

Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup Meeting
February 24, 2017

Present: Sarah Diaz; Fernando Muñiz; Irma Reyes; Gail Reyes-Walton; Ellen Whelan; Ryan E. Williams; Jeana Barcey; Cecilia Singh; Chrichton Stewart; Tracy Davis; Monica Rams; Shaun Punzalan; Carrie Glennon; Susan Cunningham; Tony DeJesús; Steven Smith; Elizabeth Cannata; Andrew Ludwig; Jennifer Volpe; Vanessa Dorantes; Bill Rivera; Joyce Voltaire; Deb Borzellino; Sommaly Ounthongdy; Yadira Ijeh; Susan Smith

I. Introductions

Bill Rivera and Vanessa Dorantes welcomed all to the meeting. All members present introduced themselves and the area offices, facilities, or agencies they represented.

II. Presentation on CLAS Standards work plans with Providers

Tim Marshall and team presented on the CONNECT Systems of Care grant and relevant timelines and benchmarks specific to work on provider integration of federal Cultural and Linguistic Services (CLAS) Standards. Prior to the award, there was a one year planning grant. The goal of this grant is to encourage provider agencies to develop a system of care that incorporates CLAS Standards, Workforce Development, Data Integration, Family engagement, and Social marketing workgroups. However, the specific initiative of this grant funding is to provide provider agencies a framework for understanding federal CLAS Standards, and provide the technical assistance and consultation to create and implement plans in their respective agencies. Colleagues Gina and Cecelia were present to discuss their work with CLAS standards implementation throughout the state. It was also mentioned that a proposal was made for the Department to likewise conduct an internal CLAS self-assessment to determine compliance. The CLAS standards did not include a specific focus on racial justice. Current work has included a Racial Justice lens. However there must be a balance with the cultural and linguistic diversity elements of the Standards.

To date, multiple provider cohorts developed and submitted their CLAS Standards plans for review. Attempts are being made by providers to identify and develop more measurable objectives to deal with cultural and linguistic diversity. This work is challenging for providers, as they needed assistance figuring out how to reach these objectives. Providers have indicated the need for support, which has been heartening. Vanessa D. share that there was no Region 5 representation. Tim shared that a next cohort was proceeding. During the first phase of self-assessment participants were very invested and received lots of information. There was vulnerability when providers looked at their disparities and disproportionality data. It was again concluded that family engagement is an essential part of this work.

Cecelia stated all of the agencies welcome the discussion regarding how to deal with race, racial justice, disparity and disproportionality. A sample Cultural Competence Assessment Tool will be made available to the group. Tim Marshall apologized for not identifying agencies in the regions and welcomed regions to make suggestions regarding any providers that would like to be involved. Bill Rivera would be given the announcement of the third cohort so that SWRJWG

members could notify providers. Providers have to articulate a plan to account for linguistic services with they currently do not provide, i.e., language line access, etc. Agencies are coming together to discuss how to obtain the resources to address these complex requirements. The group of champions love the work and want change.

Bill Rivera shared that, historically, the focus of compliance with CLAS standards have been framed in the context of the national health care delivery system. DCF completed two of these in the past. They did not capture the scope or measurable areas specific to child protective services work. Recently, a memo from the Administration for Children encouraged child welfare agencies to review CLAS standards for compliance with Title 6. It was recommended that DCF conduct an internal self-assessment to determine if the agency was in compliance with the standards. Susan Smith stated that this is an opportunity to find out how this work could be integrated into department practices as DCF is a learning agency. Tim Marshall to make sure there is no disconnect between the work with providers and the department's racial justice and CLAS work.

III. Regional, Facilities, Divisions, and Provider Updates:

Region 1

Susan C. reported that Norwalk office has a new Office Director, Ms. Yolanda Chapman Smith. Carrie is going to Norwalk and will continue as co-lead for their racial justice team. Region 1 is working on bridging the gap with providers regarding racial justice work. Monthly meetings are being scheduled to meet with providers. Dr. DeJesus will facilitate a cultural humility training and initiate case consultations that include providers. Region 1's racial justice workgroup has facilitated conversations regarding disparity and disproportionality and had a TA with Jen Agosti. Information from their staff survey was shared with Dr. DeJesus to help them integrate survey results in their trainings. Bill R. stated that Bridgeport and Norwalk offices hosted the Lost in Translation Training with providers present. Providers also began to discuss compliance Title 6 as a result of Reg. 1's activities.

Region 2

Chrichton S. reported that the case consultation model has been implemented since last fall. SWS's and SW's brought cases and talked about bias and cross cutting themes, as they related to case decisions. Reg. 2 informed Susan Smith regarding the concern that Hispanic kids were under represented due to a LINK glitch. Jen A. is meeting with all of the supervisors in Regions 1 and 2. There have been teleconferences with Jen A. to finalize the agenda. RAC and providers will participate in training with Jen A. and be a part of Region 2's monthly racial justice team meetings.

