



**DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES**  
*Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities*



**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** All Staff  
**From:** Joette Katz, Commissioner  
**Date:** Monday, June 24, 2013  
**Subject:** Racial Justice

We at the Department of Children and Families (DCF) believe in the values of diversity and inclusion. Specifically, we believe in the diversity of thoughts, ideas, beliefs, experiences, and we value the inclusion of all people and their human differences. We recognize and acknowledge how dominant culture, power and privilege perpetuate racism in our systems, programs and interactions, and, as a result, DCF is on a journey to become a racial justice organization whose beliefs, values, policies and practices are developed to oppose and eliminate racism.

Racism is the belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities, and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.<sup>[1]</sup> Racism can be unconscious or unintentional, but nevertheless will not be tolerated.

We will continue to study the impacts of race and racism in the work we do with our families at DCF. This work is uncomfortable and even painful to some, but we have found that the greatest challenges bear the greatest rewards. As a racial justice organization, we will decisively identify, discuss and challenge issues of race and color and the impact(s) they have on our agency, our families, our community, and ourselves. We will challenge ourselves to identify and correct any inequities found within the agency and in the provision of our services.

Our goal is to cultivate and sustain an environment in which employees, families and all of our partners feel safe to discuss the impacts of racism, power and privilege on agency practice and their personal lives. We recognize that becoming a racial justice organization is an ongoing process, and it is through the learning along the way that our culture will be strengthened and our workplace made more dynamic.

To this end, I wanted to update you on some steps we will be taking over the coming months to move forward:

- 1. DCF Decision-Point Data over Time:** Over the next few months, we will be reviewing DCF data from 2010-2013, using race-ethnicity as cross-tabs for the key decision points in our child welfare casework. This includes referrals, substantiations, case openings, out-of-home placements, lengths of stay in placement, residential placements and permanency. These data will allow us to address specific policies and practices that may be resulting in disparate outcomes depending on a child's race or ethnicity.
- 2. Development of a Formal Statewide Workgroup:** I have asked the Regional Administrators and Facility Superintendents to nominate two individuals per region/facility to participate in a permanent workgroup that will lead and manage this work for the agency. Overall, this workgroup will convene monthly and will

identify priorities for the work. These individuals will serve not only as workgroup members, but as agency leaders, champions, liaisons with the Area Office-based Diversity Action Teams and the Senior Administrators Team and implementers of improved practices.

3. **Management, Monitoring, and Accountability:** Once the workgroup has been convened, the Senior Administrators' Team will manage, monitor and hold the workgroup accountable for the work. This will include regular and visible check-ins and progress reports from the workgroup, as well as periodic outreach to ensure that the group has what it needs in order to do its work (e.g., data, time, resources, etc.)
4. **Role of and Work for Senior Administrators' Team:** While the designated workgroup will focus on agency policy and practice, the Senior Administrators' Team will be accountable to me and the statewide workgroup on racial and ethnic equity issues related to agency staffing. The team will be: reviewing staff data, including satisfaction levels and hiring/promotion data; addressing issues that are raised by these data; and striving to support ongoing conversations about race, ethnicity, culture and our work at all levels. Members will also be working to ensure that managers and leaders across the state have the support they need to advance this work.
5. **Area Office Diversity Action Teams (DATs):** I recognize that over the last few years, some Area Office DATs have struggled with their roles and responsibilities. As part of this renewed attention and effort, I expect that the DATs across the state will be re-energized as they review their own local data and set individual priorities for their work. The Statewide Workgroup will be a resource to the Area DATs, and in 2014, we hope to convene all DAT participants from across the state at a statewide Racial Equity Summit to share successes and challenges.

I look forward to joining you in this work, as it is the right thing to do for our children, families, and communities – and the time is now. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

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