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California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative Final Report

*For the Child and Family Policy Institute of California
Funded by members of the California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership*



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PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was a project rooted in courage, as work related to race and disparities never has easy answers. This project required every person who participated to have conversations that were difficult to have, hear things that were difficult to hear, and say things that were difficult to say. I have deep respect and admiration for the funders, sponsors, faculty, and participants of this project – those who are constantly willing to challenge the system, one another, and most of all themselves.

This report would not have been possible without the generous funding of and support from the members of the Co-Investment Partnership, particularly Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the California Department of Social Services, and the Child and Family Policy Institute of California. The specific guidance, insights, commitment, and patience provided by Stuart Oppenheim at the Child and Family Policy Institute of California and Miryam Choca at Casey Family Programs were invaluable and their dedication to this project and work is unsurpassed.

Toni Paxton at the Child and Family Policy Institute of California not only helped conduct surveys and interviews for this report, but provided continuous and collegial support for teams, staff, and faculty over the course of the entire project. She was often the primary connector between project participants and the project itself. This project could not have been launched without the initial leadership of Margaret Jackson, nor would it have been sustained without Rebecca Jones Gaston coming forward to assume the leadership reins through to the project's conclusion.

Also of critical note is the administrative and logistical support provided by Barbara Foster and her team at CSU, Fresno and the Social Welfare Evaluation, Research, and Training Center staff under the leadership of Dr. Jane Middleton. Barb and her team worked tirelessly to ensure that each in-person meeting was seamless for participants, faculty, and project staff. Their behind-the-scenes efficiency, support, and flexibility created environments that

allowed these challenging conversations to take place and action planning to flourish.

Additionally, reviewers of this report generously gave their time and provided incredible improvements, ideas, and recommendations: Monique Hawkins-Kern County; Nancy Urquilla-Los Angeles County, Pomona Office; Chris Avventino, Lillian Chang, and Gary Taylor-Orange County; Richard Knecht-Placer County; Ivy Jackson-Riverside County; Kathy Jackson, Antonia Torres, and Roseann Myers-San Diego County; Sharon Bell and Lisa Hines-San Francisco County; Barb Joos-San Mateo County; Rebecca Jones Gaston-Casey Family Programs; Tom Lidot-Pacific Mountain Philanthropy; Barbara Needell-University of California at Berkeley; Elisha Gilliam-Annie E. Casey Foundation; Cynthia Billups; and Lucille Echohawk.

Most of all, I thank the county teams that participated in the California Disproportionality Project. This includes the parents, youth, community partners, tribal partners, and county agency staff who practice – and live – this work every day. They were the ones who truly made the vision of this project a reality and it is their ongoing commitment to this work that provides continuous hope for the children, families, and communities in California.

- Jen Agosti, Author

DISPROPORTIONALITY by San Joaquin County

Deciding

Inclusion was imperative

Someone needed to step up to the

Plate

Resolving we were

Obligated to

Protect all children. We made it our mission to

Obtain

Racial equity for all

Together we

Incited a movement

Offering to find a solution, committing to leave

No stone unturned

All options on the table

Labeling our issues

Identifying PDSAs

Testing hypothesis

Yearning to make a difference

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

The following report has been developed to share ideas and lessons that emerged from the California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative (CDP). It includes four distinct sections, each providing information from different perspectives. Each section can be utilized independently or they can be used in combination. We hope this report provides readers with ideas, concepts, and concrete practices and strategies they can apply to their own jurisdictions to address disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian families and children.

Project Purpose:

To address racial disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian families and children in child welfare

Sponsors/Funders:

[Casey Family Programs](#); [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#); [Stuart Foundation](#); [California Department of Social Services](#)

Project Management:

[Child and Family Policy Institute of California](#)

Duration:

22 months (July 2008 – May 2010)

Participating Counties:

Alameda, Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Placer, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, and San Mateo

Overview:

Fifteen teams, representing 12 California counties and a state-level team, included parents, youth, community partners, tribal partners, child welfare agency workers, supervisors, managers, and leaders, as they worked collaboratively for 22 months to address disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian families and children. These teams focused intensively on raising awareness, developing and delivering training, engaging partners, and testing changes in practice. They were supported by expert faculty members as they used aspects of three key methodologies to guide their work: the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, the Family to Family Initiative, and an American Indian Enhancement Team.

Key Learnings:

This project identified four key system-level elements that are required to support agency-wide changes: 1) ongoing and continuous training and awareness; 2) committed and engaged leadership; 3) dedicated and supported workgroups; and 4) an intentional focus on sustainability.

Additionally, participating teams developed and/or tested promising practices to help address the issues of disproportionality and disparities. These practices included race/culture-specific practices and general child welfare practices:

Race/Culture-Specific Practices

- Using bias-free language and reviewing cases for bias
- Packaging intakes/referrals differently
- Improving documentation
- Using peer support for cultural identity
- Being culturally responsive and respectful in meetings, teams, and service provision

General Child Welfare Practices

- Connecting families to communities
- Providing parents with information
- Focusing on families' strengths
- Engaging families in meetings and decisions
- Engaging youth in meetings and decisions
- Finding and connecting with family and relatives for placement

The California Disproportionality Project

This report has been developed to share ideas and lessons that emerged from the California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative (CDP). It was informed by the actual work done by the 15 participating teams (14 county teams and one statewide team) as well as the reflections and experiences of project leadership, staff, faculty members, and participants.

The report includes four distinct sections, each providing information from different perspectives. Each section can be utilized independently or they can be used in combination. We hope this report provides readers with ideas, concepts, and concrete practices and strategies they can apply to their own child welfare work as they strive to eliminate disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian¹ families and children.

Section 1: The California Disproportionality Project : An Overview

This section provides an overview of the work that was done in the California Disproportionality Project. It includes an Executive Summary Report along with a project timeline.

- A: Summary Report
- B: Timeline

Section 2: Core Issues and Lessons Learned Related to Disproportionality

This section describes the core conceptual lessons learned from the California Disproportionality Project. It describes the four key concepts that are necessary to address this issue, including many of the tensions and lessons that were learned along the way relative to each concept.

- A: Disproportionality at the System Level
- B: Youth and Parent Leadership in Addressing Disproportionality

Section 3: Ideas for Improving Practice to Address Disproportionality

This section describes the core practice lessons learned from the California Disproportionality Project. It describes key strategies that seem to address disproportionality and disparities in child welfare. This section also includes one-page pullout cards that can be used to help jurisdictions across the country guide practice changes that will help them address disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian families in their own communities.

- A: Improving Practice: Lessons Learned
- B: “What Works?” Practice Cards
- C: Reflecting on Data and Results

Section 4: Methodologies Used in the California Disproportionality Project

This section describes the methodologies used in this project to facilitate the awareness, change, and improvement processes. It provides an overview of what each methodology entailed as well as key lessons learned over the course of the project.

- A: Overview of the Methodologies
- B: Integrating the Methodologies: Lessons Learned

¹ Throughout this report, the term ‘American Indian’ includes Alaska Natives.

1

California Disproportionality Project

THE CALIFORNIA DISPROPORTIONALITY PROJECT: AN OVERVIEW

A	Summary Report	<i>A brief overview of the entire project, including the background, goals, structure, and key lessons learned</i>	1
B	Timeline	<i>A two-page at-a-glance view of the chronology for the project</i>	10

This is the **first** of four sections that describe different aspects of the California Disproportionality Project. Each section can be utilized independently or they can be used in combination. This section provides an overview of the work that was done in the California Disproportionality Project and includes an Executive Summary style report along with a project timeline.

1

The California Disproportionality Project: An Overview

A

PROJECT SUMMARY REPORT

This section provides an overview of the California Disproportionality Project. It describes how the project came about, its goals and vision, the project structure, key accomplishments of the teams, and core lessons learned about this work.

Introduction

In July of 2008, the Child and Family Policy Institute of California, with guidance from members of the [California Co-Investment Partnership](#), launched the California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative (CDP), funded through a partnership led by [Casey Family Programs](#) (CFP), the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) (AECF), the [Stuart Foundation](#), and the [California Department of Social Services](#) (CDSS). Over the next twenty-two months, 14 county-level teams representing 12 county child welfare agencies: Alameda, Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Placer, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, and San Mateo, along with a state-level team worked to address disproportionality and disparate outcomes for African American and American Indian children and families they serve.¹

Background and Overview

Across California, African American and American Indian children are disproportionately represented in the foster care system along the entire continuum of child welfare services. As with data on the national level, rates of substantiated maltreatment, entry into out-of-home care, and lengths of stay are all higher for African American and American Indian children in particular than for their White counterparts, while family reunification and exit rates are lower.

In September 2003, the California Child Welfare Stakeholders' Group presented its final statewide report focused on recommendations for redesign of the state's child welfare system. The core value for this new vision of California's child welfare redesign was identified as 'fairness and equity,' based largely on what these data said about the

¹ Teams in the CDP were required to select a specific population of focus, either African American or American Indian. (The term 'American Indian' includes Alaska Natives.) Twelve of the 14 county teams focused primarily on African American families and children. Two of the 14 county teams focused primarily on American Indian families and children.

disproportionate over-representation and disparities in services and outcomes achieved for children and families of color.

In response, the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) launched its first annual Fairness and Equity Training and Education Symposium in 2003 to raise awareness about the issues of race, culture, disproportionality, and disparities as well as provide training, tools, resources, and practice strategies. These annual symposia have continued to bring together staff and partners from across the state to learn, listen, and share as they move toward realizing this vision in practice. In 2004 and 2005, CalSWEC and the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC) collaborated to present statewide Fairness and Equity Leadership Symposia to engage policy makers in the growing dialogue about the critical need to address these issues within their own organizations.

Emerging from the annual Leadership Symposium in 2005 was the express desire and will from a variety of partners, both public and private, to move this work forward more intentionally and aggressively. These initial partners included CDSS, the County Child Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), CalSWEC, select county child welfare directors, CFPIC, Casey Family Programs, and AECF.

Initially these partners, known as the California Disproportionality Workgroup, identified two key methodologies, the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) and Family to Family (F2F), to support this work based on their prior and current use in addressing fairness and equity nationally as well as within California. A third key methodology, a defined American Indian Enhancement Team, was added as the project began to unfold and the need was identified by project leadership as well as participating counties.

The Three Key Methodologies

The *Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC)* methodology is a method developed by the [Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#) and adapted by Casey Family Programs to facilitate rapid practice improvements that begin with small tests of change. This method had been used to address many key issues in child welfare beginning in 2001, including a statewide California BSC focused on the implementation of differential response (2003-2004) and a national BSC focused on disproportionality and disparities (2005-2007).

The early partners for this project recognized, though, that the BSC methodology alone would not be sufficient to achieving the goals it had for moving this work forward. Counties would require additional types of technical assistance focused on awareness building, data collection and analyses, community partnership, and family engagement. This type of technical assistance was at the core of *Family to Family (F2F)*, a methodology funded in

California by the Annie E. Casey and Stuart Foundations and already widespread throughout California counties.

As counties were selected to participate and began the work of the CDP, a critical gap was identified by the two county teams that were focused on American Indian children and families. The focus on African American children and families at the first Learning Session (in-person convening) had overshadowed the history, culture, and unique needs of the American Indian community. With concern that this inherently limited the capacity of these counties to address disproportionality and disparities in their communities, the CDP, through additional funding from the Stuart Foundation, identified four additional faculty members to focus on American Indian issues.

Although there was no existing model for this third ‘methodology,’ the *American Indian Enhancement Team (AIET)* included California-based and national experts in working with tribal communities, understanding the Indian Child Welfare Act , and facilitating partnerships between public agencies, tribes and tribal communities that result in improved outcomes. This third approach not only provided awareness about American Indian history and tribal issues to all participants, faculty, and staff, but was able to enhance readiness of additional counties to begin building collaborative partnerships with local tribes and tribal communities.

Goals, Vision, and Key Elements of the CDP

The goal of the CDP was to support counties in addressing racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare for African American and American Indian children and families. The overall vision for the CDP was that in addressing these issues and improving the system for children and families of color – those who are most disadvantaged by the current system – the system would ultimately be improved for all children and families.

These goals and vision were further described by the four core values that served as the key underpinnings for the project:

- 1) Every child, woman, and man has an intrinsic and irreducible worth and a right to social and economic justice/fairness. Respect for family must guide all agency actions.
- 2) Communities, including youth and families, must be full partners in the system change process.
- 3) Public child welfare agencies must be advocates and catalysts for social change.
- 4) All children and youth need and must have permanent families.

While teams upheld these values in all of their work throughout the project, the work in which they engaged was expected to address each of nine key elements that were described in the CDP Framework:

- Building authentic tribal and community partnerships
- Collecting and using data
- Raising awareness and providing training
- Leading by example
- Engaging birth families and youth as authentic partners
- Engaging the broader child welfare system²
- Preventing inappropriate removal, diverting families to other supportive services, and ensuring equity for child welfare involvement
- Achieving practice and decision-making that does not result in racial disparities
- Ensuring least restrictive, appropriate, and supported placements
- Hiring, promoting, and supporting staff

Project Structure & Expectations for Teams

The CDP was guided by a Leadership Team that represented all of the funding partners. The Project Staff, who were staff of Casey Family Programs and CFPIC, worked closely with a group of 22³ national and California faculty members representing various perspectives including youth and community partners, program and agency staff, academic and data expertise, and community-building facilitation, and reflecting a diversity of racial and cultural backgrounds.

The staff and faculty conducted a competitive statewide application process in which 15 teams of youth, parents, community partners, and staff from all levels representing 12⁴ counties, were selected. Over the course of the next 22 months, the staff and faculty supported these teams at the four in-person meetings known as Learning Sessions, on monthly conference calls, and via a secure internet site.

² The “Broader Child Welfare System” refers to other agencies and organizations that serve children, youth, and families involved with, or at risk of involvement with, the child welfare agency. This system includes, but is not limited to, courts, schools, juvenile justice, welfare, mental health, and public health.

³ The project began with 18 faculty members. Four were added following the second Learning Session as part of the American Indian Enhancement Team.

⁴ Two of the selected counties had two teams each. One county (Los Angeles) had two separate teams based on its size, both of which focused on African American children and families. The other county (San Diego) had one team focused on African American children and families and a second focused on American Indian children and families. One selected team was a state team comprised of state-level agencies and partners.

Each team began by developing their own vision for this work along with what they hoped to accomplish. Throughout the project, they worked to raise awareness about the issues in their respective counties; to have – and engage others in having – ‘courageous’ and ‘crucial’ conversations; to test actual changes in practice and policy; and to implement practices and policies that positively impact outcomes for African American and American Indian children and families.

Key Process and System-Level Lessons Learned

Because the very nature of this work required a focus on processes and systems in addition to testing practices, teams learned a great deal about what race and culture-focused work requires from process and system perspectives.

Process Learnings

Through the work of the teams, the CDP recognized the need to continually focus on a balanced mix: a mix between ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’; between ‘heart work’ and ‘head work’; and between rapid change and long-term planning.

- **Knowing and Doing:** Many teams entered the CDP having already spent considerable time on building awareness, reviewing data, and developing and delivering trainings. While this tilled the soil for practice change, it did not mean the county should move away from this awareness building, data review, or training. Instead the CDP reinforced the need for the work on crucial conversations and practice change to be simultaneous, rather than sequential.
- **Heart Work and Head Work:** Addressing issues related to race and culture requires introspection, an examination of one’s own beliefs and biases, and a willingness to reflect and discuss those reflections openly. At the same time, addressing disproportionality and disparities necessitates balancing these personal ‘heart’ pieces with the objective knowledge, practices, and historical contexts that impact children, families, and communities.
- **Rapid Change and Long-Term Planning:** For those who are impacted most by disproportionality and disparities, changes can never be made quickly enough. And while many changes can – and should – be tested quickly, this work is complex and needs to be part of long-term sustainable plans that will outlast leadership and administration changes at the county level.

System-Level Lessons Learned

Several key lessons were also identified related to systems change. Each should be thought of as essential to engaging in, supporting, and continuing this work. All are necessary, but none by itself is sufficient. As a foundation, recognizing the need for individualized approaches with various races, cultures, and tribes is critical, as there is no single culture for African Americans or American Indians, nor is there a one-size-fits-all solution. The four key system-level lessons learned included:

- **Ongoing and Continuous Training and Awareness:** Training and awareness-building that are focused on addressing disproportionality and disparities in outcomes for African American and American Indian children and families cannot be isolated events. Not only does staff change, but the training and awareness around these issues is developmental in nature and requires constant attention to balance many of the tensions described above.
- **Committed and Engaged Leadership:** Leaders cannot be silent on these issues, nor can they delegate down permission or authority. The agency must have this work as a clear, visible, and well-articulated priority that is consistent within the agency and among the community. Leaders must create space and opportunities for staff to identify and address challenges; for parents and youth to assume leadership roles in their own rights; and for communities and tribes to join the agency as partners.
- **Dedicated and Supporting Workgroups:** This work needs more than a single dedicated group of people, but a single dedicated group of people must be identified and supported to direct, manage, and champion the work. While it is common to hear that ‘this is everyone’s job’ unless it is actually assigned to someone, it will not get done. The workgroups need active support from leaders, in the form of dedicated time, resources, and authority.
- **Intentional Focus on Sustainability:** This work is highly political in nature, but must not be subject to political whimsy. At all levels, an eye must always be kept on how it will continue and what will happen next. In agencies that are historically reactive, this focus on proactive sustainability takes on a particular urgency. Leaders will change, staff will turn over, and workgroup members will get tired. If this work is to continue, plans must address how it will be done.

The Work of the Teams: Practice-Level Changes

Over the course of the CDP, the county teams were able to implement several practices that have promising implications for addressing disproportionality and disparities in child welfare. These practices were grouped into two main areas: 1) race / culture-specific practices; and 2) general child welfare practices. Those practices that were race/culture-specific were practices that were unique to African American and/or American Indian children and families. General child welfare practices were those practices that, while initially having the greatest positive impact on these populations, would ultimately improve practice and outcomes for all children and families involved with child welfare.

Those practices that were tested by counties and showed the most promise in addressing disproportionality and disparities included:

Race / Culture-Specific Practices

- 1a. Asking Questions and Using Language that Does Not Result in Bias
- 1b. Changing the Way Intakes and Referrals Are “Packaged”
- 1c. Improving Identification and Documentation of Race and Ethnicity in Case Records
- 1d. Holding Culturally Relevant Family Meetings
- 1e. Native Family Services Team: Using Culturally Relevant Teams to Support and Work with Families
- 1f. Matching Families with Service Providers Who Are Culturally Responsive
- 1g. Dissecting a Case to Review Decisions for Bias
- 1h. Supporting Youth Formerly or Currently in Care to Support One Another

General Child Welfare Practices

- 2a. Connecting Families to Community to Prevent Child Welfare Involvement
- 2b. Improving ‘Another Response to Safety’ Engagement through Warm Hand-Offs
- 2c. Providing Parents with Information They Need
- 2d. Focusing on Families’ Strengths
- 2e. Giving Families the Opportunity to Talk About Their Strengths
- 2f. Using Parent and Community Partners to Support Parents in Meetings
- 2g. Engaging Youth Advocates to Support Youth in Their Own Meetings
- 2h. Ensuring All Families and Youth Have Access to Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) When Placement Is Needed
- 2i. Finding Family at the Front-End
- 2j. Assessing Relatives Immediately for Placement
- 2k. Using Technology to Increase Family and Youth Involvement
- 2l. Connecting & Re-Connecting with Kin
- 2m. Focusing on Education with Youth in Foster Care

Lessons Learned about the Integrated Methodologies

In order to do this work, the CDP relied on a combination of three methodologies: the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC), Family to Family (F2F), and an American Indian Enhancement Team (AIET). Each brought unique yet complimentary elements to the project, allowing the teams to balance many of the complexities of the work.

The BSC brought elements of a shared learning environment; team compositions that required partnership and leadership at many levels; a large consultative faculty; and a model for testing small practice changes rapidly (PDSAs). F2F brought established relationships between technical assistance providers and several existing counties; core strategies that provided a strong foundation for addressing disproportionality and disparities; tools and resources for addressing disproportionality and disparities; expertise in facilitating and supporting crucial and challenging conversations; and access to onsite technical assistance. The AIET was the final methodology to be brought to the CDP (engaged following the second Learning Session) and it brought significant expertise related to training on American Indian child welfare history, culturally appropriate engagement strategies to increase the participation of stakeholders, purposeful collaboration, and strengthening county readiness for working with tribes and tribal communities. These efforts ultimately resulted in the development of additional tools and resources available for participants, and expanded the focus on American Indian children and families beyond the two teams that applied with this focus. Together these three methodologies supported participating teams in making both practice-level and system-level changes.

The combination of these three methodologies posed challenges as well. Overall, these challenges were observed more from the project and leadership teams than by the participating county teams, but are worth noting. Based on the layered partnerships that created the CDP, there were challenges related to funding and staff; there was role confusion on the part of faculty members and technical assistance providers; and there were challenges at the leadership levels in terms of overall project decision-making. At the team level, the attempted integration of these three methodologies resulted in 'project' confusion with counties sometimes not understanding distinctions or commonalities among the different methodologies in which they were involved; limitations in access to onsite technical assistance; limitations on the size of their teams; and lack of clarity in the collection and use of data.

