

Established by HB 3821 Public Act 102-0506 for purposes of understanding the underlying factors of child welfare system involvement for families, examining the racial disparities of children and families involved in the child welfare system at every key procedural phase of system involvement, and identifying the causes of such disparities as well as to explore resources, policies, and practices that could prevent system entry and reduce racial disproportionality at each key procedural phase of system involvement

The Illinois Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Report

May, 2024



May 16, 2024

Governor JB Pritzker
Office of the Governor
401 S. Spring Street
Springfield, IL 62704

Offices of the Members of the 103rd General Assembly
Clerk of the House/Secretary of the Senate
Capital Building, Rooms 300 & 401
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker and the Honorable Members of the 103rd General Assembly,

Following is the final recommendation report of the Racial Disproportionality in Children Welfare Task Force, herein referred to as “Task Force” established by [HB 3821](#) | [Public Act 102-0506](#). The purposes of this Act are to 1) understand the underlying factors of child welfare system involvement for families; 2) examine the racial disparities of children and families involved in the child welfare system at every key procedural phase of system involvement and the cause of such disparities; and 3) to explore resources, policies, and practices that could prevent system entry for families and reduce racial disproportionality at each key procedural phase.

We, as Co-chairs, having provided leadership and direction for the Task Force, recognize that racial disproportionality in child welfare exists due to influences both within and external to the child welfare system. The longstanding disproportionality that is causing harm to Black families, who are constantly surveilled, and Black children, who are subjected to forced separation from their parents and familial ties, can no longer be accepted by the State of Illinois. This disproportionality can only be rectified by a comprehensive set of interventions.

Although the enclosed report points to internal and external causes of disproportional involvement that originate from common underlying factors, namely structural and institutional racism within and across other systems, our recommendations primarily focus on addressing the issues within the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Given the task of exploring recommendations that might address the disproportionality of Black children and families at each of the key procedural

phases of system involvement, some recommendations call for changes within other governmental departments, by other agency partners, and in the Court’s Children and Family division.

As a Task Force, we initially intended to vote on each recommendation. While moving through the voting process several members expressed uneasiness. Due to the breadth of representation on the Task Force, which comprises decision-makers and advocates across each of the key procedural phases of child welfare involvement, it was decided that submitting a broader combined set of recommendations for probing and implementation was the best way to move forward. We were able to vote on the recommendations addressing the allocation of resources and received unanimous support from the members.

We also scheduled two in-person working group meetings, in Chicago and Springfield and outside of the regular monthly meeting, to conduct a collective review of the remaining recommendations. This presented an opportunity for members to gain a better understanding and allowed for further discussions to take place on the language and content of the recommendations. While we did not reach full agreement on all the remaining recommendations, we did establish some degree of consensus among members.

We, as Co-chairs, want to highlight that there was an imbalance in representation on the Task Force of individuals with lived experiences – both parents and youth, as well as small community and faith-based organizations that provide support. While the efforts to include the voices and input of those with lived experiences were unsuccessful, late in the process, two parents joined the Task Force and provided valuable insight which is integrated into the recommendations. Additionally, once it was required for Task Force meetings to be held in person, a voting quorum was not achieved which led to imbalanced discussions. The lack of quorum was partly due to appointees with either irregular or nonattendance. As a result, the meeting minutes were not able to be approved for several months up until April 2024. They are included as an appendix to this report.

We, as Co-chairs, would welcome a discussion with you, and/or any other child welfare policy experts that are appropriate regarding our Task Force findings.



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THE ILLINOIS RACIAL DISPROPORTIONALITY IN CHILD WELFARE TASK FORCE REPORT

May 2024

Background

The Task Force officially convened in September 2022 and held a total of 20 monthly meetings and two workgroup meetings up until May 2024 to complete its charge of examining the racial disparities of children and families involved in the child welfare system. Early on the Co-chairs established the following 4 subcommittees based on decision points in the child welfare system and designated members based upon their expertise and interests. The subcommittees identified were as follows:

1. Investigated Screened-in Maltreatment Reports;
2. Protective Custodies to include the court screening process with consideration for who comes into care by way of protective custody;
3. Indicated Reports for Post Investigation Service Provision to include Intact Family Services and Substitute Care; and
4. Timely Exits from Substitute Care to include consideration for the amount of time spent in care, where children go when exiting care, the differences in outcomes between the races as well as things that can be done differently.

During each meeting, members broke into smaller subcommittee sessions and brought back key points to the full group for discussion. Each subcommittee was tasked with discussing policy, practice and budget allocations as they relate to reducing racial disproportionality and disparity. They were also tasked with identifying points of alignment across systems for collaboration in reducing racial inequities as well as system alternatives within communities to support families.

Due to the Governor's COVID-19 Disaster Proclamation, the Task Force meetings took place via Webex up until May 2023 when open body meetings were required to return to in-person. Given the challenges of achieving a quorum, once meetings returned to in-person, the Co-Chairs assembled two working groups in September 2023, one in Springfield and one in Chicago, to allow members the opportunity to discuss each recommendation in greater detail. In December of that year, the Task Force was granted an extension to further explore and discuss recommendations to address intakes via the DCFS Hotline, the impact of mandated reporting and the mandated reporter training.

The Task Force recognizes the systemic issues within the child welfare system that disproportionately affect Black parents, particularly mothers, and subject Black communities to invasive oversight by the child welfare system. Task Force members posited that white families are not surveilled to the same degree and their cases are handled differently when they become system-involved, which could also be contributing to the disproportionality of Black families involved in the system. Members further posited that there are policies, procedures, and conventions that sustain the problematic idea that Black children can only safely remain in their homes under the supervision of systems that persistently surveil them.

The Task Force sought to clearly understand where we are as a state and within the DCFS regions on these issues. There was recognition that concrete goals (percentage changes over time) need to be set for

reducing disparities and disproportionality, as well as identifying creative and courageous means to achieve these goals.

The Task Force spent the first few months combing through and examining Illinois data and other requested information organized by the key procedural phases of system involvement to discuss the cause of disparities. Recommendations were then proposed and presented to the full group for further discussion and refinement. DCFS personnel provided the following series of informational system overview presentations to ensure all Task Force Members were knowledgeable about the process:

- Tamela Atwood - State Central Register and the State-wide Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline
- Tierney Stutz – Overview of the Investigative Process
- Wendy Ingersoll – Overview of Permanency
- Lynette Berry-Weston – Synopsis of the Child Welfare Services (CWS)/Referrals & Intact Family Services
- Dagen Brown – Data Information Overview in response to data requests and other questions from the Task Force members
- Kirsten Neswick and the DCFS Budget & Finance Team – DCFS Budget and Funding Allocations for a better understanding of how resources are being allocated.

Members also heard from the following presenters with knowledge and expertise about related issues:

- Lyman Legters, Casey Family Programs and Norma Machay, Immersion Site Director, DCFS – Strengthening Illinois through Child and Family Well-Being: Family First Summit Overview
- Dr Tamara Fuller, Director of the Children and Family Research Center at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign – Highlights from FY22 Monitoring Report of the B.H. Consent Decree published in July 2022
- Lyman Legters, Casey Family Programs – Best Practices in Child Welfare Systems
- Theresa Costello, CEO, Action 4 Child Protection – Safe Practice Model Overview
- Task Force Member Dr Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall – Array of Support Services for Intact Family Services
- Alyssa Del Angel, Be Strong Families, State-wide Youth Advisory Board – Youth in Care Priorities
- Meghan Farren and Colton Johnson Taylor, JD Candidates from Loyola University, Chicago School of Law – Front End of the Child Welfare System: A Review of Available Data by Race

- Stephanie Pointer, IL Department of Human Services – Array of Family Supports
- Task Force Member David Esposito, Executive Director, Supportive Housing Providers Association – Overview and Landscape of Supportive Housing Availability
- Task Force Member Robert Rodemeyer, Supervisor, Child Protection Division, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office – Judicial Intervention, An Overview of Child Protection Proceedings in Cook County, Illinois
- Daniela Silaides, Assistant State’s Attorney, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office – Cook County Screening Process facilitated by Task Force Member Robert Rodemeyer.

The fiscal year 2022 BH Monitoring Report¹ from Dr. Tamara Fuller’s team at Illinois University’s Family Research Center found that the absolute values of racial disproportionality of investigative reports remained consistent over the 7 years from 2015 to 2021 and showed that Black children screened in for investigations were 2 times more than the percentage of Black children in the Illinois population. For protective custodies, though the number has decreased, Black children remain overrepresented over the 7 year period. In indicated reports, Black children are overrepresented by about two times their representation in the Illinois population. For children removed from their homes and placed into substitute care, Black children remain in care longer than three years and at three times their percentage in the general population. Hispanic children are consistently under-represented in DCFS. White children were proportionately represented between 2014 and 2020.

Given the lack of improvement in the disproportionality of Black children and families in the child welfare system, the Task Force recognized the need to consider the historical inequities that impact the Black family dynamic. These inequities must be taken into consideration in supporting Black families to reduce the disproportionalities at every decision-making point. The Task Force also acknowledged that Cook County required specific approaches that would differ from approaches needed in the rest of the state.

The Task Force sought to identify gaps in the effectiveness of prevention and reunification strategies for Black families. In particular, the Task Force found that many approaches to prevention are geared towards improving the ability of parents, children, and families to manage challenges associated with the circumstances that place them at risk, rather than eliminating the root causes of these challenges, such as poverty and the adversities that arise from it.

¹ Children and Family Research Center. (2022). Racial and ethnic disproportionality in the Illinois child welfare system: FY2022 report. Urbana, IL: Children and Family Research Center. Available online: https://cfrc.illinois.edu/pubs/rp_20221201_RacialAndEthnicDisproportionalityInTheIllinoisChildWelfareSystemFY2022Report.pdf

Task Force Members

Co-chair.....LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Shriver Center on Poverty Law

Co-chair.....Beverly Jones, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL

Members

Mareema Ali, DCFS Office of the Attorney General (Sept 2022 - Feb 2024)

Janet Barnes, Assistant Deputy Public Guardian, Office of Cook County Public Guardian

Paris Bateman, St. Clair State's Attorney's Office (*inactive* from Sept 2022 - Dec 2023)

Sara Block, Managing Director of Advocacy and Partnerships, Ascend Justice

Dagene Brown, Director, DCFS Office of Racial Equity Practice (*Honorary Designee: Keith Smith*)

Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL

Ronald Davis, Lived Expert Parent

Heather Dorsey, Director, Courts, Children and Families Div., Administrative Office of the IL Courts

State Representative Kimberly Du Buclet (appointed Dec 2023)

Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Governor's Office

David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL

Clarissa Fourman, Lived Expert Youth (Sept 2022 – Aug 2023)

Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College Law

State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar

State Representative Sonya Harper

Lettie Hicks, Lived Expert Youth (Sept 2022 – Aug 2023)

State Senator Mattie Hunter (*Honorary Designees: Angela McLemore & Carla Rogers*)

Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC

Tina Lewis, Assistant Public Defender, Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender

State Representative Camille Lilly

Kim McCullough-Starks, Director at Healthcare and Family Services (Sept 2022 - Dec 2023)

State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas (Sept 2022 - May 2023)

Onie Riley, Lived Expert Youth (Sept 2022 - Sept 2023)

Robert Rodemeyer, Supervisor, Child Protection Division, Cook County State's Attorney's Office

Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall

State Senator Sally Turner, (*Honorary Designee: Barb Frobish*)

Marie Versher, Department of Human Services (appointed June 2023)

Cassandra Williams, Lived Expert Parent (appointed November 2023)

Arthur Anderson, Lived Expert Parent (active participation since February 2024)

Administrative Support

Darnita Jackson, Assistant to the Deputy Director, DCFS Office of Legislative Affairs

Vanessa White, PhD, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law

Illinois Racial Disproportionality Task Force Recommendations

Resource Allocations

Current funding is heavily allocated towards regulating those families of children who are at risk of imminent danger and system entry. This allocation means those families who are not at such a risk will not receive the support they need until they are in crisis. This can adversely affect Black families particularly those who are living in poverty and dealing with other compounding issues such as housing instability, employment insecurity, and lack of access to healthcare and other resources. Funding should be allocated and made accessible for supportive services to address families' needs rather than after a family's situation has escalated into a crisis.

Additionally, due to racial biases in the child welfare system, Black families may be more quickly deemed at risk of imminent danger rather than simply in need of supportive services that could prevent a crisis. Twelve months of services through Juvenile Court may not be enough to avert system entry and/or achieve reunification. The prevention services clock starts ticking for the treatment period as soon as their child is identified as a potential candidate for foster care, but actual treatment may be delayed due to long waiting periods and the unavailability of approved treatment programs. This is but one example; however, without access to coordinated support services Black families will continue to face the greatest disproportionalities and its ripple effects due to system inertia and/or failures. Prioritizing prevention and racial equity calls for greater investment in communities to build stable and accessible varieties of prevention and support services that can be accessed before a crisis.

The Task Force proposes the following recommendations regarding the allocation of resources, which were agreed upon by a majority of members:

Parent/Family Supports

- Provide secure, robust, long-term financial housing subsidies (beyond the currently offered Norman funds and/or FUP vouchers) for families *at risk of separation* when housing stability is an identified factor causing the family to be more vulnerable to separation. This shall also apply to court-involved families and cases where visitation is unable to be expanded or is on hold when it is apparent that housing stability will help with and hasten reunification.
- Strengthen parents' capacity to care for youth at home utilizing funds traditionally earmarked to pay for foster care to provide monthly financial assistance and source culturally sensitive/caring supports within local communities for better delivery of services to children and families.
- Restructure the DCFS budget so that the main fiscal priority is to maintain and reunite families, even if those best efforts and services are not reimbursable by federal funds.

Community Capacity-Building

- Increase fiscal support provided to smaller, trusted community-based agencies currently located in communities where racial disproportionalities are prominent.
- Allocate resources to establish a Primary Prevention Model, such as the establishment of a resource hub, to create more readily available support for families within communities.

Legal Representation

- Increase state funding for access to high-quality legal assistance to proactively address legal issues contributing to separation including housing and employment discrimination, lack of access to public benefits, lack of access to stable, safe, and affordable housing, lack of educational support, intimate partner violence, and other family law issues. Free or low-cost legal assistance should be available to parents in need.

Policy/Practice/Legislative Change

- Allocate resources to develop an online procedure that outlines the degree of discretion that child welfare workers have at every decision point. This procedure should be used as a guide for decision-making during the intake and investigation processes and should note that any decision-making should include an evaluation of the risks and harms of family separation as well as any risks and harms of family preservation.

Investigated/Screened-in Maltreatment Reports

System involvement most often begins with a call to the Child Abuse Hotline by a mandated reporter, which leads to an investigation by DCFS. It is estimated that 53% of Black children nationwide will experience an investigation of abuse or neglect by age 18². These investigations may lead to court involvement, and throughout these processes, children may be removed from their families for varying lengths of time. Many studies have shown that these removals, even for short periods, are traumatic for both children and parents. Once involved with the foster system, youth are then at a higher risk of attaining lower levels of education, subsequent involvement with the juvenile and adult criminal legal systems, homelessness and unemployment³. Black families and communities are thus disproportionately impacted and harmed by multiple systems due to their higher risk of separation.

Mandated Reporters are required by law to call the hotline when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child, whom they know in their professional or official capacities, is undergoing harm or is at risk of being harmed by abuse or neglect. There are seven categories of mandated reporters as defined in the Illinois Abused and Neglected Children's Reporting Act of 1975 (ANCRA). These categories span the ecosystem of personnel interacting with children and include school personnel, medical personnel, social service and mental health personnel, law enforcement personnel, coroner/medical examiner personnel,

² Kim H, Wildeman C, Jonson-Reid M, Drake B. Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment Among US Children. *Am J Public Health*. 2017 Feb;107(2):274-280. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2016.303545. Epub 2016 Dec 20. PMID: 27997240; PMCID: PMC5227926.

childcare personnel, and clergy. Mandated reporters have a great deal of discretion in determining whether they have “reasonable cause” and they may believe their only option is to call the Hotline, even though they are reluctant to call due to the family experiencing issues outside of their control such as poverty and its related injustices. Mandated Reporters need training on how to explore other options for issues related to concerns and suspicions of neglect.

Given the short window for an investigation from when a call comes into the hotline to the critical decision to remove a child from their home, DCFS must have well-trained, effective hotline workers to determine if the legal criterion for initiating an investigation is met. While it is the case that DCFS only has 48 hours to hold a child and that parents can demand their child be returned after those 48 hours, it is important to note that DCFS can retake or repeat protective custody. At this stage, parents have no legal recourse.

Considering the broad discretion of the Mandated Reporters and the short window for investigations, parents need assistance in navigating this process. Additionally, effective prevention requires intervening before a crisis. By focusing on the risk of imminent danger, some policies, procedures, and practices miss the chance to provide support to Black families sooner. Early intervention and support—particularly community-based resources and support could reduce the number of cases that escalate to the point of requiring system involvement.

The Task Force also noted that there were different practices in Cook County than in other counties, therefore, Cook County may need different solutions to address disproportionalities. For example, Cook County requires DCFS investigators to screen cases with the State’s Attorney’s Office for court involvement. It was reported to the Task Force that approximately 40 to 45% of cases are deflected from being screened-in or deferred for court action in Cook County and instead are assigned as “ongoing” during which willing families are connected with Intact Family Services.

Intact Family Services is designed around the prevention of removal and is geared toward families where there exists credible evidence of abuse and/or neglect during an investigation. The premise is to ensure the safety of children, while addressing the immediate needs of families, within an established timeline to determine the family’s stability. A finding of abuse and/or neglect after an investigation does not always warrant the removal of children. There can be a finding of abuse and/or neglect but also a determination that the family is not at such great risk that removal of the child is necessary. Intact Family Services is the primary intervention for this group of families. Families can participate in Intact Family Services voluntarily or be mandated to via a court order. Given the longer average of stay for Black children in the system, the Task Force considers the investigation and screened-in phase as a crucial decision point for reform directed at the disproportionality of Black families who become system-involved.

The following recommendations are proposed to assist in addressing the disproportionality of Black families in the investigative and screened-in phases:

Family Rights and Supports

- Establish a Parent Bill of Rights or a Miranda-style notice for parents advising them of their rights. This document would also include information about supports, services, and resources to access for additional questions. The DCFS worker must provide the parent with the document, verbally inform them of their rights, and ask them to sign the document acknowledging receipt. Once both the worker and the parent sign the document, a copy is to be placed in the case file. Given that parents are highly emotional at the first point of contact, this procedure should be repeated throughout the entire process at each decision-making point.
- Provide parents with state-funded, free to low-cost, high-quality legal assistance to proactively address reasons families may be separated. These reasons include housing and employment discrimination, lack of access to public benefits, lack of access to stable, safe and affordable housing, lack of educational support, intimate partner violence and other family issues that are the consequences of race and poverty at the first point of DCFS investigation.

Policy/Practice/Legislative Change

- Create a Health and Human Service style hotline (a “Warmline”) for assistance with provisions of community services outside of DCFS and before calling the Hotline that is well-publicized to Mandated Reporters so there is an awareness that there are other options for assisting families based on concerns or suspicions related to poverty and neglect.
- Revise the Mandated Reporter Training to increase the awareness and understanding of the disparate treatment of Black families involved in and across the system. (Note: Mandated Reporters often believe that their only option is to call the Hotline even when they are reluctant to make the call. They are generally unaware that there are other options, like connecting them to poverty-related DCFS/Department of Human Services (DHS) preventative services that may be available to the family). These revisions include:
 - (1) Provide clear data showing that racial disproportionalities occur from the onset, including the overrepresentation of Black children and families as subjects of hotline calls and investigations.
 - (2) Revise the mandated reporter training to acknowledge and reflect the fact that systemic racism is compounded at every stage of system involvement for Black children and families as per the data reported in the FY22 Racial Disproportionality Report in response to HB2914 which indicates the disproportionate treatment of Black children does not end with the overrepresentation of hotline calls and investigations but spans across the life of the case.
 - (3) Provide and ensure all Mandated Reporters receive the same training and guidance on when to report based on specific offenses related to the consequences of racism and poverty as well

as when to seek alternatives to calling the Hotline for issues related to concerns about neglect.

- (4) Evaluate the efficacy of ANCRA and its role in maintaining the disproportionality of Black children and families involved with DCFS.
 - (5) Explore alternatives to contacting the DCFS hotline for families who need support with reunification or to remain intact in a timely fashion.
 - (6) Explore how Mandated Reporters can use their professional discretion to access support for families to remain intact.
- Develop alternative options for Mandated Reporters to pursue when calling reports into the Hotline (for example, if a family needs immediate housing, select #2). Provide an alternative method or number for mandated reports to report concerns and access community-based services for families to limit system involvement.
 - Create a partnership between DHS and DCFS wherein both agencies may respond if a Hotline call warrants it. Referrals to agencies such as DHS that have expertise, comprehensive community-based services, substance abuse and housing services as well as services and supports for youth should be utilized whenever possible as an appropriate alternative to DCFS involvement.
 - Implement/sustain a kinship navigator program, to help families navigate procedures for kinship custody and provide ease of access to resources for families engaged in kinship care regardless of their involvement or noninvolvement with DCFS. Such a program should be used to prevent DCFS involvement whenever families require assistance with alternative custody arrangements provided by kinship care. *(HB 4781 - DCFS Kinship in Demand addresses this recommendation and passed out of the House unanimously; initiated by ACLU)*
 - Create a Public Defender style hotline or assign attorneys to families to help through the investigative process from the onset of an investigation. The subcommittee discussed the experience that the attorneys must possess with the investigatory process within the child welfare system as it differs from other systems. For example, in criminal matters clients are typically advised not to answer questions; however, a parent's failure to cooperate during an investigation could result in removal.
 - Empower a relative to seek guardianship through a process separate and apart from the investigation by an entity other than DCFS that can legally assist families. Relatives can care for children until the parent has resolved their issues. *(It was noted that this process can take place via the DCFS Extended Family Support Program (EFSP)).*
 - Develop a differential response program that incorporates the lived experiences of parents and youth in its development and implementation of processes. Require hotline call floor workers and case managers respectfully to explicitly document how they applied a racial justice lens to

the differential response program for incoming calls into the DCFS hotline, particularly how this lens was applied in assigning a family to the family assessment track or the investigative track.

Process Improvement

- Systematically evaluate or review the Child Welfare Service referral system to ensure adherence to the basic guidelines that were initially identified and to determine whether it is consistent with prevailing evidence-based best practices.
- Revise eligibility criteria and procedures for determining whether a family follows the Intact Family Services track or the Court Intervention track. *(It was noted that Intact Family Services is a voluntary program that requires a family's willingness to participate. If a parent does not cooperate with Intact Family Services, DCFS may screen the case with the State's Attorney's Office to request a court order for Intact Services or if the circumstances support a finding of urgent and immediate necessity may take protective custody and screen for temporary custody.)*

Protective Custodies

DCFS can legally take temporary protective custody of a child if there exists an immediate imminent danger to the child. DCFS must then petition the court for a shelter care hearing within 48 hours of taking temporary protective custody. The court will either uphold the removal ordering DCFS as the child's temporary custodian or return the child to the parents with services and often with an agreed-upon safety plan. Safety plans are temporary, short-term and designed to address the concerns of the child's safety. DCFS and the Juvenile Courts are responsible for determining the immediate and future supports needed to ensure the child's safety.

The following recommendations are proposed to address the disproportionality of Black children entering the system at this decision-making point:

Policy/Practice/Legislative Changes

- Implement and expand the "bias-free removal process" per PA 102-1087.
- Develop oversight systems and training, particularly at decision points, which allow for self-checks of implicit biases.
- Explore and implement tools to expand the family-finding process and require these tools be used throughout the life of a case.
- Strengthen and implement a uniform statewide process across DCFS, Child Welfare Contributing Agencies (CWCA) and the court system to encourage father engagement.
- Examine and review current processes regarding risks associated with domestic violence and mental illness. These processes should emphasize the engagement of families facing these challenges and identify strategies to avoid child removal.

- Review the language of ANCRA for possible changes that make the text more accessible. How words are interpreted is important and requires attention. Language must be understood and used in respectful and clear terms during the assessment/investigative phase and throughout the life of a case. *(Note: ANCRA, along with the Juvenile Court Act, and the Child Care Act of 1969, are being reviewed through a race equity lens to address language, cultural sensitivity and subjectivity by SIUE.)*

Process Improvement

- To avoid taking protective custody, evaluate how safety plans can be put in place for engaged fathers who have not been identified as an alleged abuser. Reform is vital in this area, particularly for non-offending non-custodial fathers who are living out of state. Connections with other states (Interstate Compact Placement of Children) must be developed and maintained. Clarity on how safety plans can be used with fathers is essential in determining whether home assessments are sufficient and incorporate needed elements that factor into a safety plan.

Indicated Reports

An incident of abuse or neglect is confirmed or “indicated” when a DCFS investigator finds credible evidence that a child was abused or neglected. The standard of “credible evidence” means that the available facts would cause a reasonable person to believe that a child was abused or neglected. DCFS also can end the intervention after an indicated finding.

For trial/adjudication, ANCRA mandates a hearing within 90 days of service of process. In Cook County, several cases have taken a year or longer to go to trial due to pre-trial issues such as paternity, service and discovery issues, all of which prolong the length of time in care. Given the systemic race-based issues that may have triggered the Hotline call that initiated the proceedings, the system should create linkages for children to access the support services that are needed which currently they may now only access once in foster care.

