

Earlier this year, CT DCF was selected by the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute to facilitate a webinar for their Dismantling Racial Inequity series due to our commitment to eliminating disparities in our portion of the child welfare service delivery system in our state. As a result, in February we presented "Slow & Steady Wins the Race in Child Welfare Equity" to an audience of over 800 registered participants nationwide.

We have been contacted by other jurisdictions who recognize CT's progressive efforts. In those conversations, it is clear that the executive leadership and ownership of this messaging and call to action does not exist to the extent it does in CT. The efforts of the representatives of the Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup to shape craft and execute the CT racial justice lens is unmatched. We are beyond proud of the commitment of this workgroup and all of the divisions, offices, facilities and regions they represent.

This work was recently reflected in Commissioner Katz's all staff memorandum: Commissioners Memo: Racial Justice Revisited. Below you will find the first segment in a series of communications to celebrate how far we've come with the earnest commitment to how far we have to go. In the coming weeks, all our collective work will be shared in e-mails sent to all DCF Staff.

Thank you all sincerely on behalf of all of the children, families and communities we serve.





Vannessa Dorantes LMSW  
TriChair of the CT DCF Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup

### Summary of Racial Justice Workgroup Accomplishments since 24 June 2013

The **Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup** was constituted in 2013 and expanded to include external partner participation in 2015. Since that time, in addition to regular monthly meetings, several regional and statewide racial justice forums and community events have been held. There has been a continuing goal of providing stakeholder opportunities to participate interactively with the Department in its journey towards identifying and developing strategies for eliminating racial disparities in Connecticut's child welfare system. An additional statewide forum is being planned for the fall 2018. In February 28, 2018 an invitation was extended to youth participants from members of the Statewide Youth Advisory board. The focus in 2018 remains on expanding youth, parent, and other community stakeholder participation.

To ensure transparency of this work, meeting notes, Workgroup activities, and other resources have been posted on the DCF Office of Multicultural Affairs website in near real time, which is accessible to the public via the internet. A "tool box" link will be added to this website to provide additional activities, articles, and resources to assist external partners in their work towards racial equity.

To deepen and extend the work, the **Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup** established four working subcommittees:

-  **Community Engagement and Partnerships;**
-  **Contracts and Procurement;**
-  **Policy and Practice; and**
-  **Workforce Development.**

While unique in scope and purpose, each of the subcommittees has given specific attention to researching and reviewing existing agency policies and practice to align agency practice through a trauma informed and racial equity lens. This work has included, but is not limited to: revising contracts standard boiler template with a requirement for agencies to demonstrate commitment and practice to comply with cultural and linguistically competent CLAS Standards; recruiting and engaging community providers and other state partners on the Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup; addressing disparate treatment of multilingual staff in case practice; reviewing and modifying agency policies and practice guides to incorporate a racial justice lens; and supporting research in collaboration with The University of St Joseph to reduce bias and discrimination in case practice.

Further, the nexus between the long standing facility, central & area office Diversity Action Teams and regional-based racial justice work groups has been solidified. Overall, while the Diversity Action Teams have concentrated their efforts on honoring culture and diversity in celebration, teaching, and awareness, the office and regional-based racial justice groups have focused on courageous conversations, understanding implicit biases, and extending the work of the regional technical assistance (TA) opportunities.

A key construct implemented in 2016 was the development of four distinct types of technical assistance that would be provided to each of the regions, facilities, and program areas. This TA was designed intentionally to bring the statewide work (both the workgroup and subcommittees) to the practice level.

## THE FOUR TYPES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED



All of this work has been organized in a purposeful way with an eye towards sustainability, including active and engaged top level sponsorship, management, and monitoring, led by Commissioner Katz and former Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams. Susan Smith plays an ongoing executive sponsor role, carefully attending to accountability for the work as well as providing guidance and direction. She is further supported by Elizabeth Duryea and Cindy Butterfield from the executive team. Additionally, the Academy has continuously played a vital role in the work, particularly as the lead for managing and monitoring the various forms of technical assistance provided.

Each of the appointed representatives to the Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup shares his/her collective regional, facility and Central Office activities with the intent of developing consistent messaging, communication and support. The summarized efforts of the groups represented will be shared incrementally as a part of this series.