Conclusion

The CDP brought together partners across California to address the issues of disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian children and families in a concrete way. By bringing together three core methodologies to address various aspects and nuances of the work, the approach was complex yet comprehensive. The 15 teams that participated in the CDP were able to use various aspects of these methodologies to test changes in their practices, processes, and systems with a goal of achieving improvements in outcomes for African American and American Indian children and families. While it is too early to tell if those outcomes have been achieved, the learnings based on the qualitative and anecdotal experiences of participants suggest the project moved participating counties further along the path toward substantive and sustainable improvements.

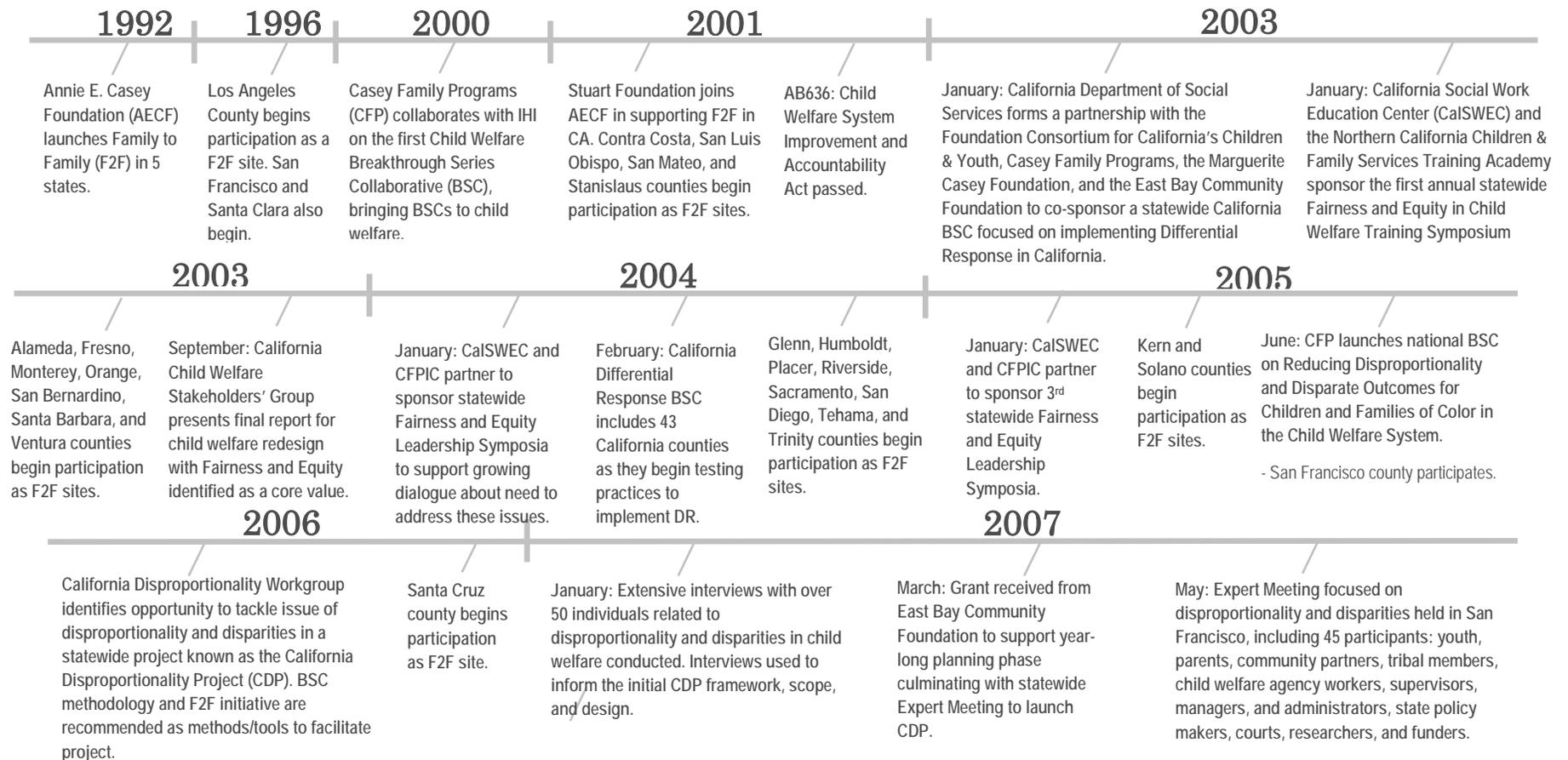
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The California Disproportionality Project: An Overview

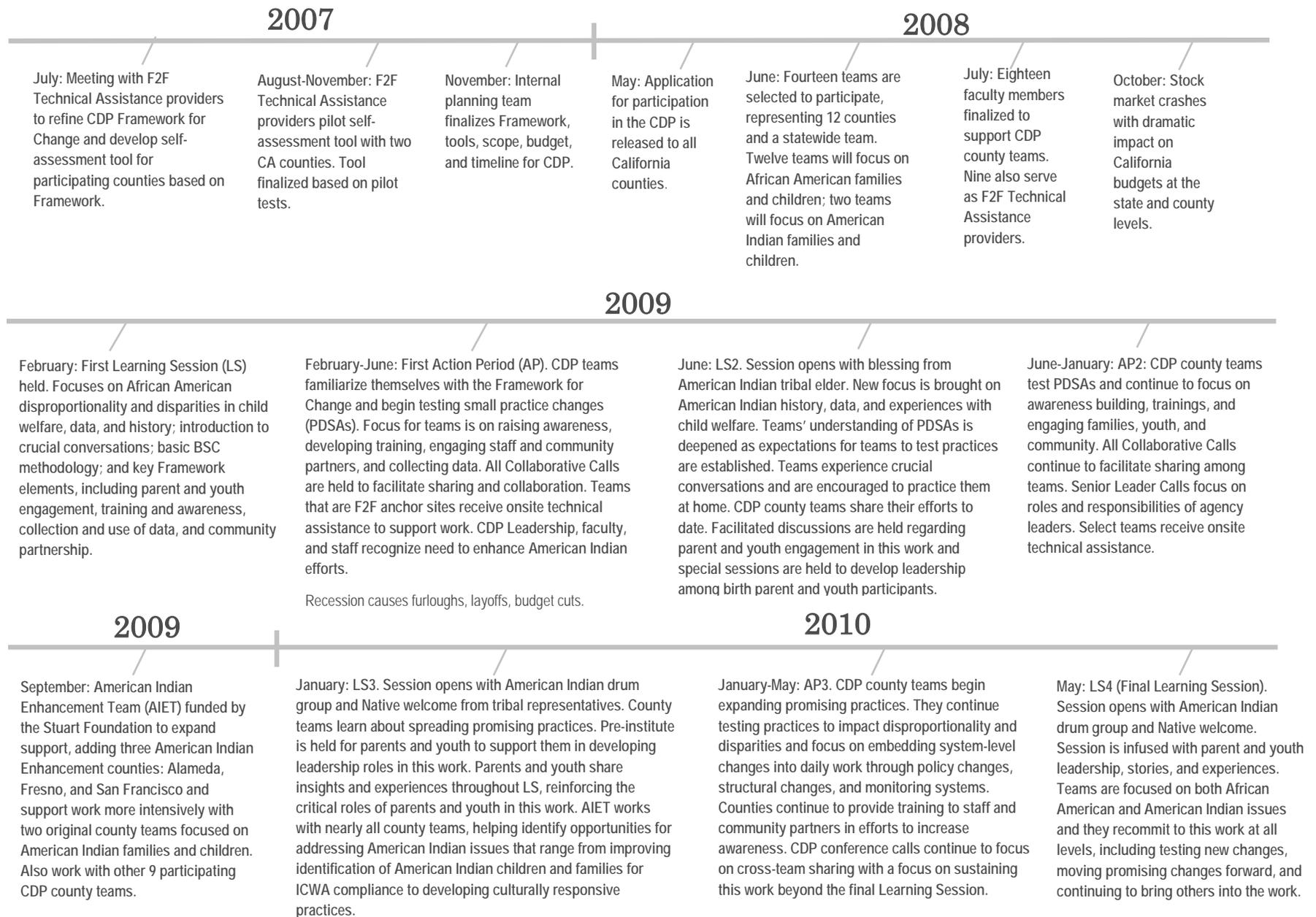
A

PROJECT SUMMARY REPORT

This section provides a brief chronology of how the California Disproportionality Project came to be. It also describes some of the critical milestones and processes as the project itself unfolded.



*California Disproportionality Project: Final Report
Section 1B: Project Timeline At-A-Glance*



2

California Disproportionality Project

CORE ISSUES AND LESSONS LEARNED RELATED TO DISPROPORTIONALITY AND DISPARITIES IN OUTCOMES

A	Disproportionality at the System Level	<i>A discussion of how disproportionality and disparities must be addressed at the agency and system level</i>	1
B	Youth and Parent Leadership in Addressing Disproportionality	<i>A discussion of how critical it is to engage youth and parent leaders in the work to address disproportionality</i>	21

This is the **second** of four sections that describe different aspects of the California Disproportionality Project. Each section can be utilized independently or they can be used in combination. This section provides information about the four core conceptual lessons learned about addressing disproportionality and disparities in child welfare agencies.

2

Core Issues and Lessons Learned Related to Disproportionality and Disparities in Outcomes

A

DISPROPORTIONALITY AT THE SYSTEM LEVEL

This section describes the core conceptual lessons learned from the California Disproportionality Project. It describes the balances that are needed between seemingly opposite perspectives about how this work should be done as well as the four key concepts that are necessary to address this issue at the system level. It includes brief descriptions of the tools and strategies that were used by project faculty, staff, and county teams.

Background and Overview

At the inception of the California Disproportionality Project (CDP), many counties across California had already made significant commitments to addressing the issues of disproportionality and disparities in outcomes in child welfare. Most of the commitments made by these counties took the form of developing and delivering staff trainings, assembling workgroups, collecting data, and building awareness within their own agencies. As one CDP Leadership Team member described, "...we [the CDP] hooked up with ongoing efforts -- a little bit of fanning produced a lot of smoke and fire."

The impacts made by the awareness building efforts, trainings, data collection, and workgroup development that several counties had already done before beginning this

"Agencies tend to be stuck in their own culture and comfort zone. Participating in the [CDP] causes you to have to shift out of that comfortable box."

- CDP Faculty Member

project cannot be overstated. While awareness on its own does not shift the practice-level work of child welfare agencies, it is a necessary precursor to the policy and practice changes that are ultimately required. And because so many counties had already begun this work prior to the launch of the project, it allowed participating counties to tackle practice and policy changes in meaningful and significant ways.

Process Issues: The Balancing Act

Many "projects" and "initiatives" have been launched over the last several years to address disproportionality and disparities in child welfare. Most of these projects and initiatives have recognized that there are serious challenges even in trying to identify the 'right' processes to inspire, facilitate, and support change. These challenges are often presented in

stark either/or terms – an agency can either ‘talk about the work’ (awareness and training) or it can ‘do the work (practice change);’ it can let people ‘feel’ the work in a visceral way (heart work) or it can paint people a picture of the work using data and historical facts (head work); it can help people move slowly, deliberately, and thoughtfully (long-term comprehensive planning) or it can move quickly (rapid change). Some leaders even use the phrase “the process IS the work” when describing how critical these tensions are. The CDP used a variety of methods to help teams balance these tensions.

Knowing and Doing

As described more fully below, awareness-building and training are critical elements that must be intentionally incorporated into agencies’ standard operating procedures in order to address disproportionality and disparities. These awareness building and training approaches cannot be single-time events; they must become part of the fabric of the agency’s ongoing work.

In the context of improving systems, though, true changes in systems cannot take place unless actual practices and behaviors are changed. Regardless of how much awareness is built around an issue, outcomes will not change until those doing the work begin to operate differently. Similarly, training is only effective if it finds its way into implementation at the direct service level.

Projects that strive to address disproportionality and disparities often wrestle with whether the focus should be on ensuring staff, partners, and families understand the magnitude and scope of the problem or if it should be on pressing

agencies to make concrete changes. As demonstrated in the CDP, the answer lies in the space between the two. The trainings and awareness-building activities should never stop – even as practice changes are being tested and implemented. In fact, as practice changes are moving forward, the importance of training and awareness-building grows rather than subsides, as people throughout the agency and community need to understand the rationale for and potential impacts of those practice changes.

In response to survey question asking the most significant learning from the CDP:

“...Self-reflection, ability to look at myself and how one can influence decisions and the impact on families for generations to come.”

- Alameda County

Feeling and Thinking

Addressing disproportionality and disparities is often said to require both ‘heart work’ and ‘head work.’ The heart work is typically described as those aspects of the work that require individuals to be introspective, reflective, and examine their own knowledge, beliefs, and biases, including the emotional and historical context of the problem. The head work tends to be more focused on data, facts, and concrete practice changes.

Agencies and workgroups have a tendency to favor one of these strategies over the other, sometimes believing that one is simply more important. Teams in the CDP asserted that the balance between these two, once again, was essential. The Learning Sessions tried to balance the two by alternating between the two types of sessions. A presentation that provided a brief history of American Indians in this country was followed by an inspiring talk about the impacts of bias on children and families of color by an American Indian judge; a session that taught how to have crucial yet challenging conversations about race was followed by action planning sessions in which teams were tasked with developing concrete practice strategies to test back home; and a session that began with a youth reading personal poetry about his experience in child welfare as a young black boy transitioned to teams sharing concrete strategies for practice improvement across counties.

Once practice changes began to take root, counties sometimes found it difficult to move back to the 'heart work,' yet maintaining a connection to participants' passions for the work became essential. Participants had to acknowledge the value of the interpersonal relationships being created and developed in this work to help them remain grounded, focused, and committed. In order to feed the ongoing awareness-building and training that is critical, continuous and ongoing heart work must be part of the processes that counties use to help propel practice change work forward.

Fast and Slow

Effective change in any realm often feels too slow to those who want it most urgently. But this work requires intentionality, which takes time. The work will move fluidly back and forth between the awareness / training that is needed to shift staffs' fundamental beliefs and the practice / policy changes that are needed to shift outcomes for children and families.

While this proved frustrating for some participants, it was a good reminder that working to eliminate disproportionality and disparities in child welfare is a long-term

"...this work takes time and cannot be rushed... the message must be relayed that there will be unintentional missteps when discussing the issue of race. Those involved with the work should go in with a mindset that those around them have positive intent."

- Orange County

process, not a short-term initiative. As a team member from San Francisco said, "We understand that although change is a slow process, you must keep going, be introspective and dialogue with each other."

One of the methodologies used in this project relied on rapid small tests of change (the Breakthrough Series Collaborative methodology). Because of the long-term slow-paced nature of this work, these small tests sometimes were quite challenging for

teams. But they also provided inspiration to teams as a reminder that change could be realized – and it wouldn't necessarily need to take forever. The balance between going slow to be intentional, while going fast to keep momentum and demonstrate that these goals could be achieved, became another tension for counties to manage throughout this project.

Teams in the CDP demonstrated that what is most effective is not a choice between each of these perspectives or approaches, but instead a delicate balance between them. In order to eventually eliminate disproportionality and disparities in outcomes in child welfare, practices and policies that guide decision-making must be reviewed, revised, and changed. In order for this to be done, staff with authority must be willing to authorize and support these changes. For these changes to be realized in practice, staff at all levels must believe in the changes and fundamentally agree with the underlying values. And for staff at all levels to act on these beliefs, the system overall must be willing to support them by creating environments of openness and trust. The need for balance is clear, but the ability to achieve this balance is difficult.

System-Level Themes

In managing these tensions, there are several system-level issues that have to be addressed in order to fundamentally change policies and practices. Over the course of the project, four primary system-level themes emerged as critical to doing and ultimately continuing this work. These were observed by faculty members, described by counties, and reinforced by the work that was done by teams over the course of the project. They include:

- 1) Training and Awareness
- 2) Commitment at the Leadership Level
- 3) Designated Workgroups
- 4) Intentional Focus on Sustainability

Training and Awareness

Before agency staff, together with families, youth, community, and tribal partners, can begin the work of changing practices and policies to address disproportionality and disparities, they must do reflective work on the values and beliefs that undergird those practices and policies. This reflective work must be done at the individual, agency, and community levels, as all impact the ultimate work done with families and youth. This reflective work may take the form of reviewing data, understanding history, being given time and tools for introspection, or having facilitated discussions.

In the CDP, counties used many different tools, strategies, and venues for doing this. Most counties had been engaged in some type of this work prior to the project, but a high-level of need for this awareness building and ongoing training was identified as critical. Unlike many child welfare trainings, which can be one-time events, trainings around disproportionality and disparities require a process-approach that is developmental in nature and includes focus on both 'head work' (data, history, facts) and 'heart work' (self-reflection, experiential activities, crucial conversations).

- **Data:** The use of numbers is often thought of as a starting place for work on disproportionality and disparities. The [Performance Indicators Project at the Center for Social Services Research, University of California – Berkeley](#), has many online tools available for California counties that allow them to look at their own data at different decision points (e.g., investigation decisions, placement decisions, etc.) based on disproportionality and disparity indices. Many counties in the CDP also worked to break these data down into finer detail by looking at specific work units to help identify potential disparities at the individual decision-making level. When presented as part of training, the impact of race on decision making becomes indisputably clear and reinforces the overall need for this work.

The presentation of these data are also useful to begin and/or continue conversations about disproportionality and disparities in the community. Orange County developed a one-page bulletin that uses data to describe this issue to staff and the community. This opened the door for conversations in ways that 'led with the facts,' laying the groundwork for the challenging conversations that would follow.

- **Trainings:** There are many types of trainings that can be used to raise awareness and continue conversations about this work. Some are stand- and-deliver trainings and others are experiential in nature. While they have slightly different formats and purposes, they are all intended to continue to raise awareness about the various facets of the issues.

The CDP began its training efforts by reviewing historical facts with participants. In doing so, many participants were surprised to realize that despite being champions of this work in their respective communities, there was a great deal of history they did not know.

While the first CDP Learning Session focused heavily on the history and experience of African Americans, the subsequent Learning Sessions presented history and data on American Indians as well, including a training by Utah Judge

William Thorne about the Indian Child Welfare Act. Because of ICWA non-compliance, data on American Indian children is notoriously unreliable, presenting an inaccurate picture of the presence and experiences of American Indian children and families in the child welfare system. Participants expressed powerful reactions to this information and the desire to learn more and share this information more broadly. This further demonstrated the incredible need for training and awareness around American Indian disproportionality and disparities, as even many of those who were highly committed to the work of this project discovered a significant amount of information they did not know.

Many training tools used by county teams in their own work at home over the course of the CDP were also used at various points in the CDP itself during the in-person Learning Sessions. Some were developed by project faculty members and staff and others were developed by county teams and brought to the project. Key training tools included:

Videos and Online Tools

- [*Race: The Power of Illusion*](#): This three-part documentary was created by California Newsreel and aired by PBS. It focuses on race in the context of science, history, society, and institutions in the United States. The video series is accompanied by a detailed discussion guide. Excerpts were shown at the CDP Learning Sessions to highlight race as a construct and the impact primarily on African Americans through the lenses of structural and institutional racism.
- [*500 Nations*](#): This video is an eight part series developed by 500 Nations TV and Warner Video in 1995 that documents the experiences of Native people throughout the Americas. There is a specific segment on this video devoted to the history of the boarding schools in which Indian children removed from their families were placed. This excerpt was shown at a CDP Learning Session to provide a context for American Indians' historical trauma, particularly in relation to child welfare.
- [*Race Matters Toolkit*](#): This comprehensive toolkit includes a video and other materials developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation. It was used widely by county teams to begin, facilitate, and continue conversations about race with staff and community partners.
- [*Implicit Association Test \(IAT\)*](#): This free online tool by Project Implicit at Harvard University was required for CDP participants prior to the first Learning Session. It provided a confidential and anonymous opportunity for participants to examine their own implicit biases.

- [Faces Videos](#): These two educational videos (one is one minute; the second is 12 minutes) were developed by the project's American Indian Enhancement Team to increase awareness about the Indian Child Welfare Act and strengthen social workers' ability to properly identify American Indian/Alaska Native children. The videos are part of a campaign to increase proper inquiry and notice, as well as supports, following the spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).
- [Parents Guide to Child Welfare Services and Juvenile Court - ICWA Version](#): This DVD developed by the San Diego American Indian CDP team provides an overview for American Indian parents involved in child welfare proceedings. The parent featured in the video was in a CDP team member and tells her story in the child welfare system. It demonstrates collaboration between the county and tribal Indian child welfare social workers and what is required for compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

In-Person Experiential Trainings

- [Walk of Privilege](#): Based on the work of Peggy McIntosh, this activity was used primarily by Family to Family Technical Assistance Providers during their onsite work with counties to raise awareness about white privilege at an experiential level.
- [Racial Sobriety](#): This training tool was used primarily by Family to Family Technical Assistance Providers during their onsite work with counties to continue conversations, interventions, and self-reflection about race and bias at an experiential level.
- [Undoing Racism](#): This training was used by a number of counties. It is a national training offered by The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and focuses on what racism is, where it comes from, how it functions, why it persists, and how it can be undone.
- [ICWA Specific Training](#): This training was developed by members of the American Indian Enhancement Team and [Tribal STAR](#) staff and delivered in San Diego to raise awareness about the need for ICWA compliance on personal, tribal, community, and agency levels. By including tribal youth and community members as part of the training, agency staff could better understand the values and beliefs that underlie the required practices.

