers***  
***Parent Advocate Program***  
***Undoing Racism Training***

**Family to Family.** Family to Family began in Kentucky in 2001 and was seen as a major step in the plan to address disparities. The strategies that were focused on in the Family to Family initiative were; 1) recruiting foster and kinship families in the neighborhoods

<sup>21</sup> “Kentucky’s Race, Community, and Child Welfare Initiative,” Definitions and Frequently asked Questions about Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes in Child Welfare,” Helen Deines, EdD, MSSW, Professor Emeritus, Spaulding University School of Social Work, September 2007

<sup>22</sup> “Race, Community and Child Welfare,” <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/raceandcommunity.htm>, Page1.

where the children are living, 2) building relationships with a wide range of community organizations in the same neighborhoods, 3) utilizing family team decision meetings as a primary tool to ensure that a support network can be established in the community where the child is living and 4) putting in place a system for collecting and evaluating the data focusing on the outcomes for the services being offered.

Unique to Kentucky's process was the assigning of a Facilitator to each team. After each Facilitated Family Team Decision meeting, parents and service providers are asked to complete a survey to let the agency know how well this practice is working for them. The agency also tracks and analyses data about their work. As of January 2007 (point in time data) the data showed that:

- “African American children that have been in out-of-home care for at least 15 months spend on average 5.3 more months in care than white children.
- African American children tend to have (0.48) more placement moves than white children.
- An additional amount of money (\$5.47) is spent daily on African American children's care because they are placed in more restrictive and costly out-of-home care placements.”<sup>23</sup>

With the continuous flow of outcome data on the number of new foster homes and with targeted recruitment in selected areas and having meetings with families in their communities they believe that they will build up the resources for children in their communities and improve outcomes.

**Neighborhood Place.** Neighborhood Place is a partnership of public sector agencies that have come together to create a network of community-based, one stop service centers. Eight Neighborhood Places, along with two satellite sites exist in Jefferson County, to serve citizens of Jefferson County. The purpose of the Neighborhood Place is to provide blended and accessible health, education, employment and human services that support children and families in their progress toward self-sufficiency. The desired outcome for these centers is to provide a coordinated, streamlined and efficient place to receive services. A team approach is used by staff with communication between service providers occurring up front. To enhance their work they use a single intake and assessment process and a common release form or Consent to Release Information form which allows workers to more easily communicate, within the law. The centers are community focused and operated with the assistance and input of community councils made up of residents of the neighborhoods being served. Additional information on Neighborhood Place can be accessed at [www.louisvilleky.gov/NeighborhoodPlace](http://www.louisvilleky.gov/NeighborhoodPlace).

**Neighborhood Visitation Centers.** The Midwest Church of Christ Family Visitation Center is a faith based Family to Family Partnership. The Center is a valuable community support that was developed and cultivated as a resource to provide a safe, neutral, supervised environment in which children visit their non-custodial parent or

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<sup>23</sup> “Kentucky's Race, Community, and Child Welfare Initiative,” Deines, Helen, Spalding University School of Social Work, Member Jefferson Area Core Team, Casey Family Programs Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Reducing Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare system, September 2007.

foster care children with their custodial parents. This resource has increased the number of visits for children and their families by offering evening and weekend visitation and other neighborhood based voluntary supportive services. In 2008 over 4000 visits were held in one church.

The Visitation Center provides the following services:

- One-to-one supervision to families,
- Family development activities and games to assist parents in training and developing their children,
- A site observation model to encourage other churches to provide a similar service,
- Family and parent training and development classes, family financial planning, life skills development, and training for anger and conflict resolution for parents, and
- Family to family mentors to support families beyond the visitation center activities.

**Parent Advocates Program.** The Parent Advocate Program was established in 2004. This program trains parents who have a history of previous involvement in the child protective services system to be advocates for families. Advocates are charged to connect families with resources, accompany parents to court and schools when needed and in general to navigate and bridge their communication with others. There are 20 advocates in the program at this time that work with families until they have achieved the case plan goals. Initial evaluation results indicate that the length of stay in out of home care was reduced by 8 months for families connected with a parent advocate.

**Undoing Racism Workshops.** Beginning in 2007, “these workshops were provided in two counties – Jefferson and Fayette, with goal of expanding to Hardin, Warren, Madison, McCracken, Boyle, Daviess, Kenton, Graves and Christian where African American children are represented in foster care more than 1.5 times the census rates.”<sup>24</sup> All human service providers, family court judges, community partners, law enforcement, agency contractors, members of the local governments, and members of the public to the extent that space was available were invited to participate. From the agency’s perspective “the seminars were designed to help participants understand the “influence of race in determining whether a child is placed in out-of-home care; the factors that affect what services are offered and delivered to black families; and the actual and perceived needs of black families.”<sup>25</sup>

In August 2008 an evaluation of the Undoing Racism training was conducted by the Kent School of Social Work at the University of Louisville. The study included both pre-and post written surveys of the participants. In the initial report the key findings indicated; (1) “that the participant’s knowledge of racial issues improved, (2) they became more aware of implications of institutional forms of racial discrimination and exclusion, (3) training was effective for participants from various backgrounds, and (4) a majority of the

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<sup>24</sup> “Race, Community and Child Welfare,” <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/raceandcommunity.htm>, page1.

<sup>25</sup> <http://chfs.ky.gov/news/governor+fletcherannounces+project+targeting+racial+disparity+in+child+welfare+system.htm>, page 2.

participants expected the training to positively impact their professional practice and personal relationships.”<sup>26</sup> They believed that this training was instrumental in their work to influence the overall culture of the agency and in creating a more open environment for bringing about change.

## **Michigan**

Michigan credits work on the overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system to the late 1960’s when a Detroit based organization, Homes for Black Children was established to address the need to find adoptive homes for African American children. Through the early work of this private provider and continued through more recent work, Michigan has been gathering evidence to explore the extent of the problem, heighten public sensitivity and/or awareness and making attempts to address the disparities. To increase efforts and in response to a legislative mandate, the Michigan Department of Human Services established the Michigan Advisory Committee on the Overrepresentation of Children of Color in Child Welfare in response to a legislative mandate to study and prepare a report on the disproportionate representation of African-American and other children of color in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in Michigan. This report, “Equity – Moving Toward Better Outcomes for All of Michigan’s Children,”<sup>27</sup> was presented in June 2006 and provided a series of recommendations that have served as the guiding framework for much of the work that has been done in the state to respond to the problem.

<b>Michigan Foster Care Population CY 2007</b>	
<b>12698</b>	<b>(48% Caucasian)</b>
<b>11768</b>	<b>(45% African American)</b>
<b>1251</b>	<b>(5% Hispanic)</b>
<b>502</b>	<b>(2% Other)</b>

In FY 2007, African Americans made up 14.32% of the population while they represented 44.9% of the children in care. The agency has continuously sought ways to engage the community in the process beginning with focus groups, public hearings and comprehensive reports. A unique strategy consistently used in Michigan’s planning and oversight for new initiatives is the utilization of broad based advisory or steering committees. Using this approach has meant broader knowledge and understanding about the issues as well as a buy-in for new work at its beginning. This has meant increased support for the framework that they have put in place to

<b>Michigan Strategies, Tools and Programs</b>
<b>Community Partnerships</b>
- Children of Color Task Force
- Child Welfare Improvement Task Force
- Michigan Advisory Commission on Overrepresentation of Children of Color in Child Welfare
<b>Child Welfare Reform</b>
<b>Family to Family</b>
-Statewide Steering Committee

<sup>26</sup> “Evaluation of the Undoing Racism Training in Kentucky,” A Report to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Department for Community Based Services, Lisa M. Johns, MSW, Becky F. Antle, Ph.D., Anita Barbee, Ph.D., Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville, August 2008, Page 1.

