

Department of Children and Families
Implementation of Disproportionate Minority Contact Initiatives
December 31, 2015

Part I. Completed strategic initiatives:

Crossover youth data analysis and subsequent implementation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model

The crossover youth project was the result of a collaboration between DCF, and the Judicial Branch's Court Support Services and Court Operations Divisions. A dataset was drawn from a cohort of youth born between 1996 and 2002 in an effort to match records and determine the prevalence of youth who "crossed over" with involvement in both the child welfare (CW) and juvenile justice (JJ) systems. As such, the data include all youth between the ages of 10 to 16 who had records within the DCF LINK database, the Judicial Branch's Child Protection (CP) System, and Case Management Information System (CMIS) databases. A unique ID was created for those who appeared in more than one of the databases to identify potential crossovers. The full DCF data set included 74,196 unique youth who were in the "birth cohort"; of these youth, 42,175 had a substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect. The full juvenile justice data set included 14,026 unique youth who had at least one case opened. The matching data from these three agencies was analyzed by the University of Connecticut's Center for Applied Research in Human Development (CARHD) in the end of 2012. Based on the matching of the three data sets, in 2012, a total of 4,909 youth were identified as appearing in both the DCF and JJ databases. It is important to note, that given the timing of the initial analysis by CARHD, that the likelihood of identifying youth who had involvement would be lower given the age range of the birth cohort in 2012, versus if the analysis were conducted today with the cohort now being older, and therefore, more likely to have come to the attention of the juvenile justice system.

Findings from the initial study in 2012 resulted in several telling findings from this sample. Crossover rates were higher among males than females. It was also higher among African-American and Hispanic youth than Caucasian youth. Crossover rates were higher for youth who experienced out-of-home placement/foster care than youth who never removed from the home. Youth with repeated involvement in DCF were more likely to cross over than youth whose involvement was limited to a single instance. Youth who are older at the time of their first DCF contact were more likely to cross over.

Following the completion of the initial study, the respective agencies moved forward with the implementation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM), in partnership with Georgetown's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR), which began in 2011. The CYPM includes evidenced based practices, policies and quality assurance systems. Implementation of the CYPM began in 2014 as a pilot with the Waterford Superior Court of Juvenile Matters and has involved a partnership between DCF, CSSD, a judge, attorneys, providers, and local police. The CYPM helps jurisdictions reduce the number of youth who cross over. Data analyses of the CYPM implementation have shown the model increases the likelihood that youth will have their cases dismissed or receive diversion; will benefit from a promising or evidenced based practice; will remain at home as a permanency goal; will be identified at an early stage of their crossing over; and will decrease the likelihood that crossover youth will be placed in corrections, in congregate care settings and will have an OPPLA permanency goal (Other Permanent Planned Living Arrangement). The kick off date for the CYPM implementation in Waterford is March, 2016.

Youth Law Enforcement Curriculum Development and Training:

In May, 2015 DCF hosted a one day minority youth-law enforcement forum to implement a curriculum to address minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems, as well as to increase youth success upon returning to their home communities. The curriculum (YLEC-Connecticut) was developed through a partnership between DCF, the Yale Consultation Center, and the Center for Children's Advocacy. The new curriculum is based on the Models for Change Pennsylvania Disproportionate Minority Contact Youth/Law Enforcement Corporation. The forum brought together youth at CJTS with police officers from Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven to speak openly about the relationship between youth of color and law enforcement. Youth and officers also received information about the ways in which adolescent development, trauma, mental health, and stereotypes about race, ethnicity, and gender impact perception, behavior, and police interactions. The forum culminated with a list of concerns and recommendations for improving youth and law enforcement relations developed with input from both youth and law enforcement. The project was funded through a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, with the forum being attended by Governor Dannel Malloy, Commissioner Joette Katz, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Felice Duffy.