Crucial and Courageous Conversations, Facilitated Dialogues, and Inspiration

- *Large Group Discussions at Learning Sessions:* These were used at CDP Learning Sessions to teach and inspire crucial conversations. Skilled CDP faculty members and staff introduced concepts, such as race as a social construct, historical trauma, institutional and structural racism, color blindness, and white privilege, noting the discomfort they often raise in participants. They also provided opportunities for people (including faculty members) to ‘practice’ these conversations in ways that modeled the types of conversations people needed to have.

The most significant thing we have learned as an Agency department is that we CAN discuss race and disparity in a thoughtful and sensitive way. What was previously ‘the 800 pound gorilla in the room’ has become something we are able to discuss in meetings and in personal conversations much more comfortably than in the past.

- San Mateo County

- *Facilitated Activities:* Several Learning Sessions used the experiential [*World Café*](#) model to support participants in having crucial conversations about visions, challenges, and opportunities for family and youth engagement; community partnership; and ongoing commitments to this work.
- *Crucial Conversations Back Home:* Most counties wanted to continue having these types of conversations at home with other staff, families, and partners, but they often found them incredibly difficult without skilled facilitation present. Many felt it would have been helpful to have this consultation available at the local level, not just at the Learning Sessions. They found it uncomfortable to be the small group who was constantly challenging the system around these issues back home. When teams did have these conversations, they found it helpful to use reflective questions such as “when was the earliest time you realized there were different races?” or “when did you become aware of race and culture?” as starting points.
- *Inspirational Speakers:* At each Learning Session, at least one speaker was brought in to motivate, inspire, and allow participants to reflect on the importance of their work. As two of these inspirational speakers, Judge

William Thorne and Jaiya John, presented their own experiences, perspectives, and reflections to the large group at separate Learning Sessions, participants were able to feel both validated and re-energized in the need for their continued commitment.

Documents and Written Materials

- *Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Tools:* The American Indian Enhancement Team, in response to its work with several teams in the CDP, developed written informational tools for counties to use to help raise awareness and understanding about American Indian families. These tools included "[*Following the Spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act*](#)," explaining the background and intentions of the Indian Child Welfare Act, beyond the regulations and requirements; "[*Tribal Projects Unit Fact Sheet*](#)," describing the purpose and support offered by this newly created unit of the Administrative Office of the Courts; and "[*Reasons Why People Do Not Claim to Be American Indian*](#)," describing the historical relationship between American Indians and federal/state government institutions in this country and providing support to improve identification and ICWA compliance. The development of these tools is continuing and will be compiled into a comprehensive online toolkit by the AIET.
- *Team Storyboards:* At each of the first two Learning Session teams were asked to create visual representations of their teams, their counties, and their work related to disproportionality and disparities with a focus on data, practice, and policy. Although these were created for and displayed at Learning Sessions to facilitate cross-county sharing, many counties brought these home and continued to use them at staff meetings, staff appreciation events, and in the office to raise awareness and create a 'buzz' about this work.

Overall, counties found that data, awareness, and trainings needed to focus on three key aspects: 1) understanding basic history and "facts," especially understanding key differences between races and cultures; 2) exploring personal and organizational beliefs, values, and biases; and 3) creating opportunities to talk openly with others about history, facts, beliefs, values, and biases. In fact, the inter-relationships between the three may be as important as each one on its own.

Commitment at the Leadership Level

All system improvement efforts rely on leaders who are committed to the changes proposed. Disproportionality and disparities work raises the level of leadership

commitment required to do this work. It requires a level of authority, visible level of engagement, and continuous management and monitoring that many other system change efforts do not require. This leadership must happen at multiple levels for counties, including County Executives, Boards of Supervisors, and Agency Directors.

Authority

In order for disproportionality and disparities to be addressed, those staff involved in the effort must have both permission and support. This work requires permission for more than practice changes; it requires permission to explore personal and institutional biases, review policies and decisions, and have conversations that will be uncomfortable, challenging, and sometimes controversial. As a result, staff must have clear and explicit articulation from agency leaders that this work is a priority and they will have the support of agency leaders as these situations arise.

“Leadership has been key to keeping this initiative in the forefront. The commitment of upper managers has been crucial to its sustainability.”

- Los Angeles - Pomona

In order for leaders to grant this authority, these issues and the potential ramifications within the agency and from the community must be identified and discussed. These must become regular parts of leadership team conversations. And parallel work around the review of policies and decisions and the exploration of personal and institutional biases must happen at the highest levels of leadership, including at the highest levels of the county leadership (e.g., County Executives, Boards of Supervisors, and Agency Directors). Without this, the authority given to staff runs the risk of being perceived as empty, temporary, or inauthentic. Unless this work is seen as an explicit priority of the agency leadership, as evidenced by their commitment as the sponsor of the work, staff may feel they do not have the authority to make changes.

Visible Level of Engagement

Granting authority to do this work is a necessary pre-condition for addressing disproportionality and disparities and this must happen at the highest levels of the agency, as described above. But leaders at the next level (e.g., the Child Welfare Directors and Managers) must also take an active role in engaging in and managing the work.

These agency leaders in the CDP not only attended the Learning Sessions, but also participated in bimonthly calls in which they discussed the progress of their teams. Many of them attended the regular (often biweekly) team meetings and talked about

the active roles they continued to play in this work. They took leadership around both general and specific issues in their counties, including:

- Bringing in skilled trainers and facilitators to work with the agency leadership team around the issues;
- Supporting the development of staff trainings and requiring all staff to attend;
- Creating environments that felt supportive and gave staff a 'safe space' to be uncomfortable;
- Modeling challenging conversations in front of staff by discussing case-level decisions and the potential impact of race on those decisions;
- Identifying funding for culturally responsive services and service teams; and
- Developing a Memorandum of Agreement with a local tribe a) to ensure that children could remain in the tribe whenever possible as well as b) to firm up the agency's policy of working closely with the tribe.

Continuous Management and Monitoring

As agency leaders play key roles in leading these efforts, they also play critical roles in managing and sustaining the efforts. Participants at the final Learning Session wanted assurance that once the CDP officially concluded, the work in the county would still continue.

Leaders have many opportunities to create expectations and then follow up to ensure those expectations are being met. This can be done in many ways, including through quantitative data reviews, supervisory reviews, and at staff meetings. Leaders involved in the CDP identified several ways they planned to continue managing and monitoring this work, some of which they developed during the CDP to hold their teams accountable:

- Incorporating expectations about participating in this work into staff evaluations and reviews;
- Developing, distributing, and presenting on disproportionality and disparity data to management teams and staff, including critical federal indicators;
- Using data reports to facilitate discussions about decisions and implications for those decisions; and

- Dissecting cases from a decision-making perspective in transparent and open ways when there were concerns.

Dedicated Workgroups

While all staff in an agency must eventually be involved in awareness and training efforts, most agencies in the CDP found it important to have a dedicated workgroup that was focused specifically on the issues of disproportionality and disparities. For many counties, the CDP Core Team and Extended Teams were simply variations of existing workgroups they had focused on the issues. For other counties, new teams were developed for this project.

There were many lessons learned related to the composition, structure, support, and purpose of these teams:

Team Composition and Size

Because the designated Core Teams were expected to lead the work in the CDP, it was critical for these teams to include more than agency staff. The youth and parents on the Core Teams were essential as were the community and tribal partners. Direct line staff were able to bring forth the realities of the day-to-day work with children, families, and communities. One team included a significant number of different department managers on their team to ensure this work became – and remained – the work of the entire agency and community and did not become silo-ed.

- ***Selecting Team Members:*** In selecting team members, most counties relied on the workgroups they already had in place. But others took a more measured approach, describing it as a professional and personal growth opportunity. One county made it a competitive process similar to the team selection process, in which staff interested in participating on the team had to write a letter of intent. This county did intentional outreach to line staff and reached out to people who had experience as champions of these issues. This helped create and foster a culture of enthusiasm, interest, and belief around the work, as well as a stronger sense of commitment and belonging for the team members who were selected. As this county continues to sustain the work by moving it to different divisions, they plan to go back to this application process as it proved so effective.
- ***Team Size:*** The CDP had funding for ten Core Team members from each team to attend the in-person Learning Sessions. While in other BSC projects, this number seemed reasonable, many teams felt

frustrated by this size limitation, as their Core Teams at home were actually much bigger. Not only did several counties begin the project with standing workgroups of fifteen or more individuals, but nearly all counties were looking to expand, rather than shrink, their workgroups. Larger teams may have been more challenging to work with at the Learning Sessions, but would have allowed broader exposure to the training experiences and greater opportunities for team building and cross-county collaboration.

- **Extended Teams:** Along with the Core Team, the CDP required each county to also develop an 'Extended Team.' This team was intended to

"...the involvement/participation of various extended team members in the [CDP] has really contributed to its expansion, creating interest and sustaining the work."

- Los Angeles - Pomona

be an extension of the Core Team, supporting the work, providing advice, and serving as champions to various constituency groups. Some counties used this prescribed model, but others, because their initial teams were so large,

simply maintained their existing workgroups as the so-called 'Extended Team' and had a subset of that group become the Core Team.

Regardless, the important learning was that ten people was simply too few to hold the weight of this work. Several teams from smaller counties expressed anxiety over always feeling that they were lone voices in their agencies about this issue. As a result, they worried that their voices, at some point, wouldn't be heard any longer. They wanted strength in numbers, so that it wasn't always a single small group – or solely a group comprised of people of color – who were discussing and focusing on this work.

At the conclusion of the CDP one team had developed an entire agency-wide Advisory Group of roughly 40 people, including cross-system partners. This group, which also included the CDP's Core Team members, had been discussing the potential of becoming a county-wide advisory body that would regularly report to the county's Blue Ribbon Commission. This example points the way for small groups doing this work to become fully embedded and embraced in an agency's (and county's) overall way of doing work.

Team Management and Support

Teams must have the ability to try new things and the ‘protected space’ to engage in difficult and sometimes controversial conversations. Because challenges in this work are inevitable, the team must have confidence that it will be supported when these challenges arise. This is only possible if the team is structured in a way that gives it explicit authority and access. The team manager must be high-level and have easy access to those above him/her.

Not only should the team manager be able to grant authority to do this complex and controversial work, he/she should also be skilled at all the work entails, including relationship building, facilitating discussions, and staying focused on clearly articulated missions and goals. If the manager is unable to do these tasks, the team must have regular access to someone who is.

The team managers in the CDP played multiple roles. Not only did they do the work described above, but they also monitored, managed, and reported on the changes that were being tested in their respective counties. In the most effective teams, the team managers championed more than just the work done by the teams, they championed and validated the individual team members and their contributions.

An additional role for team managers and the leaders for whom they worked included reaching out to the community, as the community plays a critical role in addressing these issues. Disproportionality and disparities not only impact the community in dramatic ways, but the community also has some responsibility for disproportionately referring families to the child welfare agency and not always having the capacity to provide the family support services that families need in order to safely divert child welfare involvement. The agency is dependent on the community just as the community is dependent on the agency to address these issues.

The community must view the agency’s work on these issues as authentic and that is only the case if high-level agency representatives demonstrate that it is a top priority. A community partner from one county team described how he only believed the work was ‘real’ when the agency leader held a community meeting and in his words, “let the community speak their truth to her” – and not always in the nicest ways. He said that at the end of the meeting, when she hadn’t gotten defensive or tried to explain the agency’s actions, but instead apologized for the harm perceived by the community, the community members said they were then ready to become partners to solve

the challenges together. This interaction highlights some of the complexities in addressing the issue. While all stakeholders share some responsibility, it is often necessary for agency staff to reach out and join with the community in an open and non-defensive manner before real progress can be made toward effective joint problem solving.

Purpose of Team

Teams in the CDP were given clear assignments and tasks. At the conclusion of the CDP they expressed appreciation for this clarity, saying that it allowed them the space to have the necessary conversations while also pushing them to test practice changes.

This clarity of mission, task, and priority is essential for workgroups addressing disproportionality and disparities. Without the clarity, the tensions described above often hold sway and the purpose may shift based on the leadership and/or membership of the group. By starting the CDP with a clear framework to help provide a frame and common language for the work, teams could immediately narrow in on priorities and define the balance they needed for their specific county.

Intentional Focus on Sustainability

Testing small changes that remained in an isolated workgroup, unit, or practice was never the intention of the CDP. While some practice changes were expected to begin that way through small tests of change (PDSAs), the teams were intended to serve as learning laboratories that would explore possibilities and develop promising approaches on a small scale before moving to full county-wide implementation. This proved to be successful for many teams in implementing new practice approaches.

Eliminating disproportionality and disparities relies on more than practice change. The full system and its relationship with the community at large must be assessed, structured (often restructured), and prepared to sustain the work over a longer period of time than the 22 month duration of the CDP. The individual counties involved in this project and the state-level leaders that formed the state team began developing plans focused on sustaining the work prior to the final Learning Session.

County-Level Sustainability

The majority of counties were engaged in this work prior to the project and all planned to remain engaged in doing this work following its formal conclusion. At the final Learning Session, counties were asked to describe the various ways they were going to continue their work. In addition to the broad descriptions of maintaining

their workgroups, expanding their trainings, continuing to raise community awareness, and committing to engaging and working with birth parents and youth as partners, there were many specific ways that counties described their plans to sustain their attention to this work:

- *Embedding the work in visible agency priorities:* Several counties described how they were tying the work of disproportionality and disparities to their System Improvement Plans (SIPs), as part of the state's outcome and accountability system. Because the SIPs are tied to each county's self-assessment and are currently reviewed on a three year cycle, they felt this was a strong way to ensure that not only would they hold themselves accountable for this work, but other parties would do so as well.
- *Conducting targeted case reviews:* One county began doing intensive administrative case reviews during this project, specifically of African American children and families. These case reviews brought together managers, supervisors, and staff to discuss and assess decisions in the context of race and biases. They examined outcomes as well, to maintain focus on both disproportionality as well as disparities in outcomes. This county had plans in place to continue doing these reviews and making the results open and transparent for all staff. These reviews also provided the county with valuable information about where and how processes, practices, tools, resources, and policies needed to change.
- *Leveraging funding from other initiatives and projects:* Several counties began the CDP with committed partnerships based on existing initiatives and projects. By doing this, the community was brought into this work in a way that inherently made it more sustainable. By moving this beyond a solo child welfare effort, the community could help lead, direct, and sustain this work as it impacts them most.

One county was able to amend a Mental Health Services Act contract focused on American Indian support to fund Child Abuse Prevention Specialists in the Native community. Others engaged initiatives such as [First Five](#) and [Incredible Families](#), again drawing on prevention partners to support this work. And another county looked to a federal partner and funding source, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to work through their System of Care grant to focus on American Indian families, community-supported prevention, and cultural education and awareness building.

- *Engaging the community in systematic ways:* In addition to funding partners, one county developed such close relationships with the African American community that the community itself created its own non-profit organization focused on prevention and support. Through this partnership, the public agency and this community-based organization continue to hold one another mutually accountable in their respective areas of focus.
- *Bringing more people into the work:* Workgroups convened for this project were maintained consistently for the entire 22 months. Some of them had been in existence, and most committed to remaining together after the final Learning Session, but all recognized that they could not be the sole bearers for this work.

One county that had focused its CDP Core Team on management level staff had plans from the beginning to actively engage staff from the additional management units to take this work out of the intake/investigation silo. Another group decided to fold its Core Team into a county-wide Advisory Group. And the Core Team of a very large county was able to bring its team into a county-level executive policy workgroup. This group included high-level executives and directors from many systems that interact with child welfare. Through this formalized partnership, the work of the Core Team was significantly elevated and the work spread beyond the single office that had been involved in the CDP.

“The development of the LA County Core and Extended Teams, Executive Policy Workgroup, staff training and PDSA implementation, has shown us that this work cannot be done alone. We recognize that youth, parents and community must join us in this effort in order to authenticate the process and effect change.”

- Los Angeles County – Metro North

State-Level Sustainability

In reflecting on the CDP, the project sponsors and Leadership Team identified the missed opportunity of not having a formal plan in place to support moving this work to the other 46 counties in the state from the beginning. Despite this lack of planning, the statewide partners involved in this effort identified and moved forward several strategies to sustain various aspects of the work across the state:

- *Involving the State Interagency Team:* California convened a State Interagency Team for Children, Youth, and Families (SIT) in 2003. The purpose of this team was to bring together the multiple agencies in the state that worked

with and provided services to children, youth, and their families in an effort to better integrate and coordinate services, planning, and work. The SIT formed subcommittees to address various aspects of their work together and one of these was the Disparities Subcommittee. Over the next year, this subcommittee worked with facilitators from the CDP Leadership Team to explore the possibility of participating in the CDP as its own team.

Through this group, the SIT formed a team that participated in the full CDP, which enabled them to better understand the issues surrounding this work first-hand as they listened to counties. They were also able to recommit to this work on a statewide level. The individual SIT team members planned to infuse their respective agencies with the learnings from the CDP. Addressing disproportionality and disparities is becoming part of the normal training expectations across the state. And including the state-level team together with the county teams helped the state stay in touch with counties on the direct work that was being done.

- *Supporting continued focus on American Indian children and families:* The American Indian Enhancement Team was initially crafted to deepen support for the two American Indian teams and expand the work related to addressing American Indian disproportionality and disparities to additional counties. Three additional enhancement counties were selected: Alameda, Fresno and San Francisco, and greater focus and resources were added to American Indian work overall. As the CDP moved toward the fourth and final Learning Session, statewide funding partners committed to funding this work for three years to allow the team to continue to provide technical assistance to the five counties from the CDP, expand the number of counties supported, and develop a written toolkit together with CFPIC, CalSWEC, the Administrative Office of the Courts, Casey Family Programs, and others for statewide dissemination to support all counties in the state.
- *Connecting with the Child Welfare Council:* The [California Child Welfare Council](#) (CWC) was established by legislation in 2006 to serve as an advisory body and provide recommendations for improving child and youth outcomes in the state. Because several members of the CDP's Leadership Team serve on this Council, many recommendations were taken to this level. One of the Council members has encouraged disproportionality to become a core value and core issue for the Council, guiding all work the Council does with children and youth. This CWC member, a presiding juvenile court judge who also serves on Los Angeles County's disproportionality leadership team, has

adopted and evaluated the use of court “bench cards,” which will be spread from Los Angeles to additional counties in the future.

- *Integrating work into award of federal initiative to create permanency for African American and American Indian children and youth:* The state of California recently received a highly competitive five year federal grant, a Presidential Initiative focused on addressing barriers that keep children and youth stuck in long term foster care with particular focus on African American and American Indian children. The goal is creating an integrated casework model that will be implemented statewide in order to address barriers to permanency for American Indian and African American children across the state.

In selecting its critical populations to focus this work, California’s grant proposal targeted initial focus on four counties, two of which were participants in the CDP, allowing them to build upon the work they did in the project. Following the initial three years of the grant, the work will be replicated in an additional ten counties in the final two years.

- *Relying on existing channels for dissemination:* California has many opportunities to support, develop, and disseminate the work that was done in the CDP. The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) has been focused on these issues for many years and continues to develop and deliver valuable training, tools, and resources for child welfare staff across the state. Additionally, they sponsor an annual Fairness and Equity Symposium in which work such as this is highlighted and disseminated broadly.
- *Exploring and building on existing methodologies focused on sustainability:* The CDP lasted only 22 months. While significant progress was made during this time, the methodologies used in the project did not apply components that focused explicitly on sustainability. Community Development Teams (CDT), developed by the [California Institute for Mental Health](#) and used to implement evidence-based interventions in mental health, relies on a methodology similar to the BSC and Family to Family methodologies. But unlike these methodologies, it has a model phase dedicated specifically to sustainability. The Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership, CalSWEC and CFPIC are committed to a theory of change that will apply implementation science in spreading and sustaining systemic change efforts in California, and these organizations have all committed to prioritizing the issues of disproportionality and disparity in these efforts. As they do so, elements of the CDT model, and others like it, should be explored and built upon to

ensure that the practice and process improvements made by counties in the CDP are maintained over time.

Conclusion

The work done as part of – and in concert with – the California Disproportionality Project was done at multiple levels. While teams were testing practice changes to impact their daily work with children, families, and communities, they were also working to address the

“Although [our] Disproportionality Workgroup started meeting prior to our participation in the [CDP], our attendance at the four Sacramento Learning Sessions helped us to focus our efforts, provided us with new tools to work with, gave us the opportunity to learn from both the State Project leaders and from our peers in other counties, and motivated us to move forward.”

- San Mateo County

systemic issues and structures that are needed to promote, support, and sustain changed practice. The systemic work that must be done includes awareness-building and training; ensuring leadership at all levels is actively engaged in the work; teams are created and supported to do work; and intentional efforts are made to sustain work over time. These must be done

somewhat simultaneously, all while carefully balancing the natural tensions that emerge around this work. As agencies, staff, families, youth, community partners, and tribes continue to work together to eliminate disproportionality and disparities in outcomes in child welfare, they must challenge one another to do better; push one another out of their comfort zones; all while supporting one another as they do the work in partnership.

2 Core Issues and Lessons Learned Related to Disproportionality and Disparities in Outcomes

B THE IMPACT OF PARENT AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

This section describes the need for and impact of parent and youth leadership on the work done in the California Disproportionality Project. It describes the evolving role that parent and youth leaders played, along with the key activities that supported their developing roles as leaders.

Background and Overview

During the planning phases of the California Disproportionality Project (CDP), the sponsors made it clear that the work of disproportionality and disparities could not be addressed without engaging parents and youth as partners. They needed to be at the table and engaged at every level of the work, from overall project leadership through individual county team membership. As a result, parent and youth partnership was reflected as a key element in the Framework for Change as well as a requirement for county Core Teams.