The following recommendations are proposed to address the disproportionality of Black children at this decision-making point:

Parent/Family Supports

- Expand Norman funds in a manner that better meets the needs of families, including increasing funding, reducing eligibility criteria, and allowing for recurring funding so that the family has time to complete services.
- Discontinue the Case Assignment Placement Unit’s (CAPU) randomized matching system that is used for foster care placements as it creates burdens for families and case management staff. Assign Child Welfare Contributing Agencies (CWCA) to cases based on geographic proximity to the family such that they function as an integrated, community-based organization for the family.
- Require DCFS to create a procedure for parent utilization in reviewing safety plans.

Community Capacity Building

- Invest in and build up the capacity of community-based agencies that are in communities where racial disproportionalities are prominent so that they can provide integrated services to nearby families.

Policy/Practice/Legislative Changes

- Create urgency around establishing a meaningful visitation plan. Intensive family contact has been shown to increase the likelihood of safe reunification. DCFS should facilitate frequent, high-quality contact between children and their parents, siblings, and extended kin through phone, video conferencing, email, texting and attendance at family events/gatherings.
- Revise the child and family team meeting procedures to be more inclusive of family time. Develop ways to promote kin and relative foster care to create environments that enable the use of these meetings to coordinate efforts and opportunities for parents to assume the day-to-day parental tasks and functions.
- Increase funding for family (parents, siblings, relative) visitation support, whether through agency costs or stipends for a relative to cover related costs.
- Establish monthly (routine) multi-disciplinary case conferencing meetings across all Illinois governmental offices that support keeping families intact. These meetings should include a collaborative partnership between DCFS and DHS focused on providing Black families with resources needed based on the consequences of poverty (adequate housing, furniture, etc.).
- Train all staff, especially every caseworker, in cultural competencies that allow them to interact with different races without imposing biases.
- Address the extensive speculation that occurs in juvenile court proceedings that are often grounded in racial bias by amending the Juvenile Court Act to direct judges to assign weight to the evidence based upon the qualifications of the person making recommendations. *(It was noted that experienced staff have practice navigating the courts and could potentially provide subjective information which would be more persuasive and have more probative value due to their tenure).*

Process Improvements

- Review placement data after removal to determine how far children are placed away from their home of origin for kinship and non-relative care as well as any racial disparities in the area.

Timely Exits

The Task Force discussed a variety of issues related to the connections between how a case enters the system and how long the child and family remain system involved. The Task Force also examined the impacts of bias cutting across each of these touch points in the system as it relates to race and poverty.

The following issues were identified:

- The reasons DCFS would bring a case to the State's Attorney and their screening process.
- The basis of how decisions are made and the interpretations of different legal standards.
- Supervisory reviews of the decisions to file a petition and the information that is included in a petition in terms of the facts and allegations.
- How poverty is addressed in petitions.
- The allocation of parental responsibility and the different roles parents may play.
- The varying models of child/parent representation during court proceedings.
- The information parents receive during court proceedings and where they can go with questions.
- The Temporary Custody hearing, its 48-hour requirement and the Judges' determination of the elements of temporary custody.
- The interpretations of safety and risk embedded in the urgent and necessity determination.
- The parameters around visitation and when in-person contact is available and resumed.
- Placement decisions with nonrelative fosters including the location, transportation and connection with siblings including older siblings who have exited care.
- Disqualification and eligibility for kinship placements.
- Prioritization of certain services, the measure of parental progress for participating in services and how barriers are addressed.
- The dynamics between workers and distrustful families in terms of the level of family involvement in the decision-making in terms of developing service plans and integrated assessments.

The following recommendations are proposed to address disproportionality at this decision-making point:

Parent Supports

- Address the challenges faced by parents/caregivers who cannot locate or identify resources to pass reunification placement clearance. Also, consider how this burden disproportionately affects certain communities in terms of how the Case Assignment Placement Unit randomly assigns CWCA's.

Policy/Practice/Legislative Changes

- Ensure timely permanency planning in terms of integrated assessments that include and involve the family, ensure the youth have a voice in the process through client-driven representation from an attorney other than the youth's GAL and connect families with the services they need as opposed to what DCFS sees as a necessity for reunification.
- Amend the Juvenile Court Act to increase the standard of proof during adjudication from "preponderance of the evidence" to "clear and convincing evidence" and at the termination of parental rights trial to "beyond a reasonable doubt".
- Amend the Juvenile Court Act to ensure compliance with the Rules of Evidence in the Code of Civil Procedure and prohibit the admission of unreliable evidence, such as past indicated findings that are based upon the lowest standard or proof.
- Amend Illinois' drug-exposed infant statute to align with the protections provided by the Illinois Reproductive Health Act.
- Disentangle factors tied to poverty from the maltreatment definition of "neglect."
- Create a law comparable to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act that uses the "active efforts" standard for reunification and other permanency goals in terms of removing barriers to service delivery for Black families during adjudication as opposed to "reasonable efforts" thereby mandating concrete supports tailored to the individual needs of a family to be provided consistently throughout the life of the case and be inclusive of family finding.

Additional Recommendations to Address Disproportionality in System

- Reduce the impact of compounded racial biases by limiting the use and retention of "unfounded" investigations. For example, limit the use of reports to persons named as alleged perpetrators (within a limited time) as opposed to persons named as other household members or alleged victims. Additionally, the length of time such records are retained should be shortened.
- Conduct an independent racial justice and equity audit of all DCFS rules, policies and procedures. (*Note: DCFS released the "Race Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit" in May 2024*)

in partnership with the Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) per their “Racial Equity Call to Action Prioritization” discussion.)

- Further limit the disclosure of DCFS records for employer and professional licensing determinations.
- Integrate racial equity practices and principles into the DCFS Continuous Quality Improvement process to allow for data collection and analysis to share effectively with other regions.
- Regularly perform an independent audit/qualitative analysis of the SAFE model to be completed through a racial equity lens as DCFS implements this model’s new approach.
- Establish a statutory right to client-directed, state-funded legal representation for every youth in care at all phases of case proceedings. Deliver support to the youth/parents through a multi-disciplinary legal representation team that includes social workers, peer mentors, and system navigators.

Summation of Comments from the Public

- The Task Force was asked to consider recommending a blind process pilot at the SCR/Hotline level due to Black children being twice as likely as other races to be reported to the Hotline. DCFS reported that this recommendation is currently included in the DCFS plan and that they are moving forward with this initiative.
- A question was asked about the capability of individual offices to do data-requested polls or data grabs surrounding their decision points particularly data on the entry rates by office for purposes of comparison.
- A recommendation was made to assess what has been done in the past 10 to 12 years to improve the status of Black families. The re-establishment of the African American Family Commission established by the Illinois African American Family Commission Act (20 ILCS 3903/) was recommended as a potential course of action. The purpose of the Illinois African American Family Commission was to advise the Governor and General Assembly, as well as work directly with State agencies, to improve and expand existing policies, services, programs, and opportunities for African American families. The Illinois African American Family Commission was formed to guide the efforts of and collaborate with State agencies, including the Department on Aging, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Employment Security, and others, to improve and expand existing human services, educational and community development programs for African Americans. This improvement and expansion was to be achieved by monitoring and commenting on existing and proposed legislation and programs designed to address the needs of Black people in Illinois, assisting State agencies in developing programs, services, public policies, and research strategies that would expand and enhance the social and economic well-being of African-American children and families, facilitate the participation of and

representation of Black people in the development, implementation, and planning of policies, programs and community-based services as well as to promote research efforts to document the impact of policies and programs on Black families. *This consideration is in alignment with the Task Force's recommendation to build the capacities of Black-led community-based services to support the holistic needs of families.*

- A recommendation was made to reach out to Chapin Hall to learn what some of their staff has been working on in terms of building a structure for primary prevention.
- Under the direction of Anita Weinberg of Loyola Chicago University of Law, two law students synthesized data from various reports on disproportionalities and other data sources and presented their informative findings to the Task Force.

Conclusion

The Racial Disproportionality in the Illinois Child Welfare System FY2023 Report in Response to HB2914 confirms the results of previous analysis that Black children and families are disproportionately represented in every phase of the child welfare system. Investigative data examined over the past five years also shows that there is an increase in over-representation of Black children at the protective custody and substitute care entry decision points between FY2021 and FY2023. Every system-involved interaction makes it more likely that a family will be further immersed within the system. Black families who become system-involved because of the broad discretions and/or false assumptions of a mandated reporter may continue to linger in the system and be system-involved for many years to come. Over decades, these disproportionalities have resulted in the systemic intergenerational dismantling of Black families throughout Illinois. We can and should do better. The recommendations made here in this report on the Illinois Racial Disproportionality of Black Children in the Child Welfare System provide guidance on how to ensure more Black families stay intact to begin to heal from the unjust trauma of unwarranted separation.

**Illinois Racial Disproportionality Task Force Recommendations
Appendix**

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2022

Meeting called to order by: LaTanya Jackson-Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL

Members in attendance: Mareema Ali, Cook County Public Guardian
Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian
State Representative Chris Bos
Dagene Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS
State Representative Lakesia Collins
Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL
Ronald Davis, Parent Member directly impacted by the Child Welfare System
Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts
David Esposito, Executive Director at Supportive Housing Providers Assoc. of America
Clarissa Fourman, Former Youth-in-Care
Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law
State Representative Sonya Harper, Legislative Black Caucus
Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues, Former YIC
Carla Rogers, Proxy for State Senator Mattie Hunter
Cherie Kesler, Attorney at Law, Village of Savoy
Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender
State Representative Camille Lilly, Legislative Black Caucus
Kim McCullough-Starks, Healthcare and Family Services
State Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas, Legislative Latino Caucus
Onie Riley, Former Youth-in-Care
Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office
Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
State Senator Sally Turner

Public: Dr. Vanessa White, Consultant, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Anita Weinberg, Director, ChildLaw Policy Institute, Loyola University
Kaitlyn Reis, Loyola University
Ashley Deckert, Illinois Collaboration on Youth
Simone Weil, Casey Family Case Programs

DCFS: Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Office of Racial Equity Practice
Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communications and Advisory Groups
Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Roll Call:

Darnita Jackson took the roll.

Welcome by the Chairs

“Question of the Day” | Introductions by all Members.

Topics of Discussion:

- Overview of Open Meetings Act by Kara Hamilton.
 - Notifications of meetings and materials, agendas and minutes publicly posted – Public Notice
 - Appointees required to complete online Open Meetings Act training within 6 months of appointment
- Guiding Principles for the Work.
 - Able to create conditions where child welfare involvement is rare.
 - Families have access to what they need to feel supported and equipped.
 - Shared responsibility to achieve the best outcomes.
- Meeting Agreement – can be amended later.
- Overview of the Legislation – HB3821, Public Act 102-0506.
- Mission of the Task Force.
- Duties of the Task Force.
- Dr. Vanessa White presents:
 - Raw data on demographics of African-American children versus other races of children in the child welfare system relative to the population, definitions and information on measuring racial and ethnic disproportionality, Absolute RDI and Relative RDI, as well as percentages for investigated reports, protective custodies, indicated reports and substitute care entries by region from 2021 and 2022.
 - Discussed compounded impacts of other systems on the disproportionality of black children in care, ie, low socioeconomic status, unstable housing, education, jobs and income become generational issues that have impact over time. Criminal juvenile justice policies disproportionately affect blacks as well as multi-generational issues of historical mass incarceration of black men and women and issues around housing biases and racism.
 - Racialized nature of child welfare policies on black mothers.
- Statistics showing disproportionality but also steady decrease from 2014 to 2021. In 2010, black children made up 14% of the population and accounted for 56% of children in substitute care. In 2014 it was 44.5% and in 2021 it was 39.5%. Research shows substitute care for black children is much higher than other races or ethnicity.
- African American Family Commission Act tasked with addressing racial disproportionalities in all systems across the board and inquiries into whether it will be reestablished.
- Outcomes, Expectations and Timeline for Recommendations:
 - Legislative and Administrative policy recommendations are to be submitted to the General Assembly and the Governor by September 20, 2023.
 - Task Force will be dissolved, and the ACT repealed on January 1, 2024.
 - Co-Chairs will meet before January 1, 2024 to discuss implementation plan of recommendations.
- Update on Vacancies. There are 3 unappointed spots, 1 to be designated by the Governor and 2 parents that have been impacted by the child welfare system. Currently in search of a black mother who has been impacted by the child welfare system who is willing to participate.

Questions/Comments Noted for Further Discussion:

- Historical data is needed going back 10 years that shows the trend of the situation.
 - Data showing movement of the children that come into the system from first placement.
 - Data indicating the causes of involvement in the system for comparative analysis to identify biases within the screening system or racist trends that may be found among cases dealing with homelessness, substance misuse and/or mental health where there is more of an opportunity to apply discretion with regards to decision-making authority versus egregious cases.
 - Data related to why cases stay in the system for extended periods of time. Whether there are disparities in decision points around visitation between parents and children, the frequency of visitations and barriers to visitation.
- Consideration of family preservation.
- Changes around mandated reporting and the reporter's discretion specifically as it pertains to black, brown and biracial children.
- Consideration of other subject matter experts to participate in the work groups for the Task Force.

Action Items:

- Email LaTanya or Beverly with Meeting Agreement additions, suggestions, or recommendations.
- Will determine subcommittees to work on different aspects of the recommendations to bring forth and to review the data.
- Will review the data that was requested as a start to map out the path;
 - Identify the direction in which to begin based off the data;

- Identify groups moving forward to meet the criteria.
- May invite other groups/agencies/providers to present how they are addressing this issue, what was the data then and what is the data now.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:35AM

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Minutes of Meeting
October 19, 2022

Meeting called to order at 9:02AM by: LaTanya Jackson-Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL

Members in attendance: Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian
Sara Block, Ascend Justice
State Representative Chris Bos
Dagené Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS
State Representative Lakesia Collins
Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL
Ronald Davis, Parent Member
Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts
David Esposito, Executive Director at Supportive Housing Providers Assoc. of America
Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law
State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar, Legislative Latino Caucus
Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues, Former YIC
Carla Rogers, Proxy for State Senator Mattie Hunter
Cherie Kesler, Attorney at Law, Village of Savoy
Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender
Kim McCullough-Starks, Healthcare and Family Services
Onie Riley, Former Youth Member
Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office
Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
State Senator Sally Turner

Members not present: Mareema Ali
Paris Bateman
Clarissa Fourman
State Representative Sonya Harper
LaTanya Law
State Representative Camille Lilly
State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas

Public: Dr. Vanessa White, Consultant, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Ashley Deckert, Illinois Collaboration on Youth
D'Laney Gielow, Legal Aid Chicago Observer
Simone Weil, Casey Family Case Programs
Lyman Legters

DCFS: Tamela Atwood, Deputy Director of the State Central Register
Tierney Stutz, Chief Deputy Director of Investigations & State Central Register
Wendy Ingersoll, Intact Family Services

DCFS: Lynette Berry-Weston, Permanency
Kiersten Neswick, CFO, Budget & Finance
Budget & Finance Team
Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Off of Racial Equity Practice
Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups
Lucretia Newman, Legislative Liaison, Office of Legislative Affairs
Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Roll Call:

Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Welcome by the Chairs:

Agenda Overview and Opening Question by Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson-Wilson.

Approval of Minutes:

Ronald Davis entered a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on September 29,2022. Nora Collins-Mandeville seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Topics of Discussion:

- Overview presentation of DCFS State Central Register, IL Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline by Tamela Atwood.
 - Requirements for delegated authority to initiate an investigation.
 - Varying degrees of Intakes, i.e., allegation-based, information only, child welfare services and/or preventative services referrals and connections to community-based services.
- Overview of Investigative Process by Tierney Stutz.
 - Pre-commencement activities, assessment of report made, review of previously known background information and Initial Investigative Plan.
 - Referral assessments and final determination made within 60 days.
 - Final findings on State Central Register and retention codes and notifications of findings as per statute.
- Permanency Overview presentation by Wendy Ingersoll.
 - Placement and Substitute Care/relative Kinship care
 - Permanency goals, permanency planning process and Child & Family Team meetings.
 - Permanency services for the family and snapshot of youth-in-care.
- Overview of Child Welfare Services/Referrals and Intact Family Services by Lynette Berry-Weston.
 - Child Welfare referrals (calls made to the hotline), community linkages or short-term intervention versus Intact Family Services or Intensive Support and other services.
 - Voluntary or court-ordered services per indicated findings and Extended Family Services for unfounded final findings.
- DCFS Budget and Funding Allocation presentation by Kirsten Neswick & the DCFS Budget & Finance Team.
 - Funding sources for FY23.
 - Budget and Headcount for FY19-23
 - FY23 Budget increases and investments.
- Initiative to Improve Permanency Outcomes for Youth-in-Care of Color by Co-Chair Beverly Jones.
 - Reduced the length of time children of color stayed in Foster Care.
 - Increased the number of children who left the system preferably by reunification.
 - 72% of permanency achievements with respect to children of color are reunification, one-third going to the parental side.

Questions/Comments/Proposed Recommendations Noted for Further Discussion:

- What supports/services are provided and/or offered to families during the 9-month adjudication period to help them meet court's expectations to keep children with the family such as housing, substance use, mental health issues that impact the family? Wendy Ingersoll provided information about the integrated assessment process conducted when families come into the system and after a child is removed that provides recommendations and referrals for parents to services such as substance abuse, parenting classes, psychological evaluations, etc. with DCFS contracted providers.

- With regards to the data presented during the DCFS Budget Overview, it was unclear as to why the Norman fund increase of \$2 million dollars was not included as part of the appropriated Family Preservation increase of \$11 million dollars. Jason House advised the increase for Intact Family Services is included in the amount appropriated for Family Preservation and while there are some Intact Families who may qualify for Norman assistance, this is not a requirement to receive Norman cash and housing locator assistance.
 - Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson-Wilson requested line-item breakdowns of budget increases and investments for FY23 to be shared during the next meeting in November.
 - Additional points for further discussion include the 39% increase to Foster Care indicated in budget overview, why this occurred and line-item breakdown information to be received at the next meeting to identify the lack of support for families.
- Identify when decisions are made for children who will appear before the attention of the court system for purposes of analyzing the trajectory and implementing a monitoring and quality assurance-based system that allows for continued growth and development.
- Revise the Mandated Reporter training to avoid disproportionate number of reports; decisions being made by reporters stemming from implicit biases. Dagené Brown reported that per the passing of HB3100 the Mandated Reporter Training will now include implicit bias training.
- Revise the Investigator training and the extent implicit bias factors into how investigations are handled.
- Revisions to criteria for Intact and the decisions involved whether case is appropriate for Intact or court intervention.
- Analyze the percentage of cases in which investigators deem family has enough supports and protective factors in place therefore there is no risk, and no action needs to be taken, how is this being monitored?
- Consider ways to develop oversight systems and trainings particularly at decision points that allows for self-checks of implicit biases.
- Determine to what extent race factors into decisions to seek court involvement in cases where families are noncompliant to Intact Family Services. Is court involvement warranted? How are decisions being monitored?
- Consider the higher burden on people who cannot locate or identify resources that can pass placement clearance which disproportionately affects certain communities in terms of how CAPU randomly assigns POS agencies; Randomized system used for foster care placements creates burdens for families and case management staff as well as waste and loss.
- Review placement data after removal to determine how far are children placed away from their home of origin regardless if it is kinship or non-relative and whether there is racial disparity in that area.
- Identify decision points referenced in Disproportionality reports released within the last two years for framework to formulate goals to be reached over a period of time.
 - (1) Tamara Fuller, Michael Braun, Satomi Wakita, Kyle A. Adams III, University of Illinois, School of Social Work, Children and Family Research Center, Racial Disproportionality In the Illinois Child Welfare System (Oct. 2020),
 - (2) Northern Illinois University, Center for Child Welfare and Education, DCFS Northern Region Permanency Enhancement Project, FY 20 Annual Report – July 2019 to June 30, 2020
 - (3) Kim, H., Wildeman, C., Jonson-Reid, M., & Drake, B. (2017). Lifetime Prevalence of Investigating Child Maltreatment Among US Children. American Journal of Public Health, 107(2), 274-280.
- Dagené Brown reported DCFS is working to improve data collection processes as part of Data Governance and Organization to Support Equity and Racial Justice Act along with other agencies to ensure data is inclusive, accurate and reliable with the development of the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) and the ability of families to self-identify.

Public Comment:

- Ashley Deckert of Illinois Collaboration on Youth asked the Task Force to consider recommending a blind process pilot at the SCR/Hotline level due to black children being twice as likely as other races to be reported to the hotline. Dagené Brown reported this recommendation is currently included in the DCFS Racial Equity Blueprint plan and plans to move forward with this initiative.
- Ashley Deckert asked about the capability for individual offices to do data requested pools or data grabs surrounding their decision points. Dagené Brown suggested the Task Force collectively decide what data is needed for review to allow the data requests to be made while the CCWIS system is being built.

Action Items:

- Email Co-Chairs with Meeting Agreement additions, suggestions, questions, comments or recommendations.
- Review the Disproportionality reports and articles sent to Members via email in preparation for the Overview of the CFR Report by Tamara Fuller on November 9, 2022.
- DCFS Budget & Finance Team will provide more detailed information regarding the agency's budget for FY23 to include line-item information regarding increases and investments on November 9, 2022.

- Will break out into small groups to discuss the data, decision points and recommendations.

Meeting Adjournment:

Dagené Brown moved to adjourn the meeting. David Esposito seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:25AM.

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Meeting Minutes
November 9, 2022

Meeting called to order at 9:05AM by: LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL

Members in attendance: Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS
Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian
Sara Block, Ascend Justice
Tracey King, DCFS Proxy for Dagené Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice
Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL
Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts
Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law
State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar, IL Legislative Latino Caucus
Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues
Carla Rogers, Proxy for State Senator Mattie Hunter
Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender
Kim McCullough-Starks, Healthcare and Family Services
State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas, IL Legislative Latino Caucus
Onie Riley, Former Youth Member
Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office
Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
Renee Martin, Proxy for State Senator Sally Turner

Members not present: Paris Bateman, State's Attorney Office
State Representative Chris Bos
State Representative Lakesia Collins
Ronald Davis, Parent Member
David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL
Clarissa Fourman, Former Youth Member
State Representative Sonya Harper
Cherie Kesler, Attorney Village of Savoy-SBDC
LaTanya Law, Dept of Human Services
State Representative Camille Lilly

Public: Dr. Vanessa White, Consultant, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Ashley Deckert, Illinois Collaboration on Youth
Kaitlyn Edicola
Kaitlyn Ries, Loyola University
Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago
Michelle Nicolet
Edoardo, Proxy for State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas

DCFS: Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Office of Racial Equity Practice
Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups
Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed Members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was later determined that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

Heather Dorsey entered a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on October 19, 2022. Janet Barnes seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Agenda Overview:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson provided information regarding the approach for the work going forward. The Subcommittee designations and breakout sessions to occur during the meeting followed by report outs from each group, public comment, closing remarks and adjournment. The “Opening Question” will be presented as a part of the roll call for future meetings.

Discussion Item 1 – Subcommittee Overview:

Co-Chair Beverly Jones presented the proposed formation for the Subcommittees to include four groups based upon the decision points in the child welfare system, each to include a Facilitator and a Recorder.

Subcommittee breakdowns identified as:

- Investigated Screened-in Maltreatment Reports
- Protective Custodies – to include Court Screening Process with consideration for who comes into care by way of protective custody.
- Indicated Reports for Post Investigation Service Provision to include Intact Family Services and Substitute Care
- Timely Exits from Substitute Care – to include consideration of the amount of time spent in care, where children go when leaving care, the difference in outcomes between the races and things that can be done differently.

Scope of Subcommittee Work:

- Each are tasked with discussing policy, practice and budget allocations as it relates to reducing racial disproportionality and disparity.
- Each to begin with data around the indicated decision point to identify questions, areas where more information is needed leading into doable recommendations for change in practice, policy and/or legislation.
- Each to refer to the articles, data and findings from Dr. Fuller’s FY2021 Disproportionality Report and the DCFS budget allocations via the PowerPoint sent on October 19th to include consideration as to how funding aligns with the responsibilities and what shifts will be recommended.
- Each should identify points of alignment across systems for collaboration in reducing racial inequities as well as system alternatives within communities to support and help families.
- Each should propose root causes for the disparities at the indicated decision point and provide solutions for changing the trajectory.

Questions/Comments/Concerns from Members Noted for Further Discussion:

- Q: Is the screening process for court involvement to take protective custody different based upon the county? Cook County require Investigators get approval from the State’s Attorney Office to file a petition to take protective custody, approximately over 40% of cases are screened out not to take protective custody but offer ongoing services instead. Other counties do not have this process. References were made to Lake and Winnebago Counties who work with Cook when investigations cross county lines. A: Heather Dorsey confirmed and reiterated the screening process for Cook County is different from all other counties in the State based upon the investigative packet of information that is received before filing a petition.
 - Noted for further discussion: The legal aspect of taking protective custody, the resources/varying processes and information received via the “packet” throughout each county in totality that may or may not differ from Cook County. Are there trends to be considered with regards to disproportionality?