<sup>27</sup> “Equity – Moving Toward Better Outcomes for All of Michigan’s Children,” A report from the Michigan Advisory Committee on the Overrepresentation of Children of Color in Child Welfare, , Carol Goss and Marianne Udow, March 2006.

guide their work in addressing disproportionality and disparity in the treatment of minority children.

**Community Involvement Strategy.** Michigan considers its community partners the biggest resource available to them in their collaborative efforts to bring about change in the child welfare system. Beginning with the legislation enacted in 2004 that mandated the agency to establish The Advisory Committee on the Overrepresentation of Children of Color they have sought ways to involve the community directly in the agency's work. This advisory committee included representatives from the public and private sectors, legislators, experts in social work, law and psychology and child welfare. By doing this they created a model strategy that was used to engage all relevant parties in the community who had a stake in improving the conditions of children and families. Using this mandate the committee engaged the broader community in this process through focus groups and public hearings that resulted in "a blueprint for change in 2006 in which eleven recommendations were made."<sup>28</sup>

Most recently the agency has established the Child Welfare Improvement Task Force that is charged to make recommendations relative to (1) prevention, (2) foster care, (3) adoption, (4) detention, and (5) funding. The Task Force includes legislators, judges, parents, youth, and community representatives.

**Child Welfare Reform.** Michigan is currently in the process of carrying out a major child welfare reform and considers this to be a major step in their overall effort to improve services to children of color. As a result changes will be made to restructure the organization which includes but is not limited to how they respond to allegations of child abuse and/or neglect, workforce development, case management, development and/or utilization of services and placement resources. As changes in the policies and practices are being considered careful attention will be given to ensuring that these changes address the issues that may now contribute to disproportionality and disparities in the treatment of children of color.

**Family to Family.** The basic description of the Family to Family initiative is the same as that described in two other jurisdictions (see Arizona and Kentucky). Initiated in Wayne and Macomb counties in 2001, the Family to Family approach ensures that birth parents, foster parents and community representatives are involved in the decision making process concerning the placement and service needs of their children. Once again Michigan engaged the broader community by establishing the Family to Family Statewide Steering Committee to oversee the process from its beginning to its implementation statewide. As the program expanded across the state a coordinator was assigned in each county. The steering committee members meet quarterly, share their collective experience and serve as advocates on the importance of making foster care child-centered, neighborhood-based and family-focused. With the emphasis on data collection their model also improved the

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<sup>28</sup> "Equity, Moving Toward Better Outcomes for all of Michigan's Children," Report from the Michigan Advisory Committee on the Overrepresentation of Children of Color in Child Welfare, Marianne Udow, State of Michigan, Department of Human Services, June 6, 2006, Pages 18 – 22.

information that staff had to ensure that the children were kept safe and heavily relied on increased use of individualized services to meet the unique needs of a particular family.

## **Minnesota**

Minnesota has institutionalized their strategies on addressing disproportionality and has been implementing strategies for twenty-eight years. Addressing disproportionality is included in their goals, policies and procedures, and is legislatively mandated. Minnesota’s history of taking action to address minority issues goes back to 1980 when the Council of Black Minnesotans was established to address unmet needs and ongoing issues impacting Minnesotans of African descent and to ensure that their needs were made known to the legislators and other policy makers. The Chicano Latino Affairs Council and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans were also in place to carry out a similar function for their people. The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council is the official organization that serves as the liaison between the Minnesota government and the 11 Minnesota Tribes.<sup>29</sup> Ramsey County is also home to the largest Hmong community in the United States which also has representatives working with the agency.

**Minnesota Foster Care Population  
CY 07**

**7770 (53% Caucasian)**  
**3071 (21% African American)**  
**3959 (27% other includes Hispanics)**

In 1990, Caucasians represented 88% of the population, but decreased to 77% in 2000. In 1990, 79% of children in the county were Caucasian, but that number decreased to 62% in 2000. In the overall population in Ramsey county children of color increased from 20% in 1990 to 39% in 2000. Because of these changing dynamics Minnesota believed that it needed to study these dynamics and determine the overall impact and the potential workforce implications.

In 2001, “the legislature mandated that the Minnesota Department of Human Services study the outcomes for African American children in the child welfare system and convene the African American Disparities Committee. This group was charged with the responsibility of presenting recommendations to the legislature annually.<sup>30</sup> A review of the data in Ramsey County showed that “children of color, especially African American and American Indian children are disproportionately represented in the child protective system and in out of home placements.<sup>31</sup> “There were differences in the case characteristics during the

**Minnesota Strategies, Tools and Programs**

**Best Practices Framework**  
**Ending Racial Disparities Project**  
**Focused Research**  
**Policy and Practice Tools**

<sup>29</sup> Ramsey County, “Minnesota Children of Color Program.”

<sup>30</sup> Ramsey County, “Minnesota Children of Color Program.”

<sup>31</sup> Ramsey County “Ending Racial Disparities Project” November 2004.

assessment process and race was found to interact with these case characteristics in a way that is predictive of case dispositions.”<sup>32</sup> Ramsey County has been the targeted community for addressing disproportionality in Minnesota.

**Best Practice Framework.** Ramsey County’s Children and Family Services Best Practice Framework enabled the Agency to put in place a structured framework to guide child protective staff in delivering services. This framework included the development and implementation of a series of guides for social worker’s practice.

- Supervisors Handbook is designed to ensure that the organizational infrastructure and community relationships support strength-focused practice with staff training and mentoring to support their work.
- Worker’s Guide includes the practice principles that provide value base for their work with a description of how they are to be implemented. Every worker is required to look at how their biases and personal values may get in the way of effectively serving families.
- Family Centered Assessment Guidebook requires that the entire family is the focus of attention and that an array of informal and formal services and supports be available to meet their needs.
- Directory of Minnesota Organizations Serving Diverse Populations.
- Structured Decision Making, Race, and Racial Disparity in Ramsey County Maltreatment Reporting, May 2003.
- Basic Diversity Practices Self Assessment Tool, September 2003.
- Investigating Racial Disparity in Minnesota’s Child Welfare System.
- Cultural Competency Guidelines for the Provision of Clinical Mental Health Services to American Indians in the State of Minnesota, March 2004

**Ending Racial Disparity Project.** “The Ramsey County Community Human Service’s Department of Family and Children’s Services Division (RCCHSD) Ending Racial Disparity Project began as a multi-year project that divided the activities into three tracks: (1) internally focused (2) externally focused and (3) the elimination of disparity in outcomes for RCCHSD clients of different racial and cultural identities.”<sup>33</sup> The work is also divided into three Phases.

- Phase I includes identifying cultural consultants representing different racial/ethnic communities to assist in the development of partnering relationships with each racial/ethnic community and ensuring that each minority group has someone who can provide input into the planning and executing of activities.
- Phase II focuses on building community relationships and partnerships, gathering information from community members about the impact of agency policies and practices, and soliciting their ideas on changes that will reduce the existing racial disparities.

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<sup>32</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services, “2005 Executive Summary for the African American Comparative Case Review Study Report, p.1.

<sup>33</sup> Ramsey County Community Human Services Department Family and Children’s Services Division “Ending Racial Disparities Project”, August, 2004.

- Phase III will encompass the implementation of changes or proposed new initiatives when they are developed as a result of community meetings and focus groups.

