

**DCF Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup Meeting Final
2/8/19**

Hosted by: The Connection

Notes by: Ryan Williams

Present: William Rivera (CO); Commissioner Dorantes (DCF); Tina Jefferson (Region 6); Marie M. Spivey (SEET, Inc. LLC); Sarah Diaz (Region 5); Joyce Voltaire (Region 5); Susan Smith (CO Q&P); Isabel Turmeque (CO); Kimberly Newman (Region 4); Sommaly Ounthongdy (Region 4); Tim Marshall (CO); Elizabeth Stokes (DCF CT-Kind); Kristina Stevens (CO); Ines Eaton (CO); Melanie Sparks (CO); Dan Moreland (CO); Nedra Muley (Region 6); Tracy Davis (CO); Monica Rams (Region 2); Chrichton Stewart (Region 2); Ellen Whelan (Solnit South); Maria Deleon (CO); David Silva (Region 3); Beresford Wilson (FAVOR); Anne McIntyre-Lanher (CO); Siobhan Trotman (Region 5); Christiana Best (USJ); Rosiris Espejo (Region 3); Paul Bernard (Region 1); Dayna R. Snell (CO); Candy Phillips (DCF/ODE); Elizabeth Flores Baker (YAB); Josh Fisher (Region 2/YAB); Latasha Johnson (Region 4); Jodi Hill-Lilly (CO Academy); Deb Borzellino (The Connection, Inc.); Elisabeth Cannata (Wheeler Clinic); David Williams (DCF/ACR); Lisa Sedlock (Region 3); Ryan E. Williams (CO/SIU); Martha Stone (Center for Children’s Advocacy); Maghan Korn (CTJB-CSSD); Lia Cestaro (CTJB-CSSD); Vincent Russo (CO); Angelina Opoku (DCF MPA Intern); Aziz Sandhu (DCF MPA Intern); Xavier Arriaza (DCF Intern)

I. Introductions and welcome of new members/guest

II. Changing of the Guard

Bill R. introduced Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes. Commissioner Dorantes read her resignation letter as Tri-Chair of the Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup, which included the appointment of Tina Jefferson, Regional Administrator for Region 6, as her successor. Bill will send an electronic copy of the Commissioner’s letter out to all members. Tina expressed that she was honored by the nomination of the Commissioner Dorantes to serve as one Tri-Chair, as well as her excitement about continuing the work.

Host Deb Borzellino provided information regarding the meeting site and use of facilities.

III. “Workplace Violence Legislation”

Commissioner Dorantes facilitated a conversation to request feedback on proposed legislation that would increase the penalties for assaults on DCF workers in the line of duty. The legislature requested details regarding DCF’s existing workplace violence response. The Governor’s office expressed concern about the legislation as it could have an adverse impact on people of color, as DCF interacts with communities of color disproportionately as compared to the white population. The legislative change may also impact DCF’s existing workplace violence policy. Vincent Russo shared that the Governor’s office representative questioned if this legislation would serve as a deterrent to prevent threats and violence against our workers. The Governor’s office wants DCF workers to be safe, but is also mindful of racial dynamics in this legislation. The Governor’s office is open to considering the input of the SWRJWG. Areas of workplace violence addressed in the legislation - Disgruntled Persons, Active DCF clients, Public at large, Staff to staff, Non-work related persons to staff (for additional details, see State of CT DCF Workplace Violence Responsiveness handout). The Commissioner shared that two DCF offices had bullet holes in their windows.

Currently, some of the existing worker's compensation claims are assaults in DCF facilities by children on staff. Regarding facilities, it is frowned upon to press charges against youth, due to their mental health needs and age.

Assaults are rare at the facilities, however data is needed. Bill R. expressed concerns regarding the implication of this legislation and the possibility of arresting youth assaulting staff at any of the Solnit facilities. He referenced a Yale study on physical restraints that was completed years ago at Solnit South. One of the findings was that black boys were more likely to be restrained by white staff based on the perception of threat by the black boys. In other words, staff response can exacerbate the anger response of youth, which can increase the chance of arrests and charges being levied against those with potentially clean records. Bill R. emphasized the need for our existing workplace violence and threat assessment process to be refined to deal with these matters more expeditiously.