- Robert Rodemeyer provided information on Cook County’s screening process that may differ from other counties.
 - Screening process and other departmental regulations with regards to consideration of viable noncustodial parents residing outside of Illinois.
 - Intact Family Services offered more than once for families when the circumstances are different, parents are willing to accept and services will mitigate the risk.
 - Other measures to explore alternative caregivers such as legal and short-term guardianship.
 - “Priority 1” or extreme sexual and/or physical abuse case notifications and follow ups which has been discontinued due to staffing issues.
 - Guarantee from the Multi-Disciplinary Pediatric Education and Evaluation Consortium to have nonmobile, non-ambulatory and non-verbal children with specific injuries be assessed by a Board-Certified Child Abuse Pediatrician.
- Q: Is there a variation in how involved the Prosecutor’s Office is in deciding whether there are grounds to file a TPR (termination of parental rights) petition and whether that has a negative impact on disproportionality?
- Q: Is there a way to differentiate between the types of allegations? A: Data is available and will be provided to all Members.
- There was decline in the disproportionality among African American children in recent years. Q: What is affecting that decline?
- African American children are placed in substitute care at a rate of 2.5 times their percentage within the population. Q: Are children of color more likely to be brought into foster care versus staying within the home with services?
- Q: What are the deciding factors to when children can remain in the home with services and what are the reasons for removing a child?
- Q: What happens after indicated findings and for what children? What is the impact of those decisions and disproportionality?

Discussion Item 2 – Investigated Screened-In Maltreatment Reports (1st Decision Point):

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson provided review of information received during the meeting in October about the State Central Register and calls coming in from Reporters for determination if the circumstances meet the criteria for an investigation.

- Many of the calls received do not rise to level of an investigation.
- Families needing assistance call the Hotline for assistance. There should be another number families can call when having difficulties and need services.
- Subcommittees were designed broadly using Dr. Fuller’s report as a guide with the expectation that each group will determine and discuss all the many decision points within the larger decision point in each individual subcommittee.

Breakout Sessions Began at 1:14PM

Breakout Sessions Ended at 2:08PM

Subcommittee Report-Outs:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson provided guidance on breakout sessions to be used to promote discussions, ask questions and determine additional information needed to begin to formulate recommendations.

- Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson reported the Investigated Screened-In Maltreatment Reports Subcommittee discussed the factors leading up to this 1st decision point, i.e, the Mandated Reporter training including training that takes place in schools and the bias that is involved in making the decision to report – what’s included within the training; The issues concerning whether the cases meet criteria and how that is determined. The length of investigations and providing families with legal resources during the investigation. Legal Aid in Chicago represents families during investigations and how to make families aware of this service.

Questions/Data Requests noted for further discussion:

- Data needed on the types of reporters that report to the Hotline and whether there is a difference between what is substantiated and unsubstantiated.
- Data needed on the priorities for each classification and how DCFS conducts those investigations.
- Q: What is the difference between families who have legal representation during the investigation versus those who do not? Is there a difference?
- Q: Are individual schools receiving different Mandated Reporter training on what and how to report?
- Dr. Vanessa White reported the Protective Custodies Subcommittee discussed the Blind Removal Process, newly passed legislation, which requires a Steering Committee that is currently being formed. The Blind Removal Process does not prevent immediate removals if there is the presence of imminent danger. The Child

Death Review Committee was also discussed and the impact of other cases which cause workers to be more prone to take protective custody as well as the Implicit Bias training and its effectiveness.

Questions/Comments/Data Requests noted for further discussion:

- Data on case studies across regions is needed to determine the differences and nuances between Cook County and other counties for purposes of formulating different types of recommendations. What can be learned about the variations? There was a jump in the numbers from 2016 to 2020. Janet Barnes volunteered to help with review of case studies.
- Data needed on the entry rates across time relative to race, ethnicity, region and geography.
- Survey families on their experiences from the front end of the child welfare system.
- Co-Chair Beverly Jones reported the Indicated Reports Subcommittee discussed Intact Family Services and the decisions around whom this service is offered and what is court-ordered versus what is voluntary.

Questions/Data Requests noted for further discussion:

- Data needed to determine when and where Intact services are voluntary.
- Data needed on indicated findings when cases are not opened; how often does this occur?
- Data needed on the geographical differences within the State and how the processes vary from county to county.
- Q: What are other states doing for Intact Family Services?
- Q: What is the difference between Intact and Substitute Care? Is it more one-sided with regards to decisions being made to offer the family services versus bringing a child into care?
- Sara Block reported the Timely Exit from Substitute Care Subcommittee discussed reasons DCFS would bring a case to the State's Attorney and their screening process; the basis of how decisions are made; the interpretations of different legal standards; supervisory reviews of the decisions to file a petition and what is included in filing a petition in terms of the facts and allegations; the allocation of parental responsibility; the varying models of child/parent representation during court proceedings; what information parents receive during court proceedings and where they can go with questions; the Temporary Custody hearing, its 48-hour requirement and the Judges' determination of the elements of temporary custody; the interpretations of safety and risk embedded in the urgent and necessity determination; the parameters around visitation and when non-person contact is available; placement, nonrelative foster placements including the location, transportation and connection with siblings including older siblings whom have exited care; Kinship placements, i.e., disqualifications and eligibility; prioritization of certain services; and the dynamics between worker and distrustful families.

Questions/Data Requests noted for further discussion:

- Q: With regards to parental responsibility, is there a view of the different role parents have played?
- Q: How is poverty addressed in petitions?
- Q: What is the prayer for relief in the petitions? Are reasonable efforts alleged?
- Q: How are cases assigned and how are judges, attorneys, GAL's, and public defenders rotating through the Juvenile Court?
- Q: How involved is the family in the decision-making in terms of developing the Service Plan and the Integrated Assessment? Are families comfortable expressing what they need?

Public Comment:

- Ashley Deckert of Illinois Collaboration on Youth asked the Task Force to consider entry rate data from the office level for purposes of comparison.

Action Items/Next Steps:

- Email Co-Chairs with data requests, alternative subcommittee designations, suggestions, questions, comments, or recommendations.
- Co-Chairs to provide additional information from Casey Family Foundation for Subcommittees.
- Review Dr. Fuller's Disproportionality Report resent on November 9th prior to the next meeting scheduled for December 14, 2022.
- Will break out into small groups to discuss the data, decision points and recommendations.

Meeting Adjournment:

Sara Block moved to adjourn the meeting. Heather Dorsey seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:29AM.

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2022

Meeting called to order at 9:05AM by: LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL

Members in attendance:

Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS
Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian
Sara Block, Ascend Justice
Dagené Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice
Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL
Ronald Davis, Parent Member
Chandler Mattison-Farris, ACOI, Proxy for Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts
David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL
Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law
State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar, IL Legislative Latino Caucus
Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues
Carla Rogers, Proxy for State Senator Mattie Hunter
Cherie Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC
Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services
State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas, IL Legislative Latino Caucus
Onie Riley, Former Youth Member
Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office
Barb Frobish, Proxy for State Senator Sally Turner

Members not present:

Paris Bateman, State's Attorney Office
State Representative Chris Bos
State Representative Lakesia Collins
Clarissa Fourman, Former Youth Member
State Representative Sonya Harper
LaTanya Law, Dept of Human Services
Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender
State Representative Camille Lilly
Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall

Public:

Lyman Legters, Senior Director Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs
Dr. Vanessa White, Consultant, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Ashley Deckert, Illinois Collaboration on Youth
Simone Weil, Director, Public Policy, Casey Family Programs
Anita Weinberg, Loyola University
Summer George, Illinois Collaboration on Youth

DCFS: Norma Machay, Northern Region Immersion Site Director
Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Office of Racial Equity Practice
Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups
Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed Members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

David Esposito entered a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on November 9, 2022. Beverly Jones seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Agenda Overview:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson outlined the day’s agenda to include a Family First Summit Overview presentation by Lyman Legters – Casey Family Programs and Norma Machay – DCFS to be followed by breakout sessions, subcommittee report-outs to the whole group, recommendations to date, public comment, closing remarks and adjournment.

Discussion Item 1 – Family First Summit Overview Presentation:

Lyman Legters and Norma Machay are Co-facilitators of the Family First Communication and Integration work group responsible for planning the Family First Summit meeting that took place on November 1, 2022 at the University of Illinois in Champaign, Urbana. There were over 185 participants present in-person and over 90 virtual participants online.

- Norma, the Immersion Site Director for Lake County introduced herself and provided her background information in serving DCFS for 26 years whereas she began as a case worker.
- Lyman, the Strategic Consultant for Casey Family Programs currently assigned to Illinois also introduced himself and provided the presentation would summarize the Family First Summit meeting and include rationale that could serve as a catalyst for transformation in Illinois.

Overview Presentation – Strengthening Illinois through Child and Family Well-Being: A Summary: by Norma Machay and Lyman Legters.

- The Family First Communication and Integration work group worked together for 3 years and was originally initiated by the Family First Planning Committee in an effort to share more information about Family First external from DCFS and present an opportunity to elevate families and serve as a catalyst for transformation of the child welfare system in Illinois. Reference to the Family First and Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) enacted to reform the federal child welfare funding. The work group meets twice a month and is comprised of the following:
 - Private Agency Partners
 - Administrative Office of IL Courts
 - ISBE
 - DCFS Divisional Leaders
 - Sister Agencies
- The work group created a Mission Statement specifically for the Summit to be family and youth centered, to include what is needed to achieve well-being for families and to address the following:
 - Prevention
 - Coordination
 - Awareness
 - Diversion
 - Youth and Family Centered being that equitable and mobilized
- The work group created a Vision Statement for themselves as follows:
 - Partnership and alignment across public systems agencies and the community is normalized systemic and silos are dismantled.
 - Vision is for families in Illinois to have the capacity to care for their children and that all Illinois children thrive in safe, stable and nurturing families and environments.

- The Family First Summit Meeting participants and notable speakers included:
 - State of Illinois Deputy Governor Sol Flores,
 - Dr. David Sanders, Executive Vice President of Systems Improvement, Casey Family Programs,
 - 3 Lived Expertise Panelists who have experienced the child welfare system, sister and community agencies.
 - State Policy Panel moderated by Andrea Durbin, Chief Executive Officer, Illinois Collaboration on Youth and co-facilitator of the Family First Communication and Integration work group; also included Christine Haley, DHS State Homelessness Chief, who presented information on homelessness, programs and initiatives.
 - Jeffery Aranowski, Executive Director for ISBE presented information on Safe and Healthy Climate.
 - Tim Verry, Director of the Division of Family and Community Services,
 - Karin Norrington Reaves, National Workforce Development Consultant presented information regarding workforce development; and
 - Directors of programs within State Departments, Judges, State Attorneys and a great amount of other stakeholders

- The Lived Expertise panelists developed the following Call to Action plans:
 - The IL Juvenile Court System and the IL Child Welfare System take too long to reunify children with their parents.
 - Shared parenting is essential to ensure timely permanency. When children are removed and placed with a relative or foster home a shared parenting contract should be a part of that to include goals of timely permanency.
 - Listen to youth-in-care, they know what they need and want and have not been heard.

- The Family First Summit Meeting ended with the development of 5 action plans, one for Statewide and one for each region. Notable takeaways from each include the following:
 - Statewide Goal – investing local and state tax dollars on services and supports families and communities need to include support to meet basic needs, prevention services and services that are locally identified/driven to include cultural shifts wherein asking for support is viewed as positive.
 - Cook Region – seek funding and opportunities to support families before they are involved with DCFS, to strengthen the internal communication, to integrate with other providers that support families and have engagement and foster relationships with families to meet families where they are.
 - Central Region – Collaborative cross-system meetings at the system level - an example provided from Lake County in which meetings took place quarterly and included child welfare, the court system, DHS, Daycare and home visiting which later determined that all were serving the same families. To include other partners/providers in the family meetings, to share information more efficiently via releases or shared data bases, to have the focus be on children and families i.e., family engagement and relationship building.
 - Northern Region identified needing funding flexibility such as more funds for primary prevention, expanding or reforming how Norman Funds can be used with regards to funding for housing, immigration, education and legal services, as well as the availability of services specifically as it relates to mental health providers, youth and early childhood supports, and preventative supports that are truly preventive and put into place before the risk factor is identified.
 - Southern Region identified needs related to IT, staff and integrated data bases among the sister agencies to better serve the families, as well as additional support to the workforce in terms of training, credentialing and opportunities for pathways, goals to build protective factors into primary prevention to have early supporters as well as coordination and support from other systems such as schools.

- A reinforced commitment to Racial Justice was front and centered in every presentation and from every speaker and is an essential key to transformation. Transformation will require a systemic approach for collaboration and service delivery to achieve wellbeing. Racial justice must be a cross systems focused; there needs to be an alignment across efforts.

- 21st Century Child and Family Well-Being Framework:
 - Consists of a family well-being system that prevents harm by working in partnership with children, families, communities, and agencies to assure all families have the capacity to care for their children and all children thrive in safe stable, nurturing families and environments.
 - Has to be a collective responsibility, not DCFS focused.
 - Needs to be proactive building protective capacity pre-maltreatment; safety may need to be redefined at the intersection of poverty, neglect or conditions that are out of the control of families that impact their involvement with systems.
 - Focuses on universal population-efforts and impact.
 - Primary prevention needs to be included; Family First allows for the ability to fund resources to families, to broaden approach beyond the child for intervention, to do secondary and prevention from the front end of the system.

- Well-being was defined as the unifying concept, that translates and travels across systems and contexts, contemplates a “life-course perspective and sets thriving, healing and wholeness frame as the goal. Well-being is a human condition of thriving characterized by health and fulfillment to be considered as a lifelong process; example given in terms of well becoming. Racial justice/racial equity is a well-being domain and can be articulated that way across systems.
- References to the data slides presented by Dr. Sanders during the meeting were shown which are based upon data collected from Illinois reflecting distinct disparities for black children in the following areas between 2015 and 2021:
 - The rate at which they are screened in for investigation or assessment as well as for the rate they are screened in and substantiated in an investigation.
 - The rate in which they are entering care which has improved over the last couple of years.
 - The rate of black children that are staying in care
 - All of which begs the question per Dr. Sanders whether there are 2 systems in Illinois, one for black children and families and one for everyone else.

Questions/Comments Noted for Further Discussion:

- Lyman offered to come back to share information regarding the direction of the Statewide and regional action plans with the Task Force at a later date.
- Norma indicated the Family First Communication and Integration work group would be meeting to discuss the Statewide action plan and develop ways to move forward with leaders within the department.
- Lettie Hicks volunteered to be a part of the workgroup and next steps process going forward as an individual with lived expertise and recommended an alignment/relationship with the Juvenile Justice system.
- Q: Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson inquired about the racial justice aspect of the action plans and things that were directed to specifically address the treatment of black families. A: Norma will send this information to the Task Force.
- Q: Co-Chair Beverly Jones inquired about how to incorporate all the various efforts to address disproportionality from the Task Force, individual agencies, etc. into a whole. A: Lyman indicated this continues to be one of the struggles in the racial justice space, making sure there is connection and alignment which needs to be centered in the discussions and suggested this an important consideration for the Task Force as disintegration is one of the things that derails the transformation. Norma shared this is a recommendation and part of building those action plans set forward by the work group to break those silos as they envision the next steps to move the work.
 - Dagené Brown indicated that part of her role within the Department is to ensure efforts are not duplicative and extended an invitation to the Task Force Chairs to attend a future Advisory Commission meeting and potentially the Commission’s Chair will attend a future Task Force meeting for collaborative works.
- Sara Block made a comment with regards to the wellbeing system and things to consider that contributes to wellbeing so that other systems, community partners and organizations are included. Sara mentioned there needs to be a narrow entry point into child welfare.
 - Lyman agreed and shared in their discussions the driving factor is to be clear the specific and narrow role of child protection versus the broader childhood wellbeing focus that aligns across systems.
- Robert Rodemeyer made a comment about the recommendation to coparent with foster parents made by the Lived Expertise panelists stating it goes against the construct of the system referencing that per the Juvenile Court Act guardianship cannot be explored unless adoption is ruled out whereas adoption is a goal of priority over guardianship. Additionally, the Department does not subsidize guardianship in non-relative homes and the randomized matching of POS agencies based upon contracts with the Department versus from a parent or child’s community of origin hinders reunification.
 - Lyman reiterated the need for a collective response considering some of the things mentioned are outside of the purview of DCFIS indicating consideration be given for the policy level, what legislative action needs to be taken and what other agencies need to be involved.
 - Norma reported these issues were brought up in the summit meeting by the Lived Expertise panelist.
 - Dagené reported the language “rule out adoption” has been changed; however, the practice has not changed with Judges in some areas preferring the adoption method and ordering the Department move in that direction before guardianship as an option.

Discussion Item 2 – Shift in Mindsets

Co-Chair LaTanya talked about the nature in which the system was designed and built to be disadvantageous to black families. Values, concepts and mindsets have to change in order for the policies and procedures to change will be effective. The mother and father, the 2 parents are the best suited to care for their children and starting from this principle

and then indicating the supports a family needs to continue to be able to care for their children. Mindsets have to be changed in order for the policies, procedures and recommendations to change the way that things function. Being committed to doing things differently and recognizing that we can do better is important.

- Co-Chair Bev commented it really means changing the mindsets of people who work in the field because everyone is not on board and that is a lot of the work that needs to be done for a foundation and reinforcing those messages. Additionally, there needs to be a critical mass of the direction we are going and that is our commitment but to stay where you are is not acceptable. The work of the Task Force is important and there is a sense of urgency and importance to the work.
- Sara commented with regards to where mindsets need to shift, involves the idea of shrinking child protection and child welfare as we know it to serve a limited purpose and reinvesting to address the needs of families in a more holistic, receptive, less punitive, less oppressive way that can build the community which will also require public awareness and buy in.
- Lyman commented the things that will derail transformative and reform efforts are predictable such as changes in leadership, tragedies and other distractions and presented the question how we build them into the strategies and inoculate the work from these barriers or detractors.
 - Co-Chair LaTanya commented there are ways to plan and build the challenges that will come as a result into the plan.

Subcommittee Breakout Sessions

Co-Chair LaTanya provided guidance for discussions during the breakout sessions to include the things discussed during the Summary Presentation, ideas and solutions as it relates to the individual subject matter of each subcommittee with consideration for the following prompts which were posed for the creation of action plans:

- Define a share goal and a vision for prevention for your region moving forward.
- How will you change or enhance your practice to promote family well-being?
- How will you foster collaboration across government agencies and providers with your agency?
- What supports would you need to take on your new approach to prevention services in your work, agency and region?

Breakout Sessions Began at 10:25AM

Breakout Sessions Ended at 10:55AM

Subcommittee Report-Outs:

- Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson reported the Investigated Screened-In Maltreatment Reports Subcommittee began discussions with goals as referenced by the Family First summary presentation with regards to when families seek assistance, how to encourage families to seek assistance and removing the punitive element of seeking assistance. Additional discussions were held on the dynamics involved when a family has experienced domestic violence – the approach taken when a parent is a risk, removal of the child, priority placed on safety but recognizing that the best place for the child may be in that situation with the parents and how this could be solved. The fact that there are referrals from Domestic Relations to State Court because of the situation and divorce which could potentially provide an opportunity to identify other state agencies to support families. Further discussions were also had on mandatory versus discretionary reporting and potentially having specific factors for reporting for mandated reporters based on certain offenses such as head trauma to include a guidance for when reports should be made with consideration given to other factors involved; advising mandated reporters on what takes place, input was provided by one subcommittee member/former teacher indicating neither training nor guidance was provided with regard to mandated reporting, when to report, what actions should take place, etc. Discussions on the need for massive funding for the initial stages of investigation, pre-petition legal representation is needed for the families involved and other supports that can be provided to keep children in their homes which will change the outcomes.
- Dr. Vanessa White reported the Protective Custodies Subcommittee discussed needing clarity around the first 48 hours (when a child is removed from their home); what happens if the report is indicated and how quickly this decision point leads to a child being placed in foster care. Dagené reported the subcommittee discussed protective custody as an entry point and consideration for after protective custody is taken; what happens to the families within the system? Additional data is needed for an understanding of the cases coming in and those that are referred to Intact Family Services looking at voluntary and involuntary intact cases; what other options are available versus bringing the family into the system. Dagené advised being part of Intact Family Services is still an indication that a family is involved with the system and the fact that it makes it difficult for families to get resources when its stigmatized. The subcommittee will continue to determine the data that is needed to continue this conversation.

- Co-Chair Bev reported the Indicated Reports Subcommittee discussed the questions they had with regards to adoption versus guardianship, which families get referred to Intact Family Services as opposed to children being removed from the home and how youth are educated while being served by the child welfare system.

Questions/Data Requests noted for further discussion:

- What percentage of families get referred to Intact Family Services as opposed to children being removed to be disaggregated by race? How is that decided? What is the percentage of indicated findings and case closures by race and the reasons why?
 - If a relative gets guardianship does any of the children return home to the parent? How many kin or relatives get guardianship versus going through the adoption process?
 - How well are youth-in-care doing in school? Are they behind and what assistance and supports do they receive to help improve their education? Data is needed by race and grade level.
- Sara Block reported the Timely Exit from Substitute Care Subcommittee discussed the development of service plans and how parents are integrated into the process, whether they are comfortable and trustful expressing what they need. What is being measured as far as progress and the participation of services, what should be the measure and who is qualified to determine this? How the system responds to barriers to participating services? Additional discussions were had around adjudication, disposition and shrinking the system in different ways. In Illinois the Juvenile Court Act, supporting case law findings are made with the child but should they be similar to an indicated finding, i.e. parent and child? Consideration for raising the burden of proof at adjudication from preponderance to clear and convincing evidence. With regards to disposition what does the standard of fit, willing and able really mean and how is fit being defined as well as the minimum parenting standard that make most parents feel like they are not enough or that the outcome is predetermined especially among black families. In addition, evaluation of the best interest standard as it is subjective, susceptible to bias and favors the status quo of children remaining in foster care and how children internalized being a ward of the State. The subcommittee will continue discussions beginning with the permanency planning process during the next meeting.

Questions/Data Requests from Chat noted for further discussion:

- Data on which families are offered Intact services and how successful are Intact services.
- Data where there was an investigation and PC was not taken and the child was later injured or died.
- Data on how decisions are made for Child welfare referrals versus investigation and referral for Intact services and how it differs across the State disaggregated by race.
- Data on the language and when the court can even consider guardianship as a permanency goal.

Recommendations to Date:

- Pre-petition legal advocacy; Establish a state-funded right to legal counsel for families at the very first point of DCFS' investigation.
- Changing the burden of proof during adjudication from preponderance to clear and convincing.
- Mandated reporters to receive the same training that provides guidance on when to report and based upon specific offenses or guidance for reporters in terms of alternatives to calling the Hotline for when you have concerns; legal recognition that there are other ways to support a family then calls into the Hotline; another number to call for the straight provision of community services outside of DCFS. A partnership between DHS and DCFS where the call comes in and both take action if needed.
 - **Noted for awareness:** Dagené made reference to the African American Family Commission and their final report with lists Differential Response as one of their initiatives in which calls were by another entity outside of DCFS. The African American Family Commission ended in 1994. DCFS current Child Welfare Services Referral program is the alternative to Differential Response; however, you are still required to call the Child Abuse Hotline for services and once it is determined that the call does not meet the criteria for an investigation the case is referred to community-based services. Dagené will send the Co-Chairs a copy of the final report and recommendations.
 - Nora Collins-Mandeville made reference to agencies such as DHS that have the expertise and community-based services, substance abuse and housing services as well as comprehensive community-based youth service. Having a mandated reporter report their concerns to an agency that has access to those services seems to be an appropriate alternative.
- Strengthen parents' capacity to care for youth at home by allowing them to utilize funds that have traditionally been earmarked to pay for foster care.
- Increase families' access to high-quality legal assistance to proactively address reasons families may be separated including housing and employment discrimination, lack of access to public benefits, access to stable, safe, and affordable housing, educational supports, intimate partner violence, and other family law issues. Free or low-cost legal assistance should be available to families in need.
- Disentangle factors tied to poverty from the maltreatment definition of "neglect."

- Disaggregate systemwide data to root out bias and institute a blind removal protocol.
- Amend Illinois' drug exposed infant statute to align with the protections provided by the Illinois Reproductive Health Act
- Streamline and simplify the process parents can use to have their records cleared within a reasonable amount of time following their successful completion of DCFS intervention.
- Further limit disclosure of DCFS records for employer and professional licensing determinations.
- Require DCFS to demonstrate evidence of specific, meaningful actions it has taken to avoid forcible family separation and why no service arrangement or other in-home interventions could sufficiently decrease DCFS' concerns in court proceedings.
- Require the Court to make findings regarding how the trauma of family separation may impact each youth's well-being as part of the Court's best interest analysis in removal hearings, i.e., a thorough balancing of harms of family separation and placement into foster care against the harms child is exposed to in home.
- Establish a statutory right to client-directed, state funded legal representation for every youth in care at all phases of case proceedings. Deliver support to the youth through a multi-disciplinary legal representation team that includes social workers, peer mentors, and system navigators.
- Provide alternative methods for mandated reporters to report concerns or seek services for families, i.e., hotline outside of DCFS so access services, also allowing mandated reporters more discretion and the ability to use professional judgment within the scope of their professional duties as to whether a case actually needs to be made.
- Increase and enhance family connections.
- Require that DCFS provide evidence at all hearings demonstrating affirmative, active efforts to prevent the breakup of kin/family and that those efforts have and continue to prove unsuccessful.
- Adopt more rigorous legal standards that require DCFS to engage in meaningful, active, ongoing, solution-oriented efforts to remove all barriers to frequent quality contact between youth and their family members regardless of the permanency goal.