**Focused Research.** The current research initiatives on children of color include:

- Research on Disparity - The Children of Color Initiative developed a partnership project with the University of Minnesota, county agencies and the Minnesota Department of Human Services to study factors that contribute to the disproportionate representation of African American children in neglect.<sup>34</sup> In a comparative case review study report of African American children it was found that African American children were still more likely to be over represented in Minnesota’s child protection system. The rate of allegations of child maltreatment statewide was 12.9 per thousand for all children, but 57 per thousand for African American children.<sup>35</sup>
- State/County Tribal Partnership - To address the disproportionate representation of American Indian Children in child welfare the Minnesota Department of Human Services convened an Advisory Council that represents, Indian Child Welfare practitioners, Tribal representatives, program managers and key stake holders responsible for creating and implementing effective policies and services for American Indian children.<sup>36</sup>

**Policy and Practice Tools.** The Practice Guide for Working with African American Families in the Child Welfare System (2008) was developed as a resource and reference manual for caseworkers as they engage African American families. To review the guide on-line go to; <http://dhs.state.mn.us/1fserver/Legacy/DHS-4702-ENG>. It was specifically developed to assist caseworkers in understanding the systemic issues associated with the overrepresentation and racial disparity of African American children and families. Caseworkers are assisted in:

- “Augmenting or developing their best practice skills in client engagements.
- Understanding cultural differences between the caseworker and African American clients.
- Appreciating the differing world views of caseworkers and clients that may be shaped by family tradition, race, culture and socioeconomic factors.
- Developing new methods of engagement that can lead to improved child safety, well-being and permanency outcomes for African American children.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Children of Color Outreach. <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main>

<sup>35</sup> 2005 Executive Summary for the African American Comparative Case Review Study Report. Minnesota Department of Human Services.

<sup>36</sup> Minnesota Department of Human Services, [www.dhs.state.mn.us/IndianChildWelfareCouncils](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/IndianChildWelfareCouncils)

<sup>37</sup> “A Practice Guide for Working with African American Families in the Child Welfare System,” Rockymore, Maxie, MSW, Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Safety and Permanency Division, February 2008. Page 2

## Mississippi

“Mississippi has been working diligently to improve the child welfare system since 1995. These efforts have included developing a family-centered, child-focused, and community-based practice intervention model that includes:

- Formation of community-based support services throughout the state;
- Implementation of a family-centered, strengths-based intensive services child welfare demonstration project;
- Development and implementation of a supervisory training curriculum;
- Increased coordination with community partners, the judicial system; and
- Increased coordination with community leaders in assessing community resources, expansion of Family Preservation services and Time-Limited Reunification services.”<sup>38</sup>

Mississippi Foster Care Population  
FY 2007

No statistics available

There was increased emphasis on coordination of work with community partners especially in assessing community resources. The Mississippi Department of Human Services through its Division of Family and Children’s Services (DCFS) considers its Family Preservation programs to be one that has been instrumental in maintaining children safely in their own homes. “From January 1, 2000 through December 31, 2003, more than 2403 families and 6,333 children were served through Family Preservation. Of the 6,333 children, 6198 children were able to remain with their families, while 135 children had to enter the child welfare system.”<sup>39</sup>

### *Mississippi Strategies, Tools and Programs*

*Family Resource Center*  
*Family Preservation*  
*Family Team Meetings*  
*Time Limited Reunification*

**Family Resource Center.** The Mississippi Department of Human Services through a contract operated by The Exchange Club of Vicksburg Child Abuse Prevention Center established the Families First Resource Center to serve families in Warren and Claiborne Counties. The Families First Resource Center is a community-based program that accentuates collaboration, coordination, and teamwork in delivering services throughout the communities to all families. “The Center provides support and support services to parents, particularly new parents, which will enable them to keep their children and become more effective parents. It also provides child and family advocacy, education, information to the community, and promotes the safety and well being of children and

<sup>38</sup> “Child and Family Service Plan,” Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children’s Services, October 2004 – September 2009, Page 7.

<sup>39</sup> “Child and Family Service Plan October 1, 2004 through September 30, 2009,” Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children’s Services, Page 12.

families.”<sup>40</sup> All services are offered at no charge to the families. Three services that are especially supportive of the plan to keep children with their families and out of the child welfare system are:

“Parent Aide service that offers in-home services to help abusive and neglectful parents transform their unhealthy patterns of behavior toward their children to one that will enable them to live as a healthy, functioning family unit.

- Parent Education services which is designed to provide parents with the tools for appropriate disciplinary methods, to be aware of the needs of children, the capacity to improve communication skills within the family, and the capacity to learn developmentally age-appropriate expectations of children.
- Supervised visitation services that enable non-custodial parents to visit with children who are minors when court orders require visitations in a supervised setting.”<sup>41</sup>

**Family Preservation Program.** The goal of the program is to provide intensive home-based services for families where the children are at imminent risk of disruption due to abuse and/or neglect. The agency was able to achieve success in keeping children in their own homes and it was expanded statewide. In most counties they were provided a Family Preservation Program Specialist and a Family Preservation Social worker who was paired with a Family Preservation Homemaker creating a team that works with families to provide the support services. The agency provided a central support staff team that provided training.

**Family Team Meetings (FTM).** FTM uses family group conferencing techniques to bring stakeholders and family members together to identify their strengths and needs. The emphasis is placed on setting goals and assigning tasks to all members ensuring that all participants work together as a team to support the family.

**Time Limited Reunification (TLR).** TLR services include individual, group or family counseling; substance abuse treatment; and transportation for families to receive these services. These services are provided through two child-placing agencies that have reunited 172 children and finalized 80 adoptions. Therapeutic services are provided to children with serious emotional disorders who can remain or return home. Case Managers are available to the child and family 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Although the service is short-term, it is intensive in nature. It is also available to children in foster care or adoptive placement prior to and after the adoption is finalized. For a child placed with a relative a kinship care stipend is paid in an amount equal to the foster board payment based on the child’s age and need.

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<sup>40</sup> “Families First Resource Center,” Exchange Club of Vicksburg Child Abuse Prevention Center, Inc., <http://www.capcenter.net/ffrc-p.html>.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.capcenter.net/ffrc-p.html>

## *North Carolina*

North Carolina, as early as 2003, initiated work to implement a Systems of Care (SOC) with a grant from the Children's Bureau.<sup>42</sup> This project that gave the state its opportunity to apply the SOC principles to child welfare was initiated in Mecklenburg, Alamance and Bladen counties.

The project focused attention on the utilization of strategic planning and interagency infrastructure development as a means to change policies, systems, agencies, and direct practice.

This new approach began with pulling together agencies, community partners, and family members in a collaborative designed to better meet the needs of children and families. It was used as a way to focus attention on issues related to disproportionality and disparity in treatment of minority children. In their response to the federal review of the child welfare

### **North Carolina Foster Care Population FY 2007**

<b>13899</b>	<b>(46% Caucasian)</b>
<b>11768</b>	<b>(39% African American)</b>
<b>2438</b>	<b>(8% Hispanic)</b>
<b>2058</b>	<b>(7% Other)</b>

program when North Carolina submitted its Program Improvement Plan (PIP), one of the themes of the PIP plan was to address cultural competence throughout their work.

Although the formal attention at the state level began in 2006, several counties (Wake and Guilford) have been working on this issue for a much longer period of time. In 2006 the state hired a permanency coordinator to focus on legal permanence and to elevate attention to the disproportionate number of African American children in foster care.

North Carolina identified more than 12 different initiatives that have been undertaken in the state that have contributed to improvement in the outcomes for children; five will be included in this report. The tools they utilized include Structured Decision Making, Family Finding, Multiple Response system, Structured Intake, Family Risk Assessment, Family Assessment, Family to Family, Parent Partners, Undoing Racism Training, Multiple Response System Learning Institute, Systems of Care and appointing a Permanency Coordinator.