Region 3

Middletown is doing well with the racial work. We had a retreat to discuss how to further the work. DCF Willimantic Office Director, Dr. Loida Reyes, has had meetings with law enforcement and community providers. DCF Norwich has had a lot of changes in the office, which has slowed the racial justice work, but they've experienced more linguistic diversity with new staff. Jen A. will offer technical assistance in how to move the needle to affect

outcomes. Region 3 would require all staff and foster parents to have the “Journey Toward Racial Enlightenment” training. Joyce James’ technical assistance, which included providers, was well received.

Region 4

Region 4 had its first series of technical assistance with Joyce James and Dr. Lott in January 2017. Members of their RAC and DCF Region 4 program managers were involved. They focused on the integration of racial justice into the work. Next meeting is 3/8/17. Region 4 is exploring how to connect the work to the outcome measures, i.e. looking at commencement, substantiations vs. unsubstantiations, looking at case dispositions and how different managers make decisions, as well as how kids are coming in to care by race and ethnicity. They are also looking at case planning, needs met, and length of stay; specifically they are questioning why kids of color are staying in care longer. They are also looking at providers and service delivery. Vanessa D. pointed out that data clean up goes in line with continuous quality improvement.

Region 5

Region 5 had its first technical assistance meeting with Dr. James in Waterbury. Region 5 offices have had the Journey Towards Racial Enlightenment training and have established a collaboration with the Hispanic Coalition to work with churches. Meeting with Hispanic community in Torrington, Bill R. presented Lost in Translation and was requested to return for future presentations. Vanessa D. pointed out that the training was given in Spanish, which turned the tables on non-Spanish speaking people in the audience, helping them to know what it feels like for non-English speaking people. New Opportunities facilitated a presentation on how to understand the Hispanic community in Torrington. Region 5 is looking at working with New Opportunities to support them in the future and to reach out to the community regarding to how to respond when DCF gets involved. There were discussions on how to use the racial justice lens in the six remaining outcome measures, as well as discussion about how to eliminate the unknown category in LINK as it relates to race, how to designate race in protocol documentation, and how to maximize the use of the other category (i.e., be specific). Region 5 also explored how to address barriers regarding family engagement. There is also a data clean up as it relates to case planning. Racial justice co-leads and Wellness Team members met with Dr. Schultz to explore bringing in the Global Conversations on Race dialogues.

Region 6

Region 6’s RAC retreat was well informed by the work of DCF. They discussed how RAC work would be shaped over the next year. No matter what topic, there was attention given to race, equity and justice. It was further reported that Tina J. stated that RAC and DCF involvement goes both ways, and Tina J. requested advice from the RAC regarding linguistic diversity.

Central Office

Gail Reyes Walton stated that the offices of Diversity and Equity and Multi-Cultural Affairs have been very supportive with furthering the racial justice work at CO. There have been Brown Bag Lunches examining the elections and the law enforcement shootings of black men. They had a

speaker talk about discrimination against the Muslim community. CT CHRO Rep. Cheryl Sharp will assist with a panel discussion on racial profiling discussion by law enforcement and the NAACP. Statewide DAT meetings have discussion about what's going on nationally, statewide and in offices as it relates to racial justice. DAT events are educational. Irma Reyes stated that Debi Freund left the agency as the director of the Office of Diversity and Equity. Victor Brathwait is service as Acting Director.

The Office of Diversity and Equity will facilitate conversations about diversity and inclusion and offer sexual harassment training. Two trends were identified: When asked what facilities knew about SWRJWG and DAT they knew very little. Irma recommended more marketing regarding RJ and DAT to facilities. The second issue was transgender issues: What is appropriate regarding asking about gender, birth or current identity. Irma R. stated that they would find out answers to any questions. Bill R. shared that there is a perception in the immigrant community that DCF will remove children from parents who may be deported. We are working with agencies to communicate with immigrants on how to prepare for potential immigration enforcement operations. Bill R. shared that DCF hasn't changed its existing policy and practice, but often times, these communities view DCF as an arm of I.C.E. and law enforcement by virtue of the fact that we are government agency. The department will not report people to I.C.E. We will not remove children unless they meet the statutory definitions of abuse or neglect. Fernando M. noted Gov. Malloy's statement that CT will push back on immigration orders issued by the White House. There are approximately 22,000 US citizen children born to undocumented individuals. Bill R. encouraged Managers and SWS to review DCF Immigration Policy 31-8-13 for guidance on how to serve this population.

CO Juvenile Justice. Steve S. shared a recent event which brought kids and cops together in Bridgeport. This event was well received. Probation and juvenile justice data indicates that recidivism hasn't been dropping for high risk kids. As it relates to racial justice, the population are mostly kids of color. OPM received a grant to target high risk youth in Hartford, Bridgeport and Waterbury on probation, parole or involved with DCF. Juvenile justice staff is working on engaging family members that the youth identifies to train the identified individuals on how to reduce recidivism; EPICS I is the initiative. The CJTS program geared to move kids to talk through their issues has been successful. The program was facilitated by a grant written by Martha Stone. It is the desire to bring this FREE program to the community and through the restorative justice approach. Steve shared about the TA they had with Dr. James. They also explored a focus group for youth who went to Family and Community Ties homes. No black youth were brought to permanency via that program. This will be addressed. There have been meetings regarding juvenile justice data, i.e. how to pull it out of Condoit.