Public Comment:

None

Action Items/Next Steps:

- Email Darnita Jackson or Dagené Brown with additional data requests.
- Email the Co-Chairs for alternative subcommittee designations, suggestions, questions, comments, or recommendations.

Meeting Adjournment:

Dagené Brown moved to adjourn the meeting. Onie Riley seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:32AM.

Next Meeting Scheduled for January 18, 2023.

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2023

Meeting called to order at 9:02AM by: LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL

Members in attendance: Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS
Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian
Sara Block, Ascend Justice
Dagené Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice
Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL
Ronald Davis, Parent Member
Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts
David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL
Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law
Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues
Carla Rogers, Proxy for State Senator Mattie Hunter
Patricia Holling, Proxy for LaTanya Law, Dept of Human Services
Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender
Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services
State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas, IL Legislative Latino Caucus
Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office
Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
Barb Frobish, Proxy for State Senator Sally Turner

Members not present: Paris Bateman, State's Attorney Office
State Representative Lakesia Collins
Clarissa Fourman, Former Youth Member
State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar, IL Legislative Latino Caucus
State Representative Sonya Harper
Cherie Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC
State Representative Camille Lilly
Onie Riley, Former Youth Member

Public: Dr. Tamara Fuller, Director, Children and Family Research Center, University of IL at Urbana
Kaitlyn Edicola
Dr. Vanessa White, Consultant, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Ashley Deckert, Illinois Collaboration on Youth
Paula Roa
Leah Yaris

DCFS: Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Office of Racial Equity Practice
Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups
Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed Members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

David Esposito entered a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on December 14, 2022. Beverly Jones seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Agenda Item 1 – FY2022 Monitoring Report of the B.H. Consent Decree Presentation:

Co-Chair Beverly Jones introduced Dr. Tamara Fuller, Director of the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) at the School of Social Work at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Fuller presented “Highlights from FY2022 Monitoring Report of the B.H. Consent Decree” published in July 2022. Dr. Fuller’s presentation focused on the following chapters:

- Child Safety – recurrence among children with substantiated reports, while in Intact Family cases, who do not receive services as well as those that occur while children are in substitute care.
- Continuity, Stability & Length of time in Care – the experiences of children once they are placed into substitute care:
 - initial type of placements – kinship foster homes, traditional foster homes, specialized foster homes, emergency shelters, group homes
 - placement stability
 - children who run away from substitute care
 - the length of time in substitute care
- Legal Permanence – Reunification, Adoption, Guardianship
 - the stability of the permanency – how many children re-enter care after being reunified, adopted or achieved guardianship
 - children achieving guardianship
 - children who age out of the system without achieving legal permanence
- Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in the IL Child Welfare System from the following decision points:
 - Which children are screened-in for investigations via the Hotline.
 - Which children are taken into protective custody during the investigation.
 - Which investigations are indicated.
 - Which children are removed from the home and enter Substitute Care including which children remain in Substitute Care longer than 36 months.
 - Which children received Intact Family Services.
- Dr. Fuller emphasized 4 key findings regarding disproportionality as follows:
 - Finding #1 – Black children are over-represented at every decision point in the IL Child Welfare System when compared to their representation in the IL child population.
 - Finding #2 – There are large regional differences in the degree to which Black children are over-represented in the IL child welfare system.
 - Finding #3 – Most, but not all, of the overrepresentation of Black children in the IL Child Welfare System is introduced at the Hotline. CFRC does not have access to Hotline data; however, per DCFS, the absolute value for Hotline intakes is about 2.0 for Black children in FY2021 meaning Black children are overrepresented in who gets reported to the Hotline.
 - Finding #4 – The amount of disproportionality has been decreasing over the last 7 years for some decision points. At the last decision point there is an increase in the amount of disproportionality in that black children have longer lengths of stay in substitute care longer than 3 years.
- Dr. Fuller reported the next B.H. Monitoring Report will be published in June, 2023.

Questions/Comments Noted for Further Discussion:

- What does the Department do in terms of sibling placement when a facility only takes children of a certain age?
- A request was made for a data analysis by Dr. Fuller and CFRC with regards to sibling placements comparing kinship foster placements and traditional placements disaggregated by race.
- Additional clarity was requested as to how the guardianship numbers were measured within the report which the length of time to guardianship is based on when children enter substitute care through to the date the legal guardianship is transferred. Comments made that guardianship is statutorily discouraged in Illinois and available only in relative placements as well as other practice issues with regards to kin having to obtain guardianship.
 - Dr. Fuller recommends the Task Force review Dr. Ted Cross' findings from the recent study about guardianship and the factors that lead to low guardianship rates and/or have Dr. Ted Cross present his findings to the Task Force.
- There are two factors in application within the court system, particularly for Cook County, that rule guardianship out as a permanency goal option:
 - The Juvenile Court Act specifically states that a judge cannot enter a goal of guardianship until the goal of either return home or adoption has been ruled out despite recently enacted legislation.
 - Illinois does not permit guardianships for certain age groups in non-relative homes.
- There is something within the system that creates variability, with regards to white and black children after the first decision point i.e., which children are screened-in for investigations via the Hotline, that creates stability for blacks across the entire continuum that seems to be distinct and suggest that there is a different effect occurring by race, ethnicity once you actually enter the system.
 - Anyone can call the Hotline, the question is what is the process for deciding to accept it as a report or not and are the criteria the same for all children. What is the decision-making like when a call comes into the Hotline? What gets accepted and not accepted is important as well.
 - Dr. Fuller stated CFRC did a report on the Hotline and the criteria for accepting a call is the same and is defined by statute.
 - Is it tracked what calls are taken as information only versus what calls lead to an actual investigation? Has the racial disproportionality been looked at in this aspect?
 - Data requested on the categories of mandated reporters that result in investigations to include a breakout of whether those mandated reporters are calling on neglect allegations or abuse allegations.

Questions/Data Requests/Comments from Chat noted for further discussion:

- We should take a closer look at lengths of stay across all DCFS regions for African Americans using RDI-like approach.
- Finding 2 begins to capture the relationship between race and lengths of stay across all regions.
- Screening in at the hotline is a DCFS decision though.
- The decision to make it an investigation or a CWS happens when that hotline call is made to SCR; CSW referral that is.
- That DCFS receives more calls regarding Black children. That is the meaning I understand from what Ms. Fuller stated.
- It's not just screened in criteria, it's also the professions that are required to be mandated reporters and how that intersects with oversurveillance, meaning, one intervention point is removing mandated reporting
- Isn't this where the bias-removal pilot project comes into play?
- Data request on breakdown by categories of mandate reporters that result in a finding?
- Access <https://www.cfr Illinois.edu/> to view the Children and Family Research Center's website and latest publications
- Access <https://www.cfr Illinois.edu/data-center.php> to view the CFRC Data Center

Breakout Sessions Began at 11:11AM

Breakout Sessions Ended at 11:41AM

Subcommittee Report-Outs:

- Robert Rodemeyer reported the Investigated Screened-In Maltreatment Reports Subcommittee began discussions around the data presented by Dr. Fuller as it relates to the 50-week number for kids in care and the experiences of families during that time to begin to strategize ways in which to give families more agency representation during this

time span. The subcommittee discussed the child and family team meetings and moving away from the current visitation model to be more inclusive of family time. Additionally, ways to promote fictive kin and relative foster care to create environments that enable parents to assume the day-to-day functioning and tasks using the child and family team meetings to coordinate these efforts and opportunities. The subcommittee believes this in turn will be more indicative of the safety to return home and the risk factors involved which will lead to more informed decisions in terms of permanence. Shifting resources to providing parents the opportunity to reassume care, take back parenting responsibility will lead to more informed decisions and alleviate concerns within the court system quicker.

- Dagené Brown made a comment regarding the hour allotted for parental visitation versus the time-frame to be reunified and whether there are opportunities to use this time more effectively and allow the parents to do something in the parental role, i.e. doctor's visit allowing the parents to engage their children for more than one hour a month as it could lead to reunifying families faster.
- Dagené reported the Protective Custodies Subcommittee discussed the data that black kids are twice as likely to be reported to the Hotline versus how they move through the child welfare system. The subcommittee discussed the apparent trend down in disproportionality over past years and why this is occurring. One potential recommendation is connecting racial equity practices and principles to the Department's CQI process to allow for the ability to collect the data and communicate what the effective practices are with other offices in other regions. Dagené commented this is also an ongoing initiative of the Office of Racial Equity as the data is not currently captured and broken down by office. The subcommittee also proposes revising and revamping the Mandated Reporter training as a recommendation with the understanding that disproportionality happens from the onset with the decision to make a report to the Hotline.
- Dr. Vanessa White reported the Indicated Reports Subcommittee discussed the data with regards to placement and the opportunity to do more with relative or kinship placements and are still in need of the data previously requested.
 - Carla Rogers made a comment with regards to the data presented today reflecting most youth are placed in kinship care which conflicts with data previously presented that children were not being placed in kinship care as the first course of action.
 - Dagené commented that most of the Department's youth-in-care are placed in kinship care as there are not that many foster care placements available. Dagené will provide clarity during a future meeting.

Recommendations to Date:

- Connecting racial equity practices and principles to the Department's CQI process to allow for the ability to collect the data and communicate what the effective practices are with other offices in other regions.
- Revising and revamping the Mandated Reporter training with the understanding that disproportionality happens from the onset with the decision to make a report to the Hotline.

Public Comment:

Ashley Deckert reiterated the comment from Bryan Samuels in that there seems to be variability in terms of the decision points moving through the system for black children adding that while the data and the relative RDI indicating there is limited disproportionality, this does not mean there isn't any and this should be considered when the decisions are made internally to not contribute to that. Additionally New York is connecting directly with the people within their communities that make the most child maltreatment reports, i.e., teachers, law enforcement, medical professionals to determine ways in which to support them in helping families as opposed to reporting them. Proposes a similar strategy within the State, regionally or by county as a way to engage mandated reporters. Proposes improving the mandated reporter training to include thoughtful measures about who and how the report is made highlighting there is bias in how families referred to the Hotline.

Public Comments from Chat:

Ashley Deckert: Just for clarification, does the report identify who is the perpetrator of the maltreatment while youth is in care? is this generally the foster parent/kin caregiver...etc. or is it generally the bio parent?

- Things to consider to impact hotline level data: 1. Improve mandated reporter training 2. Blind removals at the hotline level
- Not at the hotline level, bias free removal happens at the decision to remove a child or not that is where the demographics are removed, not before then however.

Action Items/Next Steps:

- Email the Co-chairs with suggestions, questions and/or additional comments.
- Email Darnita Jackson or Dagené Brown with additional data requests.
- Breakout sessions will occur every meeting going forward.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02PM.

Next Meeting Scheduled for February 15, 2023.

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2023

Meeting called to order at 9:03AM by:	LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL
Members in attendance:	Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Sara Block, Ascend Justice Dagené Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice Ronald Davis, Parent Member Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts Clarissa Fourman, Former Youth Member Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar, IL Legislative Latino Caucus Carla Rogers, Proxy for State Senator Mattie Hunter Cherie Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Patricia Holling, Proxy for LaTanya Law, Dept of Human Services Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender State Representative Camille Lilly State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas, IL Legislative Latino Caucus Onie Riley, Former Youth Member Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
Members not present:	Paris Bateman, State's Attorney Office State Representative Lakesia Collins Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL State Representative Sonya Harper Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services State Senator Sally Turner
Public:	Dr. Vanessa White, Consultant, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Paula Roa, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Simone Weil, Casey Family Programs Anita Weinberg, Loyola University Chicago Meghan Farren, Loyola University Chicago Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago

DCFS:	<p>Tamela Atwood, Deputy Director, State Central Register</p> <p>Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Office of Racial Equity Practice</p> <p>Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups</p> <p>Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs</p>
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Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed Members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

Beverly Jones entered a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on January 18, 2023. Ronald Davis seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Agenda Item 1 – SCR Informational Overview by Tamela Atwood:

Tamela Atwood, Deputy Director of the State Central Register (Hotline) joined the Task Force to present an overview presentation on the State Central Register as well as to answer questions raised during the meeting in January with regards to the Hotline, the decision-making process when calls come into the Hotline and what calls are tracked as information only versus what calls lead to an actual investigation.

Tamela’s presentation provided the following information:

- The State Central Register has four physical sites located in Springfield, Chicago, East St. Louis and Quincy.
- The Statewide Hotline was created through the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (ANCRA) never closes, and calls are answered in real time. The majority of calls or online reports are made by mandated reporters, however, anyone can make a report to the Hotline, reports can be anonymous. In FY22, approximately 44.1% of the reports that came in resulted in a child abuse and neglect investigation.
- Incoming calls are answered in the order in which they come and are placed in a queue and answered by hotline workers who are on standby and awaiting incoming calls. Hotline workers listen for information that meets the criteria as set forth in ANCRA to be able to take a report of child abuse and neglect.
- Every contact that is made at the Hotline is documented on an Intake that is maintained in the SACWIS database. Reports of child abuse and neglect make up 41% of calls that come into the Hotline. The types of intakes are as follows:
 - Information Only intakes are calls that come in that do not meet the criteria for child abuse and neglect as set forth in ANCRA. Information only intakes generally are calls of concerns that are taken regarding Intact or placement cases and including important information that the case worker should have and know.
 - Child Welfare Service referrals are a result of reports that come into the Hotline that do not raise to the level of child abuse or neglect, does not meet the criteria set forth in ANCRA; however, the family would benefit from some type of service. Services includes family support referrals to assist grandparents to care for their grandchildren or preventative services that help connect families to housing, parenting and/or community resources, counseling services, etc. and do not involve a child abuse or neglect investigation. In FY21, between 14,000 and 15,000 referrals were made for families.
 - Licensing referrals are a result of calls that come into the Hotline regarding concerns about licensing violations with a licensed facility that does not meet the criteria for child abuse and neglect as set forth in ANCRA.
 - No Report Taken are a result of calls that come into the Hotline reporting concerns about child abuse or neglect but the information given does not raise to the level set forth in ANCRA or suggest the family would benefit from services therefore no report is taken; however, the call is documented as an intake.
- Questions raised during the meeting in January included the following:
 - What is the process for deciding to accept calls that come into the Hotline as a report or not?
 - Is the criteria the same for all children?
 - What is the decision-making like when a call comes into the Hotline?
 - In response, Tamela shared that the information provided by the reporter is assessed by the Call Floor worker to determine how the call will be documented. The Call Floor worker asks questions about the family’s composition, the incident of concern, the child’s age, developmental functioning and vulnerability.

The Call Floor worker looks at the history of the family, whether the family has had prior DCFS involvement or investigations or has a history of child abuse or neglect, whether prior calls were received on the family regarding the same allegation, whether there are open investigations as well as the severity of what is being reported. Decision trees are not utilized by the Hotline worker to guide in the assessment. Further, the requirements for DCFS to have the delegated authority to initiate an investigation include:

- Eligible Victim – child must be age 17 or younger also includes youth between the ages of 18-22 currently living in a DCFS licensed facility.
 - Eligible Perpetrator – must be an immediate family member or household member, paramour or caregiver and now also includes a human trafficker.
 - Eligible Incident – there must be child abuse or neglect suspected based upon the allegation system.
- Illinois is an allegation-based system. The purpose of the allegation system is narrowly defined as a set of circumstances providing the framework for purposes of determining whether what is being alleged meets the criteria for child abuse and/or neglect and whether it occurred as a direct action of an eligible perpetrator or due to blatant disregard for parental responsibility that caused an injury to a child. Refer to DCFS Procedures 300, Appendix B.
 - Law requires DCFS to report to the State's Attorney Office cases where there has been a second indicated report of child abuse as well as infants exposed to substance abuse to review for possibly filing a petition. Further the State's Attorney Office can file petitions independent of DCFS based on other information such as a police report.

Questions/Comments Noted for Further Discussion:

- Heather Dorsey made a comment with regards to the number of new filed JA cases and how it tracks with the number of new investigations filed. There were exponential numbers in some counties of new cases filed but this has tapered off in the last few years similarly to the information provided in the presentation regarding the percentage of new investigation cases. The data involving the percentage of new investigation cases should be reviewed and next steps to include reviewing removal data to determine how many result in an open court case.
- Bryan Samuels asked a question about the relationship between the criteria for abuse and neglect used by the Hotline versus the State's Attorney Office. Are State's Attorneys obligated to follow the same criteria and how varied are their determinations whether to accept the case or to bring a child into temporary custody?
 - Tamela responded the criteria does not change for DCFS and it is important that it is applied consistently to the allegation system as it describes the factors that investigators should be looking for. DCFS indicates reports based on credible evidence. When a DCFS investigator takes protective custody of a child it is only when it is believed that the child is in immediate imminent danger which cannot be controlled and there is nothing reasonable that can be done to protect the child. The State's Attorney Office decides to file the petition and set forth the evidence to either maintain the protective custody or return the child home.
- Stemming from his comments raised during January's meeting with regards to the seemingly variability within the system, Bryan made a comment that it is not uncommon for investigators to investigate a case with the understanding of the information they need to bring to the State's Attorney for their decision to be validated. Bryan questioned whether there is variability in removals or investigations by the geographic distribution to the State's Attorney Office.
 - Robert Rodemeyer questioned the meaning of "validate" as the assessments are separate for different purposes. The State's Attorney Office in Cook County has an independent responsibility to assess each petition for their own purposes. There are certain departmental guidelines that often lead to cases not being screened. Investigators have informed them that they cannot make a second referral to Intact Family Services if a family was previously provided Intact services at some point in time of which this is not indicated in statute or the Juvenile Court Act. There are also cases with viable fathers or family members located in bordering states; however, DCP will not safety plan and will not place a child with a father across state lines. These factors prohibit or limit investigators' actions and will impact urgent and immediate necessity as well as probable cause in a court proceeding to support the burden of more likely than not.
 - Bryan reiterated for the Task Force that there are other variables in the decisions about which children are removed and which ones are not. The State's Attorney Office plays a critical role and suggests there are variables to consider directly related to the fact that different State's Attorneys will use different criteria for the purposes of making their own determinations which could be the reason for seeing different patterns of data across the State.
 - Robert provided over 40% of screened-in cases are not filed in Cook County which includes cases received by other counties but cannot speak to the screening process conducted in other counties. Further there is a

difference in how DCFS field offices function in different regions due to the standards and practices within those counties.

- Robert asked a question about DCFS' reluctance to indicate subsequent cases involving domestic violence because no harm was done to the children even with credible evidence that domestic violence occurred and is further supported by law enforcement. The unfounded findings make it difficult for the State's Attorney Office to prove to the courts that this is a recurring issue and requires court action. These incidents involve emotional abuse and psychological damage to the children in the home. Children witnessing these incidents are harmed above and beyond a physical injury. Robert questioned whether there was training around this or a way to link the SCR number and indicated finding to the perpetrator of domestic violence even though that was not the person the case was logged or coded under to allow for documenting what is happening without indicating the victim.
 - Tamela provided domestic violence falls under allegation #60 Substantial Risk of Harm or allegation #10 Environment Injurious to Health and Welfare and are the more difficult allegations to indicate based on credible evidence due to statements being recanted by the victim or the children who witnessed it. These allegations require considering the totality of the circumstances to determine whether it would cause a reasonable person to believe that the child is in severe or moderate danger of physical harm or injury. The data shows most of the indicated reports are risk of harm allegations which involve incidents of domestic violence as well as parental mental health issues.
 - All reports are tracked head of household under mother's name. A risk of harm allegation can be put on any member of the household so there could be an unfounded report on the mother but indicated on the paramour or father. Additionally, there is training for Call Floor workers and Investigators on domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health issues. Mental injury or emotional harm is also a standalone allegation.

Questions/Data Requests/Comments from Chat noted:

- When calls come in is race identified? If so, are the cases assigned to investigators broken down by race?
 - When calls come into the Hotline, race and language of the family is identified if known by the caller. Calls are assigned to field offices based upon the geographical location of the family. The information is transmitted electronically to the Child Protection Supervisor who then assigns the cases to an investigative worker.
- Of the 44% of cases that are referred for investigations and the 56% that are not referred, does DCFS track data on the race of the families?
 - DCFS does track by race. Refer to Data Slide deck provided on February 15, 2023.
- Does the Child Welfare Specialist receive photos or videos in at the call stage?
 - No, they only receive information verbally. Call Floor workers do not have a way of knowing if the information being reported is true; however, if it fits into the allegation then it is sent to the field to investigate. Photos, videos and other supporting documents are gathered during the investigation stage.
- Are all No Reports Taken calls kept on file so if another call comes into the Hotline the worker can see the previous call resulted in no report taken? When is the SCR number assigned to the family, only if it is assigned for investigations or based upon other decisions?

Yes, workers can review the number of no reports taken. Reports are documented with intake numbers which are different than SCR numbers. SCR numbers are only assigned when there will be an investigation, i.e., a CANS report for child abuse or neglect which is assigned to the field with an SCR number. SCR numbers are tracked A to Z, so when a family is reported the first time it is assigned a number with an A behind it and so on. Hotline workers can see all prior history on a family and can search by participant which is the process and also includes identifying if there are prior unfounded or indicated reports; Information only reports that were sent to the caseworker, prior child welfare referrals, pending open cases or involves a prior youth in care. The increase in child welfare referrals is related to HB1551. Refer to 325 ILCS 5/7.01. P.A. 101-0237/HB1551 eff: 1/1/2020). Access [Illinois General Assembly - Full Text of Public Act 101-0237 \(ilga.gov\)](https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/101/bills/101_0237/HB1551.htm) to view full text.

- What are the IOR and SOR numbers?
 - IOR means initial oral report and refers to the first time that a report is made to the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline and taken for investigation. SOR means subsequent oral report and refers to a second or more report to the Hotline. The number of new investigations is a combination of subsequent oral reports and initial oral reports.
- It is sometimes the case that DCFS will bring a case to the various State's Attorney's Offices across the state, and for the ASA to decline to file a petition?
- The point Bryan is making about variability is significant.

- Is there any data regarding how different prosecutor offices handle the same type of allegation and fact pattern?
 - DCFS does not capture this information.
- I didn't follow what you said about the mandated reporter slide--is that the race of the reporter? Or race of the child reported by mandated reporters?
 - The mandated report data includes the race of the child. It does not include the race of the reporter. This information is not captured by DCFS.

Agenda Item 2 – Data Information Overview by Dagené Brown:

- Dagené provided highlights and a brief explanation regarding the data slide deck sent to members today. The data slide deck includes data requests as well as responses to the questions received previously from the Task Force.

Breakout Sessions Began at 10:25 AM

Breakout Sessions Ended at 11:25 AM

Subcommittee Report-Outs:

- Cherie Kesler reported the Investigated Screened-In Maltreatment Reports Subcommittee are proposing the following recommendations:
 - Body cameras for investigators to help identify and determine whether or not cultural bias plays a role. Helps to identify aggressive conversations whereas currently there is only the investigator's report.
 - DHS style hotline for request for assistance by either would be reporters or individuals themselves, a request for help.
 - Public Defender style hotline to help families through the investigation process, hotline system with defense attorneys who answer questions.
 - A separate family system similar to what they have in Wisconsin which would assist families with the establishment of guardianships outside of an investigation if time is needed for them to work on themselves which could be a division of either DCFS or another agency.
 - A parent bill of rights, a style of warnings for parents that would also include information about support and access to services that somebody could call if needed.
- Dagené reported the Protective Custodies Subcommittee are proposing the following recommendations:
 - Ways in which to get a safety plan for engaged fathers who have not been indicated in the system stemming from Robert's comments about the inability to get a safety plan for fathers living out of State to assist with preventing kids from coming into the system.
 - Drilling down the risk of harm allegation in terms of the different risks that are accounted for and captured under this allegation especially with regards to domestic violence and mental illness.
 - Reviewing the language of ANCRA as it pertains to the criteria for initiating an investigation during the intake process to account for how language is used differently in families particularly for the families that are being reported for purposes of determining if that influences reasons why kids come into care; example spanking versus whooping. How has the language evolved over the years in terms of the system of allegations as Hotline assessments are based off conversations. How the words are interpreted is important for the purposes of determining whether the language needs to be challenged or changed. Speaks to the variation of removals and which families these occur for as well as the allegation-based system that the same words are used for all; however, implicit bias, other forms of integrating and existing knowledge suggest that the use of particular words may have different meanings for different people.
- Dr. Vanessa White reported the Indicated Reports Subcommittee are proposing the following recommendations:
 - Online prompts or a decision-making tree to address the amount of discretion that workers have in making decisions which will be used as a guide to work through questions and decisions during the intake and investigation process.
 - Changes to referrals in that currently services are based on history of findings; however, it should be based on preventing children from coming into care and should not require a history of finding to receive support.
 - Primary Prevention Model such as a hub to move some capacity to the communities for readily available support. Recommends inviting the Casey Family Programs to return to a future meeting to share best practices from around the country or world-wide and to discuss leaders of change with a preventative model.

