

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.

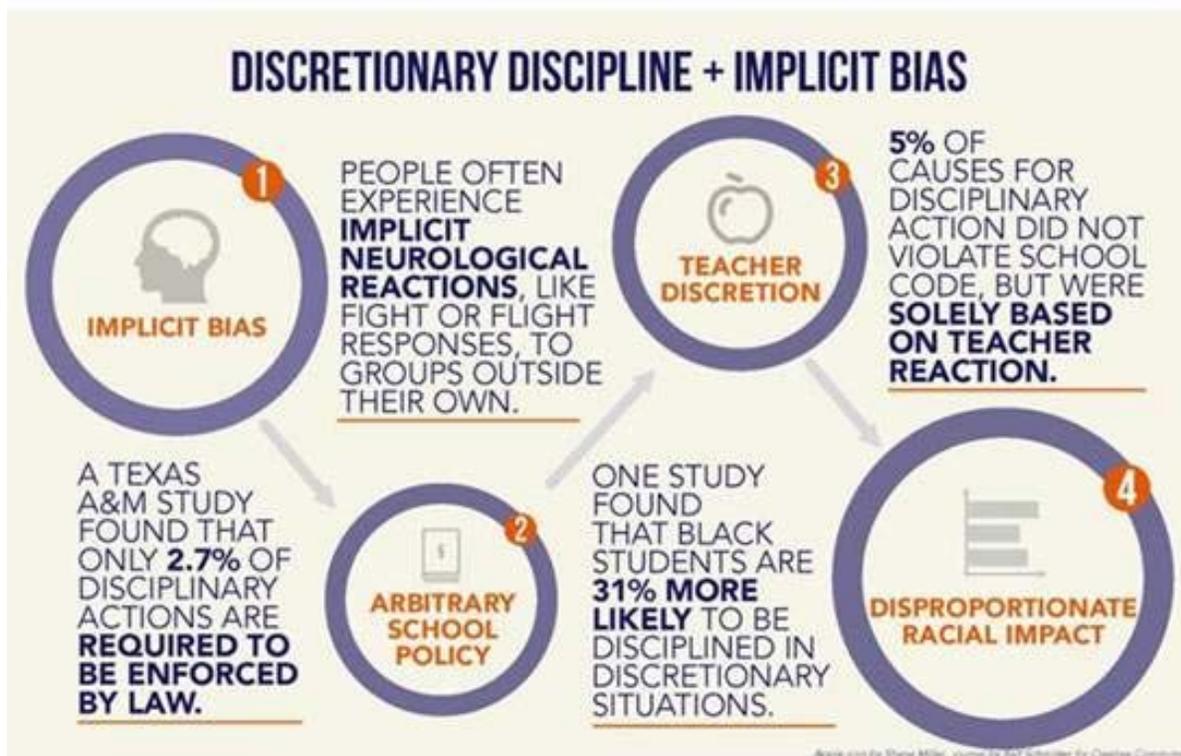
✚ **Representing:** Albert J. Solnit Center – South Campus

✚ **Leadership forward:**

The Albert J. Solnit Children's Center embarked on a mission to address racial disproportionalities that exist within our practices. Throughout 2016 we examined data that had not been previously collected and identified disproportionalities. We are determined to work to ensure that all our youth and families experience equitable outcomes. We know in order to address this large systemic and societal issue, we cannot do this in isolation and without our youth and families around the table with us.

✚ **What have we done?**

- ❖ On November 19, 2014, as part of our monthly Grand Rounds series, "Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Juvenile Justice System: A Current Look" was presented by Martha Stone, JD, Director of the Center for Child Advocacy and Leon Smith, Director Alternative Schools Project, Center for Child Advocacy.
- ❖ As part of our mission in our racial justice actions, Solnit management team and staff participated in a training led by Jen Agosti, Founder and President of JRA Consulting Services, Ltd. Soon after, Solnit management team and staff received consultation and guidance from Ms. Joyce James along with Vicki Vernon Lott, Ph.D. of Joyce James Consulting who have extensive experience and expertise in the area of racial justice and addressing racial disproportionalities in large systems, including the child welfare system as part of our Technical Assistance (TA).
- ❖ The Solnit Center – South Campus has focused Racial Justice efforts on equity in the care we provide in order to identify where disproportionality impacts the provision of mental health care to our youth and their families. These efforts included a detailed look at data with specific focus on race, including in our use of PRNs ("as needed" medications), emergency safety interventions (restraints and seclusions), discharge destination, length of stay as well as disproportionality in school discipline at our Riverview School. We developed specific action steps in light of identified disparities in the data.
- ❖ When identifying disparities, we have taken a deeper dive into the school discipline data.



- ❖ On July 11, 2017, the Solnit Center welcomed youth and families to participate in a day long workshop with Ms. Joyce James, a nationally recognized expert on racial justice in systems, as our facilitator in order to gather feedback to further enhance our strategies to improve outcomes for our youth and families.
- ❖ Following this day long workshop, we integrated youth from our PRTF and Hospital into our Diversity Action Team. Truly making these youth an equal part of our team, they received pay through our life skills program for their contribution to the team.
- ❖ We revived the amazing work put into the CT DCF Ethnic Hair and Skin Care Manual back in January 2008 by utilizing it to inform and update our Haircare Procedure. Please see this link for access to the manual: http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/DCF/Multicultural_Affairs/pdf/EthnicHairandSkinCareManual12016pdf.pdf?la=en
- ❖ In updating our haircare policy, we updated the products purchased for use by our youth with ethnic hair and skin.
- ❖ Recognizing the unique needs for our youth with ethnic hair and skin care, we have expanded our haircare services offered on campus by contracting with a licensed beautician to provide hair braiding and crocheting for our youth.
- ❖ Organize and present data in a manner where we look inward and have meaningful reflection with all levels of staff.
- ❖ We have begun to assess our training curriculums and update curriculums to include our racial justice work.
- ❖ On the PRTF conduct individual case reviews on youth who require restraint and/or psychiatric hospitalization, with special consideration made to race of the youth.
- ❖ Continuing to plan for discharge at admission while working with families and stakeholders to discuss in each care planning meeting in order to address disparities in length of stay.
- ❖ On March 7, 2018, as part of the Psychology and MSW Trainee Seminar, Race and Psychotherapy presentation was offered. This presentation will also be facilitated on May 9th for the PRTF clinicians.

What's our planned next steps?

- ❖ Instill a philosophy where everyone understands that the youth and families are our consumers and we are the deliverers of services.
- ❖ Continue to refine and strengthen our debriefing process after critical incidents. Identify and facilitate programming that allows the youth to feel good about themselves and hopeful.
- ❖ Address our physical environment and make improvements in order to reflect our diversity as a community.
- ❖ Formally change our mission statement to include equitable care to all.
- ❖ Review and act on feedback from our perceptions of care.
- ❖ Continue to identify strategies to maintain our RJ initiatives without the TA.
- ❖ Continue to brainstorm current barriers to RJ implementation and future barriers.

INSPIRATION:

Our focus has been on challenging our implicit biases and making conscious efforts to achieve mental health, health and educational equity for all our youth at the Albert J. Solnit Center – South Campus.

“Empathy is not simply a matter of trying to imagine what others are going through, but having the will to muster enough courage to do something about it. In a way, empathy is predicated upon hope.”

— Cornel West