

**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 4 – Strengthening families and supporting communities through a professional and diverse workforce.

 **Leadership forward:** Region 4 has proud history of working towards achieving racial justice in our system. Our diverse workforce, partnerships with providers and commitment to ensuring the delivery of equitable and just services to children and families exemplify who we are and what we stand for.

**What have we done?** Among many of the efforts under way the following are a few highlights:

On June 16, 2017 Region 4 and My People Clinical Services hosted a full day community event for adolescent service providers, youth and staff at the Wilson-Gray YMCA. The event was facilitated by Ms. Joyce James, Racial Equity Consultant who was providing technical assistance to the Region at the time. The purpose of the day was: To create a common understanding of systemic and institutional racism, build partnerships, and strengthen collaboration among providers who serve adolescents in our community.

Ms. James provided a portion of her workshop entitled “A Groundwater Analysis of Racial Inequities” in the morning session. In the afternoon, DCF adolescent data was reviewed through a racial justice lens followed by a powerful and inspiring youth panel. The youth shared their experiences receiving services from many of the providers who attended the event. The day concluded with next steps for this group as there was a strong desire among the providers to continue meeting.

The selection of the Wilson-Gray YMCA as the location for the event was intentional given the desire to be embedded within the community. It was also a place that had meaning for a youth in our care who was killed in March 2017 by gun violence.

As a result of this event and the desire of others, the Region has been working to build an “adolescent provider coalition” aimed at working to address the challenges facing our youth, many of whom are African-American and Hispanic. Some of the strongest partners in this group are grass-roots, community based providers who are committed to working to solve problems.

The Region has had other accomplishments as we work towards achieving racial justice across the system. We understand that we cannot do this work alone which is why partnering with the community and youth is so critical.

AND....

The Racial Justice CQI Team felt strongly that in order for our staff to think and act with commitment to addressing racial inequities and injustice a pledge would be appropriate. We developed and implemented our Racial Justice Pledge: Standing TALL for Racial Justice incorporating Judge Delgado's reflective questions into the pledge. The team had the logo made into buttons distributed for our staff and our T.A.L.L. (Think Act Listen Learn pledge) posters are displayed in the supervisors/management offices. A Reflective Supervision guide was created with talking points to have courageous conversations during supervision.


The Racial Justice CQI has had a multitude of learning forums to educate staff on implicit bias and courageous conversations about race which have included facilitated dialogues with Dr. Anthony De Jesus of St. Joseph College, ‘A Closer Look at Racial Justice-Making the Connection’ workshop with Jen Agosti, and in collaboration with the Diversity Action Team hosted the Everyday Bias Café series based on highlights from the book *Everyday Bias* by Howard J. Ross. Staff learned that biases can be positive/negative, constructive/destructive, or conscious/unconscious.

 **What's our planned next steps?**

We were inspired by the TA provided by Joyce James and her Groundwater Analysis of Racial Inequities workshop. In light of that, we have asked her back to train all of the Region 4 staff. Beginning in April and concluding in September our staff will participate in a day and a half session with Ms. James. Staff will have the opportunity to challenge their own biases and gain insight into systematic and institutional racism. Most importantly staff will have a greater understanding of how this impacts our daily work and that WE are all part of a larger system. Working in partnership with all the different systems such as the court, community, and with the families we serve, WE all need to continue the work in addressing disparity and disproportionality.

The Racial Justice CQI Team continues to complete case reviews utilizing a racial justice lens. More specifically, CPS and Court Services Officer completed the reviews and the team is beginning the analysis of children ages 0-3 who have been removed and had a considered removal meeting. Based on the findings, the team will be making recommendations to impact case practice as it relates to racial justice.

The Region in collaboration with staff from Central Office are currently working on an educational video that will be utilized for training to model how social workers can talk to families about their race/ethnicity and discussion around cultural considerations during the assessment of a family's needs/strengths. More specifically, making the connection of how the conversation about race/ethnicity impacts family dynamics.

 **INSPIRATION:** Region 4 Logo – we seek to inspire every day!

Standing **TALL** for



Racial Justice Pledge

I will Think about the impact of my words and actions when they do not match my intent and be open to feedback from others.

I will not Act on my assumptions; rather, I will test them and change.

I will Listen to my colleagues and learn from their experiences.

I will Learn what I can do to make a difference.