Latosha J. stated that any existing data might be skewed due to underreporting by staff who have been verbally threatened. There tends to be more tolerance by DCF staff to absorb instances of workplace violence threats due to the conditions that caused DCF's involvement with families, i.e. DCF removing kids, etc. Beresford W. stated we often put ourselves in dangerous situations in the effort to build positive relationships. After an assault, workers generally return to families hoping to foster the positive relationship, which could put the individual in even more danger. Beresford W. stated that there should be policy and protocols that protect the worker and the family members. Commissioner Dorantes stressed that staff have to give themselves permission to be safe. Elizabeth F. shared that often children are abused in facilities, which causes the degradation of the staff to youth relationship and a resultant feeling of worthlessness by the youth.

Siobhan T. asked if staff are trained on how to perceive threats. Commissioner Dorantes stated we have to get data on the race of victim and perpetrator. It was mentioned that there was no record of threat assessment in the case record, which impacted the overall planning for the child. Threat assessments are good, but the case aspect in workplace violence instances involving our families must be included. Capturing of the threat assessment is key. Placing a piece of red paper in the case record has been the way to alert staff there's been a threat made, but many questioned if this was standard practice throughout the agency. Steve S. suggested CT Kind implement an electronic notification regarding any threats against staff by clients.

Tracy D. shared that the Academy will start offering additional training on worker safety, including simulations by FAVOR staff acting out situations. The Academy is working closely with Engineering to look at workplace violence reports and utilize real examples to help educate trainees and permanent staff. Bill R. shared that he spoke to Michael Wood of DCF HR, to ask if there was a race question on the existing DCF threat assessment form. Michael shared that that information was not captured. The number of reported threats was relatively low. Bill R. inquired if the HR Unit managing threat assessments is capturing this information.

Martha S. shared that this is the second time this has come up. The Center for Children's Advocacy opposed the bill to increase penalties for those who assault DCF workers and the possibility it would subject kids with behavioral issues due to trauma to unwarranted punishment as a result of verbal threats. Megan K. of CSSD asked what the purpose of the bill was...Was it being proposed as a deterrent?

If passed, the bill will increase the penalties from 2nd to 1st degree threatening and identifying DCF staff persons in the line of duty as a protected class and assaults toward DCF staff would increase from a class D to class C felony. It was questioned as to whether these threats are being prosecuted.

Kristina S. shared that there were things she didn't consider and encouraged the group to frame the issue differently by considering what other jurisdictions were doing to address this matter. She questioned what the threshold should be and that it should be clearly defined. Joyce V. questioned whether there are opportunities to collaborate with other state agencies regarding this issue. Many CSSD workers are considered peace officers and in the event they're assaulted, there are extra penalties associated to their position.

Dr. Spivey offered that it might be useful to speak to the CT Hospital Association because there has been a rise in violence toward hospital staff. Dan from DCF HR asked to consider giving the judge discretion. Commissioner Dorantes offered that in previous situations, Judges have been known to be biased toward people of color when exercising their discretion. Beresford W. stated it shouldn't matter who does the crime but there should be equity in the penalty for the crime. Tim M. shared that the desire to decrease violence toward our staff should be highlighted by the fact we do dangerous work and increase training for staff instead of focusing on the penalties, as people don't think about penalties in the heat of the moment.

Commissioner Dorantes also shared that there was an incident between workers that training wouldn't have mitigated as it was unexpected and random. Several questioned whether a stiffer penalty could have made a difference. Susan S. shared that she will follow up with the State of VT to access on how they responded to their incident with a client to staff homicide. VT is more racially homogenous, which might affect the data. Jodi H-L offered that while addressing a critical incidents with staff, the work culture that has been fostered is that workers have to "suck it up and do what we have to do." She stressed that the culture has to shift so that people will be more comfortable reporting. There are things within DCF that need to occur in order for the culture to change. Commissioner Dorantes encouraged the group to share this information with their groups. Bill R. ask the Commissioner how she wanted the information to get back to her. She requested that members send any feedback ASAP to Legislative Liaison vincent.russo@ct.gov. Commissioner Dorantes and Jodi H.L. excused themselves from the meeting to attend another meeting.

IV. CLAS Community Forums Update

Bill R. introduced Dr. Marie Spivey, one of the Consultants providing training on the CLAS standards to community providers. She was asked to present on overview of the work that they were facilitating in the regional CLAS forums. Bill R. reminded the group that the guidelines proposed in the CLAS standards are currently incorporated into existing agency policies and practices. Dr. Spivey stated DCF regions would be contacted regarding the CLAS learning forums sessions. Bill R. stated he would disseminate Dr. Spivey's presentation to the group.