Initial Parent and Youth Roles in the CDP

The first intentional role crafted to ensure parents and youth were leaders in this project was that of the project Co-Chair. A facilitator, consultant, and Family-to-Family Technical Assistance provider who had previously been in the foster care system was invited to co-lead the overall project. As project Co-Chair, she served on the project team, involved in shaping calls, agendas, and overall priorities for the project as it unfolded. In addition to this overall leadership role for a youth leader, a parent leader was also included on the project faculty. This proved to be critical, as the need for additional support and coaching for parent and youth leaders was identified over the course of the CDP.

While each team was required to include at least one parent and youth on their Core Teams, many teams initially struggled to identify these partners. These counties received additional support from CDP faculty to ‘find’ parents and youth who would participate on their teams.

At Learning Session 1 these constituent team members expressed that they felt unsure of their roles, sometimes unsupported on their teams, and generally uninformed about the topic, the work, and the way the professionals on their teams spoke. When the teams broke up into their cross-county “Affinity Teams” (individuals grouped by role rather than locale),

these parents and youth talked openly about feeling more like token representatives than true partners. Thus, while some teams had been able to recruit parents and youth to participate in this project, they had been less attentive to the preparation, support, and intentionality that is needed to engage those who are 'outside' the formal system as true partners. These roles were not only new to the parents and youth on the teams; they were new to the teams themselves.

Initial Team Reactions and Reflections

Based on the feedback from the first Learning Session, Learning Session 2 created opportunities beyond the Affinity Teams for the parent and youth team members to assemble separately. There was a concurrent session provided for them to learn more about the topics of disproportionality and disparities and to talk more about the roles they could play in this work.

These facilitated sessions helped some of the parent and youth team members develop their voices and share some of their own ideas for the improvements needed to address these complicated issues. Not only did they have the opportunity to share these ideas amongst themselves, dedicated time was reserved on the Learning Session agenda for them to share these ideas with all project participants.

Following this sharing, the entire CDP engaged in an active [World Café](#) style discussion that focused on developing a vision, opportunities, and solutions for moving toward authentic engagement and partnership with parents and youth. This experiential session helped all participants think not only about what parents and youth would need to do to become authentic partners, but what agency staff would need to do to make that happen.

The large group debrief of this exercise was quite telling about where many participants were on this issue. While project staff and faculty expected participants to develop solutions that they would own as personal or team commitments – things they themselves could do to better engage parents and youth on their own teams – most solutions shared by team members were recommendations for the project. These focused on Learning Session activities, such as holding separate sessions for parents and youth; ensuring sessions were inclusive; not requiring parents and youth to attend sessions that were agency-focused; etc. While these recommendations were both valid and valued, very few solutions shared were commitments that teams were making to working toward this partnership at home. Parent and youth voices were noticeably quiet during this time.

Moving Beyond Token Representation

As a result, the project staff, co-chair, and parent faculty member developed a comprehensive plan for focusing on parent and youth engagement in a multi-faceted way

for the time that remained in the project. This plan included conference calls with the respective Affinity Teams, focusing on developing self-advocacy and strategic sharing skills within the parent and youth groups, and continuously stressing the need for and helping teams identify resources to ensure that parents and youth were being included as partners.

At Learning Session 3, this plan unfolded. Parent and youth leaders were invited to arrive earlier than the rest of their teams to attend a specially designed “pre-institute.” This pre-institute included a host of activities to give parent and youth leaders more comprehensive grounding in the work, an understanding of how to ‘protect’ themselves while sharing important expertise with their teams, inspiration to step in and take a role, and coaching on how to use their voices in strategic and intentional ways.

This pre-institute resulted in the development of one of the most impactful strategies of the Learning Session – that of sharing personal vignettes. Parent and youth leaders worked individually and together to craft their own stories in their own words. Some were narrative; others were poetry. They were shared by the parents and youth themselves throughout the Learning Session as introductions to each session over the course of the two days. They required no framing, nor did they require any conclusions. The stories and the sharing allowed all project participants to see these constituents in new ways as they were given space to share their experiences, expertise, and the power of their voices.

Jaiya John, the inspirational speaker who spoke directly to the parents and youth during the pre-institute then spoke to the entire audience on the second day of the Learning Session. He further raised their awareness about the power and impact of these voices on change as he relayed some of his own experiences through story, poetry, and a charge to carry forward. This charge to the group focused on the need for passion in this work – and how that passion must fuel the changes that are needed. The evaluations at the end of this Learning Session expressed a deep appreciation for the involvement of parents and youth, and expressed an equally deep commitment to ensuring that these voices would continue to be heard.

“[It was] scary to have youth and parents on [the] team at first, but that ended up being the most positive part and strength on the team.”

- CDP Participant

Stepping into Leadership Roles

If Learning Session 3 was where parents and youth moved from being silent team members to active participants, Learning Session 4 was where these team members moved from being active participants to becoming true leaders in the project. There was once again a pre-institute for parent and youth leaders, this time focused on developing and planning to facilitate a Collaborative-wide World Café on the first day of the Learning Session.

Additionally, the group also identified volunteers to share stories, experiences, and

inspiration throughout the meeting, again as introductions to each individual session on the agenda. After spending two hours during the pre-institute crafting the 'right' questions for CDP participants to address, the parents and youth entered Learning Session 4 with a renewed energy and strength in voice that led participants throughout the two day session.

The goal of the World Café, as designed by the parents and youth, was to have teams focus on why it was critical to keep parents and youth at the table for this work and more importantly, actively engaged in it. Parents and youth wanted to ensure that this was a commitment beyond the duration of the project. Not only was there universal agreement in the room that this was essential, teams were creative and intentional in making plans to ensure this would be the case. Some examples of what teams committed to do following this activity as well as at the conclusion of the project included:

- Find independent funding sources and creative ways to compensate youth and parents in order to make them more available for participation in evaluating services, developing policy/practice, and mentoring new youth and parents entering the system;
- Invite parents and youth to participate on policy review and development committees;
- Develop, support, and fund a Youth Advisory Group and involve members of this group along with parents and community members in the continuous quality improvement PDSA methodology to facilitate system improvements and practice changes;
- Continue to advocate for birth parent and youth engagement in different forums and in various work efforts; and
- Coordinate and facilitate a youth panel for the Statewide Interagency Team before the end of the year (2010).

Parent and Youth Impacts on Practice Improvements

Not only did the involvement of parents and youth have a significant impact on participants' understanding of the role that parents and youth must play in this work, but the parents and youth were also able to inspire and conduct many of their own tests of practice improvement over the course of the CDP. Some of the highlights of these practice improvements included:

- ***Youth and Parent Leaders Providing Training:*** Many youth and parent leaders helped develop and participate in trainings. These trainings were directed toward

social workers, foster parents, and/or birth parents as well as court representatives. Youth in San Diego participated in new social worker training, highlighting the need to identify tribal youth and connect them to their tribes. Digital stories were also created allowing the real experiences of birth parents and youth to be shared with a broader audience.

- **Parent Partners to Provide Parents with Information:** The parent leaders on several teams expressed a need to improve the way information is shared with parents, especially at the beginning of their child welfare involvement. Many felt this was only done as an afterthought, and had tremendous impacts on parents' engagement in planning and decision-making. By developing practices and processes in which Parent Partners (those who had already been through the child welfare system) could connect with and provide information to parents, these parents would have a much greater likelihood of engaging positively with the agency. And this positive engagement could impact the ability to avert placements or, when placement was needed, to speed reunification.
- **Parent Partners to Support Parents in Meetings:** Similar to practices that helped provide parents with information, Parent Partners also began to contact parents to provide preparation and support to them around Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs). So many critical decisions occur at these meetings that having parents prepared, present, and participating as active partners can have dramatic impacts on the outcomes the children and families ultimately achieve.
- **Youth Advocates for Support in Meetings:** Not only do parents need and deserve to participate as active partners in meetings that will result in decisions about their lives, youth need and deserve the same. Youth leaders on one team worked to develop a similar model to the Parent Partner model in which youth advocates would contact, prepare, and provide support for youth to participate in their own TDMs.
- **Youth Peer Support:** Club Seven was the idea of a tribal youth on the San Diego team. He believed that tribal youth in particular needed connections and relationships to one another that would develop, support, and sustain their connections to their tribal heritage. This club would be more than a typical support group; it would provide education, history, skills, and support as youth developed not only their self-identities but their identities as tribal members.
- **Using Technology to Engage Parents and Youth in Meetings:** Logistics were cited by many parents and youth as a challenge to participating in meetings. With many youth being technology-savvy, one thought of using Skype, or other virtual

technology, to allow parents and youth to participate in meetings and court hearings even when they could not be physically present. At the conclusion of the CDP this was still in early stages of testing, but showed promise in increasing the numbers of parents and youth who were able to participate.

Conclusion

Finding culturally appropriate ways to engage parents, youth, tribes, and tribal communities in system improvement work is often a challenge for agencies. This engagement often results in discomfort, uncertainty, and anxiety about what will be said, who will be heard, and how information will be understood or perceived. These “typical” challenges were

heightened by the fact that this project was addressing issues of race, culture, and bias.

This engagement is also a challenge for parents and youth, who know the system extremely well as consumers, but may not know the

processes, language, rules, and regulations that guide the system. They often feel like outsiders to the work and this can be further exacerbated by the agency’s natural hierarchy and authority, particularly in the context of their involvement.

Yet as the CDP demonstrated, when these challenges are attended to, the outcomes can be remarkable. Not only can this involvement result in ideas and necessary system improvements that might otherwise go unidentified, it can also help shift organizational cultures that see youth and parents as consumers rather than partners.

Parent and youth leaders from teams had many of their own reflections about the roles they played in the CDP and their continued commitment to the work going forward. These quotes best summarize the impact they had on this project – and will certainly continue having on this work in the future.

“While many of us still have passion and enthusiasm for our jobs, many of us have never considered ourselves to be innovators or someone who can empower other people. Both [the parent and youth on our team] are those kinds of people as are many others who have been committed and have been part of the CDP 7th Generation Team work. So, if a difference will be made, on behalf of Native American children, we would expect it to come from the youthful innovation, passion, and enthusiasm of the youth and the willingness of adults to listen...”

- San Diego County

"I am going to keep working hand [in] hand with my team and continue trying to become a parent partner for Natives in San Diego and keep on sharing my story." – San Diego Parent

"My commitment is to keep in contact with SS Agency, my county workers, etc. and to be involved in meetings to ensure my voice can be heard." – Orange Parent

"I'll keep in contact with the workers and youth that got me involved in this program. I would like for someone that fell on hard times like myself to hear my story." – Kern Parent

"My commitment will be to think of new ways youth can be involved and have their voices heard and let my county know all of my ideas." – San Joaquin Youth

"[I will] keep [giving] 100% and just stay true and use my voice to help." – San Diego Youth

"I will actively seek to engage the agencies in my community. I will find ways to become a voice from the outside, and to move within." – San Diego Youth

"I promise to stay involved in San Mateo County's work focusing on disproportionality. I value time spent and knowledge gained. I will do my best to voice my concerns, thoughts, questions, and/or anything else regarding disproportionality and foster youth/parent advocates!" – San Mateo Youth

"I commit to helping foster youth build confidence to help change situations in their communities. I also commit to continue being an advocate to speak up for their rights." – Fresno Youth

"I will stay committed to this work because it is my calling. I hear this saying, 'If not me, who? If not now, when?' It needs to be me and the time is now. I will stay committed to this work because I want those who share a similar background as I to have a better chance at life." – Alameda Youth

3 California Disproportionality Project

IDEAS FOR IMPROVING PRACTICE TO ADDRESS DISPROPORTIONALITY

A	Improving Practice: Lessons Learned	<i>A discussion of how disproportionality and disparities can be addressed through changes in child welfare practice</i>	1
B	What Works: Practice Cards	<i>One-page descriptions of practices that were tested during this project that showed promising results</i>	13
C	Reflecting on Data and Results	<i>A discussion of the challenges of and opportunities for using data to reflect on improvements</i>	34

This is the **third** of four sections that describe different aspects of the California Disproportionality Project. Each section can be utilized independently or they can be used in combination. This section provides information about the key practices and strategies that have promise in addressing disproportionality and disparities in child welfare.

3

Ideas for Improving Practice to Address Disproportionality and Disparities

A

IMPROVING PRACTICE: LESSONS LEARNED

This section describes the core practice lessons learned from the California Disproportionality Project. It describes key strategies that seem to address disproportionality and disparities in child welfare. This section is followed by one-page pullout cards that can be used to help jurisdictions across the country guide practice changes that will help them address disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian families in their own communities.

Background and Overview

Teams participating in the CDP committed to making changes at both the system and practice levels in order to address disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian families and children. Neither done alone will result in the depth of change that is needed to address these issues. In the CDP, teams built upon practices already being done in their agencies as well as developed and tested new ideas over the course of this project.

Two Areas of Practice Improvements

The Framework for Change was intended to be the guiding document in developing ideas for change. This Framework included system-level issues, such as building community and tribal partnerships, developing awareness and training around the issues, collecting and using data, engaging committed leaders, partnering with the broader child welfare system, and hiring, promoting, and supporting staff. At the practice-level the Framework helped agencies think about engaging families and youth as partners, preventing child welfare involvement, achieving practice and decision-making that is bias-free, and improving placement practices for African American and American Indian children.

As teams tested practices to address these elements, they began to fall into one of two general areas: 1) race / culture-specific; or 2) general child welfare. Those practices that were race/culture-specific were practices that were unique to African American and American Indian children and families. A few of these practices were highly specific for American Indian children and families and are noted as such. General child welfare

practices were those practices that, while initially having the greatest positive impact on these populations, would ultimately improve practice and outcomes for all children and families involved with child welfare.

1. *Race / Culture-Specific Practices*

The practices tested by teams in this area focused on identifying explicit and implicit biases related to race and culture; improving identification and documentation of race and ethnicity; creating teams and linking families with services that are culturally responsive; and helping youth develop their cultural identities. The Practice Cards in Section 3B provide more detail on each of these specific practices.

- a. **Hot Words** (*Asking Questions and Using Language that Does Not Result in Bias*): Language is a powerful factor that contributes to stereotypes, perpetuates negative characterizations of individuals and families, and adversely influences decision-making in the child welfare system. By identifying 'hot words' that are commonly used by mandated and non-mandated reporters to describe individuals, their behaviors, their families, and their communities, and asking further questions when these words are used, more objective pictures of families can be developed, resulting in the potential for less biased decisions. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:
 - Developing a list of words or phrases for hotline/screening/intake staff to pay particular attention to (e.g., whooping, beating, crazy, drug user, resistant, non-compliant, angry, etc.);
 - Asking reporters to clarify when using any of these words; and
 - Providing documentation and prompts about these words and phrases for staff.
- b. **Order Matters** (*Changing the Way Intakes and Referrals Are "Packaged"*): First impressions are critical. When child welfare investigators are presented with descriptive information about a family's race, culture, language, or geographic location before they review any details about the actual allegations or family dynamics, they are likely to form opinions about the family based on their own beliefs and biases, both conscious and unconscious. By removing these descriptors from the initial review of information, biases and assumptions will be reduced, thus resulting in initial impressions and resulting decisions being based primarily on the details of the actual allegations and eventual interactions with families. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Having staff ask questions about a family’s race, ethnicity, culture, language, geographic location, etc. but keeping this information on a separate page from the allegation narrative;
 - Having staff review the allegation narrative alone, without the descriptive information, for the initial review of the facts of the case; and
 - Including the demographic information sheet as secondary, rather than primary, information for workers to use as reference.
- c. **Write It Down** (*Improving Documentation of Race and Ethnicity in Case Records*): While race, ethnicity, and culture should not affect decisions that are made about child welfare involvement, they are critical to know in order to understand families and respond appropriately to their unique strengths and needs. This is particularly important for American Indian families, as having the correct information in the county’s data system triggers a series of Indian Child Welfare Act requirements, activities, and available supports. Additionally, this information is essential from a data analysis perspective to review and ensure families of color are not experiencing disparities in the ways they are treated or in the outcomes they ultimately achieve. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:
- Providing staff with training about why it is important to learn about and document families’ races, ethnicities, and cultures;
 - Developing guidance about how workers should ask for this information;
 - Ensuring families are being asked for this information in ways that are respectful and allow for the agency to respond appropriately to their unique needs; and
 - Conduct case reviews and reviewing data information system to ensure this information is reflected.
- d. **My Way of Meeting** (*Holding Culturally Relevant Family Meetings*): Family meetings are common in tribal culture. Using these meetings as a model for the more agency-focused “Team Decision Making” meetings, tribal families and communities can be involved early on to avoid placements when their children are at risk of removal. By engaging parents, children, extended family, tribal members, Indian child welfare staff, and other child welfare staff before a removal is done – and/or immediately after – fewer American Indian children will come into the agency’s custody and children will be maintained on their reservations or within their tribes. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:
- Providing tribes and families with clear information about these meetings early on in their involvement with the agency;

- Beginning and ending meetings with prayers and/or other rituals that are appropriate for and led by tribal members; and
 - Scheduling the meetings (locations and times) to meet the needs of the family.
- e. **Native Family Services Team** (*Using Culturally Relevant Teams to Support and Work with Families*): Tribal families rely on culturally relevant, community-based services in order to have their needs met in appropriate ways. By identifying and providing these services in culturally responsive ways, such as through a team approach, Native youth and families will be more engaged in services, more satisfied with services, and more successful in achieving the goals of their plans. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:
- Identifying workers focused on emergency response and ongoing casework along with a community liaison and family advocate to work in partnership with Native families;
 - Identifying, reviewing, developing, and using culturally appropriate assessment, case planning, and evaluation tools and service models;
 - Developing clear referral process such that as Native families are identified, they are referred to the service team; and
 - Creating opportunities for the families and youth to get to know the team members to establish trust, communication, and confidence in the process.
- f. **A Provider Like Me** (*Matching Families with Service Providers Who Are Culturally Responsive*): When children and families need services, it is critical for those who provide the services to be respectful of and responsive to the children’s and families’ culture. This will increase the likelihood of trust, positive relationship development. And this will ultimately impact the children’s and families’ likelihood to attend the service and for the service to be effective. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:
- Asking youth and families if they would feel more comfortable with a service provider of the same race and/or culture;
 - Identifying qualified service providers in the community of multiple races and cultures to meet the diverse needs of the specific community; and
 - Connecting youth and families with service providers in the community based on race and/or culture.

- g. **Taking Things Apart** (*Dissecting a Case to Review Decisions for Bias*): Open and courageous conversations are necessary at all levels to address disproportionality and disparities. One way of facilitating these discussions in concrete ways is by dissecting a case from a decision-making perspective. This not only allows staff to view decisions in unbiased ways, but also helps illustrate the connection between decisions and disparities in outcomes for children and families. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:
- Creating cross-hierarchical teams in the agency to do these reviews;
 - Reviewing all key decision-points in the case using specified guidance and tools;
 - Facilitating open discussions within the team on findings in non-threatening ways that allow for different perspectives to be heard; and
 - Sharing findings with staff as awareness and training opportunities.
- h. **Club Seven** (*Supporting Youth Formerly or Currently in Care to Support One Another*): Youth involved with child welfare agencies, particularly American Indian youth, need to maintain connections to their tribes and cultures. Creating structured opportunities and an operational network for them to meet together for mutual support as well as to learn about and stay connected to their tribal history is an essential part of their development as youth, young adults, and tribal members. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:
- Partnering with tribal youth to identify times, locations, and develop curriculum for the group;
 - Helping continuously identify tribal youth and connecting them to this group;
 - Providing logistical support to the group as needed and requested; and
 - Encouraging and supporting leadership development within the group to ensure it can be youth-led and youth-facilitated as much as possible.

General Child Welfare Practices

The practices tested by teams in this area focused predominantly on developing partnerships with families; improving engagement with families; supporting partnerships between families and communities; and connecting families and youth with their own natural supports. While all of these are practices that are fundamental to good child welfare practice, in the CDP each was tested specifically with African American and/or American Indian families and children based on data and experiences

that suggested these families and children were disproportionality impacted by the practices.