### *North Carolina Strategies, Tools and Programs*

*Family to Family*  
*Family Finding*  
*Multiple Response System*  
*Systems of Care*

**Family to Family (Guilford and Wake Counties).** Family to Family in Wake County Human Services began in 2001. They focused their attention on the inner city area of Raleigh where there was a disproportionate number of African American children coming into care. Guilford County with children coming from Greensboro also began their program in the same year. As was true of other Family to Family programs the emphasis was on building partnerships with communities and finding foster homes in the

<sup>42</sup> "Systems of Care," <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/systemofcare/soc.htm>.

neighborhoods where the children were living. In both programs special attention was given to “ensuring that quality decisions were being made at three critical decision points: investigations, substantiations, and initial placements.”<sup>43</sup> These programs continue today and have continued to yield positive outcomes for children.

**Family Finding.** Family Finding is a pilot program to identify relative resources for children designed to reduce their length of stay in foster care. This project focuses on counties with large numbers of youth or children in the backlog of those with potential to age out of care. Eight counties are participating, Buncombe, Catawba, Cumberland, Durham, Gaston, Mecklenburg, New Hanover and Wake. Family Finding is contracting with Kevin Campbell and [USSSearch.com](http://USSSearch.com) to produce names of individuals that are linked to the individuals of inquiry. Four strategies are used with this model; Youth interview, Case Mining, Internet Searches, and the Snowball Technique where the social worker pursues family members through other relatives as they are identified.

**System of Care (SOC).** SOC is a nationally recognized framework for organizing and coordinating services and resources into a comprehensive interconnected network which North Carolina implemented in 2003. Three counties, Mecklenburg, Alamance and Bladen began the work. The SOC “helped address issues such as a limited array of services, inconsistent partnering with families being served, lack of coordination and collaboration between service providers, and failure to engage community supports.”<sup>44</sup> SOC at the state level brought together multidisciplinary groups where the agency decision makers, community partners, along with family members work collaboratively to meet the needs of the children. At the county level the work was done through problem solving groups that focused on work with families to ensure safety and permanence for the children. At the family level the work was done through Child and Family Teams where a plan was developed to assist the family in resolving significant problems. With all the groups combining their work, the outcome resulted in an overall infrastructure to support families and for working collaboratively in the community.

**Multiple Response System (MRS)** is described as the effort to reform the entire continuum of child welfare services. It began with a pilot demonstration in 2002 with ten county Departments of Social Services, expanded to 42 counties in 2003 and went statewide in January 2006. “It is comprised of seven separate strategies delivered to families through a practice model grounded in the use of Family-Centered practice and System of Care principles.”<sup>45</sup> The Strategies include; Child and Family Team meetings, Case Assessment, Case Tracking, Family-Centered Supervision, Family Risk Assessment, Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs, and Structured Decision Making. The Multiple Response System Learning Institute, which was a three day skills development extension of the state’s child welfare training, is no longer being held annually. However, it was considered to be a very valuable part of their work because it

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<sup>43</sup> “Places to Watch, Promising Practices to Address Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare,” The Center For Community Partnerships in Child Welfare of The Center For the Study of Social Policy, The Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity, Ernestine Jones, December 2006, Page 74.

<sup>44</sup> “Systems of Care,” <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/systemofcare/soc.htm>. Page 1.

<sup>45</sup> “What is Multiple response System?” <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/mrs/index.htm> Page 1.

placed emphasis on success stories, challenges and barriers and encouraged open discussion and brainstorming sessions that helped in the development of solutions to the challenges and barriers.

## Oklahoma

Oklahoma is in the early stage of dealing with disproportionality. Oklahoma does not have an explicit policy to address disproportionality.

Oklahoma identified four strategies that they are using to help achieve better outcomes for three minority populations, African Americans, Native Americans and Latino families. They believe that each area requires concentrated work that focuses on different approaches to engage the communities in a more direct way in developing community-based resources.

Oklahoma Foster Care Population FY 2007	
5526	(47% Caucasian)
1951	(16% African American)
1634	(14% Hispanic)
2712	(23% Other)

In November 2006, the Oklahoma Commission for Human Service released “A Guide to Developing Cultural Competency entitled - Oklahoma’s Evolving Mosaic.” It provided definitions of key terms such a culture, cultural competence; outlined certain behaviors, principles, skills, and characteristics; and provided a list of organizational components for cultural competence.

Oklahoma Strategies, Tools and Programs
Family Group Decision Making
Indian Adoptive Recruitment
Latino Child Maltreatment Services
One Church One Child

**Family Group Decision Making (FGDM).** FGDM supports the Department of Human Services strong belief in connection of siblings. Efforts are made to keep them in their communities and keep siblings together. A high percentage of children are placed with relatives, which also addresses the issue of disproportionality. Kin is defined as both blood and fictive kin. Previous discounting of families impacted disproportionality. Now there is a need and expectation to treat and pay kin the same as non-kin.

Kin placements have increased significantly. Over 57% of family placements are with fictive kin, which represents a huge cultural shift for the families and the agency. “In FY 2006, 62% of the children leaving the system were reunified with their birth parents or primary caregivers. 54% of the youth living in out-of-home care were residing with kin and 49% were adopted by relatives.”<sup>46</sup> In the intake process they begin looking for

<sup>46</sup> “Facts About Children in Foster Care in Oklahoma”, Oklahoma KIDS (children’s Information and Data System) Resource Database. [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org).

possible family placements right in the beginning as part of their practice model. Family Group Decision Making is used to engage families early and to facilitate better decisions based on understanding the family as a whole. The agency staff is diligent in their search process up front to identify kin for placement. Foster and Kin placement receive the same financial support. Placements can happen before approval of the grant. When children are placed with kin for fourteen days the family gets a kinship start up stipend, a \$375 training stipend and another \$375 when the investigation is completed before the regular payments begin.

**Latino Child Maltreatment Services.** A new federal grant (500k/5 years) from the Federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) expands services for high-risk Latino families. The grant is to support an evidence-based child maltreatment prevention service for high risk families to prevent family violence. It uses a model where the focus is on home based visitation and;

- Adapting and expanding the Oklahoma SafeCare+ program for the Latino community,
- Selecting evidence-based augmentation to promote nonviolent interactions of family members; and
- Evaluating the Latino home visitation team along with the existing SafeCare+ model.

**Indian Adoptive Recruitment Program** came as the result of the Tribal/State Agreements that have been in existence since 1985, and there are now 35 total. They support tribal attainment for foster care placement of Indian children. There is also Indian Adoptive Home Recruitment<sup>47</sup>. In accordance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), efforts to recruit Indian Adoptive homes are coordinated with tribal social workers that provide a connection to Indian Families. Two Area Tribal Coordinators are available to facilitate dialogue when there are issues in state placement for Indian children.

**One Church One Child (OCOC) Minority Recruitment Program.** OCOC is a special minority recruitment program designed to find parents for children who are African American and need permanent homes. It began in the early 1980s when there were many African American children in foster care, but few resources available for them. They subsequently lingered longer in the system. The program seeks to inform the African American community about children who need adoptive homes, dispel myths and misconceptions regarding the adoption process, and identify families interested in adopting children. Program activities are conducted statewide. An adoption specialist in both Tulsa and other Oklahoma counties is assigned to work with the program. Presentations are made in churches in the African American community regarding the need for adoptive homes. Each church is challenged to recruit from its members at least one family to adopt.