Bill R. stressed the need for exploring strategies for better integrating the racial justice framework into CLAS standards. Tim M. shared that this is the last FFY funding allocation for the CLAS standards grant. There have been three cohorts to establish the learning communities and to support the provider community about how to view their data in areas to eliminate health inequities. It is hoped that additional funding will become available to support the learning collaboratives after September

30, 2019. Other agencies have discovered this work is difficult, as providers have to extract and analyze their data, which can be challenging.

V. Office of Diversity and Equity Updates on DATs/other projects

Bill R. introduced Ms. Candy Phillips, Director of the Office of Diversity and Equity who provided the Statewide Diversity Action Team (DAT) update. The DAT statewide Co-chairs met on 12/5/18 and 1/9/19 to discuss effective strategies for meeting our goals in 2019. The goals are: 1. Creating a workplace culture that is respectful of each other and the clients we serve; and 2. Ensuring Diversity and Inclusion at all levels of the organization. The DAT Co-Chairs agreed to move forward with analyzing any existing data collected by ODE i.e. Exit Interviews, Upward Mobility Program Participants, Complaints etc. in order to prioritize initiatives/activities for 2019. A follow-up meeting with the Statewide DAT Co-chairs is scheduled for 2/20/19. In preparation for the upcoming meeting, Ms. Phillips shared existing data. She also informed the group that she met with Susan S. and the Office for Research and Evaluation, who reviewed the data and assisted with developing a comprehensive strategy to ensure data is collected and disaggregated appropriately moving forward. In the interim, the DATs will continue to plan and host cultural events in the various offices.

Latosha J. asked if there was a plan to provide DAT Committee Members with an update regarding the data collection etc. In response, Candy P. stated the Co-chairs will be responsible for sharing information and soliciting feedback from DAT committee members following the 2/20 statewide co-chairs meeting. Steve S. asked how exit interview data would be compiled and integrated into the process. Candy P. stated that currently it's a challenge to analyze the Exit Interview and other data collected by ODE because the low percentage of employee participation. With the assistance of Susan S. and ORE, the DAT will be able to collect and analyze data to develop initiatives. Latosha J. suggested conducting "Stay Interviews" as well as exit interviews. By the time there's an exit interview, it's too late. Stay interviews are proactive and will enable DCF to address issues before they become problematic.

VI. Scope and Function of Community Engagement and Contracts and Procurement Committees

Bill informed the group that there currently two workgroup committee chair vacancies: Contracts and Procurement Subcommittee and Community Engagement Subcommittee. Bill R. shared feedback about challenges that are emerging with the current boilerplate language created for RFPs. Many responding to RFPs have not been responding adequately to the question. Bill asked Melanie Sparks if she could elaborate on this. Melanie shared that she provides feedback on RFPs. They have discovered RFP applicants were missing the mark regarding the racial justice question. This led to the realization that DCF must define expectations for the racial justice and cultural competency cultural elements of the RFP process.

Bill also informed us that the Community Engagement Subcommittee would now focus on outreach to providers. Bill asked for volunteers to lead these workgroups. Tina J. encouraged the group to send her and Bill R. an email expressing interest to serve as new chairs. Deb B. stated she and Elizabeth C. would be glad to provide input regarding the RFP process. Melanie S. shared that the

subcommittee will facilitate four trainings on our RFP process March 2019. The announcement for the RFP trainings will go out the week of 2/11/19.

VII. Committee Updates

Bill R. shared that a utilization survey was sent to systems and other COPs to determine how staff were using interpreters and translation services in their work with clients. He shared that the department is working on a LINK build to capture how and for what reasons language services are being utilized. Dr. Spivey shared about an instance in which a hospital patient wasn't getting served because hospital staff didn't know he was deaf. The patient was trying to articulate his needs and it was eventually discovered the patient was deaf because he was turning his head to show his ear.

Tracy D., Nedra M. and Monica R. presented an overview of a proposal to provide supervisors and program supervisors with a new training titled "Racial Justice: A daily conversation on racial justice, moving the work forward." Tracy shared that they wanted to move forward regarding the Case Consultation Model (CCM), but because the CCM hasn't been fully approved, it was decided that social work supervisors and program supervisors would be provided with a structured opportunity to facilitate conversations regarding racial justice in all areas of a case practice with their staff. DCF is looking at revising the supervision policy and practice guide. This presents an opportunity to embed this approach in policy. (For details, see power point presentation).

Nedra M. emphasized that racial justice be discussed at every opportunity during the life of a case so as to better meet the needs of the family. Kim Newman asked how Legal fits into this model. In other words, at which point does a legal consultation become an opportunity for education about issues of race and bias? Tracy D. suggested that the Legal division begin to explore areas where racial justice matters are addressed in their case consultations. It was suggested that anyone participating in this training could potentially present their learning to their respective workgroups.