The forum was replicated in December, 2015 in Bridgeport. This included 11 DCF involved youth, DCF staff, and Bridgeport police. Post test results from the Bridgeport replication were as follows:

Youth

- Improved perceptions of law enforcement by youth
- Enhanced levels of trust of law enforcement by youth
- Increased knowledge and understanding for youth of how to effectively engage with law enforcement
- Increased interest of youth about DMC and juvenile justice related issues

Law Enforcement

- Increased knowledge of mental health issues among youth and the impact of trauma on youth
- Increased knowledge and understanding for youth of how to effectively engage youth
- Increased interest from law enforcement about DMC and juvenile justice related issues, and in attending future trainings

Additional Agency Efforts Include:

- Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) completed the implementation of a length of stay protocol based on a structured decision making matrix in October, 2014. This protocol was put in place to reduce the ability of implicit bias to influence decision-making. The implementation of the length of stay protocol has reduced the negative disparity in lengths of stay;

- Implementation of a policy of graduated responses and case teaming to ensure that adolescents on parole receive services in the least restrictive setting as determined by a DCF multidisciplinary team;
- Participation in the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) public awareness campaign regarding Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC);
- Disaggregation of service utilization and outcome data by race/ethnicity and reviewing this data on a quarterly basis;
- Addition of **Achieving Racial Justice** to the Agency’s official Performance Expectations and cross-cutting themes;
- Development of Arrest Reduction Practice Standards with providers (completed in December, 2015) and arrangement for cultural humility training for congregate care and private foster care providers (to be delivered in early 2016);
- Development of disparity indices for youth committed delinquent. Indices include youth committed delinquent in a secure setting, placed in congregate care settings, and placed on parole in the community.

Part II. Future Initiatives to Address Disproportionate Minority Contact Over the Next Two Years:

Participation in a Grant activities funded through the Open Society

The Center for Children’s Advocacy (CCA) and DCF partnered in a grant winning application to the Open Society on “Deep End Diversion.” The project goal is to decrease arrests of youth in juvenile justice congregate care facilities in Connecticut by creating an innovative diversion mechanism inside these facilities. The project addresses the issue of rates of arrests of youth in juvenile justice congregate care facilities, and the absence of any mechanism for diverting youth from being arrested and charged. The project was developed in response to data analyses conducted by CCA’s Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Committees that found that high numbers of arrests of youth living in juvenile justice congregate care facilities contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in Connecticut’s juvenile justice system. The work of the DMC Committees has resulted in systems change that has reduced DMC at multiple points, however, the Committees have not been able to address arrests in congregate care facilities. Between October 2013 and December 2014 there were 461 arrests of youth in DCF congregate care facilities; 76% were arrests of youth of color.

The Open Society Deep End Diversion project’s main objectives are 1) Work with a stakeholder group, which includes system-involved youth, to develop a deep end diversion model infused with restorative justice principles for juvenile justice facilities; 2) Implement the deep end diversion model at the state’s high security juvenile justice facility and the two juvenile justice residential treatment facilities; 3) Contract with an evaluator to conduct a formal evaluation of the implementation of the diversion

model; 4) Replicate the model in juvenile justice congregate care facilities throughout the state; and 5) Produce an information brief on the model and disseminate nationally.

The project's systemic reforms serve youth living in congregate care facilities in Connecticut. In addition, the project strategy intentionally makes space for meaningful youth involvement in designing system reform, from the beginning stage of the reform effort.

Addendum: DCF's Statewide Racial Justice Initiatives:

On June 24, 2013, Commissioner Katz announced the development of a Formal Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup (RJWG) to lead and manage the racial justice work moving forward for the agency. The goals of the Workgroup would be to: 1. Diminish disparities on all levels of the leadership and staff; 2. Explore how personal internal biases impacted staff decisions and work towards creating an environment of equity among all staff; and 3. Achieve equity in meeting the needs of families served through area offices and facilities operated by DCF.

On November 6, 2013, the Racial Justice Workgroup convened to expand its work on how to best integrate Commissioner Katz's new cross cutting theme of addressing racial inequities in all areas of DCF practice. The outcome of this meeting was the development of four targeted subgroups which will guide the work moving forward:

- I. **Disproportionality and disparity analysis** in policy and practice as identified by agency data;
- II. **Workforce issues** specific to hiring, promotions, discipline, upward mobility, university partnerships, and staffing reflective of the cultural and linguistic diversity of populations served;
- III. **Contracts and Procurement** to evaluate and determine if DCF funding is being allocated to support services that reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the populations served; and
- IV. **Community** to focus on external conversations on how racial injustice and other forms of discrimination was contributing to and or exacerbating the disproportionality and disparate treatment of children of color in the child welfare system. The focus of this workgroup would be juvenile justice specific partners, mandated reporters, courts, and law enforcement.