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<sup>47</sup> Oklahoma Department of Human Services. 340:75-15-82. Recruitment of Adoptive Homes. Retrieved July 29, 2008. [www.okdhs.org/library/policy](http://www.okdhs.org/library/policy)

In 2005, OCOC handled 423 inquiries; conducted 150 presentations; processed 122 Adoption and Foster Care applications and completed 53 assessments. In 2008, OCOC handled 281 inquiries; conducted 215 presentations; processed 86 Adoption and Foster Care applications and completed 39 assessments.

## Texas

In July 2004, Governor Rick Perry issued an executive order directing the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to review and reform Child Protective Services (CPS). The State of Texas stepped out in front of many other jurisdictions in 2005 when the legislature passed State Bill 06 requiring a reform of child protective services and requiring that they examine disproportionality. An Oversight Committee was established by the Governor to ensure that reform efforts were implemented. The Health and Human Services Commission is now utilizing the “Disproportionality in Child Protective Services – Policy Evaluation and Remediation Plan”<sup>48</sup> that was developed in response to work needed to carry out the mandates required to implement State Bill 6. The agency submitted follow up reports to the legislature. In the Report, they documented that disproportionality did exist in the system and in July 2006, the agency developed a Remediation Plan in which they reported on revised training for Child Protective Service workers, the developing of the One Church One Child project, establishing of partnerships with community organizations to address disproportionality, hiring of a state level disproportionality director and specialists and increasing diversity among CPS staff in the regions and at the state level.

### **Texas Foster Care Population FY 2007**

<b>8618</b>	<b>(30% Caucasian)</b>
<b>8354</b>	<b>(29% African American)</b>
<b>10842</b>	<b>(39% Hispanic)</b>
<b>671</b>	<b>(2% Other)</b>

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Service’s (DFPS) data in 2005 showed that African-American children were almost twice as likely as Caucasian or Hispanic children to be reported as victims of child abuse or neglect.<sup>49</sup> They also spent significantly more time in foster care and were less likely to be reunified with their families. Texas released information from another study that looked at the removal rates for African American children pre fiscal year 2006 and post interventions after 2006. “In four of the five original sites (Harris, Jefferson, Travis and Tarrant) the removals were lower for African American children and removals were also lower relative to Caucasian children. Statewide it is their assessment after this initial work that they are experiencing a reduction in the disproportionality rate for children entering care.

### ***Texas Strategies, Tools and Programs***

***Cultural Competency Training  
Faith Based Initiatives  
Family Group Decision-Making  
Kinship Services  
Regional Advisory Committees/  
Disproportionality Specialists  
Strengthening Families Program***

<sup>48</sup> “Disproportionality in Child Protective Services – Policy Evaluation and Remediation Plan,” The Texas Health and Human Services Commission and the Department of Family and Protective Services, July 2006.

<sup>49</sup> See <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/about/renewal/cps/disproportionality.asp>.

**Cultural Competency Training.** DFPS addressed the issue of individual and system change by engaging in a series of trainings that were intended to provide management and staff with information to enhance their knowledge and to offer other intense personal training about the issues associated with institutional racism, bias and prejudice. Undoing Racism training for management began several years ago followed more recently by the Casey Family Program's "Knowing Who You Are" training about race and ethnicity. This training invites staff to examine their assumptions and biases related to race and ethnicity and to study personal comfort levels around these issues. This training is being provided to social workers, investigators and foster parents. Online cultural awareness training was developed for all child protective service staff and management.

**Faith Based Initiatives.** Congregations Helping In Love and Dedication (CHILD) and One Church One Child (OCOC) are operational in North Central Texas. Both organizations utilize the principle of targeted recruitment for locating families for children who are available for adoption and/or in need of a foster home. Efforts were focused in Arlington, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and Austin, all areas with high concentrations of African American children in care. Initiated in 2003 as a result of legislation, CHILD is a "faith-based recruitment program that reaches out to faith communities and asks them to identify at least two families from each congregation who will be recruited and licensed as foster parents. Each congregation will have the opportunity to develop supportive services for their foster families. These support services could include respite care, reduced tuition for day care, tutoring and after school programs, transportation, celebrations for special occasions and enrichment activities."<sup>50</sup>

OCOC focuses on recruiting adoptive families for children. They utilize long-standing relationships with newspapers and television news programs to focus on child specific recruitment such as the Wednesday's Child television feature. Recently they developed an internet site page that features special appeals by a member of the clergy.

**Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM).** FGDM is a voluntary program that is available after a child is removed from the home and for youth currently in care that are preparing to exit the system. These conferences involve the participation by the family, including extended relatives, with the agency representatives to develop a plan to ensure safety and permanence for a child. A jointly agreed upon family driven plan is negotiated and includes goals, tasks and assignments for the family as well as others connected to the case. It may also be used before removal of the child from the home. In the report produced in 2006 the findings indicated that "for families who participated in conferences within the first 30-45 days following removal from the home, foster care placements fell from 54% to 38%, relative placements increased from 29% to 45% and 13% of the children returned home."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> "2005-2009 Plan, Multi-ethnic Placement Act/Interethnic Provisions, [http://dfps.state.tx.us/About/State\\_Plan/2005-2009\\_Plan/14.asp](http://dfps.state.tx.us/About/State_Plan/2005-2009_Plan/14.asp) , Page 2.

<sup>51</sup> See, "Policy Evaluation and Remediation Plan," Page 7.

**Kinship Services** were expanded in a significant way as a result of Senate Bill 06 which allowed them to provide resource materials, financial assistance and support services to relatives. Key components that were added to the service were:

- “Start-up assistance of \$1,000 per sibling group and an annual recurring payment of \$500 per child to a qualified kinship caregiver for the child’s essential needs including child care for those who qualified.
- A kinship manual that provided resource information.
- A commitment to share information with the caregiver to provide the child’s history.
- Accelerated processing and certification of the relative’s application.
- Reimbursement of legal fees incurred by a relative during the adoption process.”<sup>52</sup>

**Regional Advisory Committees/Disproportionality Specialists.** In the eleven regions, the Regional Advisory Committees (RAC) have been established that are largely comprised of African-Americans that represent the group with the highest disproportionality rate, each being led by a disproportionality specialist with support from a statewide manager. The committees also include clients, city council representatives, attorneys, community leaders and other representatives. The Committees work collaboratively with the agency in identifying and utilizing resources in the communities to prevent the need for children to be removed from their families. They also recommend changes and communicate concerns to agency management.

**Strengthening Families Program.** The Strengthening Families Program was developed to prevent out-of-home placements that were poverty-related and to allow children to be returned home sooner. Flexible dollars are made available to social workers to help families with expenses such as first and last month’s rent so that they can find housing enabling children to return home sooner or to prevent them from being removed in the first place. Nine million dollars was made available over a 2 year period for use in supporting families so that children could remain with their families.

### *Los Angeles County*

Los Angeles County has been aware of the overrepresentation of African American children served by the Department of children and Family Services (DCFS) for many years. Since the early 1990’s DCFS has implemented several strategies to decrease the number of entries of African American children into foster care and concurrently decreasing their time in care. Examples of key initiatives included focusing on planning for older foster care youth transitioning out of foster care through “Rites of Passage” and creating the “Black Family Investment

<b>2777</b>	<b>(15% Caucasian)</b>
<b>5858</b>	<b>(32% African American)</b>
<b>9089</b>	<b>(50% Hispanic)</b>
<b>510</b>	<b>(3% Other)</b>

<sup>52</sup> “Disproportionality in Child Protective Services – Policy Evaluation and Remediation Plan,” A report from The Texas and Human Services Commission and The Department of Family and Protective Services, July 1, 2006, Pages 9 – 10.

Project” to provide specialized support services for African American Families and youth. But DCFS senior leadership realized more was needed.