- Norman funds: meetings between Members and DCFS administration around Norman funding are occurring and there are going to be changes to the procedures particularly because the turnover for investigators is one to two years. Need to change the rules to ensure accountability for the things that need to happen with Norman funding.
- Sara Block reported the Timely Exits from Substitute Care reported discussed and proposing Heather Dorsey present information during a future Task meeting on the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts and the work they are engaging in, the data they are collecting and their partnerships with DCFS. The permanency planning process was also discussed with regards to the integrated assessment, service plans and other case reports that can create delays and extended time frames on the front end. This is impactful to the length of time in care and the subcommittee questioned whether the courts have time for a meaningful review before hearings. The discrepancies between the quality of services amongst the different agencies was discussed as well in terms of availability, support for foster parents and how that effects the family's experiences. Youth's experiences in foster care are often worse than what they could have experienced remaining in the home. The subcommittee are proposing the following recommendations:
 - Ensure timely integrated assessments, core reports, service plans with consideration given to how these processes are conducted to include involvement from the families, particularly the importance of the youth's voice in the permanency planning process and connecting families with services that are needed.
 - Clarissa Fourman questioned why former youth-in-care members have not been invited to share their experiences with the Task Force.

Public Comment:

Angela McLemore posed the questions how can the task force help to facilitate communications between a hospital and the appropriate agency when a child is born with an addiction? How can this child be followed through until the age of 18? Angela commented there are various organizations that need to communicate with each other for this to occur. Both the mother and the child need support and resources.

Comments from the Chat:

Anita Weinberg added the following note: In addition to Casey, I would suggest reaching out to Chapin to learn what some of their staff has been looking at in terms of building a structure for a primary prevention. I can provide names as it relates to Indicated Reports and Timely Exits subcommittees as part of a recommendation.

Action Items/Next Steps:

- Former youth will be invited to share their experiences during a future Task Force meeting.
- Email the Co-chairs with suggestions, questions and/or additional comments.
- Subcommittees are to continue thinking about and keeping record of recommendations based upon the data.
- Breakout sessions will occur every meeting going forward.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:49 AM.

Next Meeting Scheduled for March 15, 2023 at 9 AM.

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Meeting Minutes
March 15, 2023

<p>Meeting called to order at 9:02AM by:</p>	<p>LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL</p>
<p>Members in attendance:</p>	<p>Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Sara Block, Ascend Justice Dagené Brown, Director, Office of Racial Equity Practice Ronald Davis, Parent Member Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Patricia Holling, Proxy for LaTanya Law, Dept of Human Services Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender State Representative Camille Lilly State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas, Onie Riley, Alumni of Care Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office</p>
<p>Members not present:</p>	<p>Paris Bateman, State's Attorney Office State Representative Lakesia Collins Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL Clarissa Fourman, Alumni of Care Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar State Representative Sonya Harper Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall State Senator Sally Turner</p>
<p>Public:</p>	<p>Lyman Legters, Casey Family Programs Theresa Costello, Action 4 Child Protection Dr. Vanessa White, Consultant, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Paula Roa, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Simone Weil, Casey Family Programs Anita Weinberg, Loyola University Chicago Meghan Farren, Loyola University Chicago Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago Ashley Deckert, ICOY</p>

DCFS:	<p>Tracey King, Deputy Chief of Staff</p> <p>Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Office of Racial Equity Practice</p> <p>Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups</p> <p>Rodrigo Remolina, Deputy Director, Office of Legislative Affairs</p> <p>Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs</p>
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Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed Members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

Ronald Davis entered a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting on February 15, 2023. Beverly Jones seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Agenda Item #1 – Best Practices in Child Welfare Systems Presentation by Lyman Legters, Casey Family Programs: Refer to slide deck sent via email on March 15, 2023.

LaTanya provided the frame of reference for today’s presentation in that the Task Force’s goal is to identify ways in which to improve the child welfare system in Illinois. To assist with this task, Lyman Legters, Strategic Consultant with Casey Family Programs joined the Task Force to present “Racial Justice in Child Welfare – A Brief Survey of National Efforts” focusing on themes, bright spots and priorities from three other jurisdictions, namely Connecticut, Sacramento, CA and Broward County, Florida.

Casey Family Programs is a national operating foundation devoted to improving outcomes and experiences for children and families that experience child welfare. Casey has relationships with all 50 states and has worked with Illinois, the Department of Children and Family Services and other organizations within the State for about 13 years.

Highlights from Lyman’s presentation are as follows:

- Connecticut has identified racial justice as a strategic goal and as a foundational part of their transformation efforts and are moving towards an anti-racist organization. Connecticut also has an appointed multi-system Task Force as well as a state-wide workgroup focused on disproportionality and disparity in the child welfare system. Connecticut is using the data they have with regards to disproportionality, disaggregated by race and ethnicity to analyze their decision-making strategies and responsive tactics in both policy and practice to explore the issues. Connecticut’s racial justice efforts and their safety efforts are completely aligned which also extends to alignment across systems and context. Lyman shared Connecticut’s legislative report to their respective legislature that shows the data trends within the resources section of the slide deck.
- Sacramento, California has implemented the “Black Child Legacy” campaign for Sacramento and the surrounding counties. It is important to note that the state of California is a county administered system therefore Sacramento’s Black Child Legacy campaign is not a statewide effort. The Black Child Legacy campaign was initiated because black children were dying at twice the rate of white children in that community, across all spectrums that cause fatalities from gun violence to safe sleep issues to abuse and neglect. The campaign focused on the root causes of the fatalities which caused the efforts to be extended beyond addressing and responding to issues within their child welfare system to also include community safety, gun violence and gang activity in connection with the Juvenile Justice system. Sacramento adopted the 21st Century Well Being system recognizing that safety and well-being are to be integrated, racial justice is a well-being domain and that their racial justice work and their safety efforts are to be connected. Sacramento was able to reduce huge numbers of children from dying across all races and ethnicities. Managing the narrative to and within the community as to the root causes why children come into care as well as the shift in the mindsets of the workforce were instrumental in the reduction of child fatalities.
- Broward County, FL addresses racial disproportionality and disparity in their child welfare system by connecting with the community via a series of community cafes to receive direct feedback. Broward Co focused on preventing entry into the child welfare system by fundamentally changing the way children come into care and how investigations were conducted. Whereas historically Illinois also had a very narrow entry point into the child welfare system which has shifted over the last few years. Lyman recommends consideration of past practices in Illinois that worked as a resource for developing future strategies and policy change. Broward Co’s transformation is centered on community accountability in that the community determines how successful and/or effective the work is. Broward Co has reduced the numbers of children and prevented entries into the child welfare system impacting children across all races and ethnicities. Lyman shared Broward Co’s report which includes their goals and principles within the resources section of the slide deck.

- Illinois is poised to make substantial changes in the child welfare system to impact a great number of children and families. Racial Justice, racial equity cannot be achieved with a transformational effort. Illinois is making progress in its transformational efforts and must be centered in the conversation from a national perspective. Illinois has legacy and was one of the key states to be looked at with regards to the progressive work around racially just practices and focusing on disproportionality and disparity and doing an analysis with disaggregated data. Illinois is part of the National partnership on child safety. Illinois is part of the Casey Family Programs' Race Equity Improvement Collaborative that has been in operation for almost 5 years and consists of a group of 15 States that meet annually to focus and share resources on practice and policy change for racial equity. Dagené Brown is a part of the Race Equity Improvement Collaborative as Illinois leadership and as a part of the Child Welfare Advisory Committee. The Family First and Prevention Services Act presents an opportunity for Illinois to utilize federal resources for purposes of funding prevention efforts.
- Themes and priorities shared across all 4 jurisdictions include the following:
 - Data – it must be understood to ensure it is helpful in see the trends and the improvements that are or are not being made.
 - Clarity on what the vision for transformation is and how to align the vision across multiple systems and context.
 - Shared leadership and collective responsibility across systems and agencies, requires cross agency commitments.
 - Voice of lived expertise as they can tell you what is going on and what is needed.
 - Being driven by collective results across systems and contexts.
- Casey Family Programs has a team dedicated to Illinois. Their focus is on providing, improving and ultimately preventing the need for foster care. Simone Weil is the Policy Director. Lyman Legters is the Strategic Consultant. Casey Family Programs is a partner in the transformative efforts.

Questions/Comments Noted for Further Discussion:

- Representative Lilly asked a question about discussions around Intact Family and the resources needed to sustain the intact philosophy within the jurisdictions outlined during the presentation. Additionally, how these activities are funded within their respective State and Counties.
 - Lyman responded that there are themes across these jurisdictions in terms of family centers and community-based resources provided to families but would need to do a cross-reference to determine this information to be provided at a later date. Further, Intact Family Services can be built up to offer more resources as a part of a recommendation from the Task Force.
 - Onie Riley made a comment with regards to the funding for Intact Services of which was drastically reduced in Illinois over the past 10 to 15 years.
 - Lyman commented the Task Force should consider the historical context with regards to the funding of Intact Services as well as the 19th and 20th century operations and principles within child welfare in the 21st century.
- LaTanya asked a question about Broward County, the things they did to narrow their front door to entry into the child welfare system and the supports Broward County provided families to keep them from being subjected to the system.
 - Lyman provided he would need to do a deeper analysis and provide this information at a later date; however, Broward County had an intention to prevent entry therefore they committed a lot of resources to the community but will provide specific strategies at a later date and could make connections with representatives from Florida to allow them to speak to the ways in which they narrowed the doorway to entry. Further, historically Illinois had a narrow doorway into entry but struggled with permanency rates and children exiting the system which has shifted in the last few years. Lyman poses this is something the Task Force should consider and what that means in terms of racial justice. Additionally, another transformation effort to look for is Dana Weiner's report out of the Governor's Office which will be a helpful resource to access but needs the perspective of the Task Force on its implementation.
 - Dagené Brown provided information on the narrow doorway into entry in Illinois from the year 2000 in that there were a number of strategies that covered racial justice at the helm of permanency, the community and the father initiative to help keep brown and black families out of the system. The Permanency Enhancement Project is housed under the Office of Racial Equity Practice is an initiative between DCFS and University partners that consist of action teams throughout the State to address some of this work and gets communities involved to help with faster reunification of children as well as to prevent entry into the system. Funding for this initiative was cut under a previous administration which eliminated the University partners that helped with technical support to communities. Dagené is working to increase this funding stream with

the support of federal and grant funding that was provided in 2021 to address systemic racism and posed the question how to enhance these efforts and continue to engage the communities.

- Co-Chair Beverly Jones asked a question with regards to Intact Family Services versus Foster Care and how to think about this differently and what things are seen on a national level whereas in Illinois the bulk of the child welfare system involves Foster Care.
 - Lyman responded Foster Care is not an evidence-based program. It is what has developed over centuries as the response to child abuse or neglect and is based on an old premise. Transformational thinking is what needs to take place in different jurisdictions with the question being how to build out Intact Family Services. These questions also need to center around the why within the work of the Task Force to include why is it important to focus on racial justice and racial equity and explore the history of how and why Intact Family Services got to this point when the resources were cut to figure out responsibilities going forward. These conversations need to extend to the provider community as these conversations are within the Family First Prevention Act, the 21st Century Child and Family Wellbeing as well as the racial justice space therefore alignment is important to move it forward. Clarity around the vision for Illinois children and families is key. Casey Family Programs is invested in supporting these efforts.

Questions/Comments from Chat:

- Does CT have a structure in which human services and child welfare services are housed in the same state agency?
- Can you speak more to what it looks like to align/link racial justice and safety? What are states and counties putting into place to do that?
 - Lyman intends to discuss the efforts of other jurisdictions in this regard at a later date; however; racial justice and safety are not separate and posed the question how the Task Force is informing the safety practice within child welfare which also connects with the Office of Racial Equity Practice and how they are informing the safety efforts of DCFS and across other systems. There needs to be intentionality in linking these efforts. Illinois is part of the National Partnership on Child Safety which has racial justice centered within its efforts. Lyman further posed the question how is racial justice contemplated in the implementation of the Safe Practice Model and how the Task Force can inform the implementation.
- Simone Weil: Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspectives this morning. Additional information regarding safety and racial justice: [Safety Science Culture – Casey Family Programs](#) and the Broward County example: [Advancing Racial Justice – Casey Family Programs](#)
- I don't know if DCFS staff on this call can respond to this question - the Governor's budget includes a big increase in dollars for investigation, and much less for intact services. How do these efforts relate to the proposed budget? My understanding from this presentation is that IL is planning to move to this model. Thanks.
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Agenda Item #2 – Safe Practice Model Overview Presentation by Theresa Costello, Action 4 Child Protection:

Refer to slide deck sent via email on March 15, 2023 as well as documentation sent on March 17th and April 4, 2023.

LaTanya provided the frame of reference for this presentation namely to showcase what is currently being done at DCFS. Dagené introduced Theresa Costello from Action 4 Child Protection as part of the team helping to develop the Department's initiative to impact how children come into the system stemming from comments made by Bryan Samuels during the meeting in February with regards to examining the language used today from 20 or so years ago and how the Department assesses safety within families.

Theresa Costello, CEO of Action for Child Protection joined the Task Force to present an overview presentation on the SAFE Practice Model. Action for Child Protection is a nonprofit organization that partners with children and families departments across the country tailored to the specific jurisdiction. Action for Child Protection is currently working with Illinois to ensure consistency with statute, policy, rules and regulations related to safety plans.

The Safe Practice Model was developed in 1984 and has been updated over the years based on research, practice, experience and requirements. The Safe Practice Model goes from Intake to case closure and can be implemented in various ways dependent upon the jurisdiction. Action for Child Protection is also involved with other aspects of child welfare such as policy, training, quality assurance, procedures, etc. and supports implementation of the evidence-based program, Family Connections, a prevention intervention.

Highlights from the Safe Practice Model presentation are as follows:

- SAFE stands for safety · assessment · family evaluations. The SAFE Practice Model is replacing CERAP (Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol) the Department's current decision-making tool which was developed in 1996.
- SAFE includes structured, interrelated assessment processes that include defined criteria objectives and assessment protocols that structure the case from what an investigator does at intake all the way through to permanency. SAFE include best practices necessary to keep children safe, identifies children who are in need of protection and takes the least intrusive approach.
- SAFE begins the assessment process by bringing the strengths-based focus to the forefront from the beginning of a case. This is done by recognizing the protective capacities that exist within a family weighed against the dangers that may exist in a family from appearance behavior for purposes of determining what can be done to keep the child safe without removing them from the home. Child safety can be achieved by enhancing the caregiver's protective capacities.
- SAFE has standardized criteria and well-defined guidelines that every worker will be using. This approach has proved to reduce judgement and bias in decision-making. SAFE has a specific process of structuring and defining the conditions for reunification with home supports after removal which is unique to the model.
- Outcomes in Arizona resulted in a 30% decrease from a peak in 2016 when nearly 19,000 children were in foster care after implementation of the SAFE Practice Model. Arizona developed and implemented a supervisory coaching program to reinforce the practice, rebuilt their I.T. infrastructure replacing SACWIS with CCWIS creating efficiencies for their staff and created a mobile app to help staff with documentation while in the field.
- Stemming from the question raised during Lyman's presentation with regards to Intact Family Services and ways to raise the number of families served, Arizona was able to increase the number of families served via in-home safety plans with the implementation of the SAFE model.
- The foundational principles of the SAFE Model used throughout the life of a case include the following of which the definitions were provided via email on March 17, 2023:
 - Present Danger
 - Caregiver Protective Capacities
 - Impending Danger
 - Safe vs Unsafe
- The SAFE Model concept for change related to safety includes the Family Conditions Continuum which is evaluate a specific danger and is distinguished by the following:
 - Severity of behaviors of conditions and circumstances.
 - Vulnerable children by age, developmental status or disability.
 - Conditions out of the control of the family.
 - Imminence or the likelihood that something will occur in the very near future.
 - Behaviors and conditions that are observable rather than a gut feeling.
- The SAFE Model Information Collection Assessment Areas speaks to information sufficiency which is a change to what is currently done. Information Collection standards are established for every case beginning at intake which is organized into the following 4 assessment areas.
 - Extent and surrounding circumstances of the maltreatment.
 - Adult functioning on a daily basis for all caregivers in the household to include whether there is drug or alcohol abuse, mental health functioning and whether there is domestic violence.
 - Child functioning on a daily basis for each child in the household.
 - Parenting and discipline practices for all caregivers in the household.
- SAFE helps to identify unsafe children and instill the least intrusive safety management which will likely result in an increase in the number of families serviced via Intact rather than via permanency. The safety management strategy at the point of investigation will require ways in which to provide in-home services and avoid placement. If a child cannot be kept safe at home and must be removed the conditions for reunification are defined right at that point as well as the conditions for return home with in-home safety supports. There is a parallel process whereas a child is returned home with the home safety supports while the longer-term treatment is being worked on which includes community provider supports that are specific to safety.

Questions/Comments Noted for Further Discussion:

- LaTanya asked a question about the process currently for investigations as opposed to what the process will be after the implementation of the SAFE Practice Model.
 - Theresa responded that the process right now under CERAP which guides the decisions around safety, there is not a separation of the concepts of present and impending danger with the current list of safety factors and therefore a decision can be made based upon a present danger that sets a trajectory for the family. An example was provided where there is substance abuse and domestic violence present within a case with 60 days to investigate however a decision was made to remove on the first day of the case. With SAFE a safety plan can be put into place while the assessment continues to study the impending danger which allows for a better understanding of the protective capacities in the family and ways to keep the child in the home with services.
- Angela McLemore asked a question about the criteria-based decision making as it relates to the foundational principles and definitions to be used throughout the life of the case and whether these are predetermined criteria that are to be used to determine where in the life of a case the child may be? What are the predetermined criteria?
 - Theresa responded there are definitions for factors and includes specific criteria that will be utilized by staff. The protective capacities, i.e., behavioral, emotional, and cognitive each have well-defined descriptors. Staff and supervisory training will occur as a part of the implementation as well as supervisory coaching to make sure all utilizing are applying the criteria in the same way.

Refer to the SAFE glossary sent via email on March 17th, 2023 to review all the definitions.

- Angela raised the question how caseworkers are supported mentally and physically within the current DCFS system.
 - Dagené will provide this information during the next meeting but provided that the expectation is that supervisors are monitoring staff from a mental health and safety standpoint. Additionally, there the Department has initiatives specific around safety and EAP mental health programs as well as requirements that staff take time off due to specific situations with a family.
 - Beverly responded from a provider's perspective that safety begins with the supervisor. Staff are not asked to go into a situation that could be considered dangerous without another staff member or supervisor accompanying them and on occasion law enforcement can also assist. There is also a process for caseworkers to talk about their experiences after a home visit. Additionally, there is an EAP program that is free for employees to take advantage of as an additional support.
- LaTanya asked when will the SAFE model be implemented. Additionally, the determination of impending danger and present danger is that used as an assessment to determine whether the children should be removed?
 - Theresa provided that DCFS will replace SACWIS (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System) with CCWIS (Comprehensive Child Welfare Implementation Information System) of which Deloitte has been contracted for this and the SAFE Practice Model will be built within namely IllinoisConnect. This is a 5-year process which has already begun. Implementation to begin October, 2023 starting with the Intake module for the Hotline followed by Investigations, Intact and Permanency beginning Spring, 2025.
 - Theresa provided that the criteria for present and impending danger are used to determine if the child is safe or unsafe but also includes the assessment of the protective capacities which in turn leads to the decision about removal or whether there is a way to keep the child safe within the home with supports.

Questions/Comments from Chat noted:

- Can you share how equity and racial justice is centered in the SAFE model?
 - Theresa responded the SAFE model addresses equity and justice primarily through the consistent application of the standardized criteria and quality consistent supervision of that. Determination about safety concerns are all criteria based and therefore built and designed to avoid bias in the decision-making. The criteria that constitute abuse and neglect will continue to be determined by AN CRA with the implementation of SAFE; however, there can be influence in terms of consistency at each decision point beginning with the first contact. The experience with other jurisdictions is that the consistent application of the model is what brings equity to the system at large.
- When will DCFS begin using the SAFE model and will it rollout statewide or by region?
- With SAFE, are concepts of risk and harm replaced by present and impending danger?
 - Yes, they are.

- Is there a plan for educating the judges and lawyers/gals about the SAFE model, including the early decisions by DCFS recommendation on whether to remove a child that is going into place in the fall?
 - Theresa shared that each will be educated and trained on the new language as part of the implementation.
- Is the intent to capture images of children on body cameras?
- I am concerned that the body cameras could be used against families.
- Once the image is captured, could it be FOIA'd by the press?
- It sounds like the SAFE model is intended to address some of this. Would these recommendations connect to what already is underway?
- Rep Flowers - HR0085 - urging the Supreme Court and Circuit Court of Cook County to recommend legislation to reduce this disparity and shorten the duration of foster care experienced by children in the Cook region.
- I object to capturing children's images on body cameras. It impacts confidentiality.
- What is the process for asking for amendments to the recommendations?

Agenda Item 3 – Review of Recommendations to Date:

LaTanya provided the intent was to review the proposed recommendations formulated to date from the various breakout groups as a whole group. Dr. Vanessa White provided the overview of recommendations from each subcommittee for purposes of clarifying, revising and/or affirming which the Task Force would like to move forward with.

Refer to the slide deck sent via email on March 15, 2023.

Public Comment:

There were no comments made from the public.

Action Items/Next Steps:

- Members are to review the slide deck received via email on March 15, 2023 prior to the next meeting which includes the presentation from the Casey Family Foundation to identify additional questions.
- Members are to review the slide deck received via email on March 15, 2023 prior to the next meeting which includes the recommendations to date. Members should consider the information provided during the SAFE Practice Model presentation and its impact to the recommendations.
- Vanessa White will follow up on recommendations via email for additional clarity.
- Youth Alumni will share their experiences during the meeting in April.
- Breakouts sessions to occur during the next meeting.
- Presentations from Health and Human Services and the Court System will occur during the meeting in May.
- Email the Co-chairs with suggestions, questions and/or additional needs.
- Subcommittees are to continue thinking about and keeping record of recommendations based upon the data.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:38 AM.

Next Meeting Scheduled for April 19, 2023 at 9 AM.

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Meeting Minutes
April 19, 2023

<p>Meeting called to order at 9:05AM by:</p>	<p>LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL</p>
<p>Members in attendance:</p>	<p>Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Sara Block, Ascend Justice Tracey King, Deputy Chief of Staff, Proxy for Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall</p>
<p>Members not present:</p>	<p>Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Paris Bateman, State's Attorney Office State Representative Lakesia Collins Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL Ronald Davis, Parent Member Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL Clarissa Fourman, Youth Alumni State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar State Representative Sonya Harper Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues Patricia Holling, Proxy for LaTanya Law, Dept of Human Services Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender State Representative Camille Lilly Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas Onie Riley, Alumni of Care State Senator Sally Turner</p>
<p>Public:</p>	<p>Dr. Vanessa White, Consultant, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Paula Roa, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Simone Weil, Casey Family Programs Anita Weinberg, Loyola University Chicago Meghan Farren, Loyola University Chicago Colton Johnson Taylor, Loyola University Chicago Dr. Leslie Ward, State Board of Education Alyssa Del Angel, Be Strong Families Colleen Connolly Jamie Schulte, Legal Aid Chicago</p>

DCFS:	Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Office of Racial Equity Practice Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs
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Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was not present.

Approval of Minutes:

Approval for the March minutes to occur during the meeting in May if it is determined that a quorum is present.

Agenda Item #1 – Array of Support Services for Intact Family Services by Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall

Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall provided information on DCFS Intact Family Services. Dr. Samuels served as the Director for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services for four years. Intact Family Services was not available as an option during his tenure. Dr. Samuels advises the Task Force to consider the evolution of child welfare particularly in terms of implementing programs and policies that are working within other states as there will be adjustments and/or adaptations that need to be made. Intact Family Services has evolved over time and per Dr. Samuels needs to continue to evolve for it to be a tool. Dr. Samuels discussed the current model of Intact Family Services, what families are being served via the program and consideration for where the program fits in the continuum of supports that families need specifically as it relates to issues around racial disproportionality.

Highlights from the discussion with Dr. Samuels are as follows:

- Intact Family Services is targeted to families where there is “credible evidence” of abuse and/or neglect during an investigation. A finding of abuse and/or neglect during an investigation does not always warrant removal of the child. There can be a finding of abuse and/or neglect but also a determination that the family is not at such great risk that removal of the child is necessary. Intact Family services is the primary intervention for this group of families.
- Intact Family Services is designed around prevention of removal. The premise is to ensure the safety of children while addressing the immediate needs of families within an established timeline for purposes of determining the family’s stability. The goal is to assist families with the issues that brought them to the child welfare system and includes connections and access to skills, competencies and programs that families can access directly should they need future assistance.
- Intact fulfils the “reasonable effort” standard as mandated by the federal requirement to keep families together. The goal is to identify risk to the children and ensure they have the support that is needed.
- Intact utilizes private agencies in Illinois that contract with DCFS to provide case management services. Families can participate in Intact Family Services voluntarily or be mandated via a court-order.
- There is an array of services offered via Intact Family Services, i.e., counseling, domestic violence prevention, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, parenting classes and coaching as well as housing assistance. The services offered is based upon the premise of helping families meet basic needs to prevent continued involvement with the Department.
- In 2014, the number of deaths of children with contact to the child welfare system decreased yet the number of children going into care increased. There was also an increased rate at which the deaths were occurring within the Intact Family Services program. As a result, Chapin Hall was brought in to do an evaluation of and make recommendations for the program. Some of the findings and recommendations are as follows:
 - Create a formal protocol for when to close cases. There were no basis for case closures; cases remained open as more families were added which ultimately resulted in the overall population in Intact Family Services to increase. Case workers did not have clear goals and expectations.
 - Practices did not meet the standard for evidence-based approaches particularly around prevention.
 - Ensure supervisors had the necessary skills to enhance the quality of supervision.
 - Procure a wider range of prevention services.
 - Collectively refine the criteria for removal to include involvement from DCFS, the State’s Attorney and the courts for consistency throughout.
 - Redesign the assessment and intake process for a clearer sense of the challenges the family faced.
- Family First is the first federal commitment to provide resources on the front end for prevention. It requires the use of evidence-based interventions to support families. Illinois has identified a number of evidence-based programs to be utilized such as motivational interviewing, parents as teachers, positive parenting programs and trauma focused to name a few. The federal government will reimburse DCFS for half of the costs associated with delivering these types of services on the front end for the purposes of prevention.

