



ACHIEVING RACIAL JUSTICE ACROSS THE DCF SYSTEM is the operational strategy designed to address disproportionality and disparities within the context of DCF's continuum. Each region, division and facility was asked to reflect on the last 5 years to bring attention to the impact of race and racism on the families we work with. Objectively responding to racial inequity takes many forms. This series will capture the deliberate attention to this work taken by each area office through collective regional, central office division and facility responses.

Representing: Region 1

 **Leadership forward:** Region 1 has focused our Racial Justice work to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of the impact race in our system. We have spent considerable time taking apart our data and understanding where disproportionality impacts our region and strategized steps to move towards action. We have work in 3 phases: Year 1 was focused inward, developing our staff, and analyzing our systems, Year 2 focused on our provider community and beginning our work together to impact racial justice, and this year – year 3 we are focused on our community and partners. Below are some of the steps and activities taken on throughout our region.

 **What have we done?** During phase 1 and continuing forward we developed our Regional Racial Justice workgroup made up of staff from the Bridgeport office and the Norwalk office. The membership lead weekly open meetings for interested regional staff to attend. Healthy, and lively discussion were held exploring topics such as implicit bias, disproportionality, race, news items related to race in the Region, Connecticut, and on a national scale. At the 6 month mark the Regional Racial Justice work group expanded their role and began to expand staff awareness through:

- monthly presentations at staff meetings
- Individual work group meetings in both offices
- Attending Quarterly statewide meetings
- All staff survey in each office which result in an 80% return rate
- Each Manager submits monthly data reports to the RA analyzing the previous month with an eye on racial justice
- Our Considered Removal facilitators talk with the team and family about how they identify race and their culture
- Through the CRM we analyze the data to measure removals, placements with relatives, and fatherhood engagement
- Development of the CAFÉ model - The foundation of the CAFÉ (Collaborative Ambassadors For Equity) is rooted in Intercultural Capacities, revolving around refining the collective knowledge, skills, and attitudes of people, pertaining to themselves and other cultures. The CAFÉ has held a number of open meetings in the office, initially to promote awareness around inequities. The voluntary attendance has ranged from 19 to 31 persons.

In addition, we received technical support from:

- Dr. Anthony Dejesus of St. Joseph's university. His research has focused on Training Models to address racial disproportionality in child welfare, Career Pathway Models for Latinos in Social Work and Health Professions and Community Organizing and Education Reform. Dr. De Jesus provided a learning session on Cultural humility and Intersectionality for our staff in both offices.
- Jen Agosti: provided consulting services focused on developing and applying continuous quality improvement methods to social service practice. Jen came to Region 1 to share her knowledge and coach us on our on-going efforts.
- Dr. Michael Schultz facilitated open discussion with each office to explore the current community environment, the impact on race, and what staff needed.
- Joan Adams – case consultations based from the trainings.

Throughout phase 2 we developed our Regional Racial Justice Provider workgroup. There are representatives from a variety of Region 1 providers, at all levels of their organization. We spent the first 2 meetings discussing racial justice work and hearing from each of our providers the work they were already doing in their organization. We also offered opportunities to partner with DCF to share resources and presentations. Some the activities the Provider workgroup took on include:

- Susan Smith, Chief of Quality and Planning DCF presented to the provider group on data and quality management.
- Tim Marshall-DCF and Drew LaValle from Beacon – Connect Grant presentation to the provider network in Region 1 – CLAS - Region 1 has 15 providers who have gone through this learning collaborative and moved their organizations forward in Racial Justice.
- Dr. Walter Gilliam – Prejudice isn't just a police problem – it's a preschool problem – Regional presentation.
- Ken C and Susan C presented group's activities to the RAC and opened discussion for the need to expand the work of the team into the community.
- RAC Community Event - organized event on immigration.
- Screening and facilitated discussion – the 13th by Ava DuVernay
- Training: The Legacy of the Jim Crow Laws and the Equal Rights Movement
- Joyce James facilitated 1st training session with DCF teams and community providers- Regional
- Facilitated discussion of the documentary "LIFE – The Kalief Browder Story" 6 part series, viewed in 3 sessions followed by facilitated discussions.

We have begun our Phase 3 work through our RAC opening doors for deep discussions in our community work and with our partners. We have focused efforts to engage local community groups, folding the Citizen Review Panel in the RAC, build on our System of Care and use the Connect grant to bring people together. Our RAC has held community Saturday events focusing on The Impact on Violence, Immigration, and Resiliency. One of our next steps in this work is planning a 2 day session with technical assistance with Joyce James in June 2018.

✚ **What's our planned next steps?** Region 1 is continuing our work internally, continuing to work collectively with our Providers, and building on our strength as a community. We are in the process of planning:

- Dr. Walter Gilliam – Prejudice isn't just a police problem – it's a preschool problem – Second presentation,
- Joyce James will be facilitating session with all Regional Supervisors on 4/23,
- Joyce James will be facilitating a session with the Regional Racial Justice workgroup to focus on steps towards action,
- Continued review and discussion of disproportionality data and development of next steps.
 - Specific steps to be identified to address disproportionality as it relates to permanency
- Joyce James to facilitate 2 day workshop with DCF, Providers, and Community to develop action plan
- Build on the CAFÉ model

✚ **INSPIRATION:** People feel uncomfortable talking about racial issues out of fear that if they express things, they will be characterized in a way that's not fair. I think that there is still a need for a dialogue about things racial that we've not engaged in.
- Eric Holder

