

**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 2 New Haven and Milford Area Office Leadership forward:**

Region 2 approached the racial justice work through a series of internal and community meetings focusing on regional data as well as creating opportunities for conversations and learning. For our internal discussions we intentionally chose to utilize the workgroup venue as the hub for discussions. The workgroup offered both a small enough size group as well as familiar peers in which to have open and honest dialogues. It was our intent to ensure that the one and done mentality of the past was forgotten and conversations related to racial justice and racial disproportionality happened regularly and consistently. A timeline of our activities was maintained by our racial justice leads which has kept us focused on our accomplishments and moving forward. Within the community we found that our partners were eager to engage with us on how our systems were intersecting and share how they were looking at themselves and their data. We are proud to say that over the past year our community partners have joined us at our monthly racial justice regional meetings. This work could not have been accomplished without our dedicated racial justice leads, Chrichton Stewart, Monica Rams, and former Region 2 Program Manager Nedra Muley.

### **What have we done?**

There were four rounds of workgroup meetings for a total of 24 different sessions. These sessions included all staff at all levels exclusive of their function or role in the region. The feedback collected from these sessions was shared at staff meetings and leadership team meetings. The workgroup meetings mirrored the activities presented at the statewide racial justice meetings. Additionally Ted Talks, videos, and articles continue to be distributed regularly. Below are the topics from the workgroups.

- Round One: Introduction to the racial justice plan and the sharing of regional data
- Round Two: Discussion on the feedback from round one and the Walk of Privilege exercise.
- Round Three: Introduction to implicit bias and its connection to our case practice.
- Round Four: Case presentation utilizing Dr. Dejesus' case consultation model

We used the technical assistance to assess our strengths and challenges to plan for next steps.

Susan Smith assisted us in understanding our data and the barriers that exist in our data collection. This led to a regional data clean-up day to provide staff an opportunity to correct inaccuracies in LINK related to race and ethnicity. At the same time coaching was made available to staff related to engaging families in conversations specific to their race and cultural traditions.

Jen Agosti provided a series of facilitated conversations and learning opportunities with managers, supervisors and members of our South Central Network of Care and Juvenile Justice System to create a common vision and lens related to racial justice. Jen Agosti asked us to answer the question: *How will we know when we have reached racial justice?* One parent partner's answer grounded us in the importance of this work. She stated, "When I don't have to worry about my 15 year old son every time he leaves the house that he will be safe". After Jen's meeting with providers the regional racial justice workgroup became a true partnership with providers. Their membership has been consistent and growing.

Region 2 hosted the Case Consultation Model Think Tank with Dr. Dejesus and Joan Adams. They were able to return to the New Haven office and provide a case specific consultation with their model. Since that time efforts have been made to utilize a racial justice lens during weekly case reviews at the SPIT/CPIT meetings.

Dr. Dejesus presented to staff in both Milford and New Haven on cultural humility and implicit biases.

Dr. Joyce James met with all managers, supervisors, and RRG for a presentation and discussion on structural racism.

Dr. Mara Gottlieb presented at a regional wellness event. Impact of Race and Color on Service Provision.

We have acknowledged that we cannot do this work alone. There have been additional opportunities to join with our community. There have been multiple presentations made at the Regional Advisory Council paralleling the topics held at workgroup meetings. Co-Chairs of the Regional Justice Workgroup were part of the planning committee for the City of New Haven's planning team for the "Race to Equity Conference" and are now a part of their community of practice. During a brown bag luncheon with Juvenile Court Judges and panel attorneys racial disproportionality data was shared for a rich discussion on the work in the region.

A newsletter has been developed to be shared between the member agencies of the workgroup



### What's our planned next steps?

Region 2 will continue to work with Joyce James through July of this year. There are three half day sessions planned for workers and one session for our providers. We have asked Joyce to include in her sessions the effect of race on our permanency outcome data. Our last TA with Joyce will be strategic planning.

The members of the Regional Racial Justice Workgroup has developed a mission statement. There is currently a contest (funded by the Children's Center) for a youth to create a logo to be added to the mission statement.



### INSPIRATION:

#### Region 2 Racial Justice Team Mission Statement

*"Region 2 Racial Justice Team exists to identify racial inequities as well as promote and advocate for system change in policy, procedures, and practice that relates to structural racism and its impact on the lives of children and families residing in the Greater New Haven Area."*