Rosiris E. suggested including ACR and ARG in these discussions. Tracy D. agreed. Regions 5 and 6 are ready to proceed with facilitating racial justice conversations in their case supervisions. Tracy D. suggested pairing regions with regions 5 and 6 to bring the other regions along in the process. Tracy D. suggested statewide phone calls regarding staff's experiences with facilitating racial justice conversations to provide support. Chrichton S. asked if OD and RAs would be a part of this plan, as there is feedback for the need of upper management to show they value and are committed to the racial justice work.

Bill R. reminded the group about the importance of leadership. We're making progress but there is a gap between leadership and those doing the work. The SRJW members present unanimously affirmed that the work of facilitating racial justice conversations should go forward. Any feedback on the proposed training curriculum can be forwarded to Tracy D. or Monica R. by NLT 2/28/19. Susan S. questioned if the SAM had to weigh in on the proposal before it moves forward. Siobhan T. stated that it would be useful for the OD COP to review the plan. Tina J. will pursue how to best approach this request with members of the SAM. Monica R. stated once the feedback is received, the information could be presented to the OD COP in conjunction with moving the work forward. Bill R. asked when we would look to presenting this to providers. Tracy D. stated that providers serving DCF regions would be invited when the DCF region is invited. Elizabeth C. pointed out that we have to consider DCF's and providers' level of comfort with discussing this issue based on how far along

they are in their respective racial justice work. Tracy D. stated Bill R. would disseminate the presentation to the group electronically.

VIII. Racial Justice Legislative Report

Bill R. stated the racial justice legislative report is due on February 15th. Susan S. shared that the final report for Public act 18-111 is moving forward and is almost complete. The data presented illustrates that disparity and disproportionality exists throughout all of the CPS pathways. ORE looked at family strengths and needs data, coping skills, parenting and substance abuse needs. The parenting data examined showed no significant differences by race. However the coping skills and substance abuse measures revealed that white families had a higher need for assistance in these areas. They found statistical indifference in meeting families' treatment needs. This led ORE to question how to impact specific pathways and achieve statistical significance after targeted interventions identified by the SWRJWG will be implemented. One of our MPA interns is working on compiling the data for our meeting in April.

IX. Tool Box: Red Table Talk: "Revisiting Jane Elliot"

Bill R. shared about a new show called "Red Table Talk Dialogues". He shared an excerpt from a recent talk titled "The Racial Divide between Black and White Women." The clip included a brief dialogue about race from Dr. Jane Elliot, creator of the "infamous" "Brown eyes, Blue eyes experiment."

After the viewing, Bill R. encouraged the group view the full episode for context. Siobhan T. encouraged the group to use the tools, such as this video, in their offices to encourage the conversations about race and privilege. One of the members suggested the need for specific training on how to use video clips and other methods to encourage conversations about difficult conversations on racial matters. Dr. De Jesus talked about how genetic history bears out the complexity of our make-up and how the pain of racism follows us. Barrisford W. expressed his gratitude for being a part of this group's discussion. He also challenged how conversations like these could change systemic racism, as well as implicit and explicit bias. Beresford W. also stated we have to consider women and misogyny in the equation.

Bill R. expressed that the video does not address the historical legacy of institutional racism imposed on Blacks and other oppressed groups in the United States. He cautioned against showing a video like this when the individuals facilitating are unsure of their own racial identity and the conflicts others experience. He also reminded us that there is an active effort to dilute this work by suggesting a color-blind approach to racial diversity. Tina J. appreciated Beresford's comments, but emphasized that we have to start somewhere, as there was a time when racial justice wasn't even discussed. Tina J. stated that we can't do "needs assessments" if we can't see who people are. We're not where we need to be, but we are on our way. Bill R. thanked Kim Newman for providing this Red Table Talk Dialogue to the group. Nedra M. stated Jane Elliot has updated the "Brown Eye Blue Eye Experiment" and encouraged the group to look into Jane Elliot's current work.

Meghan Korn expressed gratitude for being a part of the SWRJWG for the past three years. She has been promoted to a supervisor at CCSD's training academy and will no longer be able to attend

SRJW meetings. Meghan K. introduced Ms. Lia Cestaro, who will represent CCSD as the liaison from the multi-cultural affairs unit moving forward.

Meeting adjourned at 3:51pm.

X. The Next meeting is scheduled for April 12, 2019 at the Connection