- a. **Keeping Families Together** (*Connecting Families to Community to Prevent Child Welfare Involvement*): Ensuring children are safe while keeping families together is the primary goal of child welfare services. Connecting families with support services in their own communities can often help them maintain their children safely at home. Providing courts with clear evidence that a family is actively involved with these family preservation and other family support services in the community can make it less likely that courts will require removal or deny recommendations for reunification. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:
 - Conducting Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) for the initial detention (removal) in which families are introduced to family preservation services and Linkages;
 - Helping families access these services if they are desired; and
 - Sharing these recommendations with courts in an attempt to keep families intact.
- b. **Warm Hand Offs** (*Improving 'Another Response to Safety' Engagement through Introductions*): Many families who do not meet the standard for formal child protective services (CPS) involvement are referred to community services for preventive supports. The enrollment in and engagement of families referred to these services has been low in the past, but with a letter from CPS introducing the services and providers it is likely to increase, thus preventing these families from coming to the attention of child welfare in the future. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:
 - Partnering with community members and families to develop an introductory letter from CPS that introduces 'Another Response to Safety,' (differential response pathway), the community agencies, and services provided;
 - Sending letter from CPS;
 - Ensuring Another Response to Safety partners contact families within seven days (although after waiting 72 hours to allow families to receive CPS letter.); and
 - Having someone at CPS agency available to answer questions from families.
- c. **Tell Me What I Need to Know** (*Providing Parents with Information They Need*): In order for agencies to make sound decisions, families must be part of the decision-

making process. They can only do so when they understand everyone’s roles and responsibilities, the agency’s processes, and the types and purposes of meetings in which they will be involved. By providing this information to parents in ways they understand and from their peers (through Parent Advocates/Parent Partners), parents can play more active roles in informing the decisions that are made about their own lives. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Developing clear expectations for social workers that describe their interactions with parents and youth;
- Developing “Talking Points” card for social workers with key information about Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) that families must be given and required social workers to use this card; and
- Developing, engaging, and supporting Parent Advocates/Partners to share information about TDMs with parents, encourage them to attend these meetings, help them understand the purpose and process of the meetings, provide support to them prior to the meetings, and answer any questions they might have.

d. **Look at the Good** (*Focusing on Families’ Strengths*): When staff focus on families’ strengths rather than challenges, they are more likely to work in partnership with families and help them find the supports they need in the community. As a result, they are more likely to believe children can remain safely at home with their parents. By finding ways to help staff recognize, acknowledge, verbalize, and document these strengths, more children will be able to remain at home safely with their families and families will be able to get the supports they need directly from community partners. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Contacting abuse/neglect reporters before the investigation begins to ask them to identify at least one family strength;
- Asking families to identify their own strengths in language that makes sense to them (e.g., tell me what you are most proud of as a parent”);
- Sharing these strengths with partners who are working with the families as well as with the courts; and
- Providing training to courts and community partners about the importance of identifying, sharing, and focusing on families’ strengths.

e. **Families Speak First** (*Giving Families the Opportunity to Talk About Their Strengths*): Many meetings are held with and about families once they are involved with child welfare. In order to ensure these Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs)

result in decisions that best meet the needs of families, it is essential to have families present. Equally important is for families to be given skills, supports, and opportunities to actively participate in these meetings. Allowing families to speak first, and encouraging them to talk about their strengths, creates an environment in which families and agencies can work in partnership to best meet the needs of their children and themselves. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Encouraging parents to attend meetings through Parent Partner/Advocate outreach, reminder phone calls, and written information;
- Encouraging parents to bring their own supports to the meeting;
- Creating a supportive environment for parent involvement at the meeting; and
- Inviting parents to begin by sharing their strengths, their challenges, and why they are there as well as the strengths, challenges, and needs they see for their children.

f. **Parent to Parent** (*Using Parent and Community Partners to Support Parents in Meetings*): Including parents in Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) is essential to making sound decisions about children and their families. Parent Partners or Advocates can play significant roles in helping parents prepare for, attend, and actively participate in these meetings. They support and empower the parent to partner with the agency. The partnership that results may help more children remain at home safety with their parents. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Recruiting, training, compensating, and supporting Parent Partners or Advocates (parents who have been through the system themselves) to support parents through the TDM process;
- Connecting parents who are interested with Parent Partners or Advocates; and
- Having Parent Partners or Advocates explain the TDM process, engage parents in the process, encourage parents to bring other family members and supports, and attend the TDMs with the parents.

g. **Youth to Youth** (*Engaging Youth Advocates to Support Youth in Their Own Meetings*): In order for youth to succeed in life, they must understand what is happening in their lives and receive the supports they need. Additionally, including youth in meetings about their lives is essential to making sound decisions, as they are the experts in their own lives. Youth Advocates and Mentors can play significant

roles in helping youth understand, prepare for, attend, and actively participate in meetings, as well as ensure they receive the supports they need and want. They support and empower youth to articulate their hopes, dreams, and needs as well as plan for their futures in ways that make sense. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Recruiting, training, compensating, and supporting Youth Advocates and Mentors (youth who have been through the system themselves) to support other youth;
- Connecting youth who are interested with Youth Advocates or Mentors;
- Having Youth Advocates or Mentors explain meeting processes, associated decisions, and opportunities for services and supports;
- Having Youth Advocates or Mentors engage youth actively in meeting processes and attend meetings with the youth; and
- Supporting Youth Advocates or Mentors in teaching youth self-advocacy skills.

h. **Everyone Gets One** (*Ensuring All Families and Youth Have Access to TDMs When Placement Is Needed*): Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) are critical for including parents and youth in discussing placement options whenever placement is needed. But when children are placed into protective custody directly by the police, these TDMs may not occur because of agency administrative barriers. Finding ways to ensure that children who enter placement in these ways are assigned to workers in the same ways as other children, and have appropriate referral investigations and placement reviews (including TDMs), will help ensure that decisions made about placement are inclusive of families and youth. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Developing protocol for workers to respond to these situations in the same ways they do for Immediate Response referrals;
- Investigating the referral in the same manner as all other Immediate Response referrals;
- Requesting a Team Decision-making meeting (TDM) to be scheduled within 24 hours of the protective custody if placement is determined necessary; and
- Engaging families and youth, as well as the social worker, in these TDMs.

i. **Right from the Start** (*Identifying Potential Relative Caregivers at the Front-End*): When children cannot safely remain in their own homes, placement with close

relatives and extended family members is often the first choice. This placement allows children to stay connected with their race, culture, and family. Waiting until the placement is necessary before identifying possible family members delays the ability to make these placements. Thus, identifying family as quickly as possible – even before placement is needed – helps prepare for a placement should it become necessary. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Mining case records for possible relatives;
- Using family trees, relationship webs, and eco-maps to identify relatives and close connections;
- Interviewing parents and known family members about who is in their family, who is important to their family, and who they rely on for family support; and
- Building on existing family finding models.

j. **Assess Us Fast** (*Assessing Relatives Immediately for Potential Placement*): When children cannot safely remain in their own homes, placement with relatives and non-related extended family members is often the first choice. This placement allows children to stay connected with their race, culture, and family. Once relatives have been identified and engaged with the agency, they must be assessed for safety before placements can be made. Ensuring these assessments are done quickly increases the possibility of keeping children with family as a first (and ideally only) placement. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Making Placement Resource Application for Relatives accessible in a variety of ways;
- Raising awareness among community and system partners about the importance of relative placements and the application/assessment process;
- Providing outreach and support to potential relative caregivers throughout the application and assessment processes; and
- Training all staff on the importance of identifying and supporting potential relative caregivers through the application and assessment processes.

k. **Be a Part of My Life** (*Engaging Relatives When Placement Is Necessary*): When children cannot safely remain in their own homes, placement with relatives and non-related extended family members is often the first choice. This placement allows children to stay connected with their race, culture, and family. Once relatives have been identified and assessed, the agency must actively engage them so they

understand the important roles they can play in children’s lives. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Following up with identified relatives in timely, respectful, and intensive ways;
- Focusing on the importance of maintaining child’s cultural identity and connections with family;
- Providing an opportunity for children, youth, and families to ask questions about roles, responsibilities, and expectations; and
- Providing various opportunities for relatives to remain a part of children’s lives, beyond placement resources.

l. **All About School** (*Focusing on Education with Youth in Foster Care*): All youth must have access to high-quality education and know what is needed for them to complete high school and attend post-secondary institutions. Youth in foster care, for a variety of reasons, do not always have the continuity, motivation, or inspiration to focus on their education. Moreover, they are not always familiar with the requirements for high school graduation and/or to attend post-secondary schools. Helping youth understand these requirements and providing them with the motivation and inspiration to succeed educationally can help reduce disparities in educational achievement for foster youth. Strategies tested by teams to do this included:

- Developing a guide of educational information focused on the description of A-G requirements and sharing it with youth;
- Having regular conversations with youth, beginning at an early age, about requirements for universities and post-secondary education;
- Sharing racial and cultural history with youth for motivation, inspiration, and building self-esteem;
- Collaborating with school districts to share educational data on all foster youth;
- Conducting regular transcript reviews and analyses together with youth; and
- Teaching youth self-advocacy skills and support youth in using these skills to advocate for the courses/classes they need for graduation and to attend post-secondary institutions.

Conclusion

The practices tested by teams in the CDP are by no means the only practices that can be used to address disproportionality and disparities of African American and American Indian children and families. Nor is any single practice described above sufficient to addressing these issues. A variety of practices must be tested and implemented. These practices must address each of the agency's multiple decision-points in their interactions with families; the way families, youth, tribes, and communities are engaged; and how cultural differences and cultural preferences are identified, acknowledged, and respected.

3

What Works?

B

PRACTICE CARDS

This section provides single page pull-out cards highlighting some of the key strategies and practices that were tested by teams and emerged as practice improvements in the California Disproportionality Project.

Each card begins with the overall title of the practice and a brief overview of the purpose of the practice. The “*How To*” section provides a list of actions that anyone can take to try to achieve the purpose described. “*Demonstration of Promise*” provides some key successes from the actual teams that tested the practice. And the “*Things to Think About*” section provides considerations for counties interested in implementing the practice, based on lessons learned.

There are a series of cards for the two primary practice/strategy areas:

- 1) *Race/Culture Specific Practices* – Some of these practices are further delineated as “American Indian Practices.” These practices can also be used for African American families and children, as well as for other populations, but as described in these cards they were tested and developed specifically to focus on American Indian families and children.
- 2) *General Child Welfare Practices* – These practices are not specific to African American or American Indian families and children, but focusing these practices specifically on designated populations will likely improve outcomes and reduce disparities.

The strategies and practices can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities to address disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian children and families.

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

RACE/CULTURE SPECIFIC

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 1a	Hot Words <i>Asking Questions and Using Language that Does Not Result in Bias</i>
Overview & Rationale	Language is a powerful factor that contributes to stereotypes, perpetuates negative characterizations of individuals and families, and adversely influences decision making in the child welfare system. By identifying 'hot words' that are commonly used by mandated and non-mandated reporters to describe individuals, their behaviors, their families, and their communities, and asking further questions when these words are used, more objective pictures of families can be developed, resulting in the potential for less biased decisions.
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a list of words or phrases for hotline/screening/intake staff to pay particular attention to (e.g., whooping, beating, crazy, drug user, resistant, non-compliant, angry, etc.). • When any of these words or phrases are used by reporters or by other staff, ask those using the language to further clarify and define. • Provide adequate, easy-to-use documentation and prompts about these words and phrases to hotline/screening/intake staff. • Hold meetings with staff, community partners, tribal partners, and system partners about these words and phrases, how they are used, and what they mean to various communities and cultures. • Review case files for these words and phrases and use them as the basis of discussion in supervision and training to help raise awareness among staff about how language can impact decisions.
Demonstration of Promise	<i>"[We] have had meetings with partners, system partners about it. [This is] standard practice now for all hotline screeners and supervisors. [We] got approval from labor...had it all in writing and asked for feedback.... Everyone [now] has guideline on it and it is fully rolled out to all hotline staff." – Child Welfare Manager</i>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that families, tribes, and communities are partners in developing the list of 'hot words.' They have the best insight into language that may have different meaning to and with different cultures. • Use the language as the basis for conversations to ensure staff understand the intent behind this process. Language used is often a proxy for or representation of underlying beliefs. • Community awareness and training must be done to ensure the tribe and community understand where this practice is coming from and why. Transparency and openness in this work is critical.
Originally tried in	Alameda

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

RACE/CULTURE SPECIFIC

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 1b	Order Matters <i>Changing the Way Intakes and Referrals Are “Packaged”</i>
Overview & Rationale	First impressions are critical. When child welfare investigators are presented with descriptive information about a family’s race, tribe, culture, language, or geographic location before they review any details about the actual allegations or family dynamics, they are likely to form opinions about the family based on their own beliefs and biases, both conscious and unconscious. By removing these descriptors from the initial review of information, biases and assumptions will be reduced, thus resulting in initial impressions and resulting decisions being based primarily on the details of the actual allegations and eventual interactions with families.
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to have hotline/screening/intake staff ask questions about a family’s race, tribe, ethnicity, culture, language, geographic location, etc. but keep this information on a separate page from the allegation narrative. • Present investigators, emergency response workers, and case workers with the allegation narrative first. • Use the allegation narrative alone, without the descriptive information, for the initial review of the facts of the case. • Include the demographic information sheet as secondary, rather than primary, information for workers to use as reference.
Demonstration of Promise	<i>“I found myself focusing more on what was being reported rather than who the reporting party was and the family's identifying factors (race, location, family composition, etc.). What was different was a noticeable attention shift towards the information being reported rather than the make-up of the family.... I found myself really focusing on the reported information with no assumptions about the family being reported making my investigation much cleaner with no up-front biases going into my initial meeting with the family.” – Child Welfare Worker</i>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology systems can be rigid and pre-populated reports and forms may already contain these demographic descriptors up front. • Although it is important not to lead with these demographic descriptors or to use them to bias decision making, it is critically important to ask the questions and continue to gather this demographic information for other purposes. • Training, coaching, support, and supervision are necessary to help staff transition from long-standing practices and processes to re-organizing the way in which they review and use information.
Originally tried in	Alameda

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

RACE/CULTURE [AMERICAN INDIAN] SPECIFIC

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 1c	<p style="text-align: center;">Write It Down <i>Improving Documentation of Race and Ethnicity in Case Records</i></p>
<p>Overview & Rationale</p>	<p>While race, ethnicity, and culture should not affect decisions that are made about child welfare involvement, they are critical to know in order to understand families and respond appropriately to their unique strengths and needs. This is particularly important for American Indian families, as having the correct information in the county’s data system triggers a series of Indian Child Welfare Act requirements, activities, and available supports. Additionally, this information is essential from a data analysis perspective to review and ensure families of color are not experiencing disparities in the ways they are treated or in the outcomes they ultimately achieve.</p>
<p>How To</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide staff with training about why it is important to learn about and document families’ races, tribes, ethnicities, and cultures. • Develop guidance, together with community partners, parents, and youth about how workers can ask for this information in ways that are clear, non-threatening, and enhance rather than undermine their developing relationships with families. • Ensure families are being asked for this information in ways that are respectful and allow for the agency to respond appropriately to their unique needs. • Conduct case review process, together with case carrying staff, to review existing case files and ensure this information is included. • Review the county’s data information system to ensure this information is reflected. • Review and revise agency forms and documents (e.g., Intake and Referral forms; Team Decision-Making Forms, etc.) to include fields for race, ethnicity, and culture. • Include discussions about and reviews of data gathered as part of regular supervision.
<p>Demonstration of Promise</p>	<p><i>“After doing so [reviewing case records to make sure button was checked in CWS/CMS to trigger all the important ICW aspects] we went from something like 68 [American Indian identified families] to 134 (doubled or tripled). It was a one-time deal, but allowed us to give education around it to explain [to staff] the need for culturally appropriate work.”</i> – Child Welfare Manager</p>
<p>Things to think about</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data systems can be rigid and inflexible. Make sure the data system has appropriate fields for the data being collected and staff know how to enter data correctly. • Asking families questions about race, ethnicity, and culture can feel uncomfortable for both families and staff. Ensure staff understand why it’s important and how this information will be used. • When working with specific populations, e.g. American Indian families, ensure staff understand the specific issues that affect their willingness to report their race, tribe, ethnicity, and/or culture. • Accessing these data once they are entered into the system can be difficult. Work with technology staff to ensure the data can be used for self-evaluation. • Continue to work with staff through training and supervision to ensure this information is not resulting in further bias in their work with families.
<p>Originally tried in</p>	<p>Alameda</p>

3 What Works? – Practice Cards

B RACE/CULTURE [AMERICAN INDIAN] SPECIFIC

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 1d	My Way of Meeting <i> Holding Culturally Relevant Family Meetings</i>
Overview & Rationale	<p>Family Unity and Nurturing (FUN) are used as prevention meetings and are common in tribal culture to keep families safe. Using the more agency-focused “Team Decision Making” (TDM) meetings, when intervention is necessary, allows tribal families and communities to be involved early on to avoid placements when their children are at risk of removal. By engaging parents, children, extended family, tribal members, Indian child welfare staff, and other ICWA staff, and child welfare staff before a removal is required – and/or immediately after – fewer American Indian children will come into the agency’s custody and children will be maintained on their reservations or within their tribal community.</p>
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tribes and families with clear information about these meetings early on in their involvement with the agency. • Ensure that the meetings are planned in partnership with family members, ICWA social workers, and the TDM coordinator. • Allow the family to invite others, including tribal members. • Begin and end meetings with prayers and/or other rituals that are appropriate for and led by tribal members. • Provide parents with information about protective issues, safety plans, placement options, and invite them to actively participate in the recommendations for and decisions about each. • Schedule the meetings (locations and times) to meet the needs of the family.
Demonstration of Promise	<p><i> “[Worker] did one TDM and opened up a Voluntary case versus filing a petition. We...kept the family intact and on the Reservation....A preventive case came to [worker’s] attention...a FUN [Family Unity and Nurturing] meeting was held to empower the parent. An Indian custodianship was completed and provided the caregiver with the support she needed. We kept the family intact. Minor is back on the Reservation and in her original school....TDM was held to get a child back on the reservation and placed with a relative. It has been successful in keeping the child in the community....Our goal was to keep families together on the Reservation, in their community and with their family. So far we have had success with keeping families on the Reservation.” – Child Welfare Manager</i></p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every tribe is different. Don’t make assumptions about cultural beliefs and practices. Ask the family and tribal members to take the lead in ensuring the meeting meets their cultural needs. • All meeting participants, including parents, youth, and tribal members, must understand who will be at the meeting and what the purpose of the meeting is in advance. No surprises. • Parents and youth may need preparation and support to help develop the agenda and find their voices at the meeting. • The ‘power’ at the meeting must feel balanced. If the family and tribal members feel overwhelmed by “professionals” in the room, it may be challenging for them to engage. • Language in the meeting must be accessible, direct, and clear to all. No jargon.
Originally tried in	San Diego

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

RACE/CULTURE [AMERICAN INDIAN] SPECIFIC

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 1e	<p align="center">Native Family Services Team <i>Using Culturally Relevant Teams to Support and Work with Families</i></p>
Overview & Rationale	Tribal families rely on culturally relevant, community-based services in order to have their needs met in effective and appropriate ways. By identifying and providing these services in culturally responsive ways. Native youth and families will be more engaged in services, more satisfied with services, and more successful in achieving the goals of their plans.
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify workers assigned to emergency response and ongoing casework, along with a culturally-prepared community liaison/family advocate, to work in partnership with Native families. • Ensure that these team members are American Indians. (If they are not, they should be specifically selected by the Native community for their ability to work effectively with Native families.) • Identify, review, develop, and use culturally appropriate assessment, case planning, and evaluation tools and service models. • Meet regularly as a full team to work in a collaborative manner. • Develop clear referral processes such that as Native families are identified, they are referred to the service team. • Create opportunities for the families and youth to know and interact with team members to establish trust, communication, and confidence in the process. • Identify funding sources and secure support from agency leadership for dedicated Native Family Advocate position.
Demonstration of Promise	<i>"[We] envision expansion of the Native Services Team. Services are more accessible and available for families who get into the service." - Child Welfare Managers</i>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many counties have Indian Units or Native Social Worker staff. This model could be in addition to or instead of these models. It fits seamlessly with a System of Care Model. • The Native Community Liaison needs to be integrated with the management and leadership staff of the agency and needs to play a clear role in decision-making. This will help with relationships, trust, and the identification of needs in the community. • Trust and communication are essential in this model. These take time, intentionality, commitment, and patience to develop. • Lack of funding should not prevent a move to this type of culturally appropriate services team. Even without dedicated staff positions, existing staff and tribal community members may still be willing to fill these roles. • Not all partners (e.g., courts, schools, attorneys) have the same understanding or respect for cultural issues. Continued training and awareness is needed.
Originally tried in	Placer

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

RACE/CULTURE SPECIFIC

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 1f	<p style="text-align: center;">A Provider Like Me <i>Matching Families with Service Providers Who Are Culturally Responsive</i></p>
Overview & Rationale	<p>When children and families need services, it is critical for those who provide the services to be respectful of and responsive to the children’s and families’ culture. This will increase the likelihood of trust, positive relationship development. And this will ultimately impact the children’s and families’ likelihood to attend the service and for the service to be effective.</p>
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage the youth and/or family in a discussion about how they identify their own race and/or culture. Inquire if they would feel more comfortable with a service provider of the same race and/or culture. • Identify qualified service providers in the community of multiple races and cultures to meet the diverse needs of the specific community. • Train and educate social workers about the importance of making these connections for youth and families. • Connect youth and families with service providers in the community based on race and/or culture following a discussion in which the youth and family indicates this connection is desired.
Demonstration of Promise	<p><i>“As expected, the child's participation in therapy has increased. The therapist reports he is engaged in the therapy process, attends sessions consistently, and opens up to his current therapist a lot more than to his prior clinician.” - Child Welfare Worker</i></p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships, especially between children and therapists, are highly dependent on trust. Even when they are the same race, culture, and/or gender, this is no guarantee that trust will be built. • Every individual is different. While this practice may be highly effective and desired by some youth and families, others might have other preferences. Asking families and youth what works best for them is essential. • Some communities have limited numbers of providers available. When providers who look like the clients being served are not available, the agency must try to build capacity within the community to best meet the needs of the children and families it serves.
Originally tried in	<p>Los Angeles - Pomona Office</p>