In 2008, two DCFS offices in Los Angeles County, Pomona and Metro North, were accepted for participation in the California Disproportionality Project, a 24 month collaborative learning project to support eliminating racial disproportionality and disparity (ERDD). This project was co-sponsored by the Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the California Department of Social Services.

In Los Angeles County, it is believed that an essential, key to success for the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) on ERDD was the establishment of a sufficiently powerful policy committee made up of key stakeholders. Thus, the BSC leadership workgroup was co-chaired by the DCF Director, Trish Ploehn, and the Los Angeles Superior Court Presiding Dependency Judge Michael Nash. The co-chairs invited law enforcement, education and judicial partners, parent and children attorneys, members of the Children’s Commission, and other community partners to participate in this workgroup. The members focus on raising awareness, reviewing relevant data, and identifying root causes of racial disproportionality and disparity in foster care by researching, examining and developing promising practices at a policy level.

Besides the special focus on ERDD that the /breakthrough Series Collaborative brings to bear on this critically important issue, Los Angeles County has launched four major initiatives during the last five years which indirectly but substantially help reduce disproportionality in foster care: Family to Family; Point of Engagement; the Title IV-E Waiver Capped Allocation Demonstration Project (CADP); and the Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project (PIDP). Each is briefly described below:

<p><i>Los Angeles County Strategies, Tools and Programs</i></p> <p><i>Family to Family Initiative</i> <i>Point of Engagement Services</i> <i>Title IVE Waiver Capped Allocation Demonstration Project</i> <i>Prevention Initiative Demonstration Project</i></p>
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**Family to Family.** This nationwide child-welfare reform initiative sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation was adopted by DCFS in 1998. At present, Los Angeles is one of the 25 California Family to Family counties and a designated anchor site. In 2004 each anchor site, with the assistance of the Annie E. Casey Foundation became responsible for the implementation of strategy workgroups on building Community Partnerships; Team Decision Making (TDM) Meetings, Recruitment, Development, and Support of Resources for families (RDS) and Self Evaluation. Driven by the data from the Family to Family initiative, the Pomona office’s leadership, along with their community partners, decided to focus on eliminating racial disparity and disproportionality (ERDD) paving the way for this office’s participation in the Breakthrough Series Collaborative. By sharing data with their community partners

through their self evaluation workgroup, questions were raised regarding the disproportionate numbers of African American children and families in the foster care system leading to the implementation of various projects and strategies to address racial disproportionality and disparity. Family to Family's Team Decision Making process was the driving force for ensuring that the core concept of involving and empowering birth parents, resource families, and community partners in child welfare safety and service planning was implemented.

By sharing data with their community partners via the self evaluation workgroup, questions were raised regarding the disproportionate numbers of African American children and families in the foster care system and this led to the implementation of various projects and strategies to address Racial Disproportionality and Disparity (RDD).

**Point of Engagement Services (POE).** The POE service delivery model was implemented in 2005 to ensure rapid service delivery and objectivity at critical points in a case. It requires that the following tools be used for every potential child removal from their home and that the process ensure that seamless, timely responsibility for work take place from front end investigations to actual service delivery. It includes:

- Team Decision Making involving birth families, relatives, relevant service providers, advocates, and family identified supporters to participate in placement-related decisions. TDM's are mandated for all detentions.
- Alternative Response Services ensures that appropriate services are in place for families when circumstances do not warrant opening a child protective services case.
- Structured Decision Making is a risk and safety assessment tool that is used to assist social workers in objective assessment of risk and safety level of children referred for child abuse and neglect investigations.
- Concurrent Planning Redesign is a joint staff and management initiative to address the goal of returning a child that has entered foster care into a safe and stable home environment.
- Permanency Partners Program (P3) involves a specially trained retired Children's Social Worker or Supervising Children's Social Worker who works part-time to assist the current social worker in developing connections for older youth. The Permanency Partner reads the case cover to cover to identify possible adults, meaningful to the youth who might become a viable resource. The Permanency Partner works to ascertain services that will assist in achieving legal permanency.

**Title IV E Waiver Capped Allocation Demonstration Project (CADP).** DCFS and the Los Angeles County Probation Department entered into the CADP, which provides the departments with flexibility in the way it utilizes Title IV-E funding, on July 1, 2007. DCFS has built upon system improvements already underway among County Departments and their community partners. The implementation of the CADP has been a driving force in Los Angeles's efforts on ERDD by supporting prevention programs,

reducing the reliance on out-of-home care and promoting permanence with a focus on youth in group home care.<sup>53</sup>

During the first year of the Waiver, DCFS focused on three priority initiatives:

The first initiative, upfront assessments on referrals involving substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health issues, provides for contracted agencies with expertise in these areas to evaluate families at the time a referral has been made to the child protection hotline. This has resulted in quicker identification of family issues and linkage to necessary services, including Family Preservation Services, and upfront assessments are being expanded from the Compton Office to all DCFS regional offices.

The second initiative focused on the expansion of the Team Decision Making (TDM) to include Permanency Planning conferences for youth in group home care or foster care for two or more years with no identified permanency resource. This process assures that the multi-disciplinary team of professionals, family members and caregivers meets regularly to focus on the urgent needs of the youth for permanency. In year two TDMs will be expanded to the Emergency Response Command Post to help prevent removals when appropriate safety plans can be put into place.

The third initiative is the establishment of specialized Youth Permanency Units in three District offices. Children's social workers in these offices carry reduced caseloads of youth most at risk of aging out of care with no permanent connections, those with limited connections, multiple recent replacements, heavy substance abuse, recent psychiatric hospitalizations and repeat runaways.

During the first year, outcomes were positive and sizeable reinvestment funds were realized. The funds will be used to expand the first year initiatives, restore funds to support families, reduce detentions, to achieve more timely reunifications and stabilize adoptions. In year two, the agency will implement differential response countywide which will allow the agency to respond to child abuse and neglect referrals in an individualized manner.

**Prevention Demonstration Project (PIDP).** PDIP allows qualified community-based agencies in each of the 8 Service Planning Areas (SPAs) to partner with DCFS and other county departments to prevent child abuse before it occurs and provide services to reduce the number of children requiring DCFS supervision (Primary Prevention), provide community connections for those families who choose voluntary services (Secondary Prevention) and provide preventive services and activities to reduce maltreatment and reduce the impact of abuse (Tertiary Prevention).

In SPA III, the funding was used to implement the Cultural Brokers and Parent Advocate Programs through Protoypes, a contracted community agency. Parent advocates are life-

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<sup>53</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services "IVE Waiver Target Outcomes," July 5, 2006.

trained paraprofessionals who have successfully negotiated the child welfare system and provide advocacy, leadership and training for parents. Cultural brokers are community members ideally of the same culture as the birth parent that help families navigate and understand the culture and expectations of the department, communicate the families strengths and when possible prevent removal of children from their homes that can occur as a result of a cultural misunderstanding.

As a result of the many initiatives that have been developed, Los Angeles DCFS has become a more transparent and inclusive agency with notable accountability to children, families and the public at large. Statewide data tracking programs, collaborative research and technical assistance projects, as well as the regional self-evaluations strategies have assisted Los Angeles County in the use of data to drive its practices. Eliminating racial disproportionality and disparity has become a priority.

