

SWRJWG April 25, 2016 Meeting Notes  
Documented by Ryan Williams

Present: Elizabeth Duryea; Sarah Gibson; Susan Smith; Monica Montalvo-Rams; Steven Smith; Gail Reyes-Walton; Irma Reyes; Elizabeth D'Amico; Sarah Diaz; Melanie Rossacci; Susan Cunningham; Michael Graham; Sommaly Ounthongdy; Nedra Muley; Tina Jefferson; Debi Freund; Allon Kalisher; Latosha Johnson; Tracy Davis; Michael Williams; Anne McIntyre-Lahner; Meghan Korn; Rosiris Espejo; Deb Borzellino; Jennifer Volpe; Carrie Glennon; Jo Hawke; Tracey Johnson; Elizabeth Cannata; Joyce Voltaire; Andrew Ludwig; Vanessa Dorantes; Jen Agosti; William Rivera

I. Welcome and Introductions Vanessa D. opened the meeting

- Vanessa D. welcomed participants and new members. Consultants Joyce James and Associate Dr. Vikki Lott were present. Vanessa requested that each participant introduce themselves by stating name, office and role, and one thing specific to the racial justice work that have acquired and or implementing in catchment areas over the past year. The purpose of this extended introduction was to provide Ms. James and Dr. Lott with an overview of the ongoing work taking place throughout the state.

II. Overview of Academy role in facilitating technical assistance and guidance for implementing Racial Justice Performance Expectation 3 Operational Strategies.

- Jodi H-L provided a brief orientation on the evolving of the SWRJWG to date. She elaborated further on the need to move the worker completed in the awareness and “tool box development” phases as a precursor to the stage we are currently in - implementation and measuring impact. In other words “How do we operationalize what we articulated in our PEs (performance expectations)?”

- To that end Jodi. H. introduced Consultants Joyce James, former commissioner of Texas’ DCF, and her associate, Dr. Vikki Lott, Provost Emeritus to several HBCUs. Jodi informed participants that these persons will serve as resources to support CT DCF leadership in the implementation of the racial justice work. This will be facilitated through the Academy.

- Ms. James and Dr. Lot will work with the leadership teams to ensure that their proposed operational strategies yield the desired outcomes. Each selected cohort will receive three to five sessions of consultation: Stage 1. Assessment Stage 2. Planning Stage 3. Implementation Stage. The plan is supported by the Commissioner Katz’s Office.

- Mike G inquired about how each region could access Ms. James services. Jodi H-L stated that the consultation would be implemented in stages over the next two years. Divisions which are required to submit performance expectations have direct access to Joyce James’ services through the Academy. Joyce James emphasized that there would be an intentional focus on each area in order to reach each region’s desired outcomes. She expressed that she would like to spend the appropriate time with each of the selected regions, facilities and divisions. Elizabeth D. stated that regardless of the current budget situation, this work would continue and be sustained with the proper supports. Jen A. emphasized the expansion of the SWRGWG since the beginning and noted its progress, as there are now DCF and

Community Providers at the table. Jen A. stated that Joyce J. can go broad and deep into the practice level of the racial justice work.

- Referring to the Texas experience, Joyce stated that the work started with the data to inform regions about the issue. There was significant improvement by sharing disproportionality data amongst the regions in Texas. There was a brief dialogue regarding the existing requirements for data.
- Joyce J asked us to reflect on how we would do the work going upstream, while at the same time doing the work at the back end to ensure deep and permanent embedded systems change. Jodi H-L suggested that we could look at other areas besides the Performance Expectations such as what's going on in the workgroups, but the intent is to operationalize the PEs. Jodi H-L emphasized the need for planning in order to maximize Joyce J.'s time. Susan S. emphasized the need to have a very strategic approach when working with Joyce. We have to figure out how to stage this. Jen A. suggested prioritizing expectations as a strategy. Jen A. reminded the group that as a standing practice at SWRJ Group meetings, we always leave space for an "Ask for help" block.

### III. Ask for Help consultation request – JJ data, FAR data findings, foster care placement data

- JJ DATA FINDINGS - Intern Andrew Ludwig was prepared to present findings of existing JJ data extrapolated from LINK specific to children in DCF care involved with the Juvenile Justice System. The decision was made to postpone this presentation until the next statewide meeting on July 8th.
- FAR DATA FINDINGS - Kim N. presented on findings of FAR data by race. Kim explained the DRS process (i.e. two tracks; investigations and FAR) and the MOU between DCF and the evaluation by UCONN School of SW. Kim N. pointed out that families of color are more likely to be investigated than to have a FAR. She provided a summary of the percentage of regions' FAR referrals. Approximately 4000 cases dating back to FY 2012 are missing race and ethnicity data.
- Data was specific to different pathways throughout the process of a referral. CSF (community support for families) data reveals that whites get the most CSF referrals. Christina S. stated that only 16% of FARs get referred to CSF. There was a lengthy conversation regarding the meaning of the data.
- Joyce J. stated that in Texas they also found a disproportionality in who was participating in services. They asked how they could get people more involved. Allon K. pointed out that there are more whites who are referred to FAR but that more "minorities" who receive CSF. Christina S. acknowledged the helpfulness of the information presented. Jen. A. stated that we must continue to analyze the data. Kim N. stressed that many of these families have significant histories with DCF and Vanessa D. emphasized that families have long provider histories. Christina S. asked what we could do differently to address these issues. Jodi stated that FAR is voluntary and emphasized family engagement skills. Mike G. stressed that we have to articulate to families that it's safe to engage and we must talk about the strength of the partnership. Jen A. stressed the importance of what we say and how we say it to families. Joyce J. talked about how often times the language in court affidavits, send mixed messages to families regarding the departments' desire to support them. Jen A. stated that "hot words" were used more with families of color in CA break through series. Dr. Cannatta stated it would be helpful to analyze the language used in investigations versus FAR.