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

RACE/CULTURE SPECIFIC

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 1g	Taking Things Apart <i>Dissecting a Case to Review Decisions for Bias</i>
Overview & Rationale	Open and courageous conversations are necessary at all levels to address disproportionality and disparities. One way of facilitating these discussions in concrete ways is by dissecting a case from a decision-making perspective. This not only allows staff to view decisions in unbiased ways, but also helps illustrate the connection between decisions and disparities in outcomes for children and families.
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create cross-hierarchical teams in the agency, including social workers, supervisors, and agency managers and leaders, to review identified cases. Include parents and community partners on these teams whenever possible. • Develop review tools for team to use when reviewing cases. Ensure the tools include specific prompts for identifying possible bias, including the use of ‘hot words,’ decisions based on assumptions rather than information gathered, determination of a single solution rather than multiple options, lack of inclusion of family perspective/voice, etc. • Review all key decision-points in the case using these tools. Consider each decision separately as well as together with other decisions. • Facilitate open discussions within the team on findings in non-threatening ways that allow for different perspectives to be heard. • Share these findings with staff as awareness and training opportunities. • Use data in tandem with the case reviews to further demonstrate the connection between individual decisions and overall outcomes for children and families.
Demonstration of Promise	“ <i>[Dissecting a case]...created messaging from the [agency] Director that we’re going to continue to dissect these types of cases to have opportunity to reflect and review the real work.</i> ” – Child Welfare Manager
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing cases can often feel threatening to workers. Case reviews must happen in ways that feel like learning opportunities rather than personal critiques. • The team must be prepared for challenging conversations. Skilled facilitation is important and should be done by someone outside the team to allow the team to fully participate in and process the discussions. • Community and family members should be brought in as part of these review teams. This requires transparency and openness on the part of agency staff. • These reviews should be conducted on a regular basis so that they become part of practice rather than isolated events. • The identification of cases that will be reviewed should be planful and clear. • There must be opportunities and plans to follow up with findings about possible bias in decision-making.
Originally tried in	Alameda; San Mateo

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

RACE/CULTURE [AMERICAN INDIAN] SPECIFIC

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 1h	Club 7 <i>Supporting Youth Formerly or Currently in Care to Support One Another</i>
Overview & Rationale	Youth involved with child welfare agencies, particularly American Indian youth, need to maintain connections to their tribes and cultures. Creating structured opportunities and an operational network for them to meet together for mutual support as well as to learn about and stay connected to their tribal history is an essential part of their development as youth, young adults, and tribal members.
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with tribal youth to identify times and locations they would like to meet. • Partner with tribal youth to develop curriculum for group as needed, focused on topics such as: discussing issues that enhance cultural identity and awareness; strengthening skills for future success; developing coping skills; promoting wellness and education; facilitating knowledge about and access to behavioral health services; and understanding history and impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma specific to American Indians and Alaska Natives. • Make it an agency expectations and priority to continuously identify tribal youth and connect them to this group. • Provide logistical support to the group as needed and requested, including transportation, offering meeting space, providing refreshments, developing resources, etc. • Encourage and support leadership development within the group to ensure it can be youth-led and youth-facilitated as much as possible. • Support the inclusion of other tribal partners and elders in the group as desired by the youth members. • Provide training and support for youth to serve as peer mentors and supports to one another.
Demonstration of Promise	<i>"[The] staff in the Indian Unit is now also involved. They transport youth on Tuesday nights to meetings. We have learned that youth want to come and talk about life and connect with other foster youth. It has turned out to be fabulous club for kids."</i> –Child Welfare Manager
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff must understand the importance of identifying tribal youth and encouraging them to participate in the group. • Youth developing and leading the group need logistical and administrative support to make this work. They have many demands on their time and may need assistance with the structure needed to keep momentum. • Staff may assist youth in identifying possible resources to the group, as needed or requested by the youth. • Staff and youth will need to find a balance to the partnership to ensure that youth can lead but that the staff provide the necessary support. • The group needs to be inclusive and may need to be facilitated to ensure that multiple needs are met, while the environment is maintained as safe and supportive.
Originally tried in	San Diego

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2a	Keeping Families Together <i>Connecting Families to Community to Prevent Child Welfare Involvement</i>
Overview & Rationale	Ensuring children are safe while keeping families together is the primary goal of child welfare services. Connecting families with support services in their own community can often help them maintain their children safely at home. Providing courts with clear evidence that a family is actively involved with these family preservation and other family support services in the community can make it less likely that courts will require removal or deny recommendations for reunification.
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) for the initial detention (removal) in which families are introduced to family preservation services and Linkages, even when the cases come in after hours or on weekends. • Ensure families understand the purpose of and opportunities presented by these community services by using language that is clear and supportive to families. • Help families access these services if they are desired. • Share these recommendations with courts in an attempt to keep families intact. Engage families in developing these recommendations, based on their commitments to accessing recommended services. • When detentions are necessary, advise bench officers that family preservation services have been put in place. Be specific about families’ interest in and expectations for participating in these services in effort to move quickly toward reunification. • Develop and maintain clear documentation of these recommendations for services and families’ participation in these services to share with courts and other partners, in support of families remaining intact. • Ensure courts have clear understandings of expectations for families’ participation in and outcomes for these services.
Demonstration of Promise	<i>“The recommendation to detain a child had been made by the after-hours Command Post. The consensus of the TDM was that a plan could be put in place [to keep the child with the young mom] as long as the child’s mother agreed to in-patient drug rehabilitation services. The mother was taken to Prototypes In-patient after her TDM, and agreed to other services provided by Linkages. The child was able to remain in her care.” - Child Welfare Worker</i>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After-hours staff may use different decision-making criteria and have variable access to TDMs in which these recommendations can be made. • Courts and agency staff have different beliefs about child safety, risk, and need for removals. • Appropriate family preservation services may not be accessible or available when needed. • Courts and agency staff need education about the opportunities for this practice as well as how the potential risks will be monitored, managed, and mitigated. • Families need to be included as partners in these discussions and decisions to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.
Originally tried in	Los Angeles – Pomona Office

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2b	Warm Hand Offs <i>Improving ‘Another Response to Safety’ Engagement through Introductions</i>
Overview & Rationale	<p>Many families who do not meet the standard for formal child protective services (CPS) involvement are referred to community services for preventive supports. The enrollment in and engagement of families referred to these services has been low in the past, but with a letter from CPS introducing the services and providers it is likely to increase, thus preventing these families from coming to the attention of child welfare in the future.</p>
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with community members and families to develop an introductory letter from CPS that is educational, non-judgmental, clear, easy to understand, inviting, and responsive to families’ needs. The letter should focus on introducing ‘Another Response to Safety,’ (differential response pathway) the community agencies, and services provided. • Ensure contact information, including names and phone numbers, is part of the letter. • Translate the letter into multiple languages, as appropriate for various communities and families. • Send letter from CPS, telling them about “Another Response to Safety” program (community based supportive services) and to expect contact from the program within seven days. • Ensure that Another Response to Safety partners contact families within seven days (although after waiting 72 hours to allow families to receive CPS letter.) • Have someone at CPS agency available to answer questions from families about the information in the letter, including contacts, services available, and connection with CPS going forward.
Demonstration of Promise	<p><i>“Some intake workers [Child Welfare Workers] have reported receiving calls from families [after] receipt of the letter inquiring about the abuse or neglect that was reported. Such calls are being diverted to the ARS Liaison to speak to the caller about the ARS Program.” – Child Welfare Worker</i></p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters need to be clear to ensure that families do not misunderstand and think they are <u>required</u> to engage in these programs. • Services that are described in the letters must be accessible and available to families as needed. • The CPS agency and community based supportive service agencies must be clear on roles, responsibilities, and expectations for working with these families, including timeframes and communication. • Letters should be reviewed and update regularly as names and contact information may change.
Originally tried in	Alameda; San Joaquin

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2c	Tell Me What I Need to Know <i>Providing Parents with Information They Need</i>
Overview & Rationale	In order for agencies to make sound decisions, families must be part of the decision-making process. They can only do so when they understand everyone’s roles and responsibilities, the agency’s processes, and the types and purposes of meetings in which they will be involved. By providing this information to parents in ways they understand and from their peers (through Parent Advocates/Parent Partners), parents can play more active roles in informing the decisions that are made about their own lives.
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop clear expectations for social workers that describe their interactions with parents and youth, including: mutual respect; trust; equitable treatment regardless of race, ethnicity, or culture; timely return of phone calls; contact between workers and families; responsiveness to issues raised by parents and youth; clarity of parent-child visitation; and continuous opportunities for family feedback. Ensure supervision monitors and reinforces these expectations. • Develop “Talking Points” card for social workers with key information about Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) that families must be told, including what the goals of the meeting are; who will be present; the roles and responsibilities of various participants; who families can invite to the meeting; the role parents and youth can/should play at the meeting; and what decisions will be made there. Require all workers to carry and use these cards in their daily interactions with families. • Provide parents and youth regular opportunities to ask questions and provide input. • Develop, engage, and support Parent Partners to share information about TDMs with parents to encourage them to attend these meetings, help them understand the purpose and process of the meetings, provide support to them prior to the meetings, and answer any questions they might have. • Ensure parents and youth have phone numbers of staff and partners they need to reach as well as an agency hierarchy (organizational chart) so that if their worker is not available, they have other options.
Demonstration of Promise	<p><i>“Survey completed by African American parents [about this practice] indicates mostly favorable experience and equitable treatment.” – Child Welfare Manager</i></p> <p><i>“Parent Advocates [PAs] have been positively received by the workers and parents in the TDMs. PAs have been able to assist the agency with representing Children Services more positively to the community.” – Child Welfare Manager</i></p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision must follow up with and focus on maintaining the expectations related to worker-family interactions. • Roles and responsibilities must be clear between Parent Partners and agency staff. • Parent Partners must receive training, support, and compensation. Expectations developed to guide worker-family interactions must apply to Parent Partners as well. • Information must be communicated in language and ways that are respectful of and responsive to the specific needs of the families in the community. • Agencies should have ample Parent Partners to meet the needs of families involved with the agency.
Originally tried in	Los Angeles – Metro North; San Francisco

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2d	Look at the Good <i>Focusing on Families' Strengths</i>
Overview & Rationale	<p>When staff focus on families' strengths rather than challenges, they are more likely to work in partnership with families and help them find the supports they need in the community. As a result, they are more likely to believe children can remain safely at home with their parents. By finding ways to help staff recognize, acknowledge, verbalize, and document these strengths, more children will be able to remain at home safely with their families and families will be able to get the supports they need directly from community partners.</p>
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact abuse/neglect reporters before the investigation begins to ask them to identify at least one family strength. • Document the strengths identified by reporters in the contact narratives and court documentation. • When working with families during investigation, assessment, and clinical casework, verbalize and refer to the strengths described by the reporters. • Create expectations for supervisors to seek out and reinforce these strengths during regular clinical consultations and supervision. • Ask families to identify their own strengths in language that makes sense to them (e.g., tell me what you are most proud of as a parent") • Share these strengths with partners who are working with the families as well as with the courts. • Provide training to courts and community partners about the importance of identifying, sharing, and focusing on families' strengths.
Demonstration of Promise	<p><i>"Staff acknowledged in increase in awareness of African American family strengths. When beginning a child abuse investigation, staff recognized biases held by the Reporting Party (RP) and that the RPs often had difficulty acknowledging a family strength. Staff stated that they were mindful of the family strength when first contacting the family and while working with the family in the course of the investigation...."</i> – Child Welfare Manager</p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandated reporters, court representatives, and community partners need awareness and training related to a strengths-focused orientation. This is a significant shift from incident-based allegations. • Language used in asking about 'strengths' should be meaningful to the parties being asked. Questions should be developed that identify strengths without using child welfare jargon. • Training and support for staff is making this shift is necessary. This should be reinforced through regular supervision, staff meetings, and throughout clinical work. • Team meetings held with families should be reframed to lead with this strength-focused information.
Originally tried in	<p>Riverside; San Joaquin</p>

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2e	Families Speak First <i>Giving Families the Opportunity to Talk About Their Strengths</i>
Overview & Rationale	<p>Many meetings are held with and about families once they are involved with child welfare. To ensure these Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) result in decisions that best meet the needs of families, it is essential to have families present. Equally important is for families to be given skills, supports, and opportunities to actively participate in these meetings. Allowing families to speak first, and encouraging them to talk about their strengths, creates an environment in which families and agencies can work in partnership to best meet the needs of their children and themselves.</p>
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage parents to attend meetings through Parent Partner outreach, reminder phone calls, and written information that clearly describe the meeting’s purpose, goal, participants, and roles. • Encourage parents to bring their own supports to the meeting. (If support is a Parent Partner, create opportunities for the parent and Parent Partner to meet together before the meeting to discuss questions, concerns, and ideas.) • Ensure parents understand decisions that will be discussed and made at the meeting, prior to the meeting itself. • Create a supportive environment for parent involvement at the meeting, including considerations such as where the parent would be most comfortable sitting, next to whom, how name tags might help them better recognize roles, ensuring language used at the meeting is understandable, etc. • At the meeting, invite parents to begin by sharing their strengths, their challenges, and why they are there. Encourage them to talk about the strengths of their children and the strengths they have as parents. • Ensure meeting facilitators are trained to include parents as partners and are prepared to recognize, validate, and honor parents’ roles and contributions.
Demonstration of Promise	<p>[Describing survey tool that was used to assess effectiveness of this practice:] <i>“Most families for whom tool was completed had positive feedback. Parents seemed to appreciate it...Started with African American families; then it spread to all TDMs in [our county] office.”</i> - Child Welfare Manager</p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff need to understand the importance and value of parents participating in this way. They should be prepared for parents to play these roles in decision-making. • All participants need clarity about what decisions are joint decisions between families and the agency, and what decisions will be made by the agency alone. Recognizing that the agency does have authority is an important acknowledgement. • Communication with families needs to be transparent and honest. Parents must not feel as if there are side conversations occurring without them in the room. • Language in meetings is important. Families must be able to understand what is being discussed and decided. • Cultural responsiveness is critical in helping parents feel like partners. Beginning meetings with prayers and honoring cultural traditions in the way discussions are held and decisions are made helps build trust and relationships. These things should be discussed and agreed upon prior to the meeting.
Originally tried in	<p>Los Angeles-Metro North; Orange County</p>

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2f	Parent to Parent <i>Using Parent and Community Partners to Support Parents in Meetings</i>
Overview & Rationale	Including parents in Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) is essential to making sound decisions about children and their families. Parent Partners or Advocates can play significant roles in helping parents prepare for, attend, and actively participate in these meetings. They support and empower the parent to partner with the agency. The partnership that results may help more children remain at home safely with their parents.
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit, train, compensate, and support Parent Partners or Advocates (parents who have been through the system themselves) to support parents through the TDM process. • Ask parents if they would like to be contacted by a Parent Partner or Advocate who can help explain the processes and meetings they will be participating in. • Connect parents who are interested with Parent Partners or Advocates. • Parent Partners or Advocates explain the TDM process, including who will be attending, the various roles and responsibilities, the goals of the meeting, and the specific role of the parents. • Parent Partners or Advocates engage parents actively in the process and encourage them to bring other family members and supports. • Parent Partners or Advocates attend the TDMs with the parents, ensuring that the team honors the parents’ role, strengths, goals, and perspectives.
Demonstration of Promise	<p><i>“Felt really successful. Were able to engage parents and/or extended families around placement. So successful they were able to get CalWorks on board [to support additional parent advocates.] Peer parents are now used to train other peer parents....has been expanded so that peer parents go out on ER [Emergency Response] assessments with workers.” - Child Welfare Manager</i></p> <p><i>“Many detentions have been prevented as a result of advocates’ participation. A regional protocol for increased advocacy and to raise the quality of the process is in development.” - Child Welfare Manager</i></p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers may be uncomfortable with Parent Partners or Advocates as staff based on prior worker-client relationships. Bias around these relationships may need to be addressed. • Parent Partners are both a bridge between the agency and the family and also a change agent around working with parents in a new and different way. • Parent Partners and Advocates need training and support, especially around agency rules, regulations, restrictions, and policies. • Clear policies should exist around confidentiality and boundaries between agency staff, Parent Partners and Advocates, and families, especially when Parent Partners and Advocates are from the communities being served.
Originally tried in	Los Angeles-Pomona; Los Angeles-Metro North; San Francisco

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2g	Youth to Youth <i>Engaging Youth Advocates and Mentors to Support Youth</i>
Overview & Rationale	<p>In order for youth to succeed in life, they must understand what is happening in their lives and receive the supports they need. Additionally, including youth in meetings about their lives is essential to making sound decisions, as they are the experts in their own lives. Youth Advocates and Mentors can play significant roles in helping youth understand, prepare for, attend, and actively participate in meetings, as well as ensure they receive the supports they need and want. They support and empower youth to articulate their hopes, dreams, and needs as well as plan for their futures in ways that make sense.</p>
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit, train, compensate, and support Youth Advocates and Mentors (youth who have been through the system themselves) to support other youth in Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) and other goal-setting and general decision-making meetings. • Ask youth if they would like to be contacted by a Youth Advocate or Mentor who can help explain the processes and meetings they will be participating in. • Connect youth who are interested with Youth Advocates or Mentors. • Have Youth Advocates or Mentors explain meeting processes, associated decisions, and opportunities for services and supports. • Have Youth Advocates or Mentors engage youth actively in meeting processes by helping them craft their own goals to share. • Have Youth Advocates or Mentors attend meetings with the youth, ensuring that the team honors the youths’ role, goals, hopes, dreams, strengths, and perspectives. • Create opportunities for youth to come together with Youth Advocates or Mentors to ask questions, gain information, or receive general support. • Support Youth Advocates or Mentors in teaching youth self-advocacy skills.
Demonstration of Promise	<p>Related to Joint Youth Mentor-Youth Orientation Meeting: <i>“The youth were engaged and appeared to have enjoyed the event. A parent of one of the youth was very excited and happy to learn that her child was involved in the program....All seven of the youth committed themselves to attend the next schedule activity.”</i> – Child Welfare Worker</p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers may be uncomfortable with Youth Advocates or Mentors serving as agency staff based on prior worker-client relationships. Bias around these relationships may need to be addressed. • Youth Advocates and Mentors need training and ongoing support, especially around agency rules, regulations, restrictions, policies, and how to handle disclosures as well as their own potential traumatic reactions as they hear other youths’ stories. • Youth Advocates and Mentors need time, resources, and support to develop trusting relationships with the youth with whom they will be working. • Clear policies should exist around confidentiality and boundaries between agency staff, Youth Advocates/Mentors, and youth, especially when Youth Advocates/Mentors are from the communities being served.
Originally tried in	San Francisco; Fresno

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2h	<p style="text-align: center;">Everyone Gets One</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ensuring All Families and Youth Have Access to TDMs When Placement Is Needed</i></p>
Overview & Rationale	<p>Team Decision-making Meetings (TDMs) are critical for including parents and youth in discussing placement options whenever placement is needed. But when children are placed into protective custody directly by the police, these TDMs may not occur because of agency administrative barriers. Finding ways to ensure that children who enter placement in these ways are assigned to workers in the same ways as other children, and have appropriate referral investigations and placement reviews (including TDMs), will help ensure that decisions made about placement are inclusive of families and youth.</p>
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign children who are taken into protective custody directly by the police to an Emergency Response Social Worker or an On-Call Social Worker. • Develop protocol for workers to respond to these situations in the same ways they do for Immediate Response referrals. • Investigate the referral in the same manner as all other Immediate Response referrals and determine if sufficient evidence exists to require continued protective custody or other child welfare involvement. • If need for placement exists, request a Team Decision-making meeting (TDM) to be scheduled within 24 hours of the protective custody as is the standard for all Emergency Removal TDMs. • Advise the family and youth about the TDM and their rights to bring support persons with them. Provide preparation and support to family and youth as needed to ensure they are able to fully participate in these meetings. • Ensure the Social Worker attends the TDM on behalf of the agency.
Demonstration of Promise	<p><i>“The on-call and after-hours response protocol for African American youth has changed allowing those youth and families access to a TDM meeting. The plan is to spread the practice so that all children and their families benefit.” – Child Welfare Manager</i></p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistics, scheduling, and staff assignments can be challenging to manage during off-hours. Systems must be created to ensure that these administrative issues are clearly resolved. • Outreach to families and youth regarding the TDM, the goals, process, roles, and opportunity presented should be timely to ensure families and youth have time to ask questions, gain understanding, and invite supports to attend with them. • Training and awareness should be considered for police and courts to help them understand impacts these placements have on families and youth. These trainings should include the specific data that demonstrate how this practice disproportionately affects African American and/or American Indian families.
Originally tried in	<p>Orange</p>

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2i	<p style="text-align: center;">Right from the Start <i>Identifying Potential Relative Caregivers at the Front-End</i></p>
Overview & Rationale	<p>When children cannot safely remain in their own homes, placement with close relatives and extended family members is often the first choice. This placement allows children to stay connected with their race, culture, and family. Waiting until the placement is necessary before identifying possible family members delays the ability to make these placements. Thus, identifying family as quickly as possible – even before placement is needed – helps prepare for a placement should it become necessary.</p>
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As soon as a child is identified as possibly needing placement, mine the case record for possible relatives. • Use family trees, relationship webs, and eco-maps to identify relatives and close connections. • Interview parents and known family members about who is in their family, who is important to their family, and who they rely on for family support. • Provide summary of findings and outreach efforts to placement worker. • Build on existing family finding models.
Demonstration of Promise	<p><i>“In just 3 months a team of three people (two of whom only work 16 hours per week) have located 850 relatives for 27 families/ 55 children. [Of those 27 families/55 children]: 2 cases were dismissed; 1 child placed on extended visit with the father; 13 children placed with their relatives; 1 child placed with non-relative foster home with siblings; 11 children are pending placement with their relatives; 1 child is being considered for an ICPC placement; and 9 children- relative assessments were denied.” – Child Welfare Manager</i></p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family finding takes time and resources. Staff must be dedicated to these tasks and have clear responsibilities and descriptions. Intensive family finding should not be on top of other job responsibilities. • Communication with families needs to be clear as questions about family members, especially related to possible placement, can feel threatening. • Family dynamics can be challenging. Parents may not want their children placed with specific relatives who the agency may feel are appropriate. Negotiating these relationships needs to be thoughtful, intentional, and respectful. • Parents and children should be part of the identification and location process as much as possible.
Originally tried in	<p>Kern; San Mateo</p>