### ***New York City***

New York City’s racial disproportionality work is focused on raising awareness of the role that race and institutional racism play in child welfare outcomes, data analysis of key decision points, developing a diverse managerial staff and promoting culturally competent practice. The

<b>New York City Foster Care Population FY 2007</b>
<b>715 (4% Caucasian)</b>
<b>10,368 (61% African Americans)</b>
<b>5243 (31% Hispanic)</b>
<b>715 (4% Other)</b>

New York City Children’s Services agency initiated its first effort to address disproportionality in May 2006 by creating a Task Force on Racial Equity and Cultural Competence. The impetus for this change was a Casey Family to Family conference workshop on racial disproportionality and advocacy by external groups for improved cultural competency practice at Children’s Services and at provider agencies.

In CY 2007, New York City had 17,025 children in foster care. White children made up 23.6% of all children, but only 4.2% of children in foster care were white. In contrast, 27% of all children in New York City were Black, but 60% of children in foster care were Black. Hispanic children made up 34.8% of the child population and 30.8% of the foster care population. Last, Asian children made up 10.2% of the child population in New York City, and 3.8% of the foster care population.

<b><i>New York City Strategies, Tools and Programs</i></b>
<b><i>Community Partnerships</i></b>
<b><i>Family Team Conferencing</i></b>
<b><i>Task Force on Racial Equity and Cultural Competence</i></b>

**Community Partnerships.** The Community Partnership Initiative (CPI) comprises coalitions in 11 communities throughout NYC that includes Children’s Services, child welfare agencies, Head Start and Child Care provider agencies and other stakeholders

that explore innovative, community-based strategies that can positively impact child welfare outcomes for New York City's children.

Each coalition is designed to improve the well-being of children and families in the child welfare system and reduce the use of foster care services in their community. The coalitions are forums where members share resources, ideas, information, and referrals. The coalition participants engage in joint planning, service coordination, training and advocacy.

Children's Services Community Partnership Initiative builds upon the success of The Bridgebuilders Community Partnership. In its first five years, the Bridge Builders Community Partnership Initiative in Highbridge in the Bronx has successfully established a foundation for delivering services to help strengthen families and keep children safe in that community. The Bridge Builders Project originally started in three census tracts in Highbridge as a collaborative to improve safety and permanency for children through the coordination of community-based child and family serving programs, legal and advocacy services, elementary schools, and Administration for Children Services. According to a recent evaluation by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, Highbridge experienced a decline in the number and rate of maltreatment reports and in the indication rate of those reports between 2007 and 2008 compared to surrounding communities in the South Bronx. Highbridge also saw higher rates of children being reunified with their families among all the communities. The rate at which children were found to have been abused or neglected was also lowest in Highbridge at 18.6 per 1,000 children, as compared with 24.3 to 35.4 in the neighboring communities.

**Family Team Conferencing.** In New York City Family Team Conferences (FTC) are being conducted in child protection, foster care and preventive service cases. Family Team Conferences bring together family members, their supports including relatives, friends, neighbors, and members of their religious community, with Children's Services staff, service providers and community representatives to develop a consensus based plan, if possible for every key child welfare decision. The participants in the FTC work together to create a plan for the family that ensures safety for children and is tailored to the individual needs of the child and the resources and strengths of the family and their community. By giving parents, their supports and community representatives a voice, the Task Force looks at Family Team Conferences as a means to reduce disparity.<sup>54</sup> FTCs have shown promising early results in keeping families together and/or reuniting families.

**Task Force on Racial Equity and Cultural Competence.** The Children's Services' Task Force on Racial Equity and Cultural Competence is implementing a strategic action plan developed by the 25 members and approved by Commissioner Mattingly and the senior management team. The Plan focuses on five strategic areas:

1. Raise awareness within Children's Services of the role that race and structural racism play in racial disparity and disproportionality.

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<sup>54</sup> Task Force on Racial Equity and Cultural Competency (2008-2009). New York, NY, pp. 1-4

2. Data Analysis of key decision points in the path through the Child Welfare System to identify opportunities to have an impact in reducing disproportionality.
3. Provider Agency practice to improve culturally competent practice.
4. Raise awareness about racial disparity and disproportionality in the Family Court System.
5. Continue efforts to maximize diversity of staff of Children's Services.

Among the accomplishments of the Task Force are:

- Panel interviewing guidelines for management positions.
- Integration of cultural competence indicators in a Scorecard for provider agencies
- Creation of mentoring program.
- Over 75 staff participating in Undoing Racism and Race Matters training.
- Established People of Color Affinity Group.
- Integration of race and oppression analysis into the Leadership Academy curriculum.

## VI. Conclusion

In this report we have discussed a number of strategies, tools and programs that were being carried out in each state or jurisdiction. Some activities appear to strongly indicate a trend towards more positive outcomes for children especially reducing the number of children entering into care.

Six of the eleven jurisdictions have had legislation that supported their work. In most instances the legislation was used to establish oversight groups that were charged with the responsibility to track the outcomes or to develop a plan of action with the expectation of follow up status reports. With the force of law under-girding their work in some states like Texas they were able to move more aggressively in educating the public as well as staff about the seriousness of the problem and formulating a plan to increase public awareness about the issues associated with overrepresentation of children of color in child welfare. This process also had the effect of beginning to change the culture in the communities where the work needed to begin.

<b>Table 6 Race Equity Strategies, Programs and Tools States with Legislative Mandates</b>							
<b>Type of Activity</b>	<b>AZ</b>	<b>FL</b>	<b>KY</b>	<b>MI</b>	<b>MN</b>	<b>TX</b>	<b>LA</b>
<b>Community Alliances\Councils</b>		✓	✓				
<b>One Church One Child</b>		✓				✓	
<b>Child Welfare Oversight Committee</b>	✓					✓	
<b>African Americans Disparities Committee</b>					✓		
<b>Advisory Committee on the Overrepresentation of Children of Color</b>				✓			
<b>In-Home Care Demonstration Project</b>							✓

Developing community partnerships has been adopted as a key strategy in all of the jurisdictions. Each has used the approach that is most effective in developing their community relationships. In Oklahoma they focused their community relationships around supporting the unique cultural interests in each ethnic community, Native American, African American and Latino communities. Minnesota chose the approach of utilizing designated cultural experts chosen to represent the interests of their respective cultures working with the agency to change policies and practices. Arizona and Texas have an Oversight Committee established by the Governor to monitor the implementation of their plan to realign and reform their child welfare systems. No matter the approach the goals were the same; to incorporate the views, beliefs and opinions of each ethnic group in the process used in formulating policies, case practices and services.

The Family to Family community-based strategy was yet another way where seven of the eleven jurisdictions demonstrated a common approach to bring together the families and

communities to more effectively use resources to keep children with their families and out of the child welfare system. Faith-based resources were often used as the catalyst and united with government agencies, private organizations and families in a common mission to keep children with their families and in their communities. North Carolina, Texas and Los Angeles are examples of this collaborative process involving the faith community.

Much can also be said about the impact of changing casework practices used by agencies to deliver their services. The willingness of government agencies to adopt new casework practices, such as Team Decision Making, appears to have had an impact on reducing the number of children coming into the child welfare system. The tools that have been used are given different titles but the common element present in each of these tools has been the requirement that parents along with other family members be directly involved in the decisions and planning for the care of their children. As shown in Table 7, Family Team Meetings, Team Decision Meeting, Structured Decision Making and Alternative Response Services are examples of the kind of tools being developed and used in states and the large jurisdictions to redirect attention away from out-of-home placement as the service most often used in the past to protect children. Using these tools engages the family as well as the community in the process of looking at safe alternatives that keep children in their families with a support system that ensures safety for the children while allowing the family access to resources within the community.