- It was noted that when initially rolled out, staff were either energized or afraid of FAR, hence the need to reexamine training. There is a significant impact on disproportionality when those who are least likely gain access benefitted from services. The fact that Blacks and Hispanics have higher rates of not continuing merits continued scrutiny.
- Kim N. mentioned and explained Considered Removal Meetings (CRM) and presented data from Jan-Dec 2015. Meetings are held prior to removal and after. Data shows that Whites have the most CRMs. Mike G. asked if the data could be cross referenced with kids who are immediately removed by race. Christina S. stated that data revealed that children of color were more likely to have a meeting after removal, but there was a question as to why. Mike's point might help answer the question. Jodi pointed out that the category of Multi-Race in LINK could skew the data. There is difference in regions as to how they identify race and ethnicity. Dr. DeJesus stated that there is ambivalence from the field and frustration with how to translate the information into LINK. Mike W. stated that PE issues should be referred to SWRJWG.
- FOSTER CARE ISSUES FINDINGS – Sara Gibson presenting. The division is requiring cultural competency plans, but there is a need to determine appropriateness with staff. We received 500 phone calls expressing interest in becoming foster parents, and many aren't sharing their race and ethnicity. According to the permanency resource exchange in CO – 68 families are registered, 142 requests (44% white) for adoptive families. When looking at race, there is a greater concern as 69% families are white yet close to that number of children in foster care are kids of color. We have to look at where there is a loss of families.
- The RJWG is being asked for support and guidance on how CO can work better with regions to recruit and retain families more families of color. Vanessa D. asked for data to look at kinship and ICPC. Of 142 requests, 23% of kids come from disruptive families. There is a very low number of ICPC requests from families of color. Christina S. asked about how to look at this as a whole, what are all of the compounding factors that cause the numbers. We don't have enough families of color that are being licensed to be resource families for children of color.
- Tina J. suggested that a subcommittee review the actual home studies to look at how and why families are chosen as resources. Joyce J. stated that it's good to know. We also have to look at SIU investigation outcomes. Joyce J. suggested looking at how many kids are adopted. Bill R. said there are discussions of developing a subcommittee to look at how to support foster care, as we want to make sure TFC homes are a part of this discussion as well. How do we support TFC homes so that those homes are culturally, linguistically and racially competent?
- Elizabeth D. mentioned that there is not diversity amongst judges and contract lawyers, which must also be looked at. Vanessa D. stated that we could be purposeful with this work, as contracts address racial justice, Vanessa D. suggested that TFC providers have a similar criteria to address cultural, linguistic, and racial competence.
- Mike W. stated that Executive Leadership will meet at 1 to discuss the RJ work; what has occurred, the strides we've made, the implementation of the data, and to challenge ourselves for what's ahead, i.e. continuing to dig deep into changing practice, and having tough conversations of how to move the work forward. Mike W. stressed that the Executive Leadership will support the racial justice work.

- Jen A. asked the group what they would like to ask. Ryan W. asked what Executive Leadership would like to see from SIU as it relates to the racial justice work. Sue S. stated that there must be a concerted strategy for data clean up, Mike W. asked for community providers present to engage the Leadership Team. Jen A. encouraged folks to write their request. Latosha J. stated that Juvenile Justice should be more intentional, i.e. more should be done to move the pendulum. Nedra M. wants to know in more detail, honestly how the Executive Leadership feels about the work. Gail R-W asked if there are any thoughts about integrate DCF racial justice through legislation. Elizabeth D. stated that the Children’s Committee could take the data, but they have to be given the information piecemeal. Elizabeth D. suggested messaging in a uniform manner the impact of the work. Some policies are statutory, so revisions must be made within the required timeframe.
- Joyce J. expressed appreciation for being included in our process. Joyce J. encouraged transparency and suggested town hall meetings in disparate communities and accentuated that it’s not about child welfare data, but the combination of data from various sources and stressing the common denominators. Joyce J. also suggested inviting the community to be a part of the discussion to improve their communities. Mike W. stated that Joyce is the co-chair of the National Racial Justice Alliance and reported that CT DCF has been invited to do a national webinar on 5/24/16 to talk about CT DCF’s racial justice journey.
- The meeting concluded with the viewing and discussion of video by Tim Wise titled “How Trump uses race to divide and conquer.”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pufqZHMg9Oc&feature=youtu.be>