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2j	Assess Us Fast <i>Assessing Relatives Immediately for Potential Placement</i>
Overview & Rationale	When children cannot safely remain in their own homes, placement with relatives and non-related extended family members is often the first choice. This placement allows children to stay connected with their race, culture, and family. Once relatives have been identified and engaged with the agency, they must be assessed for safety before placements can be made. Ensuring these assessments are done quickly increases the possibility of keeping children with family as a first (and ideally only) placement.
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make Placement Resource Application for Relatives accessible in a variety of ways, including on the county website, so that relatives can begin reviewing and completing it as soon as possible after initial contact. • Develop and distribute informational materials and frequently asked questions for community partners, including law enforcement and family/kinship support services, about relative placements and the application/assessment process. • Develop multiple ways for relatives to submit their applications, including online submission, dedicated email box, and/or dedicated fax line. Ensure that these various submission opportunities have a dedicated staff person assigned to check them daily and provide immediate follow up. • Provide outreach and support to potential relative caregivers throughout the application and assessment processes. • Train all staff on the importance of supporting potential relative caregivers through the application and assessment processes.
Demonstration of Promise	<i>“The Immediate Assessment Process (IAP) has proven to be one of the most promising for [our county] for several reasons. [This practice] has led to our ability to assess relatives and possibly place children with relatives on an emergency basis within 72 hours of placement into foster care. This...also allowed us to implement new procedures which eliminated “the middle man” by allowing interested relatives to work directly with our Relative Assessment Unit. The required paperwork for Relative Assessment is now accessible on the agency website as well as available to the public at various partnering agencies within the community.” – Child Welfare Manager</i>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all families have computer and/or internet access. Make sure that there are multiple options for caregivers to receive application and assessment information and forms in ways that best meet the needs of the communities being served. • Communities may have unique linguistic needs. Ensure that information, materials, and forms are available in the languages that are spoken in the communities being served. • Outreach and support should continue during the application and assessment phases. Families may have questions and may not fully understand roles, responsibilities, expectations, and/or timeframes. The application and assessment processes should be seen as opportunities for relationship building with potential caregivers.
Originally tried in	Kern

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 2k	<p align="center">Be a Part of My Life <i>Engaging Relatives When Placement Is Necessary</i></p>
Overview & Rationale	<p>When children cannot safely remain in their own homes, placement with relatives and non-related extended family members is often the first choice. This placement allows children to stay connected with their race, culture, and family. Once relatives have been identified and assessed, the agency must actively engage them so they understand the important roles they can play in children’s lives.</p>
How To	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send letters to identified relatives inviting them to support the child and/or family. • Follow up with identified relatives in timely, respectful, and intensive ways, in person whenever possible. • Focus on the importance of maintaining child’s cultural identity and connections with family. • Use tools, such as “Knowing Who You Are,” with children, youth, and relatives to raise awareness about the importance of having a healthy racial and ethnic identity. • Provide an opportunity for children, youth, and families to ask questions about roles, responsibilities, and expectations. • Provide various opportunities for relatives to remain a part of children’s lives, beyond placement resources. Remember the need for children and families to have robust support networks, not just places to live.
Demonstration of Promise	<p><i>“Feedback from the child and caregiver was positive. Both seemed to understand the importance of developing healthy racial and ethnic identities and the effort of the [child welfare social worker] and the Family Finding Program to promote this through family engagement. The child demonstrated interest in locating her paternal family with whom she has never had contact. The foster mother demonstrated willingness to work with [child welfare social worker] and Family Finding to support the [relative] search and engagement effort.” – Child Welfare Worker</i></p>
Things to think about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatives must be given many options for involvement in children’s lives. Avoiding yes/no choices related to their interest in and willingness to be a possible placement option can help keep the door open for the future. • Communication with families needs to be clear as questions about family members, especially related to possible placement, can feel threatening. • Family dynamics can be challenging. Relatives may not support the same visitation plans or permanency options as the agency, based on familial relationships. Negotiating these relationships needs to be thoughtful, intentional, and respectful. • Throughout the engagement process, frequent conversations related to roles, responsibilities, and expectations are essential.
Originally tried in	San Diego

3

What Works? – Practice Cards

B

GENERAL CHILD WELFARE

This card describes strategies and practices tested by teams in the California Disproportionality Project. They are considered to be promising approaches to addressing disproportionality and disparities based on the experiences of teams. These strategies can be easily replicated and adapted in most communities.

Practice 21	<p style="text-align: center;">All About School <i>Focusing on Education with Youth in Foster Care</i></p>
<p>Overview & Rationale</p>	<p>All youth deserve access to high-quality education and know what is needed for them to complete high school and attend post-secondary institutions. Youth in foster care do not always have the continuity, motivation, or inspiration to focus on their education. Moreover, they are not always familiar with the requirements for high school graduation and/or to attend post-secondary schools. Helping youth understand these requirements and providing them with the motivation and inspiration to succeed educationally can help reduce disparities in educational achievement for foster youth.</p>
<p>How To</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a guide of educational information focused on the description of A-G requirements, including when they need to be taken and who to contact if assistance is needed. (This guide should be developed in partnership with youth and in collaboration with the County Office of Education Foster Youth Services.) • Share this guide with youth (beginning in middle school) in fun and accessible ways, e.g., at orientations, using games like “A-G Jeopardy,” etc. • Have regular conversations with youth, beginning at an early age, about requirements for universities and post-secondary education. • Share racial and cultural history with youth, e.g., videos on civil rights movement, desegregation of schools, etc. to motivate and inspire youth on the importance of education for life opportunities and achievement. • Collaborate with school districts to share educational data on all foster youth, including academic standing, GPA, attendance, behavior reports, enrollment of classes, and credits earned/needed. • Conduct regular transcript reviews and analyses together with youth to ensure they are enrolled in appropriate classes, and A-G requirements are being met. • Partner with youth and school counselors to develop educational plans based on transcript analyses. • Teach youth self-advocacy skills; support youth in using these skills to advocate for the classes they need for graduation and to attend post-secondary institutions.
<p>Demonstration of Promise</p>	<p><i>“Transcript Analysis when used as a check and balance can be useful to the counselor when scheduling classes....The difference is empowering the youth and the social worker with written documentation to use to advocate oppose to relying on school officials for the information.” - Child Welfare Worker</i></p>
<p>Things to think about</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on education, including post-secondary education, should begin as early as possible. Waiting until the middle of high school to have these conversations with youth is often too late for them to make up lost credits, graduate on time, and prepare to pursue post-secondary education. • Partnerships and collaborations between child welfare agencies and educational departments are essential. These partnerships should be developed with local secondary school systems as well as with community colleges and state post-secondary institutions. • Data and information sharing between these multiple systems is critical to best identify and meet the needs of youth.
<p>Originally tried in</p>	<p>Fresno</p>

3

Ideas for Improving Practice to Address Disproportionality and Disparities

C

REFLECTING ON DATA AND RESULTS

This section describes the core lessons learned related to data from the California Disproportionality Project. It describes the key measures that were intended to be tracked by participating teams as well as some of the challenges in interpreting and using these data.

The California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative (CDP) was intended to address disproportionality and disparities in outcomes for African American and American Indian children and families in child welfare. In order to assess progress toward these goals, the 14 participating county teams were expected to track and share their data on several key measures over the course of the project. While some data were readily available, there were many challenges faced by teams and the project in using quantitative measures to assess the effectiveness of the CDP in achieving its goals.

Background and Overview

The two core methodologies upon which the CDP was initially based both rely on data to assess progress and improvement. The Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology requires teams to track specified indicators on a monthly basis throughout the BSC process. These indicators are intended to gauge progress and improvements in close to real-time. Family to Family (F2F) has self-evaluation teams (SETs) as one of the four core strategies used in its child welfare system reform initiatives. These SETs come together regularly within counties to review, discuss, and plan action based on changes they are seeing in their data. Because these two complimentary methodologies both had a focus on and experience in using data, a desired outcome for the CDP was for counties to further increase their data capacity related to disproportionality and disparities.

When the project application was developed, it described the expectation for participating teams to track and report on data in the following categories:

- 1) Improved child and family outcomes - Reductions of entries; less time in care; increased exits out of care; increased reunifications;

- 2) Increased awareness and understanding within the Core and Extended Team about eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities;
- 3) Improved child welfare practice;
- 4) Improved child welfare organizational culture; and
- 5) Improved community engagement and awareness around eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities.

The latter four qualitative measures were intended to be tracked individually by teams on a periodic basis. The first measure, though, was intended to use the quantitative data collected from the [California Child Welfare Performance Indicators Project](#) at the University of California at Berkeley. The data used for this project are provided by a partnership between the University of California at Berkeley and CDSS—and is based on quarterly extracts from the CDSS Child Welfare Services/ Case Management System (CWS/CMS). The online publicly accessible database developed through the Performance Indicators Project has a variety of tools and functionality designed to provide a wealth of information in easily downloadable formats. For purposes of the CDP, the quarterly data deemed most critical for regular review included allegations, substantiations, children entering placement, children in placement, and children exiting placement.

Teams were encouraged to visit Berkeley’s website, explore the race/ethnicity data online, and become familiar with the [disparity matrix](#)⁶ for their county. Each team was also asked to develop monthly ‘[stacked bar charts](#)’ depicting their performance on the five data outcomes described above. The CDP planned to offer technical assistance to counties as needed.

Disproportionality Measures and Disparity Indices

The CDP was focused on reducing both the disproportionate rates at which African American and American Indian children and families were involved with the child welfare system as well as the disparate outcomes that resulted. From a data perspective, though, researchers in the field have been clear that looking at disparity indices are more reliable and important indicators of differential treatment and decisions.

Disproportionality indicates the extent to which a group's representation in the child welfare system is proportionate to their representation in the overall population.⁷ It is calculated by dividing the percentage of children of a specified group in a child welfare

⁶ The Disparity Matrix is a specific tool designed by the Performance Indicators Project that allows individual counties to examine the degree to which specific racial and ethnic groups of children have contact with the child welfare system at higher or lower rates than their presence in the general population.

⁷ Hill, Robert B. (2006). *Synthesis of research on disproportionality in child welfare: An update*. Seattle, WA. Casey Family Programs.

population by the percentage of children from that same group in the total child population. The disparity index calculates differences between racial or ethnic groups, and is the ratio between disproportionality rates for different groups.⁸ While disproportionality measures have been used more often, disparity indices are felt to better capture the nature of racial differences between groups in child welfare.

Data Collected and Tracked in the CDP

Although five categories of measures were described in the initial application, the process-related measures (those related to increased awareness, understanding, engagement, policy change, or organizational culture shifts) were not followed up on in any formal way over the course of the project. They were the implicit focus of much of the work done at Learning Sessions and by teams between the Learning Sessions, but no explicit structure was put into place by the CDP to help counties track or assess their progress on any of these domains.

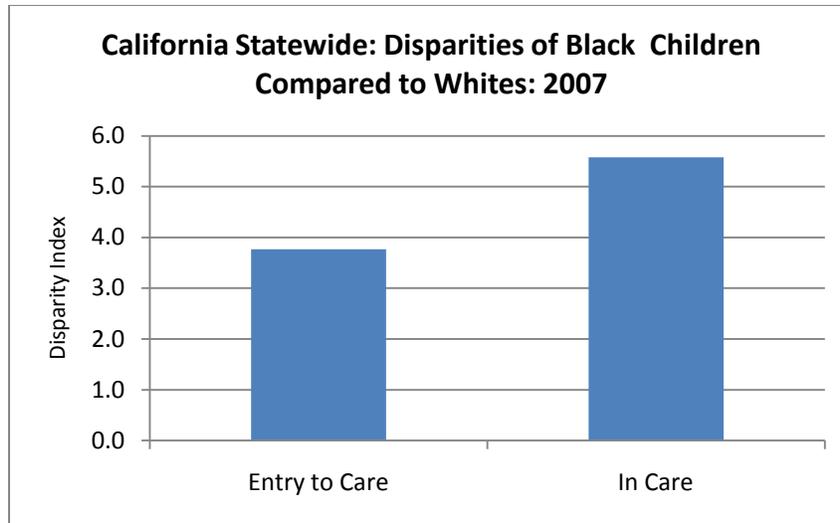
The outcome-related measure was based on the availability of data from the Berkeley website, thus four measures related to child and family outcomes were tracked by several teams:

- 1) **Allegations:** Unduplicated counts of children for whom a child maltreatment allegation was received during the analysis year
- 2) **Substantiations:** Unduplicated counts of children with a substantiated allegation during the analysis year
- 3) **Entries into Care:** Count of unique children who entered care (both entries and re-entries) without restriction on the days spent in foster care
- 4) **Children/Youth in Care:** Count of all children who have an open placement episode in foster care

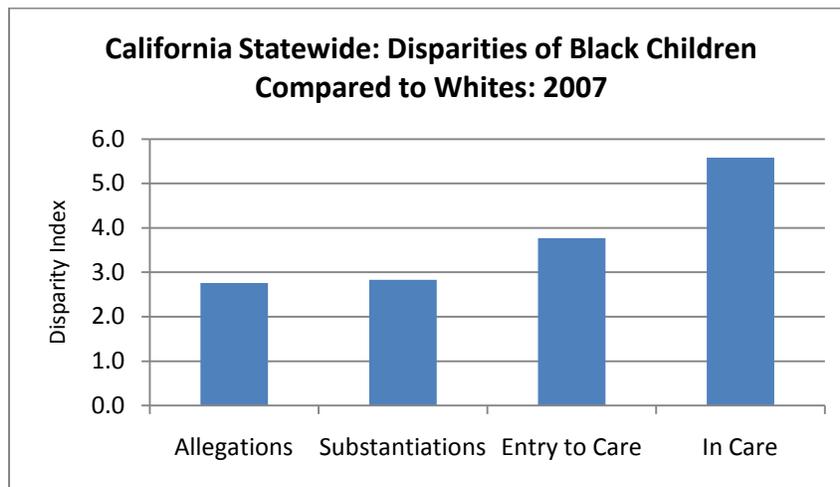
Additionally, some teams also chose to look at data related to exits from care, referrals, group home placements, reunifications, overall office/worker caseload, and caseload case service components. None of these was required, but several counties felt that these data were meaningful to them and important to track.

While individual decision points should be looked at separately to assess possible disparities, the entire body of outcome-related measures reviewed together displays a pattern of disparities that often increases with each subsequent event or decision.

⁸ Shaw, T. V., Putnam-Hornstein, Magruder, J., & Needell, B. (2008). Measuring racial disparity in child welfare. *Child Welfare*, 87(2), 23–36.



When viewed together, the disparity indices below for California in 2007 becomes greater at each decision point, indicating each decision reflects greater disparities. Black⁹ children were 2.76 times more likely than Whites to be referred to child welfare agencies; they were 2.83 times more likely than Whites to have their allegations substantiated; they were 3.77 times more likely than Whites to be removed from their homes; and they were 5.58 times more likely than Whites to be in out of home care at any given point in time.

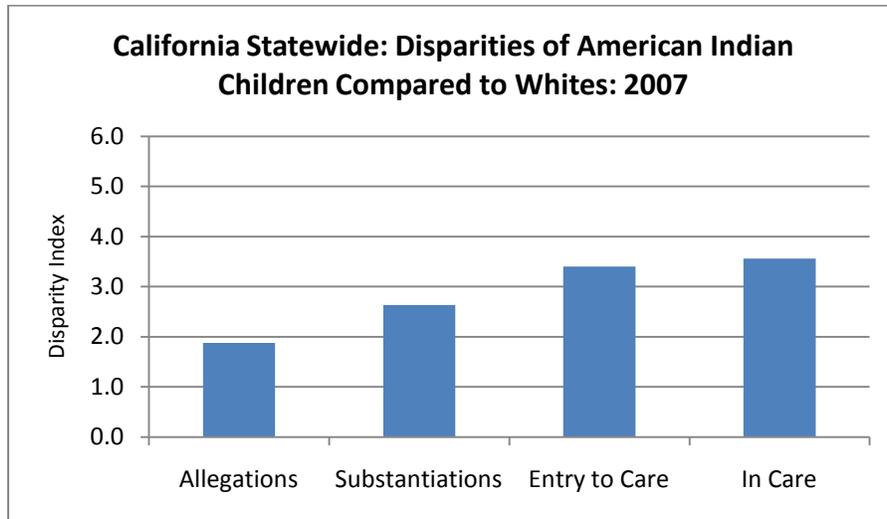


The story for Native American¹⁰ children looks quite similar. Although their numbers are significantly lower, the disparity indices are still dramatic compared to their White

⁹ In this section of the report, the term "Black" is used instead of African American. This has been done to reflect the exact language used in the CDSS CWS/CMS.

¹⁰ In this section of the report, the term "Native American" is used instead of American Indian. This has been done to reflect the exact language used in the CDSS CWS/CMS.

counterparts, as seen below. It is important to note, though, that because of ICWA non-compliance, data on Native American children is notoriously unreliable, often presenting an inaccurate picture of the presence and experiences of Native American children and families in the child welfare system.



Regardless of the likely undercount of Native American children in the child welfare data, these children were also much more likely than White children to be reported to the agency: 1.88 times more likely. Following these initial allegations, they were then 2.63 times more likely than White children to have these allegations substantiated. There is an even more substantial jump in disparities when it is time to make decisions about placement – Native American children in 2007 were 3.40 times more likely than White children to enter placement. And when looking at a snapshot of placement, Native American children were 3.56 times more likely than White children to be in placement on any given day.

Stories from the Data

In striving to address disproportionality and disparities in outcomes for African American and American Indian families and children, the CDP hoped to observe a decrease in these disparity indices over time. These are difficult data to move, especially in short periods of time, as many variables contribute to the disparities. Although no conclusive findings can be made about the connection between the work participating counties did in the CDP and changes in their outcomes, there may be some correlation between the attention the counties gave to this work over the course of the project and how this work impacted families and children.

Below are some data from participating teams from 2007 to 2010 that indicate movement toward a reduction in these disparity indices. [More complete data related to these

disparity indices from 2007-2009 follow for each individual county at the conclusion of this section.]

- **Alameda** showed a sizable drop in the likelihood of Black and Native American children having allegations substantiated as compared to White children between 2008 and 2009 (drop from disparity index of 5.09 to 3.97 for Black children and from 6.94 to 3.91 for Native American children). *Many of Alameda's practice changes in the CDP focused on addressing biases and assumptions at the allegation and substantiation phases of decision-making.*
- **Fresno** showed a sizable drop in the likelihood of Black and Native American children having allegations substantiated as compared to White children between 2008 and 2009 (drop from disparity index of 3.35 to 2.86 for Black children and from 6.27 to 2.19 for Native American children). *Fresno began requiring all staff to participate in 'Racial Sobriety' training over the course of the CDP.*
- **Kern** showed a decrease in their disparity indices for Black children related to child welfare decisions (substantiations to removals to point-in-time in care data). In 2009 Black children in Kern were 2.86 times more likely than White children to have their allegations substantiated. But rather than disparities growing from this point, Black children were only 2.64 times more likely than Whites to be removed and 2.42 times more likely than Whites to be in placement on any given day. *Kern tested several practice changes related to the early identification and engagement of relatives to maintain children at home, to become placement resources when needed, and to support timely reunification whenever possible.*
- **San Joaquin** shows a slight three year trend of decreasing disparities between Black children and White children at the point of report. In 2007, Black children were 3.01 times more likely than White children to have allegations. In 2008 this disparities dropped to 2.8 times more likely. And in 2009 the disparity was 2.64. *During the CDP, San Joaquin focused heavily on working with the community and mandated reporters to understand when it is appropriate to refer to child protective services, how to access differential response services, and how to better engage families in these services.*

Overall Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Although the CDP had strong precedents for tracking and using data based on two of the core methodologies used for the project, data proved to be a challenge for most participating teams. Support for technical assistance with data issues was withdrawn from the project due to funder reorganization, and therefore the project did not place an emphasis on downloading, collecting, or sharing the data after the first Learning Session.

While many counties continued to track, use, and share data related to disproportionality and disparities quite extensively to raise awareness, conduct trainings, and guide priorities within their counties, these data were not shared with other CDP participants, faculty, or staff.