<b>Table 7 Race Equity Strategies, Programs and Tools</b>											
<b>Case Practices</b>											
<b>Activities</b>	<b>AZ</b>	<b>FL</b>	<b>KY</b>	<b>MI</b>	<b>MN</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>NC</b>	<b>Ok</b>	<b>TX</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>NY</b>
<b>Family Group Decision Making</b>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Team Decision Making</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Family Team Meetings</b>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Structured Decision Making</b>				✓	✓		✓			✓	
<b>Child Specific Recruiting</b>		✓					✓		✓		
<b>Family-to-Family</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
<b>Alternative Response</b>							✓			✓	
<b>Concurrent Planning</b>			✓				✓			✓	
<b>Special training and workshops*</b>	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓

\* Includes training sessions addressing cultural awareness and undoing racism.

Finally training was identified as a key element used to influence the attitudes and behaviors of management, social workers and community partners. The “Undoing Racism” training, most frequently used, was conducted in Kentucky, Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas and New York. In the jurisdictions that participated in this training the response was positive. In Kentucky not only was this training held but a pre and post

survey was conducted and the participants indicated that professionally and personally they were positively impacted by the training especially in their understanding about institutional racism and how it may affect the work they are doing.

A question that remains is whether the positive direction that appears to be taking shape will continue and will it continue to impact in a meaningful way the numbers of minority children still in out-of-home care. What has been shown by the states included in this report is that some progress is being made and where that is occurring there are some common activities that are being carried out in those states. Engaging the communities in a direct and purposeful way is most evident in all of the jurisdictions. The approach, however, seems to be tailored to the level of interest, circumstances and conditions that exist in each area. Community engagement, the how's, where's and why's, is an area that warrants a more intensive review. Information from further study of this work could perhaps yield some recommendations regarding organizational strategies that could be used to support their development in other areas of the country.

The information in this report suggests that jurisdictions that focused their work in the following areas appear to be better equipped to keep their processes moving forward. The strategies, tools and programs that appear to be particularly helpful are:

- 1) Developing legislative support for the work that needs to be done to address disproportionality and disparity in treatment of children of color and ensuring that a system of accountability is put in place early in the process;*
- 2) Building community partnerships and enhancing public awareness that is important for insuring sustainability of the commitment of resources;*
- 3) Developing evidenced-based casework tools for staff to ensure that the services are achieving the desired outcomes and that the results are being documented; and*
- 4) Supporting staff with training that enhances their cultural awareness, knowledge and understanding about institutional racism and its implications for child welfare services that will under gird and solidify the process needed to achieve long term reform of the child welfare agency.*

Because of the limitations in the data gathering for this report, no definitive conclusions have been drawn about the effectiveness of the strategies, tools or programs. This report does, however, clearly identify some strategies (Community Engagement, Family to Family and Legislation) and case practice tools (Team Decision Making and Family Decision Making) where there are a significant number of states and jurisdictions that have used them for a period of time so that some outcomes can be associated with improvements that may ultimately impact disproportionality. There is information that can be learned from their experiences that could be used to support the development of national, state and local child welfare policies.

**Appendix 1**                      **Black Administrators in Child Welfare**  
**Discussion Guide**

**Interviewer** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Interview** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time Begun** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time Ended** \_\_\_\_\_

**Agency Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Agency Address** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone Number** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewee Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Agency Position** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Section I.**                                      **Agency Overview**

1. What are the primary racial/ethnic populations served by your agency?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. When did the agency initiate its first effort to address the issue of disproportionality in its services? Month and Year \_\_\_\_\_.

3. What is the background of this initiative? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What led to these changes? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Describe the initial work that was started in the agency \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Who are the primary decision makers and do they reflect the race /ethnicity and culture of the population?

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7. What programs have been put in place to address disproportionality? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What practice changes have been implemented to reduce disproportionality in your agency? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. What policies have you created or changed to achieve better outcomes for reducing disproportionality? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. What programs and practices have had the best outcomes for children and families of color? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. What resources are available to facilitate achieving the outcomes desired?

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12. What are the anti-racism training needs of staff working with children and families of color? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Section II. Agency Tools being used**

1. What tools are being used to assess the effectiveness of actions taken to reduce disproportionality? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What plan have you developed to reduce disproportionality at some level in your agency? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the elements of the plan and how are they prioritized? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What staff training has lead to better outcomes for effective services? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Do state child welfare policies and practices disadvantage children and families of color? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Which programs?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Section III. Internal Data Sources**

1. What data source are you using to determine that disproportionality exists in your state?

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2. What internal data sources do you use to monitor your disproportionality efforts?

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3. How is the current state data being used to plan for reducing disproportionality?

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4. Are there other data elements needed? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What are the data elements needed? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Section IV. Community Involvement**

1. How have you involved the community in the work in your agency regarding disproportionality? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What community partners are engaged to reduce disproportionality? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How is community input integrated into agency policy development? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Section V**

**Other Information**

In addition to responding to the questions above, please provide the following documents if they are available in your agency. Send electronic copies of information to [EFGJones@Comcast.net](mailto:EFGJones@Comcast.net). Send hard copies to:

1. Self Assessment checklists, documents, questionnaires.
2. Supervisory, Worker or Administrative Handbooks.
3. Assessment Guides or Manuals for management and employees.
4. Cultural Competency training guides, manuals or documents.
5. Diversity practice or management tools.
6. Anti-racism tools or guides.
7. Information about anti-racism, cultural competency or diversity training that has been made available to staff.
8. Copies of audits or reviews that have been completed about the agency’s disproportionality or diversity initiatives.
9. Legislation that has been enacted that impact the disproportionality or diversity work being done in the state.
10. Demographic information about the state and the population being served by the agency.
11. Other information that you believe has contributed to the outcomes that you have achieved but are not a part of the information requested above.

**Appendix 2****National Research and Assessment of Disproportionality/Racial Equity Strategies, Tools, and Programs**

<b>State/Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Executive Leader</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Agency Representative</b>
Arizona	Linda Blessing, Director	Department of Economic Security P. O. Box 6123 S/C010A Phoenix, Arizona 85005	Gene Burns
Florida	George Sheldon, Secretary	Florida Department of Children and Families 1317 Winewood Boulevard Building 1, Room 202 Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700	Minnie Jenkins
Kentucky	Janie Miller, Secretary	Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services 275 E. Main Street, 5W-A Frankfort, Kentucky 40621	Jackie Stamps Joel Griffith
Michigan	Ishmael Ahmed, Director	Department of Human Services P. O. Box 30037 235 S. Grand Avenue Lansing, Michigan 48909	Montrelle Baldwin
Minnesota	Cal R. Ludeman, Commissioner	Minnesota Department of Human Services P. O. Box 64998 St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0998	Erin Sullivan-Sutton
Mississippi	Don Thompson, Executive Director	Mississippi Department of Human Services 750 North State Street Jackson, Mississippi 39202	Anita Bell-Muhammad
North Carolina	Lanier Cansler, Secretary	North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services 2001 Mail Service Center Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2001	Charisse Johnson
Oklahoma	Howard H. Hendrick, Director	Oklahoma Department of Human Services P. O. Box 25352 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73125	Bill Hindman
Texas	Anne Heiligenstein, Commissioner	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services P. O. Box 149030 Austin, Texas 78714-9030	Donald Bauman
Los Angeles	Patricia S. Ploehn, Director	Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services 425 Shatto Place Los Angeles, California 90020	Maryam Fatemi
New York	John Mattingly, Commissioner	New York Children's Services 150 William Street, 18 <sup>th</sup> Floor New York, New York 10038	Mark Lewis

The National Research and Assessment of Disproportionality/Racial Equity Strategies, Tools and Programs began with a review of the literature and an internet scan completed by the project director and two Morgan State University doctoral students. Lists of the references that were reviewed or were in any way considered in the course of the preparation of this report are listed below.

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