


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 3, featuring DCF's partnership with the community in the city of Middletown

 **Leadership forward:** We are living in a time in which we are exposed to an overflow of news and information from so many sources and mediums. And sadly, so much of what we know is happening is a reflection of a nation and a world that is divided and in conflict. Racial injustice pervades so many of these stories, and even when that's debatable, we typically see the same ingredients making up the root causes of conflict: people who want to protect their power, their wealth, and/or their ideals from others they see as a threat. Such challenges are daunting, which can feel paralyzing – it often feels that way to me. The same can be said about our own objective to have a real impact on racial injustice. This is not to excuse any of us from participating in meaningful ways. It is, however, to offer some understanding. John Mayer sings:


*It's not that we don't care,
We just know that the fight ain't fair
So we keep on waiting
Waiting on the world to change*

And:

*It's hard to beat the system
When we're standing at a distance
So we keep waiting
Waiting on the world to change*

High school students from Parkland have defied the tendency to wait and consequently have been an inspiration to so many. Their positive and constructive message and agenda is proving to be incredibly powerful. And while their success is a story about taking action - talking about their cause far and wide - it is equally about *creating* a movement by *joining and amplifying* an existing movement.

At DCF, we can take pride in the fact that we have joined a very important movement for racial justice and within our networks and communities, we are helping to give a louder voice to it.

 **What have we done?** An important part of the work throughout the DCF, and within Region 3, has been about creating safe spaces and learning opportunities to talk about racial injustice. Numerous trainings, workshops and experiential activities have been held in Region 3 inclusive of staff, foster parents and community members. We have benefitted from agency-provided technical assistance from Joyce James & Jen Agosti, from other experts on racial justice, and from so many Region 3 staff who have volunteered to develop activities and trainings, and facilitate discussions. We have witnessed our language and capacity to talk about race evolve, and we have experienced opportunities to challenge injustices respectfully in specific ways – partnering with schools, for example, to look at racial disparities in discipline and DCF reporting. Each of these activities and many examples could be shared in much further detail, but one story sticks out as it represents how we hope to join with communities to tackle racial justice, and how we can serve to give such efforts a louder voice.
Feature: DCF Partners with Middlesex Coalition for Children and Leaders from the City of Middletown

Middlesex County is fortunate to have a strong coalition that exists to advocate for the community's children. Racial Justice is one of the strategic issues relevant to the [Middlesex Coalition for Children](#), so it was no struggle for the Director, Izzi Greenberg, to be willing to join efforts with DCF. After Izzi attending a strategic planning day with Region 3, we planned and held a very well attended community forum that Joyce James facilitated, which we called "Dismantling Systemic Racism Conference". Izzi then partnered with Joyce to run a 3 day workshop for leaders in the Middletown community, and she also hosted a DCF presentation at one of the Coalition's public meetings:



The consciousness raising efforts resulted in the formation of Middletown's Racial Justice Coalition. The RJ Coalition includes a variety of community members, from teens and parents to civic leaders, and of course, staff and leaders from DCF Middletown office. The RJ Coalition continues to meet regularly, and several activities and priorities have emerged from that. As an example, the group has taken up racial equity in schools as one priority. There is a google group listserv and Facebook page where members share activities and events, and to communicate with members about joint priorities. The power of this network is undeniably strong, evidenced by its influence on the city of Middletown, which codified a commitment to racial justice in the city charter. Current efforts by members to stem a plan to ease traffic congestion downtown by creating roadways through the North End, placing an extra burden on disadvantaged residents, is another example. All efforts by the RJ Coalition are aimed at reducing racially disparate treatment and improving the trajectory for Middletown families. Stronger families means less CPS involvement. Region 3 and the Middletown office is proud to support this effort and together, to tackle our joint challenge with racial injustices.

✚ **What's our planned next steps?** Region 3 will continue efforts to create safe spaces for reflection, learning and conversation among staff, and to create awareness and partnership within the communities we serve. We are currently negotiating a possible staff training with an organization called Merge for Equality, which worked with one of our community partner agencies on activities that the organization found very helpful as they worked on incorporating national CLAS standards into their practice. Of course we will continue to participate in the Middletown RJ Coalition, and we are in the process of planning a community conversation in the Windham area. In New London, we established an agenda to look at discipline rates by race and DCF status, and we will continue to partner with that school system to find better ways to influence success rates for our kids.

✚ **INSPIRATION:**

"For it isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it." - *Eleanor Roosevelt*

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." - *Martin Luther King, Jr.*