Ryan W. reported that The Journey Towards Racial Enlightenment Training is on hold until it is reviewed and sanctioned by the Office of Children and Youth Placement. Community providers expressed interest in receiving the training and participating in train the trainer sessions when they become available. Ryan also had a brief discussion with Jim Smith, CEO of Webster Bank about the possibility of Webster partnering with DCF in developing a financial literacy program for children and families involved with the DCF. Ms. Smith expressed interest in hearing what

such a program would look like. Ryan explained that the financial literacy pitch was a “foot in the door” for the bigger ask of having Webster Bank as a potential member of the SWRJWG. Dr. DeJesus stated that there are similar programs and suggested discussing ways to leverage the relationship with Webster Bank.

Susan Smith discussed STEP program from Casey. Susan S. states that there would be a kick off regarding this initiative. From the months of April to September there will be a focus on racial justice and data. Each region could send one team to the kick-off event.

Solnit South

There were discussion groups to discuss racial justice and supervision. There were also discussions about how to apply the racial justice lens to planned events on the units. Solnit’s racial justice group will expand. Solnit had technical assistance with Dr. James. They will look at data to include all staff. Meetings have been voluntary. There have been unit discussions with management regarding race.

Provider updates

Dr. Cannata was inspired by a Region 5 presentation about retaining bilingual behavioral health staff. They are exploring writing a grant to address the issue. Dr. DeJesus from USJ stated that they are looking forward toward expanding resources in this area. Regarding evidence-based practices, how would evidence based practices can offer solutions to address racial unrest. Using MST as a case example of expanding practice, the model has to be comprehensive and be able to address tension between individuals in the communities.

CMHA has mined data and is looking at staff and who they are working with in the community. Questions asked include: Are they pairing their staff and clients appropriately? They are looking at an RBA that looks at outcomes of the involvement between staff and clients and treatment outcomes. There is representation on the board of directors, there is a youth on the YAB, there is a Diversity Committee responsible for handling CONNECT grant. Race culture and ethnicity must be dealt with and staff must understand poverty and how multigenerational patterns are passed down. The CONNECT training helped CMHA develop their health equity plan. Vanessa D. extended community providers an open invitation to join the SWRJWG. Vanessa stated that Bill would reach out to subcommittee leads for updates and charter revisions.

Vanessa introduced Anne McIntyre-Lahner and Intern Andrew L. to present on how to access the DCF data portal. These are the steps:

- DCF homepage
- LINK reports
- Performance reporting
- Racial Justice (click on left side)
- Resource Links (click on right side)

IS, ORE, and Performance Management have focused on performance expectations. It was important to get the racial justice trend data integrated so that staff could view it. Susan Smith stated that there is intent to develop an outward facing version of ROM in order to facilitate ease of use internally with automated updates, available to the public.

Vannessa D. introduced the discussion regarding how to keep racial justice grounded in our work as we exit the revised Juan F. outcomes and why the racial justice work is important to improving outcomes for all groups. Vannessa encouraged DCF Racial Justice members to consider how to affect outcomes in the areas of the outcome measures, i.e. commencement and completion of investigations, enforceable domains on case plans, DV, Med, MH, Dental , in home visitation standards, caseload standards regarding our workforce population.

Tool Box Activity

The group watched a brief video demonstrating the concept of **Ubuntu** – a person is a person via other people. Monica R. stated that the concept ties into what’s going on in society and can help staff to focus on the outcome measures. Ryan W. correlated that concept of **Ubuntu** with that of the Objectivist concept of rational selfishness, i.e. making good decisions for oneself with the understanding that those decisions would benefit others. Chrichton S. stated that when we understanding **Ubuntu**, family engagement becomes second nature and will improve outcomes. Regarding the humanness of the concept - knowing what to say to others and how others receive what’s said would be positive. Fernando M. stated that he appreciated that the video ended with words that exemplified the values; humility, kindness, compassion. We must dig in to understanding how come we’re not successful at engaging certain populations. Tracy D. made the correlations between the PIC principles and a focus of how we treat one another and how we relate to families. Janice C. reminded the group of the parallel process. Gail R. stated that the concept of **Ubuntu** correlates with Christian principles. Dr. DeJesus stated that **Ubuntu** is at the heart of the conversation of what’s going on politically. Also as it relates wealth creation, how do we benefit from the systems in place so as to share knowledge in order to effectuate positive outcomes? Bill R. commented that many refugee communities aren’t familiar with the concept of a child welfare agency. Having cultural competency in this area is foreign to many of us, but must be considered. Many cultures have no word or words that translate to DCF. Folks who aren’t from here would have difficulty accepting DCF involvement.

Next meeting will take place on April 28th at Beacon Health in Rocky Hill.