



**Thank you to ACR SWS Lisa White-Smith of Region 4 Htfd for sharing a widely circulated poem to the DCFcovid19 mailbox. This quote is a fitting backdrop for this week's update.*

Memorandum

To: All DCF Staff
From: Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes
Date: 5/31/2020
Re: Update on Department Operations and Commissioner Weekly Video

Today, we are filled with a sense of worry, anger, fear, and uncertainty. Images from across the country reflect the grip of this pandemic, as the ever-present predator of racism and oppression, continue to permeate our nation.

George Floyd...Breonna Taylor....Ahmaud Arbery and are just three names currently atop a long list of Black people who had their lives cut short as a result of violence by others in power or who considered themselves more powerful than another human being. Their names & others on the growing LIST are known to us because there are recordings. There are many more, like *Kearria Addison* who will not be broadly memorialized... they should not just disappear.

Sure, there are varied interpretations and perspectives by everyone watching and experiencing these situations from where we each sit. I fear for the young people of color who are on our caseloads, and the men of color in our workforce for the way society views them. While I do not have authority over anyone else's individual worldview, I do have the responsibility to set the tone for how the perspectives we each bring impact the work of the agency. *"We all do better when we all do better"* Paul Wellstone

How can DCF do better so all of us can do better?

Leadership across the agency must set the primary example of expectations. Our well established Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup remains steadfast in comprehensively understanding our systematic issues. This past week, the SRJWG held the second webinar entitled, "Color of COVID in CT," which discussed the disparate outcomes of COVID-19 on communities of color & explored some of the historic reasons why.

I implore leaders across DCF to not defer to the SRJWG but rather, **join with** its representatives to facilitate more virtual discussions on race relations in the context of our work in the midst of this terrible pandemic and beyond.

Our work must continue to address disproportionality and disparate treatment of the children and families we serve.

We will continue to focus on our acceptance, substantiation and transfer rates along with our placement, lengths of stay and permanency data to understand our own trends as they relate to race and decision making.

Understanding the data is one aspect of change. Acting upon it is another. We have more work to do in order to **be** better.

We must hold ourselves accountable so each casework, human resources, contractual and communication decision is viewed through a racial justice lens. Our COVID response and recovery must be from a place of **UNDERSTANDING - EMPATHY & AUTHENTICITY.**

** Note that we had some technical difficulties while recording the weekly video. As our example of providing additional information with authenticity we decided to leave it unedited; please forgive the glitches while listening to the full message : [Commissioner's Weekly Video 5-31-20](#)*

Take care of yourselves, take care of the families we serve and take care of each other....



VANNESSA L. DORANTES, LMSW
COMMISSIONER
CT DEPT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES
505 HUDSON STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106

commissioner.dcf@ct.gov 860-550-6300

"I do my best because I'm counting on YOU counting on me..." m angelou