Questions/Comments:

- Robert Rodemeyer asked a question about the continued involvement of investigators in the event Intact Family Services were not successful or was declined. Robert referred to the State of New York which engages in re-referrals back to the initial investigatory team for families that have subsequent issues after voluntary participation. This allows for continual communication between Intact and Investigations. In contrast, in Illinois there is a “hand-off” within a 30-day period; however, it typically takes many families more than 30 days to get access to services after the referral has been made. Ultimately, when families do not engage services or decline to participate the Intact worker’s only course of action is to make another Hotline call due to the fact the initial investigatory team is no longer involved.
 - Dr. Samuels provided this was the exact set of findings that occurred in 2014 where there was a lack of clarity about the entry into and exit from the program. Families were lingering in programs, case workers were carrying them on their caseloads even though the case workers were not directly supporting those families. There was a new emphasis on making determinations regarding case closure and the expectation that DCFS, the State’s Attorney and the courts were all on the same page particularly with regards to the involuntary participation of families and in instances when families are unresponsive and the caseworker had no recourse. Chapin Hall’s recommendation for DCFS was to establish a policy and protocol for reinvestigation on the basis of new information. In Illinois, the investigators are separate from the case managers and the investigators are no longer involved once the referral is made so there is some discontinuity in that respect and makes it difficult to reassess a family’s vulnerabilities with the next investigation after the initial hand-off is made. It was clear from the evaluation in 2014 that DCFS did not have a process for when families did not participate in the program to re-investigate for purposes of determining whether the child remains at risk. Dr. Samuels could not speak to how this was addressed by DCFS.
 - Robert provided that the level of assessment services a family receives via the Integrated Assessment when entering care is considerably higher than the assessment performed for families via Intact. Intact Families do not receive the same level of assessment. Dr. Samuels agreed that historically this has always been the concern with Intact in that the continuum and intensity of services has always been concerning. When the referral is made for Intact essentially it means that there’s a hand-off to the private agencies but there weren’t enough resources built into the contract with the private agencies to provide a robust set of supports. Dr. Samuels advises there is a way to balance between the kind of resources dedicated towards removal towards resources intended to keep families together. The hope is that Family First brings more “entitled” resources for families that are still outside of the system as families who are in care for which DCFS can be reimbursed for.
- Sara Block asked a question regarding the way in which Family First will be evaluated, what data will be tracked and what outcomes will be measured. Additionally, whether data will also be collected about which families will be offered Family First services and their outcomes.
 - Dr. Samuels could not address whether Family First will be formally evaluated, by whom and what the design of the evaluation would look like. Dr. Samuels provided information on the original federal legislation of Family First in that it requires an evaluation on the actual services to ensure the requirement of an evidence-based intervention is met. However, Dr. Samuels shared insight into other things that could prove to be more useful if evaluated such as does every family benefit from the same array of services and whether the families using Intact Family Services today differ from the families that were eligible 5 years prior. Additionally, are there different results and are there certain providers that provide certain services better than other providers, is the case management part being evaluated as well to determine if some do a better job than others and lastly what the hand-off looks like when Intact does not work and a referral is made to the State’s attorney. Dr. Samuels provided there is a missed opportunity with Family First as there is no formal requirement per federal legislation to evaluate therefore DCFS would have to choose to evaluate these things independent of the requirements in Family First.
 - Sara proposed the Task Force recommend that Family First be evaluated in the manner in which Dr. Samuels describes.
- Co-Chair Beverly Jones made a comment about the Intact Family Recovery program contracted with Lutheran Social Services and Lutheran Child and Family Services, which has existed for over 20 years with great success and very little worker turnover. Beverly mentioned out-of-home care drives the system rather than Intact but there are small programs that get overlooked in the continuum of services.

- Dr. Samuels agreed in that this program is designed in-house and aligned with the families that they work with of which the workers have satisfying results. Additionally, by state law DCFS has the authority to purchase specific services without using an RFP. DCFS purchases a large set of services which then are contracted out to agencies who determine which services work for a subset of families.

Agenda Item #2 – “Front End of the Child Welfare System: A Review of Available Data by Race” Presentation by Meghan Farren, JD Candidate and Colton Johnson Taylor, JD Candidate from Loyola University, Chicago School of Law

Sara Block introduced Meghan Farren, JD Candidate and Colton Johnson Taylor, JD Candidate, students at Loyola University, Chicago School of Law. Meghan and Colton are in the Legislative and Policy Clinic under Professor Anita Weinberg. Meghan and Colton mapped out the data received from various sources from the front end before involvement by the Juvenile Court by race to showcase the data that is present, what data is missing and the differences in the data for purposes of informing the Task Force.

Refer to slide deck sent via email on April 19, 2023.

- Sara proposed the following recommendations:
 - To collect missing data as it relates to the courts
 - To clarify the data received without a racial breakdown; and,
 - Data mapping for the next phase of Child Welfare Interventions and the Juvenile Court process

Questions/Comments:

- Melissa Frydman commented that she would like to see data around cases that started in Intact but resulted in protective custody being taken thereafter.
- Angela McLemore had a question about the Data Governance and Organization to Support Equity and Racial Justice Act and whether DCFS is required to be report statistical data with regards to the racial, ethnic, age, sex, disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and primary or preferred language demographics of program participants per section 20-15 of the Act.
 - Darnita Jackson reported that Dagené Brown is involved with this to some extent through her work out of the Office of Racial Equity Practice and more information will be provided at a later date.

Agenda Item #3 – Youth in Care Priorities Presentation by Alyssa Del Angel, Be Strong Families:

Alyssa Del Angel from Be Strong Families provided information on the Youth Advisory Board and the Youth Advisory Infinity group. The Youth Infinity group consists of 5 groups; African American, Asian American, Latino, Native American and LGBTQIA+ are statewide and meet virtually on a monthly basis. Alyssa shared an overview of accomplishments and current works. The Statewide Youth Advisory Board was established via Public Act 098-0806 providing current and former youth in foster care a voice to make recommendations and find solutions for any issues affecting youth in foster care, guardianship or adoption. The mission of the Youth Advisory Board is to education, advocate and empower.

Slide deck will be emailed to Task Force.

Questions/Comments:

- Angela made a comment regarding a simulation exercise she attended facilitated by Baker McKenzie, ACLU of Illinois and the Youth Law Center which showcased the difficulties youth encounter in accessing services. Angela offered to share a contact at Baker McKenzie that may be helpful to any youth who may need services.
 - Alyssa shared that each Infinity group has a representative from the DCFS Advocacy office that attend monthly meetings and serve as a source for referrals of resources available within the Department for youth in care.
- Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson asked whether the Youth Advisory Board or Infinity groups were knowledgeable about the Task Force and if they had ideas or thoughts on recommendations that should be considered.
 - Alyssa shared that particularly the African American Infinity group is concerned about education and representation. They are aware that they are the largest demographic of youth in care yet are the lowest number with regards to post-secondary education. The hope is that someone could take a further look into this as it relates to African American youth. They considered a survey for youth ages 14 to 19 to uncover the cause of the break down from high school to post-secondary. Additionally with regards to representation, African American youth in care do not see themselves in staff or in other people they work with especially in foster and group homes outside of Cook County.
 - Angela made a comment that youth should be offered more educational alternatives like trade schools and then being admitted to one of the unions that represent the trade. Alyssa shared that they are very

intentional with regards to post-secondary education to include community colleges, trade schools, and other types of programs to include any form of education after high school.

- Dr. Vanessa White asked a question whether youth in Kinship care were able to be apart of the youth boards.
 - Alyssa shared that any youth that has been assigned a caseworker is able to work with the advisory board. Meeting notifications are posted to DNET, the DCFS internal intranet, and is visible to all employees and POS agencies. The meeting notifications are also sent via email as an announcement to everyone in the Department with Illinois.gov email extension for awareness. The youth boards and groups are an opportunity for youth to develop community and their chosen families with other youth in care. Youth have a voice in amendments to policy, are able to review and discuss the results of the SOGIE (sexual, orientation, gender identity and expression) survey and are able to provide input to Loyola Law and regarding the matching tool and the SOGIE input that will be included in the new DCFS CCWIS (Comprehensive Child Welfare Information Systems) database.
- Dr. White asked whether there were any recommendations as it relates to Cook Co. from the youth perspective.
 - Alyssa provided that Cook Co. has the most youth in care as well as the most resources; however, most youth are unaware of this. Lack of trust is also prevalent and a topic of concern among youth as they are uncertain who they can trust to give them affirming care. Alyssa will reach out to the Cook Co. YAB manager to inquire about this further.

Public Comment:

There were no comments.

Action Items/Next Steps:

- Members are to review the “Front End of the Child Welfare System: A Review of Available Data by Race” Presentation sent via email on April 19, 2023 prior to the next meeting to determine other data requests that may be useful to informing recommendations.
- Presentations from Health and Human Services will occur during the meeting in May.
- Email the Co-chairs with suggestions, questions and/or additional needs.
- Subcommittees are to continue thinking about and keeping record of recommendations based upon the data.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 AM.

Next Meeting Scheduled for May 17, 2023 at 9 AM.

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force

Meeting Minutes
May 17, 2023

Meeting called to order at 9:04AM by:	LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Co-Chair, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Beverly Jones, Co-Chair, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL
Members in attendance:	Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Sara Block, Ascend Justice Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Stephanie Pointer, Associate Director, Alternative for LaTanya Law, Dept of Human Services Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender Onie Riley, Youth Alumni Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney Office
Members not present:	Paris Bateman, State's Attorney Office State Representative Lakesia Collins Ronald Davis, Parent Member Clarissa Fourman, Youth Alumni State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar State Representative Sonya Harper Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues State Representative Camille Lilly Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services State Senator Christina Pacione-Zayas Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall State Senator Sally Turner
Public:	Dr. Vanessa White, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Paula Roa, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Anita Weinberg, Loyola University Chicago Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago
DCFS:	Levonda Harris, Assistant to the DCFS Statewide Office of Racial Equity Practice Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups Keith Smith, Racial Equity Administrator for Northern Region Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members and presented the "Opening Question". Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was later determined that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

Co-Chair Beverly Jones made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March and April. Onie Riley seconded the motion. The March and April minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Agenda Item #1 – "Array of Family Supports" presentation by Stephanie Pointer, IL Department of Human Services

Stephanie Pointer presented information on some of the services that are offered by IDHS. Refer to the slide deck sent via email on May 22, 2023 for highlights from the presentation.

Questions/Comments:

- Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson asked how families access services.
 - Stephanie provided families can go directly to the Dept of Human Services, any Family Community Resource Center, or WIC offices. Applications for snap benefits and health insurance are accessible online via the aid portal.
- Anita Weinberg asked a question about how available the services are.
 - Stephanie provided the services are available state-wide; however, the offices located within the southern area of the state are sparse making it challenging for families to get to the services. Services are sufficient across the state.

Agenda Item #2 – "Overview and Landscape of Supportive Housing Availability" presentation by David Esposito, Executive Director, Supportive Housing Providers Association

David Esposito presented information on SHPA which is a statewide advocacy organization. Members consist of non-profit social services organizations, developers, continuum of care businesses and other stakeholders. Refer to slide deck sent via email on May 18, 2023. Highlights from the presentation are as follows:

- SHPA advocates support of and for best practices for supportive housing developments, operations, supportive services, policies and systemic changes focused on equity and streamlining processes.
- SHPA is dedicated to strengthening the support for housing sectors making affordable housing and individually tailored services accessible to the vulnerable population.
- In 2021, Governor Pritzker signed the [Executive Order to Fight Homelessness in Illinois](#) creating the Illinois Interagency Task Force on Homelessness, the Community Advisory Council, and a position of State Homelessness Chief. In May, SHPA was successful in getting bill HB2831 that creates the Task Force on Homelessness and the Illinois Office to Prevent Homelessness passed. Reference: [Illinois General Assembly - Bill Status for HB2831 \(ilga.gov\)](#)
- Supportive housing is a wise investment and is cost effective. Supportive housing is healthcare and a human right. Supportive housing works, it's equitable and saves lives.

Breakout Sessions clarify recommendations began at 10 AM.

Breakout Sessions ended at 11:55 AM

Subcommittee Report-Outs:

- LaTanya reported the Investigated Screened-In Maltreatment Reports Subcommittee reviewed their recommendations to date and added some additional comments which are as follows:
 - Body cameras may present privacy concerns as it relates to recording children. The subcommittee recognizes that parents are requesting body cameras as an added layer of protection. Continued discussions will be had to identify a balance.
 - A separate hotline or building up the current 211 hotline to include identifying what is being done currently as 211 is working to strengthen and enhance the services they provide.

- Mandated Reporters and their belief that their only option is to call the Hotline even when they have some reluctance to make the call. There are other options that may be available for a family.
- Public Defender style hotline or assigning attorneys to families to help through the investigation process from the onset of an investigation. The subcommittee discussed the experience the attorneys must possess with the investigatory process within the child welfare system. Typically, clients are advised not to answer questions; however, a parent's failure to cooperate during an investigation could result in removal. Continued discussions will be had around ways to be conscientious of the nature of legal expertise that is needed.
- Substance abuse programs that have success in addressing issues involving mothers with infants. The subcommittee discussed a program based out of Washington that provides a Parent Advocate and Intact services to care for infants and support mothers with substance abuse issues. The subcommittee proposes Beverly Jones do a presentation for the Task Force to provide information about the successful program that is facilitated by Lutheran Child and Family Services of IL.
- A Bill of Rights or providing a Miranda style warning for parents that would also include information about support and access to services. The subcommittee discussed the need to identify ways in which the warning will assist parents and investigators while also recognizing that it differs from the criminal system. Continued discussions will be had on ways to move forward.
- Dagené Brown reported the Protective Custodies Subcommittee continued discussions on previously proposed recommendations which included the following:
 - Safety plans for engaged fathers whom have not been indicated in the system stemming from comments made during a previous meeting regarding the inability to get a safety plan in place for fathers living out of the State. The subcommittee discussed the Department's ability to connect with other states per the Interstate Compact Placement of Children protocol to conduct home assessments. The subcommittee discussed whether these home assessments are equivalent to providing a safety plan and ways in which to put this procedure into place before a disposition. The subcommittee discussed ways in which to expand the family finding process which is currently referral-based to make it a requirement on the front-end. The subcommittee discussed collaborative efforts with DHS to allow for information sharing and access to records to assist with finding nonoffending fathers. Continued discussions will be had on ways to work with the courts and caseworkers to implement a uniform process state-wide for engaging fathers.
 - Review and consideration of the Risk of Harm allegation specifically as it pertains to domestic violence and mental illness. The subcommittee discussed opportunities for engaging with these families differently to avoid removal of the children.
 - Review the language of ANCRA as it pertains to the criteria for initiating an investigation during the intake process to identify opportunities to update or revise. The subcommittee discussed a need to account for how language is used differently within families, specifically for purposes of determining if that influences the reasons why children come into care. The example provided was spanking versus whooping. The manner in which words are interpreted is important for purposes of determining whether the language needs to be challenged or changed. The subcommittee continued discussions on how language has evolved over the years in terms of the allegation system particularly as intake assessments are based off conversations. This relates to the variation of removals, the families these occur for as well as the allegation-based system in that the same words are used for all. Despite this implicit bias and other forms of integrating and existing knowledge suggest that the use of particular words may have different meanings for different people.
- Bev reported the Indicated Reports Subcommittee continued previous discussions on the need for prevention services to support families before reports of abuse and neglect. Bev mentioned today's presentations solidified this fact and questioned whether there is an awareness these services exist and how often they are utilized to help families. The subcommittee will focus on concrete preventative measures as a final recommendation emphasizing the importance of viewing the system as a community-based or neighborhood-oriented system. The subcommittee also discussed the following:
 - The need to identify more community health workers as a part of the change in perspective to how the system is viewed. Angela McLemore commented that community health workers are from the

neighborhoods and they build trust from within. Angela mentioned the need for increased collaboration across organizations as they seem to be working in silos. Additionally, Angela reported the infant and neonatal mortality rates and maternal mortality rates in Illinois are high which is reflective of what is occurring in the US.

- The need to develop a comprehensive website that lists and provides information on all the services within the State that communities can access.
- Sara Block reported the Timely Exits from Substitute Care Subcommittee discussed the importance of ensuring the recommendations are specific and identified some recommendations requiring additional specificity to ensure the intent of what is being asked or recommended is clear. The subcommittee will continue to review all the recommendations to identify those that need additional clarification. Additionally, the subcommittee also discussed the following:
 - The importance of collecting data on the race and ethnicity of children at certain decision points of the Juvenile Court process and whether the courts collected data on race or if this data could come from the Department.

Public Comment:

There were no comments.

Action Items/Next Steps:

- Members are to review the presentations sent via email on May 18, 2023 and May 22, 2023 in the context of all the proposed recommendations.
- Members should consider edits and/or clarifications that need to be added to recommendations.
- Presentations from Dr. Leslie Ward, IL Board of Education and ASA Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office will occur during the meeting in June.
- Email the Co-Chairs with suggestions, questions and/or additional needs.

Meeting Adjournment:

Dagené Brown made the motion to adjourn. Bev Jones seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:09 AM.

The next meeting scheduled for June 21, 2023 at 9 AM will be held in-person due to the expiration of the COVID proclamation on May 11, 2023. The meeting will be held in the King Conference Room located at the Dept of Children and Family Services, 6201 S. Emerald Dr., Chicago IL 60621.

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Meeting Minutes

Location: DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald Dr., Chicago IL

Time: Meeting called to order at 9:10AM by Co-Chairs LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law and Beverly Jones, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, LCFS of IL

Date: June 21, 2023

Members present	Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL
Members in attendance virtually	Sara Block, Ascend Justice Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Marie Versher, Dept of Human Services Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall State Senator Sally Turner
Members not present:	Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Paris Bateman, State's Attorney Office State Representative Lakesia Collins Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor Ronald Davis, Parent Member Clarissa Fourman, Youth Alumni State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar State Representative Sonya Harper Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender State Representative Camille Lilly Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services Onie Riley, Youth Alumni
Public:	Dr. Vanessa White, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Madeline Hudson, Shriver Center on Poverty Law in attendance at location Anita Weinberg, Loyola University Chicago Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago Alayna Connolly, Legal Aid
DCFS:	Keith Smith, Racial Equity Administrator for Northern Region, Office of Racial Equity Practice Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs in attendance at location

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members and presented the "Opening Question". Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was not present.

Approval of Minutes:

The approval of the May meeting minutes will occur during the meeting in July if a quorum is present.

Agenda Item III – Presentation by Dr. Leslie Ward, IL State Board of Education postponed until the meeting in July

Agenda Item IV – “Judicial Intervention, An Overview of Child Protection Proceedings in Cook County, Illinois” presentation by Robert Rodemeyer, Supervisor, Child Protection Division, Juvenile Justice Bureau, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office

Robert Rodemeyer presented a step-by-step overview of a child protection case in Cook County, IL, identifying actors and the various points of decision-making where bias may play a factor. Refer to slide deck sent via email on June 22, 2023. Highlights from the presentation are as follows:

- Call to Hotline – Requires good hotline workers to determine if the criterion for initiating an investigation is met. There should be some discussion as to whether there is one victim or an expansion of victims when calls come into the Hotline. It should not just concern the child that has been harmed but should also concern children who are at risk or at a potential for risk based upon past incidents of abuse that have been documented. Child Protection does not establish findings of guilt or make definitive determinations about what has happened or who is culpable. DCFS and the Child Protection Courts are concerned with what support is needed for the child and how to put the child in the best situation to keep them safe.
- Investigations – A determination is made and it’s either unfounded, indicated or undetermined based upon the standard does credible evidence exists to suggest that an incident of abuse or neglect occurred.
 - Protective custody is the decision by DCFS to remove a child from the care of their parents during the course of the investigation due to the imminent danger to the child’s life or health and there is no time to obtain a temporary custody order with the Juvenile Court. DCFS only has 48 hours to hold a child. Parents can demand child be returned after the 48 hours has lapse; however, Child Protection can retake protective custody or repeat PC. Parents have no recourse.
 - Only the reporter or the minor can appeal an unfounded report.
- Options for indicated reports:
 - DCFS can refer to court.
 - Refer to Intact. The child can either remain in the home or be placed with a relative with a safety plan agreed upon by the parents.
 - There is a critical decision made by investigators to close the case with or without referral for services and without any continuing long-term support from a state actor which has a lot of potential for bias. This decision trusts that there is an understanding of the risks associated with the incident, trusts parents will engage in services and follow up.
- Failed Intact – There is a critical decision to be made when there is a violation of a safety plan, a failure to comply with recommended services or a subsequent incident occurs.
 - When there is a failure to comply with safety plan (abuser is back in the home), failure to obtain an order of protection, failure to complete domestic violence or substance abuse referrals, the Intact worker calls hotline. The hotline may not take call because there isn’t a second incident of domestic violence or the criterion for initiating a case has not been met. Intact can screen the case directly with Cook Co State’s Attorney’s office.
 - Subsequent incidents of domestic violence or abuse and neglect will more than likely go to a new investigatory team who will be unfamiliar with the initial case except for the case notes in the DCFS system.
 - New York has a system in place that allows for the same investigatory team to investigate after failed intact if a parent is noncompliance or not abiding by the safety plan. New York restaffs and re-refers the case back to the same team that investigated initially. There is a collaboration effort with the investigatory team that referred the case to Intact in assessing the case. There is no process like this in Illinois.
- Temporary/Long Term Guardianship - DCFS will not allow you to make a care plan arrangement for a child if the relative lives out of state as seen in Cook County. DCFS will not allow children to be placed with biological fathers who do not have court-ordered verified paternity because they reside out of state. DCFS requires the home be assessed therefore will not allow the child to be placed across state lines. These types of cases are being deferred in filing in Cook County.
 - Relative/Fictive Kin – DCP will critically assess the likelihood of parents’ compliance with the safety plan. There is a lot of bias with this critical decision as essentially it requires trust in the individuals involved and their overall compliance going forward.

- Screening/Deferred Cases – Is there sufficient evidence available to meet the preponderance of the evidence burden? Does this case belong in the courts? Does this case need to involve a judge who will enter binding legal orders to govern the parent’s contact or restrict their relationship with their children?
 - The State’s Attorney’s Office assess cases recommending temporary custody, court-ordered Intact and voluntary Intact. 30 to 40% of screened in cases are deferred in filing in Cook County for additional evidence to be collected or due to there being alternatives to court involvement that should be explored.
 - The Cook County State’s Attorney’s office filed cases involving an average of 950 to 1100 kids last year. Cases are civil proceedings not criminal. Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender represents most of the parents. Minors are represented by Guardian Ad Litem and Cook County Office of the Public Guardian as the child’s attorneys.
- The Child Protection Division of Cook County has 11 courtrooms.
 - The Beyond Medical Necessity Call was launched during the pandemic which is a specialized court call operating once a month. Judges refer cases involving youth-in-care where the child has remained in the hospital beyond medical necessity or emergency rooms waiting for a hospital bed for 30 days or more. Judges make orders compelling DCFS to find placement for the youth.
 - Exploring the creation of a Dually Involved Call for youth who are dually involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Cook County has dedicated judges that hear only juvenile justice matters and judges that hear only child protection matters. This court will not handle the whole family case. This court will only handle the delinquency matter creating a more informed tribunal with a better understanding of DCFS and the capability of putting correct services in and coordinating the efforts of probation.
 - The following programs and supports no longer exist in Cook County:
 - Help Unit – consisted of senior level clinicians and DCFS case managers where judges could refer cases to assist and mentor case workers to help provide direction on struggling cases.
 - DCFS Facilitator – Each courtroom previously had a nonlegal facilitator who assisted as a courthouse translator meeting with the caseworkers following a proceeding to ensure they understood what happened in the court and what needed to be done as a result.
 - Hearing Officers – heard non-contested legal matters.
 - Parent Advocate – consisted of parent mentors that help parents self-advocate at the initial courthouse stage before the attorney was appointed.
- Trial/Adjudication – Statute mandates 90 days to bring cases to trial; however, this time frame does not start until everyone is served, accounted for and established to be a parent. There are a lot of cases in Cook County that take a year or longer to go to trial due to pre-trial issues such as paternity, service and discovery issues which prolong time in care. At this point it has not been determined that an incident occurred to require parents to engage in services.
 - Intact integrated assessments are conducted by a bachelor’s level social worker or case manager who does not have access to the same documents or materials or the dedicated time to conduct a thorough social history. Cases that went into Intact previously do not receive a new integrated assessment. Cases that have a history of failure of services in the home are receiving a different type of integrated assessment through Intact which is not as in-depth or thorough due to lack of resources.