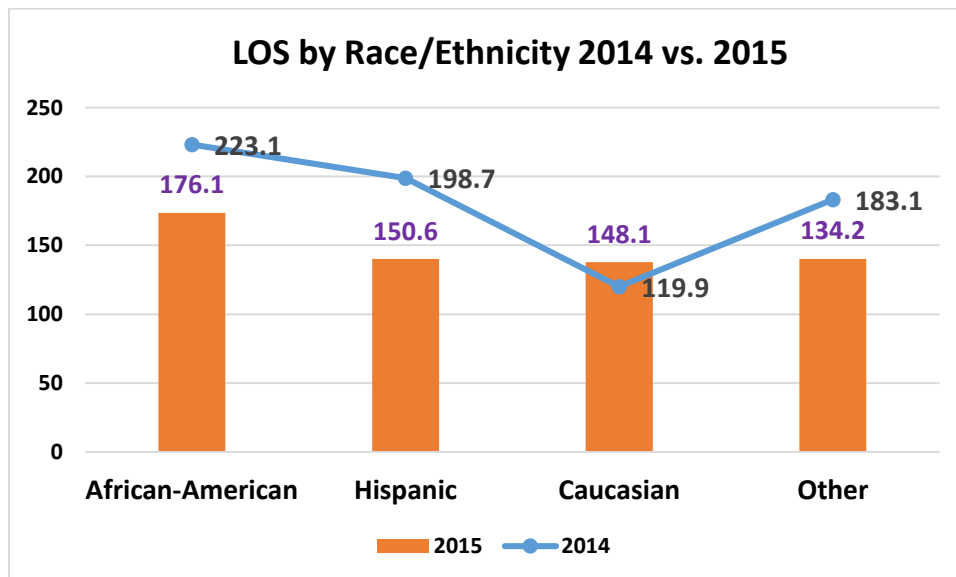
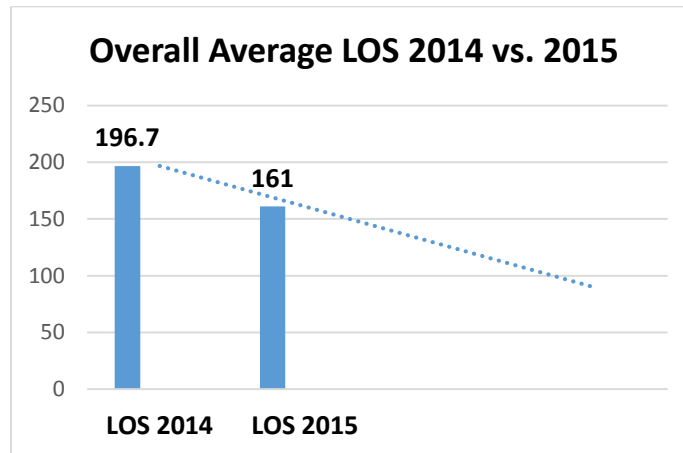
To date, the first phase of the work was focused on education, raising awareness, identifying concrete issues for change, and implementation planning. Each of the workgroups created theme-specific charters and work plans for action. However, a recurring theme in the community workgroup was the challenge of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) of children of color and the juvenile justice system. Also absent from the conversation and RJWG monthly agenda was a focus on how to best address DMC and broader matters of disparate treatment and community strategies to address children in DCF care involved with the juvenile justice system.

In October of 2015 the community workgroup included juvenile justice staff from Central Office in the meeting. The outcome of that meeting was to incorporate a standing agenda matter to address DMC and other broader juvenile justice issues through the community workgroup. Designees from JJ have been appointed, a survey of existing DMC initiatives in the state has commenced, and meetings have been scheduled in January 2016 to commence revising the community workgroup task to best incorporate the agency's role for coordinating a continuous and coordinated strategy for addressing DMC of DCF involved children of color impacted by the juvenile justice system.

CJTS Length of Stay Data:

December, 2015

The Length of Stay Protocol was launched October 1, 2014. The below data compare youth who were discharged Jan. 1 – Sept. 30, 2014 (prior to the protocol) with youth discharged Jan. 1 – Nov. 30, 2015.



Although African-American youth stay at CJTS on average approximately one month longer than all other groups since the institution of the LOS Protocol, the variance has narrowed among groups overall. This remains an area requiring continued improvement.