Questions/Comments:

- Senator Sally Turner requested clarification around the appeal process for an unfounded report.
 - Rob provided that after an investigation a determination letter is sent out with the finding and process to appeal. Mandated reporters and minors can appeal an unfounded report with the DCFS Administrative Law Judges. Parents can also appeal an indicated report. The Office of the Public Guardian assists with administrative appeals for unfounded reports against foster parents.
 - Senator Turner asked if the child would be able to utilize their appointed guardian ad litem to file the appeal. Rob advised that the guardian ad litem is appointed by the judge. There is no court involvement or court oversight into the investigation at this point similarly to when parents are violated with repeat protective custodies there is no one to complain too. Parents have no one to appeal too when there are potential abuses during the investigatory process unless the matter goes before a court. Instances of repeat protective custodies is seen primarily in Cook County.
- Dagené Brown inquired about the Fictive Kin process in Cook County and the inability to place children with relatives, fictive kin or fathers outside of the State to avoid system entry and whether this is seen during the initial stages of the process.

- Rob provided the critical decision by the investigator to place a child with the family member would then alleviate the need for court intervention. Investigators are unable to do this without assessing the home nor do they have the capacity to do this therefore they will not place the child and screen the case instead. Further, an ICPC (interstate compact on the placement of children) takes a significant amount of time. Children can be placed with fathers without an interstate compact; however, this would require the case be closed immediately. ICPC allows for multiple state planning; however, the timeline is significant. Cook County does not engage in non-interstate compacts.
- Nora Collins-Mandeville asked a question about the documentation when a case closes, a new case occurs and is assigned to a new investigator. How does the information go to the new investigator such as the recommendations for services and that the case was previously staffed with the State's Attorney?
 - Rob provided there are conversations that are undocumented in the contact notes which is problematic. Ideally, the ongoing documentation will be included in the investigatory packet and accessible by the next investigator. Internally, the Cook County State's Attorney's Office logs and tracks all cases and any time a case is screened the screener is automatically given a copy of past ongoings.
- Angela McLemore asked whether DCFS and the Courts recognize a child's ability to advocate for themselves at ages 9 and 10 when they do not want to return home.
 - Rob responded yes and in terms of the best interest of the child factors that provides specific guidelines on this and when the child is age 14 and has the ability to state their case. This occurs most frequently with visitation and the courts will usually not direct the child to comply.

Questions/Comments from Chat:

- Do you see a lot of cases where the petition is withdrawn?
 - Very few cases result in withdrawing the petition; however, it is commonly seen in cases where further medical testing or evidence reveals that an injury was not inflicted. Cases are never rejected but instead an "ongoing" is issued when the decision is made to not file a case.
- What led to Cook staffing Intact family cases with SAO?
 - Not all cases are staffed with the State's Attorney's Office. The investigator or Intact worker screens a case due to the difficulty they are having with getting the parent to comply and the determination is made that court-ordered Intact is needed.

Public Comment:

There were no comments.

Next Steps:

- Members will vote on recommendations during the meeting in August. It is imperative that a quorum is present.
- Members should consider edits and/or clarifications that need to be added to recommendations.
- Members are to review the presentation sent via email on June 22, 2023 in the context of all the proposed recommendations.
- Presentation from Dr. Leslie Ward, IL Board of Education will occur during the meeting in July.
- Email the Co-Chairs with suggestions, questions and/or additional needs.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:19 AM.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 20, 2023 at 9AM. The meeting locations are as follows:

<p>Shiver Center on Poverty Law 67 E. Madison St., 20th Floor Chicago, IL 60603</p> <p>Valet parking and via the Millenium Garage on Michigan Avenue for a fee</p>	<p>Department of Children and Family Services 406 E. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62701 1st Floor Conference Room</p> <p>Free 2-hr time restrictive parking at meters</p>
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Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Meeting Minutes

Locations: Shriver Center on Poverty Law, 67 E. Madison St., Chicago IL | DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL | Webex Conference

Time: Meeting called to order at 9:10AM by Co-Chairs LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law and Beverly Jones, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, LCFS of IL

Date: July 20, 2023

Members present @ Chicago location	Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
Members present virtually	Sara Block, Ascend Justice Ronald Davis, Parent Member Heather Dorsey, Assistant Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Marie Versher, Dept of Human Services
Members not present:	Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Paris Bateman, State’s Attorney Office State Representative Lakesia Collins David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL Clarissa Fourman, Youth Alumni Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar State Representative Sonya Harper Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender State Representative Camille Lilly Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services Onie Riley, Youth Alumni Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall State Senator Sally Turner
Public:	Dr. Vanessa White, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Rudi Hancock, Shriver Center on Poverty Law in attendance at location Anita Weinberg, Loyola University Chicago Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago Kimi Crooms Latrechia Lee
DCFS:	Melissa Box, Family First Prevention Services Administrator Ogechi Abah, Intern, Office of Legislative Affairs in attendance at location Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs in attendance at location

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was not present.

Approval of Minutes:

The approval of the May, June and July meeting minutes will occur during the meeting in August if a quorum is present.

Agenda Item III – Presentation by Dr. Leslie Ward, IL State Board of Education was cancelled.

Agenda Item IV – Breakout Sessions to refine and finalized recommendations.

- **Breakout Sessions began at 9:30 AM.**
- **Breakout Sessions ended at 10:23 AM.**

Subcommittee Report-Outs did not occur.

Public Comment:

There were no comments.

Closing Remarks:

Co-Chair LaTanya advised members will vote on each individual recommendation during the next meeting in August therefore it is imperative that a quorum of 15 members is present Continued discussions to occur during the next meeting to refine and finalize the recommendations for submission to the Governor’s office in September. The updated recommendations list will be sent out prior to the next meeting. Refer to email sent on July 24th. Dr. Vanessa White will follow up with each member to clarify questions.

Meeting locations have been secured in Chicago, Champaign, Springfield and Belleville. Refer to email sent on August 4th. Members should coordinate to meet with another member if it is determined that they are unable to attend at any of the prearranged locations and/or contact the Co-Chairs or Darnita for assistance in making this connection.

Next Steps:

- Members will vote on individual recommendations during the meeting in August.
- Members are to review the updated recommendations slide deck sent via email on July 24, 2023.
- Members should consider edits and/or clarifications that need to be added to recommendations.
- Dr. Vanessa White will contact each member for their feedback, questions and input.
- Email the Co-Chairs with suggestions, questions and/or additional needs.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 AM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 16, 2023 at 9AM. The meeting locations are as follows:

<p>Shriver Center on Poverty Law 67 E. Madison St., 20th Floor Chicago, IL 60603</p> <p>Valet parking and via the Millenium Garage on Michigan Avenue for a fee</p>	<p>DCFS 406 E. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62701 7th Floor Conference Room</p> <p>Free 2-hr time restrictive parking at meters</p>	<p>University of Illinois College of Law 504 E. Pennsylvania Ave. Champaign, IL 61820</p>	<p>Lutheran Child and Family Services 317 West Main St. Belleville, IL 62220</p>
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Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Meeting Minutes

Locations: Shriver Center on Poverty Law, 67 E. Madison St., Chicago IL | DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL | School of Social Work at UIUC, 1010 W Nevada St., Urbana IL | Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Courthouses, 1100 S. Hamilton, Chicago IL | Webex Conference

Time: Meeting called to order at 9:15AM by Co-Chairs LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law and Beverly Jones, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, LCFS of IL

Date: August 16, 2023

Members present @ Chicago locations	Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Keith Smith, Alternative for Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office Marie Versher, Dept of Human Services
Members present @ Springfield location	Ronald Davis, Parent Member Heather Dorsey, Director of Courts, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts State Representative Camille Lilly Barb Frobish, Alternative for State Senator Sally Turner
Members present @ Champaign Urbana location	Angie Bertauski-Pierce, Alternative for Clarissa Fourman, Youth Alumni Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC
Members present virtually	Sara Block, Ascend Justice
Members not present:	Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Paris Bateman, State’s Attorney Office State Representative Lakesia Collins Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar State Representative Sonya Harper Lettie Hicks, Parents United for Change, Community Organizing and Family Issues Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services Onie Riley, Youth Alumni Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
Public:	Dr. Vanessa White, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Becky Vlamis, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Tori Tulloch, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Veena Ramaiah
DCFS:	Tandra Clark, Racial Equity Administrator for Southern Region, Office of Racial Equity Practice Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups Lindia Holmes, Racial Equity Administrator for Central Region, Office of Racial Equity Practice Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs in attendance at location

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members and presented the "Opening Question". Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

The approval of the May, June, July and August meeting minutes will occur during the meeting in October if a quorum is present.

Agenda Item III – Approval of final recommendations via roll call vote. Refer to the slide deck sent via email on August 16, 2023. Dr. Vanessa White explained the process for voting on recommendations providing that the purpose of the Task Force is as follows:

- To understand the underlying factors of the child welfare system and involvement of families.
- To examine the racial disparities of children and families involved in the child welfare system.
- To explore resources, policies and practices that could prevent system entry for families and reduce disproportionality at each procedural phase which include Investigated/Screened-in Maltreatment Reports, Protective Custodies, Indicated Reports/Post-Investigation Service Provisions to include Substitute Care and Intact Family Services and Timely Exits from Substitute Care.

Recommendations were categorized as resources, policies and practices. Recommendations listed under the resources category were voted for and approved by the majority. Recommendations listed under policy were tabled for a broader discussion to take place at a future meeting.

Comments Noted for Further Discussion

- With regards to the recommendation on assisting families with establishing guardianship, Janet Barnes provided families seeking guardianship that are not asking for or in need of services do not have to call DCFS as they can file direct petitions with the court. Janet mentioned in the past there a DCFS staff-person stationed at the Daley Center in Cook, County that helped parents complete the paperwork and file the petition. Additionally, Heather Dorsey mentioned there are some programs to assist that are currently in place and funded by DCFS.
 - Robert Rodemeyer posed the question whether DCFS has the resources to identify family caregivers as an alternative to the court system when there is an investigation or an issue of abuse, neglect or dependency in the home and whether investigators work with the families' resources to establish this alternative.
 - Bev Jones provided the majority of families calling the Hotline for Extended Family Support have immediate short-term needs such as assistance with finding an attorney to obtain guardianship as well as other minimal needs such as beds. These calls are directed to private agencies such as Lutheran Child and Family Services; however, families spend no more than 3 months involved with the agency and then the case is closed.
- State Representative Lilly made a suggestion in that the format of the recommendations as it relates to policy should include why the policies are needed, what the issues are, what the goals are and should include definitions when applicable. Additionally, Rep Lilly will inquire about an extension for the submission of the Task Force's recommendations to the Governor's office based upon the delayed startup.
- With regards to the Primary Prevention Model recommendation categorized under practices, Robert referred to his presentation to the Task Force in June regarding the matching system in that families are randomly assigned to a POS agency which is not based on the geography of the child and/or parent. Additionally, POS agencies will attempt to identify foster homes internally before reaching out to other agencies. Robert provided the Foster Care Matching System should be revisited and alternatives to random assignment should be explored to prioritize geographical proximity to families.

Comments from the Chat

- Nora Collins-Mandeville: The legislature should establish a Kinship Navigator Program to help both families that are involved with DCFS and those that are not to navigate procedures for kinship custody and resource needs

for families involved in kinship care. Such a program should be used to prevent unnecessary/avoidable DCFS involvement when families need assistance with alternative custody arrangements provided through kinship care.

Agenda Item IV – Public Comment:

There were no comments from the public.

Closing Remarks:

Co-Chair LaTanya advised members to commit to meeting in one central location as meeting virtually from various sites was challenging. It was decided that a poll would be sent to members with proposed alternative dates and times to September 20th. Dr. White will arrange for a sub-workgroup for continued discussions on the recommendations.

Next Steps:

- Recommendations will be sent to members prior to the Sub-Workgroup in-person meetings to allow for continued discussions.
- Members to contact the Co-Chairs, Dr. Vanessa White or Darnita with suggestions, questions and/or additional needs with regards to recommendations or the in-person workgroup meetings.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned.

The Task Force Workgroup meetings are scheduled as follows:

Thursday, September 14th from 10 AM to 1 PM (in-person only) DCFS 406 E. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62701 7 th Floor Conference Room Free 2-hr time restrictive parking at meters	Tuesday, September 19th from Noon to 3 PM (in-person only) Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Courthouse Building 1100 S Hamilton Chicago, IL 60612 6 th Floor State’s Attorney’s Library Parking via Hamilton lot across the street for a fee
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Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Meeting Minutes

Locations: Shriver Center on Poverty Law, 67 E. Madison St., Chicago IL | DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL | Webex Conference

Time: Meeting called to order at 9:08AM by Co-Chairs LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law and Beverly Jones, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, LCFS of IL

Date: November 15, 2023

Members present @ Chicago locations	Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Keith Smith, Alternative for Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Chandler Mattison-Farris, Alternative for Heather Dorsey, Director of Courts, AOIC Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
Members present @ Springfield location	Barb Frobish, Alternative for State Senator Sally Turner Cassandra Williams, Lived Expert Parent
Members present virtually	Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar State Representative Sonya Harper Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall State Senator Sally Turner
Members not present:	Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Paris Bateman, State’s Attorney Office Sara Block, Ascend Justice Ronald Davis, Lived Expert Parent Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Marie Versher, Dept of Human Services Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender State Representative Camille Lilly Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services
Public:	Dr. Vanessa White, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Bernadette Brown, Policy & Advocacy Lead, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago
DCFS:	Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

The Task Force welcomed Cassandra Williams as the newest “Lived Expert” parent member pending approval from the Governor’s Office.

Approval of Minutes:

The approval of the May, June, July, August and November meeting minutes will occur during the meeting in December if a quorum is present.

Announcement – The Task Force’s dissolve date was extended to June 30, 2024. The Task Force will continue to meet monthly, every 3rd Wednesday of the month from 9am to Noon, with the exception of next month’s meeting scheduled for Wednesday, December 13th. The Task Force will meet to finalize recommendations and continue discussions on the mandated reporting statute, the Foster Care Matching System, supporting relative placement and making sure communities are resourced.

Ongoing recruitment efforts are underway for new members which may help with achieving quorum.

Agenda Item IV – Further discussions were had on the recommendations involving the Juvenile Court Act.

Comments Noted for Further Discussion

- Nora Collins-Mandeville identified a challenge with the recommendation to adhere to/comply with the Juvenile Court Act which requires DCFS and/or it’s contracted POS agencies to make “active efforts” for reunification and other permanency goals. Nora indicated that the language within this recommendation should be changed back to “amend” the Juvenile Court Act to include “active efforts” rather than adhere to or comply with because the current requirement is “reasonable efforts”. Nora provided active efforts is a different and higher standard that currently exists within the Indian Child Welfare Act in that “active efforts” must be made to remove barriers to service delivery thereby providing concrete supports tailored to the individual needs of a family which is to occur throughout the life of a case and be inclusive of family finding.
- Janet Barnes provided attorneys and judges would not interpret active efforts much more differently than reasonable efforts.
- Robert Rodemeyer added there are multiple findings of no reasonable effort by the courts currently as well as cases held on call to allow for corrective action by DCFS. Further there are multiple unfitness goals that do not require DCFS to administer any efforts at all.
- Dr. Bryan Samuels made a comment that the overall goal of changing the language makes sense in that currently DCFS puts the responsibilities on the parents to achieve the necessary activities without focusing on eliminating barriers. Bryan posed the question whether amending the Juvenile Court Act would produce the intended change and outcome desired within the agency.
- Nora provided that this amendment would establish 2 standards, reasonable efforts which is required for federal law and active efforts which would not adversely affect funding. The court would essentially be required to enter findings on both standards providing oversight and due process.
- Rob commented the provision of services to children are much better, more effective and specifically tailored to children due to the advocacy the children are able to receive when working with DCFS and taking advantage of the administrative channels in term of service appeals, clinical staffing and placement reviews.
- Janet agreed and added that the Public Guardian’s office also utilizes the administrative hearings to advocate for the children as well as the Public Defender’s office.

Next Steps:

- Nora to provide additional research, information and a written description of what is being proposed with the recommendation up for discussion within the next 30 days to facilitate a better understanding of active versus reasonable efforts. Additionally, a recommendation addressing rules and procedures will be drafted as well.
- Recommendations that do not have the full support of the group will be included and listed differently in the final report. Members to contact the Co-Chairs, Dr. Vanessa White or Darnita with suggestions, questions and/or additional needs with regards to recommendations.

- The Task Force will hold a working group meeting if deemed necessary to continue discussions on the recommendations.

Closing Remarks:

Co-Chair LaTanya requested members advise the Co-Chairs of any known Alumni Youth who are willing to volunteer to serve on the Task Force. Additionally, two members can be gathered in one space to count towards quorum.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 13th from 9am to Noon.

The Task Force meeting locations are as follows:

<p>Shriver Center on Poverty Law 67 E. Madison St., 20th Floor Chicago, IL 60603</p> <p>Valet parking and via the Millennium Garage on Michigan Avenue for a fee</p>	<p>DCFS 406 E. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62701</p> <p>Free 2-hr time restrictive parking at meters</p>	<p>University of Illinois College of Law 504 E. Pennsylvania Ave. Champaign, IL 61820</p> <p>Room 241 – The Law Clinic Office 217-244-9494</p>
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Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Meeting Minutes

Locations: Shriver Center on Poverty Law, 67 E. Madison St., Chicago IL | DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL | Webex Conference

Time: Meeting called to order at 9:08AM by Co-Chairs LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law and Beverly Jones, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, LCFS of IL

Date: December 13, 2023

Members present @ various Chicago locations	Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Keith Smith, Alternative for Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office
Members present @ Springfield location	Heather Dorsey, Director of Courts, AOIC Barb Frobish, Alternative for State Senator Sally Turner
Members present virtually	Sara Block, Ascend Justice Ronald Davis, Lived Expert Parent Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law State Representative Sonya Harper Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Beverly Jones, VP/COO LCFS of IL State Senator Sally Turner
Members not present:	Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Marie Versher, Dept of Human Services Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender State Representative Camille Lilly Kim McCullough-Starks, Director, Healthcare and Family Services Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
Public:	Dr. Vanessa White, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago
DCFS:	Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members and presented the "Opening Question". Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was not present.

Approval of Minutes:

The approval of the May – December meeting minutes will occur during the meeting in February if a quorum is present.

Opening Remarks:

Co-Chair LaTanya outlined the plan for meetings going forward. In response to the question on whether the Task Force will vote on the recommendations, LaTanya provided voting is not required in statute; however, no final decision has been made either way. LaTanya commented it is important for members to continue discussions as a whole group on the areas that are opposed. Breakout sessions will no longer occur.

Agenda Item IV – Timeline for Submitting Recommendations Report

Co-Chair LaTanya reminded members that the Task Force's sunset extension was approved to June, 2024.

Dr. Vanessa White proposed that future meetings be utilized as working group meetings to continue discussions on areas that are currently opposed and those specifically dealing with mandating reporting, training and ways to be impactful to be finalized by April. The recommendations will be descriptive listing those that met consensus and those that have opposing views and why in preparation for session adjournment May 24, 2024.

Further, Dr. White questioned whether other external professionals should be brought in to expand upon and clarify the issues with regards to mandated reporting as the Task Force continues to discuss and refine the recommendations. LaTanya agreed stating medical providers or school professionals would be ideal and urged members to inform the Co-chairs and/or Dr. White if they know of professionals in this space who would be willing to come speak to the Task Force.

Agenda Item V – Improving Mandated Reporting Practices, Protocols & Procedures

- Co-Chair LaTanya requested members consider and bring for discussion statutes from other states for ideas on specific amendments that provide guidance to mandated reporters.

Noted Comments from the Discussion

- Angela McLemore made a comment on the importance of the recommendation to provide decision-making tools to address the degree of discretion that child welfare workers have, previously approved by members in August.
- Co-Chair Bev Jones commented the mandated reporting statute's interpretation is not universal as people look through their own lens when viewing it. Professionals tend to err on the side of reporting versus not given some of the incidents that have happened. Professionals are relied upon to make judgement calls and will use their lens when doing so. Further, historically it is not always clear cut what gets reported there is a lot of discretion left up to the reporter but essentially this is the start. Who do reporters call for consultation when they are not sure? It would be helpful to get as much guidance as possible. This is an intrusive process.
- Dr. White commented the driving force behind it all is to remove as much subjectivity from the process as possible referring to establishing a decision tree or protocol but also refining the protocols to include having someone to call when reporters are stuck. The most important thing is driving out the subjectivity that exists.
- Co-Chair LaTanya commented some administrative rules, policies and procedures have examples to give guidance. The statute can be written in such a way as to provide guidance and remove some of the discretion so that is clear when you should report.
- Ronald Davis agreed and commented the statute leaves too much room for subjectivity and even more so depending upon the region of the state a person is in.

Developing a Statewide Consistent Process

- Co-Chair LaTanya spoke about the regional differences within the child welfare system and ways to address this to make the process uniform across the state particularly with the courts explaining how Cook Co has a screening process for taking in cases. LaTanya recently spoke with a Cook Co Judge who has made changes to the way in which cases are assigned that made a difference in the timeframe that cases are heard.

Noted Comments from the Discussion

- Ms. McLemore suggested making strong policies and procedures to create standard operating procedures for every county in the state aligned with the Governor's initiative to make systemic changes to DCFS.
- Robert Rodemeyer commented the screening process does not fall under the Governor's realm and is not a function of DCFS. The screening process is left to the discretion of each county's Prosecutor to file cases brought to them. Time and resources differ from county to county, which per Mr. Rodemeyer impacts the cases that qualify for requiring court intervention which in turn impacts return home rates. In Cook Co, there are a large number of cases that are not filed due to the volume and the severity of cases that come in which differs from other areas. The vital services provided to youth from the Office of the Public Guardian in Cook Co are unique and does not exist anywhere else in the state.
- Janet Barnes commented she has spoken to many attorneys throughout the state that analyze cases to determine not only if there is legal authority to bring in a case but also whether or not the case should be brought in.
 - Mr. Rodemeyer commented a large number of cases are screened out in Cook Co because there are alternatives other than removal.
 - Mr. Rodemeyer questioned whether there are internal rules or exclusionary criteria within DCFS with regards to Intact Family Services and suggested a list be provided outlining the reasons Intact Family Services is ruled out. Mr. Rodemeyer commented there are rules that remove investigator's discretion causing them to seek court intervention that have nothing to do with the child's safety such as:
 - Intact was previously offered.
 - Parent has had 3 investigations within the last 2 years.
 - Parent was previously court involved with another child.
 - Keith Smith commented Intact Family Services is a voluntary program that requires a family's willingness to participate. Investigations that warrant court intervention meaning there exists an urgent and immediate necessity are brought before the courts.
- Co-Chair LaTanya asked members to consider some of Cook Co's processes and other ways in which to change the rules within DCFS to discourage racial disproportionality, create consistency throughout the state in how children are treated and impact the way people make decisions.
- Heather Dorsey commented consideration be given to the different resources around the state when thinking in terms of uniformity as some counties are limited, under-staffed, under-resourced and therefore unable to implement screening processes. Further, the first inconsistency in the system relates to the cases prosecutors receive which is happening across the state therefore the decision-making process to bring cases in is important to be considered.

Closing Remarks:

Co-Chair Bev asked members to consider concrete plans for action to refine recommendations, lessen discussions and allow the Task Force to move forward on those recommendations previously agreed upon.

Next Steps:

- Members to consider and bring for discussion mandated reporting statues from other states. The meetings in February and March will be geared towards solutions addressing the subjectivity and discretion of the current mandated reporting statute.
- Mr. Rodemeyer will arrange for the Cook Co Screener to come to a future meeting to discuss their screening process and situations in which investigators in Cook Co expressed having no other internal recourse to seeking court intervention.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:06 AM.

January's meeting was cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 21st from 9am to Noon.

The Task Force's meeting locations are as follows:

Shriver Center on Poverty Law 67 E. Madison St., 20th Floor Chicago, IL 60603	DCFS 406 E. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62701	University of Illinois College of Law 504 E. Pennsylvania Ave. Champaign, IL 61820
Valet parking and via the Millennium Garage on Michigan Avenue for a fee	Free 2-hr time restrictive parking at meters	Room 241 – The Law Clinic Office 217-244-9494

Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Meeting Minutes

Locations: Shriver Center on Poverty Law, 67 E. Madison St., Chicago IL | DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL | Webex Conference

Time: Meeting called to order at 9:05 AM by Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law

Date: February 21, 2024

Members present @ various Chicago locations	Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Keith Smith, Alternative for Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
Members present @ Springfield location	David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL Cassandra Williams, Lived Expert Parent Marie Versher, Dept of Human Services
Members present virtually	Mareema Ali, Office of the Inspector General, DCFS Sara Block, Ascend Justice Heather Dorsey, Director of Courts, AOIC State Representative Sonya Harper
Members not present:	Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL Ronald Davis, Lived Expert Parent Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar Beverly Jones, VP/COO LCFS of IL Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender State Representative Camille Lilly Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall State Senator Sally Turner
Public:	Arthur Anderson, Lived Expert Parent Ramina Davidson, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Radha Nayer, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Courtney Rutledge, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Daniela Silaides, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office Dr. Vanessa White, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago
DCFS:	Darnita Jackson, Administrative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was not present.

Approval of Minutes:

The approval of the May – February meeting minutes will occur during the meeting in March if a quorum is present.

Opening Remarks:

Co-chair LaTanya outlined today's meeting will consist of various presentations per the discussions in December regarding regional differences in the investigated screened-in maltreatment reports and best practices for improving mandated reporting practices, protocols and procedures.

Cook County Screening Process:

Robert Rodemeyer welcomed Daniela Silaides, Assistant State's Attorney for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office on behalf of the Task Force. Daniela has 20 years of experience in Child Protection and on average sees about 8 to 9 cases a day currently. Daniela provided an overview of the screening process in Cook County via an interview format moderated by Robert Rodemeyer.

Highlights from her interview are as follows:

- Daniela outlined having two courses of action to take during the screening process which include accepting the case for court involvement or assigning it as "ongoing" which means the case will not be taken at that time. Daniela reported about 40 to 45% of cases are deflected from being screened in or deferred for court action in Cook County. Rob reported only a fraction of those cases come back later.
 - Daniela provided services can be initiated when a case is in "ongoing" status and willing families can typically be linked to Intact Family Services. With cases involving domestic violence where the perpetrator is no longer in the home and the victim is willing to take appropriate criminal action on their own accord, neither Intact nor court intervention is necessary therefore "ongoing" in this instance refers to allowing the parent to continue as is.
- Daniela's screening process requires DCFS submit the case history which includes the following:
 - Printed case notes from the last 2 years
 - Prior sequences indicated or unfounded
 - Prior involvement with Intact Family Services
 - Prior decisions that later led to court intervention
- Daniela commented on the trends she has noticed throughout her experience in reviewing case notes received from DCFS that indicate the West side of Chicago and the South Suburbs of Chicago receive services and evaluations differently. Cases are screened in due to difficulties in referring families to services in some areas whereas the south suburbs received appointments and evaluations sooner.
- Daniela spoke about the Safe Haven Law and believes it is not utilized enough or that DCFS investigators need additional training on how the process works. Daniela reported the right to relinquish an unharmed infant legally and safely before hospital discharge is often challenged by DCFS when it involves minority families resulting in initiated child protection cases referred for screening.
 - Rob clarified the Safe Haven law requires the physical act of leaving with the child after successful discharge and then returning the child back to the hospital which heavily relies on a person's belief that this occur and creates the space for subjectivity and prejudice.
- Daniela described the process for Intact case closures before screening stating the majority are from private agencies contracted with DCFS such as Lutheran and Catholic Charities. The process involves internal evaluations and recommendations for successful closure or unsuccessful termination and refer for screening. Daniela reported that 99% of the families that are referred to her for screening through Intact are minority families which is disproportionate relative to the number of families serviced via Intact. Additionally, the racial disparities are more evident in the decisions made by Intact as to whether cases should be screened in that substance abuse relapses are handled differently dependent upon the racial and socioeconomic status of the family.
 - Rob commented the majority of cases he screens involving substance abuse that have multiple relapse occurrences, multiple discharges from inpatient treatment facilities and/or multiple failed care plans typically involves white families from the suburbs. Opportunities to get back on track are afforded to

certain families more than others which is a decision based in opinion that invites the space for cultural bias.

- Daniela described instances in which she received cases for screening which DCFS investigators did not believe court intervention was necessary but were required to refer due to an internal policy that all investigations with a C sequence be screened-in regardless of unfounded findings or length of time between investigations.
 - Rob reported the number of screened in cases tripled within a month's time after this policy went into effective taking time and resources away from the cases and families that need support or oversight of the court.
- Daniela also reported seeing cultural and racial bias in the case notes while blind screening and usually can predict the ethnicity of a particular family based upon the section for family supports as they tend to be more detailed and thoughtful when it involves white families. Viable paternal placement and supports are not explored when it involves minority families unless paternity has been previously established by the courts whereas white families are allowed to work this out privately. Additionally, relatives across state lines identified for black and brown families are not considered to be viable placements despite Indiana's willingness to open companion cases to assist with safety planning for the first 30 to 60 days.

Questions from the Chat:

Leah Yaris/ Legal Aid Chicago: 1) When cases are given an ongoing, is there a certain time frame for DCFS to bring it back, or is it at DCFS discretion?

- A: Daniela responded that it depends. Sometimes dates are not certain or are kicked back by investigators to "ongoing" to allow for the Intact case to be opened. Other cases that rise to a different level may be assigned as ongoing but an additional piece of evidence is needed therefore those cases will have a date certain ranging from 48 hours to 7 business days dependent upon if the child is safe while the evidence is gathered.

2) Does the 2 years of prior notes include intact notes or just investigation notes?

- A: The Intact file is also required; however, if the Intact is older than 2 years or a family has had multiple Intact cases; the notes sent over will typically contain the last few notes on the discharge and information on the last service plan. Daniela clarified that she also reviews notes from unfounded reports as well for any evidence that may be used in the current case before her.

3) Is there any way to contact Daniela to give her information on a family we are representing pre-petition when we feel the investigative team isn't taking into account mitigating info?

Agenda Item III – National Landscape of Policies/Practices RE: Mandated Reporting & Training by Courtney Rutledge

Refer to slide deck.

Agenda Item IV - Refinement of Mandated Reporter Recommendations by Dr. Vanessa White

Refer to slide deck.

Questions/Comments from the Chat:

Sara Block: I am in support of the first two recommendations. I do not support the body camera recommendation.

Janet Barnes: I do not support body cameras during investigations, as I have said many times.

Leah Yaris/ Legal Aid Chicago: As someone who represents parents, I have never had a client receive this, and I have never seen it.

Courtney Rutledge: Pennsylvania legislatures recommendation: All interviews conducted by personnel from DHS and its counterparts in the course of investigations – not just interviews with children – should be recorded. Interviewees must be informed that their statements are being recorded. Information from any interview that is not recorded should be inadmissible in all court proceedings and notes summarizing such alleged interviews should not be allowed in any DHS file.

Mareema Ali: I understand, often the worker will arrive at court and it will be stated that the mother/parents were not compliant in services, but it is not mentioned that the parents have not been referred, contacted, or assisted in services by the caseworker.

Mareema Ali: There does need to be some consistency between the worker and parents to show that the parents are waiting on the department, or explain the causes for the non-engagement in services. However, it is unfortunate, often the case worker does not want to appear at fault and it does fall on the parent, I have a case now, I'm reviewing the family has been waiting 14 months for counseling, and SA treatment, and the case continues to receive extensions, but the family has had 6 workers in 2 years. I'm not sure of the solution, but definitely that parents' attorney need to be kept abreast of the case management activities and lack there of.

Closing Remarks:

Co-Chair LaTanya advised the meetings in March and April will be rescheduled to Wednesday, March 13th and Wednesday, April 10th in an effort to achieve quorum. Members who are unavailable to attend in person can send an alternative to serve as a proxy in their place.

Next Steps:

- Members to consider and bring for discussion mandated reporting statues from other states. The meetings in March and April will be geared towards solutions addressing the subjectivity and discretion of the current mandated reporting statute. Please send questions, suggested refinements or additional recommendations to the Co-Chairs and Dr. Vanessa White.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 9AM.

The Task Force’s meeting locations are as follows:

<p>Shriver Center on Poverty Law 67 E. Madison St., 20th Floor Chicago, IL 60603</p> <p>Valet parking and via the Millennium Garage on Michigan Avenue for a fee</p>	<p>DCFS 406 E. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62701</p> <p>Free 2-hr time restrictive parking at meters</p>	<p>University of Illinois College of Law 504 E. Pennsylvania Ave. Champaign, IL 61820</p> <p>Room 241 – The Law Clinic Office 217-244-9494</p>
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Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Meeting Minutes

Locations: Shriver Center on Poverty Law, 67 E. Madison St., Chicago IL | DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL | Webex Conference

Time: Meeting called to order at 9:15 AM by Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law

Date: March 13, 2024

Members present @ various Chicago locations	Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Claire Ramsey, Alternative for Sara Block, Ascend Justice Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Angela McLemore, Alternative for State Senator Mattie Hunter Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
Members present @ Springfield location	Heather Dorsey, Director of Courts, AOIC Marie Versher, Dept of Human Services Barb Frobish, Alternative for State Senator Sally Turner
Members present virtually	Sara Block, Ascend Justice Ronald Davis, Lived Expert Parent State Representative Kimberly Du Buclet Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
Members not present:	Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar State Representative Sonya Harper Co-Chair Beverly Jones, VP/COO LCFS of IL Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender State Representative Camille Lilly Cassandra Williams, Lived Expert Parent
Public:	Arthur Anderson, Lived Expert Parent Dr. Vanessa White, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law Mareema Ali, State of Illinois Leah Yaris, Legal Aid Chicago Observer Dean, 5 th State Rep
DCFS:	Darnita Jackson, Assistant to the Deputy Director, Office of Legislative Affairs

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members and presented the “Opening Question”. Darnita Jackson took the roll. It was determined that a quorum was not present.

Approval of Minutes:

The approval of the May – March meeting minutes will occur during the meeting in April if a quorum is present.

Agenda Item III: Refinement of Recommendations

Continued discussions occurred on the recommendations that needed enhanced clarity.

- Recommendation regarding training for mandated reporters; providing guidance on when to report based upon specific offenses or alternatives to calling the Hotline when there are concerns.
 - Dr. Bryan Samuels commented DCFS should make distinctions within the mandated reporter training that clearly describe the circumstances that necessitate a Hotline call.
 - Robert Rodemeyer added the training should also educate reporters on the less invasive community-based resources and alternatives to refer families for services when there are no concerns for safety.
 - Dagené Brown commented changes to the statutory language in the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (ANCRA) will need to take place as well, particularly for specific offenses, as guidance on when reporters should report.
- Recommendation regarding the Child Welfare Service (CWS) referral system which deflect reports that come in through the Hotline does not meet the criteria set forth in ANCRA; from the investigative track to referrals for supportive or preventive services.
 - Robert commented the focus should be on alternatives to court referrals seeking court intervention after an investigation where risk has been assessed, such as short-term or relative guardianships in which resources, support and assistance in pursuing guardianship through probate are provided. Robert described a lack of trust that exists in terms of the Department's assessment of African-American families in terms of their social and financial capacity as well as in their ability to pursue and access guardianship through probate that is not displayed in cases involving white suburban families. As a result, African-American children are typically brought into care.
 - Mareema Ali agreed and made a comment about the mindset and common practice of removing and placing children because the family has other older children that were previously placed which needs to be revamped.
 - Dagené Brown referenced the Extended Family Support Program (EFSP) which helps support relative caregivers to prevent children from coming into the department's care. Dagené questioned whether these circumstances indicate an issue in practice stemming from bias on the basis of race and economic status.
 - Rob responded EFSP requires the parent's consent to guardianship which has become more of an issue over the past 15 years in terms of short-term family plans and the parents' consent to 30 to 45 days during which DCFS investigators deem the risk is too high or the parent is reluctant to consent. Rob commented additional training and assessment of the policies and practices of the Child Protection Division is needed for guardianship to be a meaningful option to court intervention.
 - Dagené commented EFSP aids with filing for and obtaining guardianship via the probate court system by arranging for legal representation, providing assistance with completing the required paperwork, helping to get the parent's consent and cash assistance to cover the cost of attorneys and court fees.
 - Dr. Bryan Samuels proposed adding evaluating and/or systemically reviewing the CWS referral system to ensure the basic guidelines that were initially identified are being followed and whether it is consistent with what the research says in terms of when differential response works and does not work.
 - Rob agreed and made a comment that these are viable options and should be given equal weight and consideration.
 - Dr. Vanessa White clarified the recommendation is geared towards the decision point of investigated/screened-in maltreatment in terms of deflection from the investigative track. There

is another recommendation that speaks to the equal weight and consideration that should be given to relative guardianship in terms of and during the protective custody decision point which includes the court screening process and consideration for who comes into care by way of protective custody.

Comments/Questions from the Chat:

Janet Barnes: I think that DCFS workers, educators, and medical providers already deflect the cases that they can, and refer families to alternative services where possible. Beyond that, I agree with Dr. Samuels. This recommendation reflects the lack of knowledge of the deflection that already exists, but I will leave it there.

Dr. Bryan Samuels: This is a link to an example of a systematic review for differential response in child welfare. This review of actually includes IL's approach. Again, just an example. *Refer to attachment.*

- Recommendation regarding body cameras for investigators to help identify and determine whether cultural bias is at play. Previous discussions indicated a lack of support from the Task Force which prompted discussion on whether the recommendation should be omitted.
 - Co-Chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson referred to previous discussions where it was mentioned that parents (located in Cook County) were requesting and in favor of this recommendation.
 - Arthur Anderson agreed and commented there should be a recording of the investigation as a means of documentation and accountability for everyone involved particularly because the word of the investigator is believed over the parent. Additionally, parents are not represented, are not familiar with the language or how to navigate the court system and some of the programs that are implemented are not offered to parents.
 - Heather Dorsey made a comment that caution and consideration should be given to how support is categorized particularly because there may be other parent attorneys that would not support this recommendation.
 - Rob commented that there is significant risk for parents with this recommendation in terms of the ease with which the recordings will facilitate cases to be prosecuted, not to mention the images of homes and children that will be stored, shared and disseminated. Additionally, there may be a protective factor element associated with recordings; however, there would also be significant intrusion for families and children.
 - There are no Miranda protections in a civil proceeding, therefore anything that is captured by the body camera footage would be admissible in court including any question asked by the investigator or any statement by children made to the investigator.
 - Janet Barnes made a comment about the images of children being captured in this manner which ultimately would be discoverable and, in most situations, would work against parents.
 - Sara Block commented she does not support this recommendation due to the dangerous, unintended consequences for parents.
 - Ronald Davis concurred and commented he does not support this recommendation per his work with the Federal Public Defender's Office.
 - Arthur Anderson clarified and referred to statements made during the meeting in February in which he suggested recordings take place at every stage after the investigative stage to include the regular service plan meetings and permanency hearings. At this juncture, significant discrepancies often emerge between the caseworker's and the parent's recollections of the events that unfolded.

Comments/Questions from the Chat:

Sara Block: I would suggest removing this. Ascend Justice represents parents and worries that this will actually be harmful to parents.

- Recommendation regarding the parent's bill of rights which is to be read and explained during the initial contact with DCFS and then re-read and explained at each encounter and/or decision-making point.
 - During the meeting in February, Cassandra Williams proposed a checklist and/or signed acknowledgement be added to this recommendation as an accountability measure. Cassandra commented workers need to be held accountable, the parent's bills of rights and the appeals brochure should be readdressed when caseworkers are assigned or reassigned, during intact or other interactions and should also include full explanation of the appeal process.
 - During the discussion today, Arthur commented some parents may not understand or be aware of what they are signing or acknowledging adding there should be a recording at every stage after the initial investigation due to the discrepancies within the case notes once presented at court. Parents are not allowed to speak during the court hearings and often the Public Defender will not speak up on their behalf and does not support the parents.

Comments/Questions from the Chat:

Janet Barnes: I support pre-petition representation for parents and giving parents a bill of rights at various intervals. Again, I strongly disagree with DCFS workers wearing body cameras. Have a good day.

Sara Block: Although recording interactions is the recommendation from parents, it is not a recommendation that Ascend Justice would support.

- Recommendation regarding mandated reporters and making it permissible for them to use their discretion and professional judgement within the scope of their duties to deflect reports into the Hotline by utilizing alternative means and resources.
 - Co-Chair LaTanya clarified this recommendation is aligned to the previous recommendation on mandated reporters discussed earlier during this meeting geared toward prevention of calls into the Hotline and providing mandated reporters with additional guidance.

Outline of Recommendation Report by Dr. Vanessa White

Dr. White outlined the structure of the recommendation report which will include an executive summary to provide background information on the process, the keynote speakers, highlights from all the discussions that took place, followed by the key findings and recommendations at each decision-making point.

- Heather Dorsey asked a question about the recommendations that did not receive consensus from the full group and whether that would be reflected in the report.
 - Dr. White responded oppositions to the recommendations would be reflected as well as the disparities that are prevalent among certain parts of the state.

Closing Remarks:

Co-Chair LaTanya thanked members for their continued dedication to this cause and advised members of next month's meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 10th. Members who are unavailable to attend in person can send an alternative to serve as a proxy in their place to help with quorum and allow for the meeting minutes from May, 2023 through March, 2024 to be approved.

Next Steps:

- The finalized recommendation report will be sent to members during the last week of March in preparation for the final meeting on April 10, 2024. The Co-Chairs request members review and send suggestions or recommendations in advance.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 AM.

The next and final meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 9AM. The Task Force's meeting locations are as follows:

Shriver Center on Poverty Law 67 E. Madison St., 20th Floor Chicago, IL 60603 Valet parking and via the Millennium Garage on Michigan Avenue for a fee	DCFS 406 E. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62701 6th FL Conference Room Free 2-hr time restrictive parking at meters	University of Illinois College of Law 504 E. Pennsylvania Ave. Champaign, IL 61820 Room 241 – The Law Clinic Office 217-244-9494
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Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare Task Force Meeting Minutes

Locations: Shriver Center on Poverty Law, 67 E. Madison St., Chicago IL | DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Springfield IL | University of Illinois College of Law, 504 E. Pennsylvania Ave., Champaign IL | Webex Conference

Time: Meeting called to order at 9:15 AM by Co-chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson, Vice President of Advocacy, Shriver Center on Poverty Law and Co-chair Beverly Jones, VP/COO LCFS of IL

Date: April 10, 2024

Members present @ Chicago location	Arthur Anderson, Lived Expert Parent Kimberly Washington, Proxy for Sara Block, Ascend Justice Keith Smith, Proxy for Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Angela McLemore, Proxy for State Senator Mattie Hunter Tina Lewis, Cook County Public Defender
Members present @ Springfield location	Nora Collins-Mandeville, Director of Systems Reform Policy, ACLU of IL Barb Frobish, Alternative for State Senator Sally Turner Cassandra Williams, Lived Expert Parent
Members present @ Champaign location	Melissa Frydman, Director of Family Advocacy Clinic, U of I College of Law Cheralyn Kesler, Attorney, Village of Savoy-SBDC
Members present virtually	Janet Barnes, Cook County Public Guardian Sara Block, Managing Director of Advocacy and Partnerships, Ascend Justice Ronald Davis, Lived Expert Parent Dagené Brown, Director of Racial Equity Practice, DCFS Dr. Bryan Samuels, Chapin Hall
Members not present:	Heather Dorsey, Director of Courts, AOIC State Representative Kimberly Du Buclet Kaitlyn Edicola, Representative of the Office of the Governor David Esposito, Supportive Housing Providers Association of IL State Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar State Representative Sonya Harper State Representative Camille Lilly Robert Rodemeyer, Cook County State's Attorney's Office Marie Versher, Dept of Human Services
Public:	Dr. Vanessa White, Director of Community & Family Justice, Shriver Center on Poverty Law LaTasha Roberson, Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois
DCFS:	Kara Hamilton, Associate Deputy Director, External Communication & Advisory Groups Darnita Jackson, Assistant to the Deputy Director, Office of Legislative Affairs

Welcome & Roll Call:

Co-chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson welcomed members. Dr. Vanessa White presented the "Opening Question".

Darnita Jackson took the roll and determined that a quorum had not been achieved with 11 members present at the various meeting locations and 3 members attending virtually. There was a discussion about needing to approve the meeting minutes from May, 2023 to March, 2024 before the Task Force dissolves and the delay in the finalization of the replacement appointment of active member Arthur Anderson, lived experience parent attending in-person at the Shriver Center.

Co-chair LaTanya Jackson Wilson asked members for a motion to include virtual attendance in the overall count for purposes of approving the meeting minutes with consideration given to the count being one less than the 12 needed to achieve quorum.

Approval of Minutes:

Arthur Anderson entered a motion to include virtual attendance in the count towards quorum for purposes of approving the meeting minutes from May, 2023 to March, 2024. The motion was seconded by Ronald Davis. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions or discussion.

With quorum as agreed, Tina Lewis entered a motion to approve the meeting minutes from May, 2023 to March, 2024. Nora Collins-Mandeville seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions or discussion.

The meeting minutes from May, 2023 to March, 2024 were approved with leave to amend and correct as necessary.

Agenda Item III – Approval of Recommendation Report:

Dr. Vanessa White outlined items to be included to the draft recommendation report. *Refer to email sent April 10th*. Additional information to be added included:

- Meeting minutes detailing the discussion from previous meetings.
- Comments from the public.
- Comments/discussion from the working group meetings held in September, 2023.
- References to the FY23 B.H. Consent Decree Monitoring Report indicating no change to disproportionality .

Co-chair LaTanya proposed members review and provide feedback by Friday, April 26, 2024.

Noted Comments:

Angela McLemore made a comment advising that the recommendation report include a request to the Governor for consideration alongside the report from the University of Kentucky per his work to make systemic changes within the child welfare system.

Included for point of reference – “To further advance DCFS’ mission of developing and improving a proactive system for investigating allegations of abuse and neglect and providing supports for children and families in need, the department is also initiating a systems focused study of its Child Protection Services. The department is partnering with the Center for Innovation in Population Health (IPH Center) at the University of Kentucky to conduct the study. The project team, led by Michael Cull, PhD at the IPH Center, will be supported by Richard Epstein, PhD at Northwestern University, and Tamara Fuller, PhD at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign” (Heather Tarczan, et al. “Illinois DCFS Launches Child Welfare Dashboard and Study of Child Protection Services to Increase Transparency and Accountability.” *Illinois DCFS*, press-release, 1 Sept. 2023, <https://www2.illinois.gov/IISNews/26976-Illinois-DCFS-Launches-Child-Welfare-Dashboard-and-Study-of-Child-Protection-Services.pdf>) accessed April 13, 2024.

- Co-chair Beverly Jones advised this initiative is geared towards recommendations for systemic changes within the Department of Children and Family Services versus focusing primarily on racial disparities.
- Angela advised the work of the Task Force must be folded into those efforts as racial disproportionality, diversity and what is happening racially across all aspects of the Department need to be considered.
- Co-chair LaTanya advised the purpose of the Task Force is to make recommendations that will help to solve the issue of racial disproportionality. The Co-chairs would reach out to the Governor to discuss making the recommendations a priority.

Other Topics of Discussion:

Co-chair LaTanya further advised members would not vote on the recommendations due to the multiple discussions that took place prior. Co-chair LaTanya requested a motion to allow 2 weeks for members to review the report and provide feedback by April 26th.

- Tina Lewis made a comment indicating she was not in agreement. Tina proposed there be another meeting after members have reviewed the draft and provided feedback which many members agreed.
- Ronald agreed and requested this additional meeting be held virtually which Tina and other members agreed.

Co-chair LaTanya requested a motion to have a final meeting on Wednesday, May 15, 2024 from 9AM to 9:30AM for purposes of approving the final recommendation report after members have had an opportunity to provide additional feedback. It was understood that the meeting will be held virtually and that virtual attendance would be counted towards quorum.

- Arthur Anderson entered a motion that one final meeting be held on Wednesday, May 15th to approve the final recommendation report. Ronald Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed with Melissa Frydman and Cherie Kesler abstaining for reasons not specified.
- Nora Collins-Mandeville entered a motion that virtual attendance be counted towards quorum. Arthur Anderson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with no abstentions or discussion.

Comments/Questions from the Chat:

- Champaign Meeting: I'm sorry, we have missed some meetings here. It's not clear to us what we are voting on and how we are proceeding. It sounds like the report still needs more revisions. Can you clarify? We got the draft but don't understand what is being voted on today, if anything? What is the process for voting ultimately? Is it just an up or down vote on the entire report? And what is enough to pass the report? And when will the vote take place? Agreed. That won't work for one of our members. Abstain. Two.
- Janet Barnes: Will we get the draft with the incorporated minutes? Will you send the draft with the minutes? May 15th is fine.

Closing Remarks:

Co-Chair LaTanya reiterated as agreed the task force would meet again on Wednesday, May 15th from 9 to 9:30am. The meeting will be virtual. The final draft of the recommendation report will be sent to members by Friday, April 12th. The deadline for members to provide feedback is Friday, April 26th. Members who are unavailable to attend in person can send an alternate to serve as a proxy in their place. LaTanya advised the Co-Chairs would work to implement the recommendations once the task force dissolves.

Next Steps:

- The Co-Chairs request members review the final recommendation report and send feedback to Dr. Vanessa White and Darnita Jackson by Friday, April 26, 2024.

Meeting Adjournment:

A motion was entered to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 10:54 AM.

The Task Force's final meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 15, 2024 from 9 to 9:30AM.
Members can join remotely or via the following locations:

<p>Shriver Center on Poverty Law 67 E. Madison St., 20th Floor Chicago, IL 60603</p> <p>Valet parking and via the Millennium Garage on Michigan Avenue for a fee</p>	<p>DCFS 406 E. Monroe St. Springfield, IL 62701 6th FL Conference Room</p> <p>Free 2-hr time restrictive parking at meters</p>
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