- **Data Quality Related to Native American Children:** The number of Native American children is quite low compared to other races and ethnicities captured in the CWS/CMS data system. This can result in the appearance of dramatic changes in percentages even when the raw numbers change only slightly. Perhaps more critical, though, is to note that the numbers of children and families identified as Native American in CWS/CMS seem much lower than practitioners in the field experience. This implies that data are not being accurately reported, presenting a picture of Native American disproportionality and disparities that may be dramatically incorrect. This is a significant concern for Native Americans because incorrect data not only paints a distorted picture of Native American children and child welfare, but, more importantly, does not trigger the appropriate Indian Child Welfare Act responses required by law for these children and families. The American Indian Enhancement Team that was developed as part of the CDP is continuing to develop tools to help counties improve the way they identify and document Native American children in CWS/CMS.
- **Timeliness of the Data Availability to Compute Disparity Rates:** Many counties expressed frustration that the data they can retrieve easily from the Berkeley website is not available until roughly six months after it has been entered. Moreover, rates that require calendar year data because they are based on a comparison to mid-year Census data can only be updated yearly. Thus, for this report (written in February 2011), reporting, allegation and substantiation rates were only available up through 2009 because of reliance on the annual updated Census data.
- **Difficulty Accessing, Analyzing, and Using Data:** Providing technical support for accessing, analyzing, and using data was one of the most consistent themes in participant evaluations at the final Learning Session in response to what the project could have done better. Counties were particularly interested in increasing their knowledge and understanding of available data related to disproportionality and disparities, but felt unable to do so without assistance. The CDP planned to provide technical assistance to counties for this, but as was mentioned earlier, the reorganizations that took place during the project caused the financial support for this technical assistance to be withdrawn.

- **Connecting Data to Practice and Policy Changes:** Closely related to the challenges counties faced in accessing, analyzing, and using their data is the risk of misinterpreting or over-generalizing changes in the data. While a BSC hopes to establish basic correlations between changes in practice and changes in family and child level outcomes, the CDP was aware that there are many influences that result in changes in data, including raised awareness, trainings, the implementation of new guidelines, shifting agency priorities, political pressures, and legislative mandates. In addition, many other factors are associated with race (e.g., income, educational achievement). When reviewing data it is critical to use them to raise questions and guide discussions, rather than reach conclusive findings.

Conclusion

Data related to disproportionality and disparities in child welfare are easily accessible in California. While the data that are available cannot answer the questions about what factors are resulting in the disparities, they do help frame the questions that need to be asked, provided counties receive the support needed to use and understand the data. They can also provide critical insights into whether these disparities are changing (positively or negatively) as counties continue to build awareness, provide community and staff trainings, and implement new practices.

C

DISPARITIES BY KEY DECISION-POINTS

County Data: 2007-2009

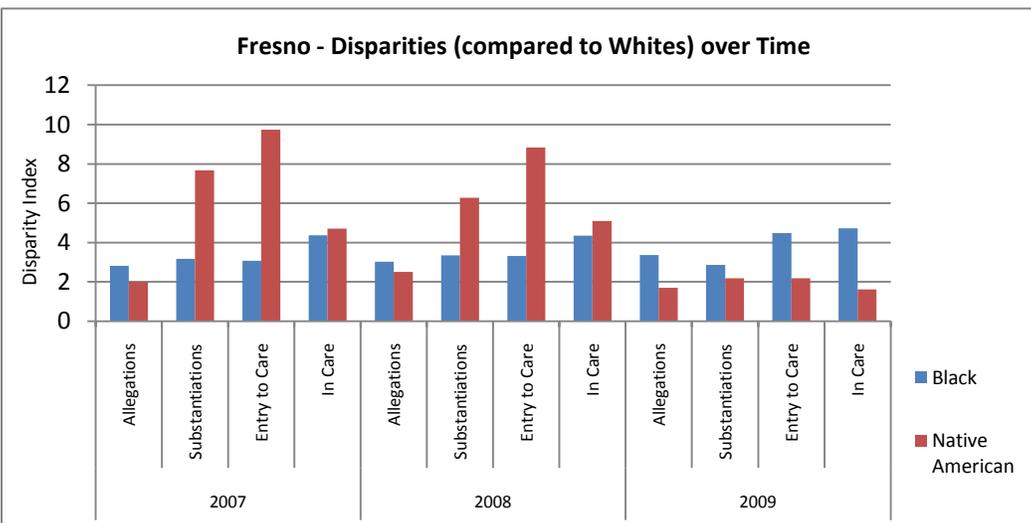
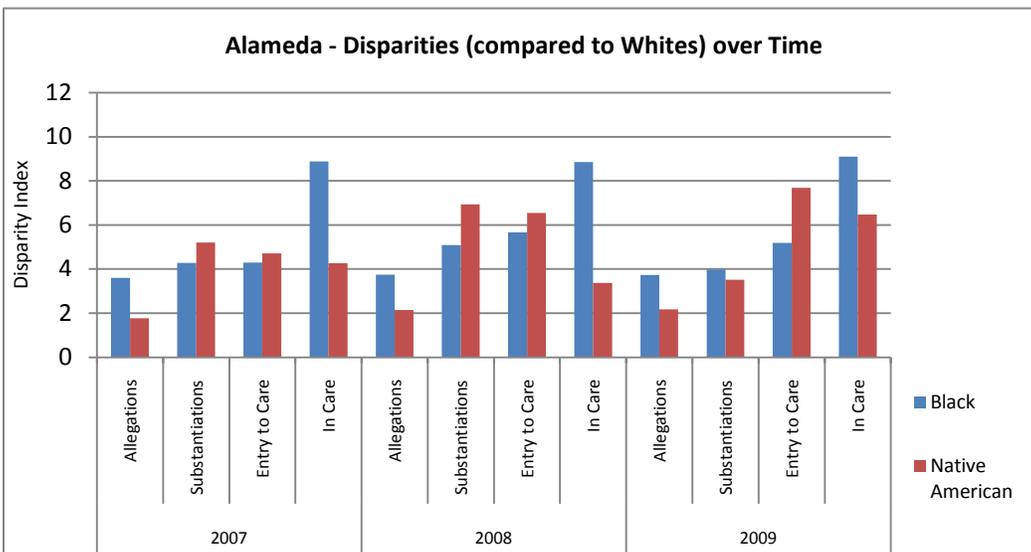
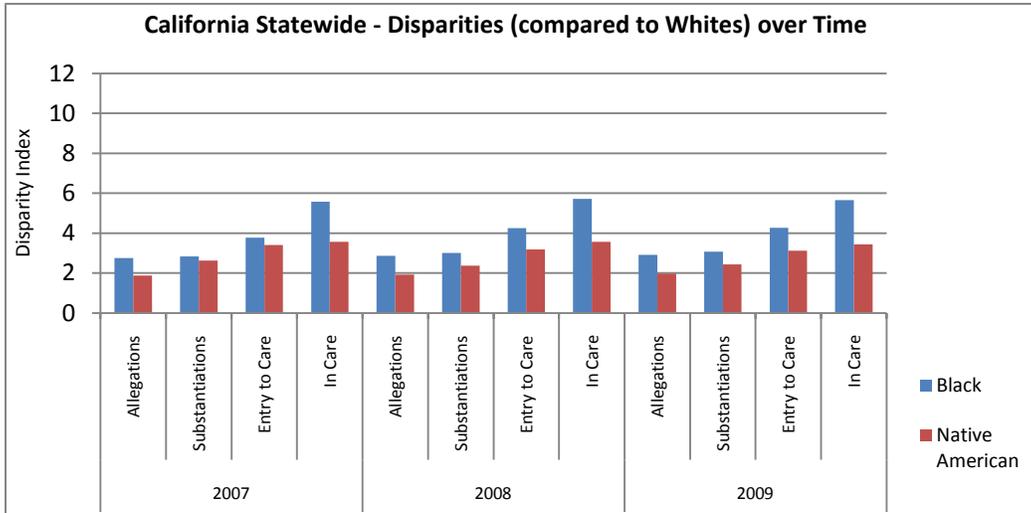
The graphs on the following pages depict the disparity indices for four key decision-points in child welfare for each county participating in the California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative (CDP). The disparity indices used here are calculations of the ratio based on the rates per 1,000 for each group (Black compared to Whites and Native American compared to Whites). All data were retrieved in February 2011 from the [Child Welfare Dynamic Report System](#) through the University of California at Berkeley.

The disparity indices included in these graphs include the following decision points:

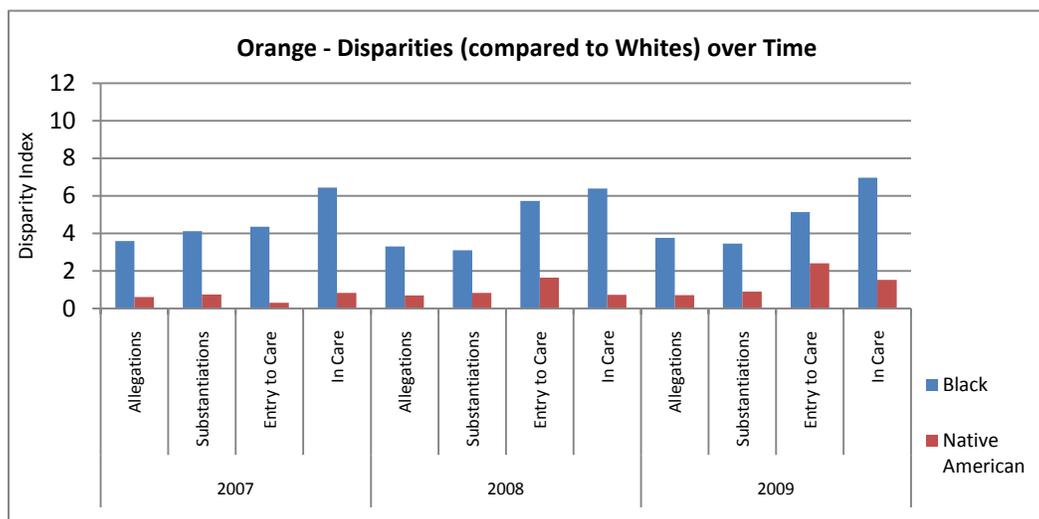
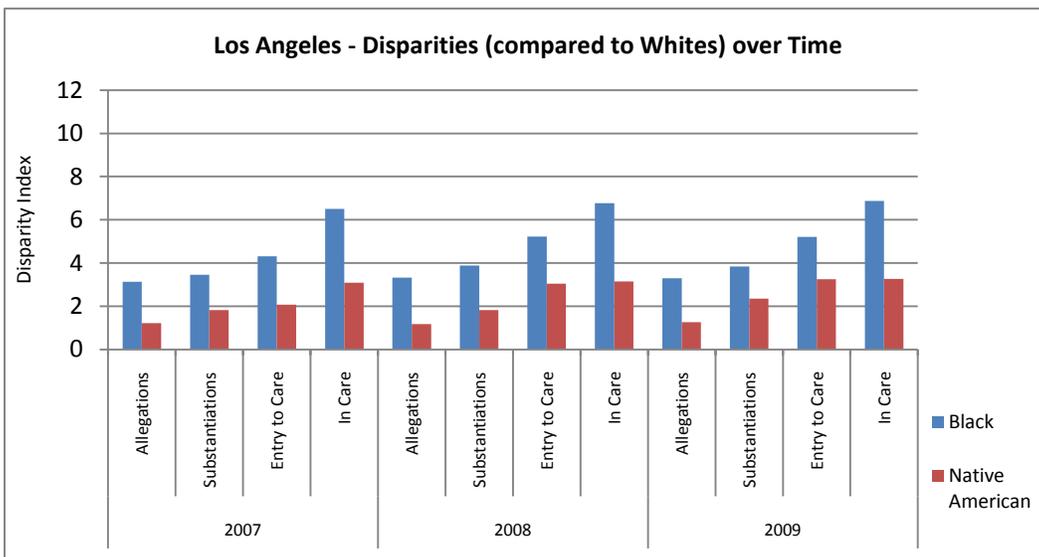
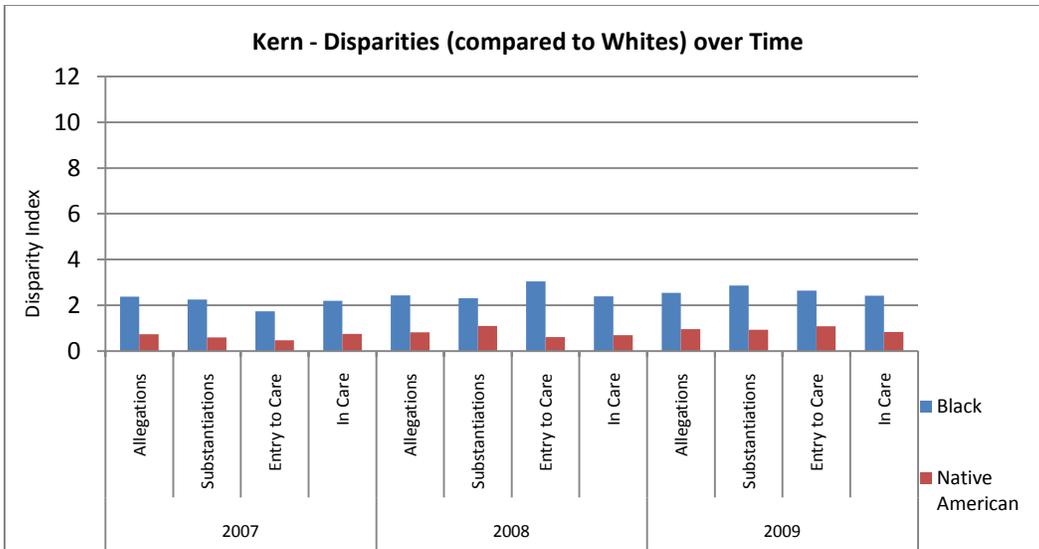
- **Allegations** are unduplicated counts of children for whom a child maltreatment allegation was received during the analysis year.
- **Substantiations/Substantiated Allegations** are unduplicated counts of children with a substantiated allegation during the analysis year.
- **Entries to care** are based on the count of unique children who entered care (both entries and re-entries).
- **In Care** refers to all children who have an open placement episode in foster care on a given day.

[Note: Entries and In Care Rates are restricted to cases supervised by a Child Welfare Agency.]

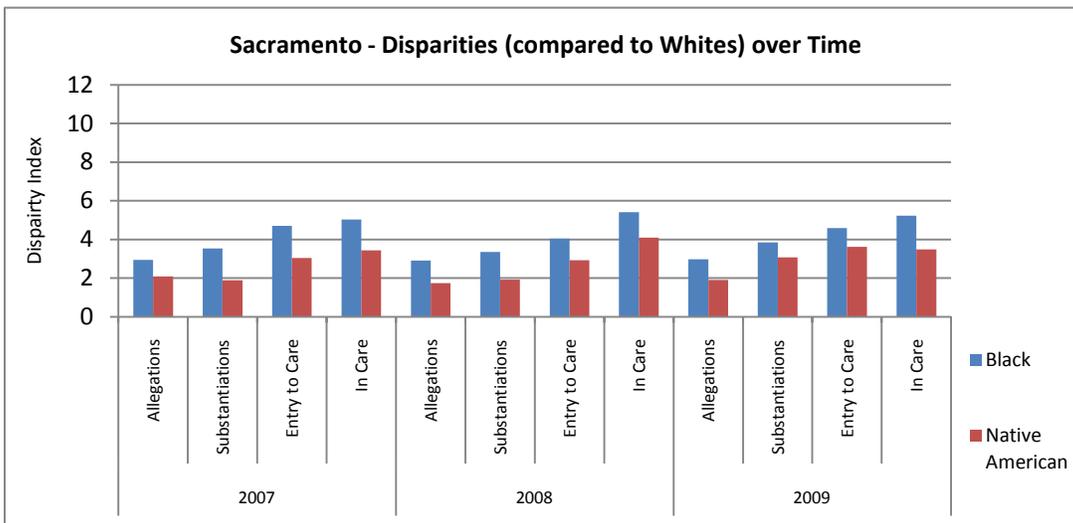
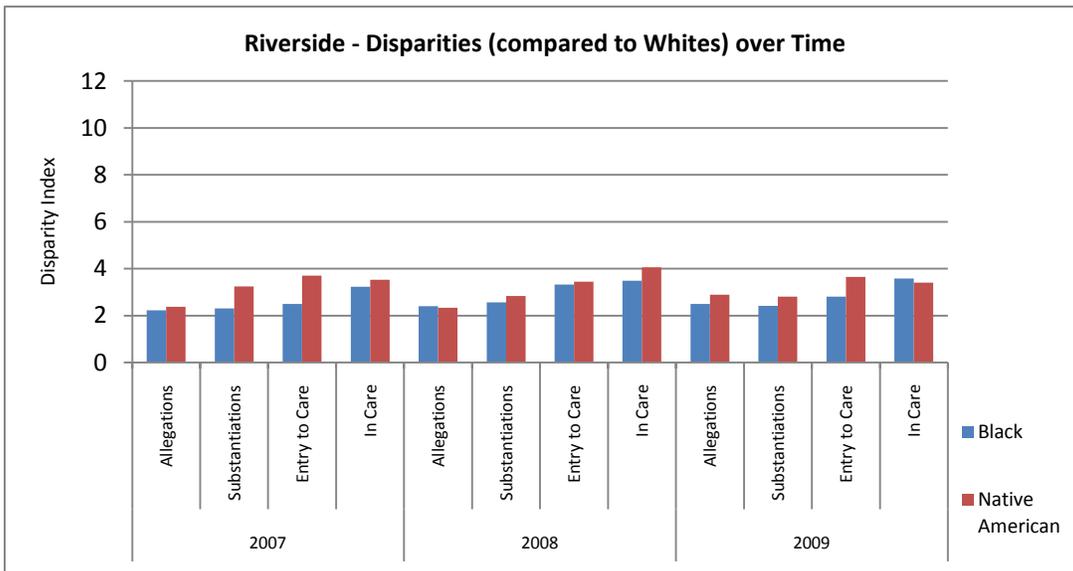
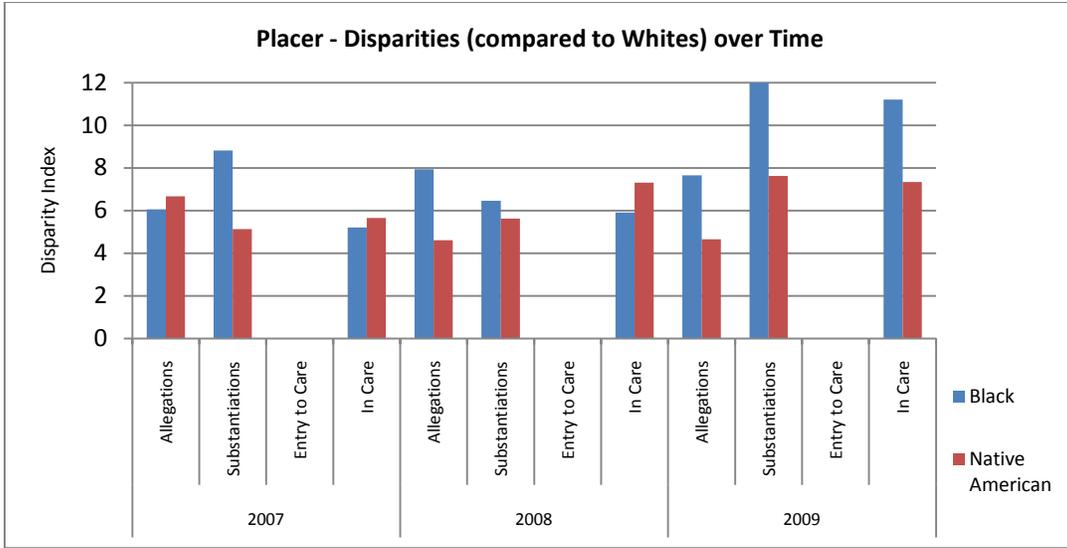
*California Disproportionality Project: Final Report
Section 3C: Reflecting on Data and Results*



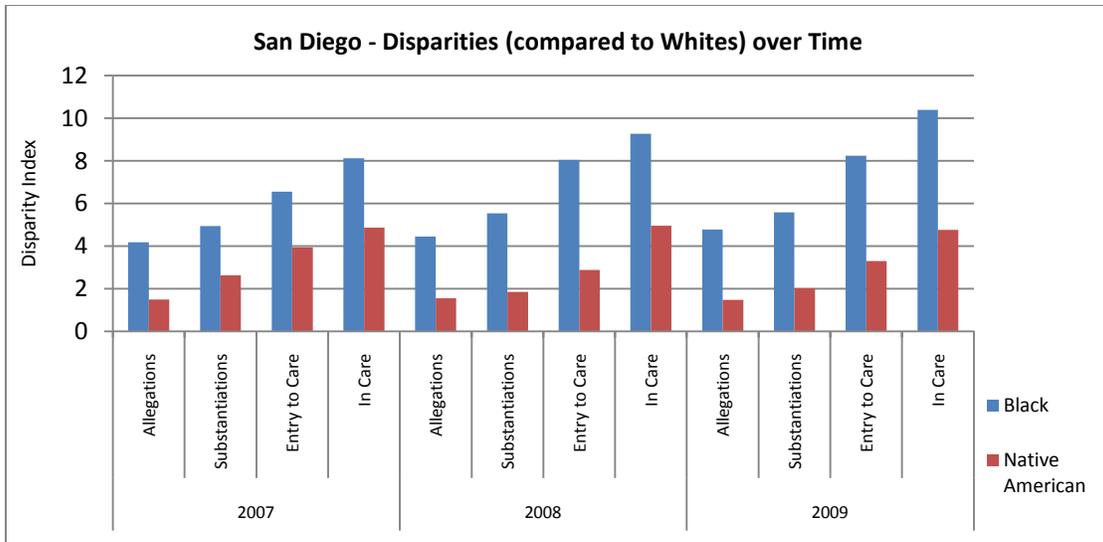
California Disproportionality Project: Final Report
Section 3C: Reflecting on Data and Results



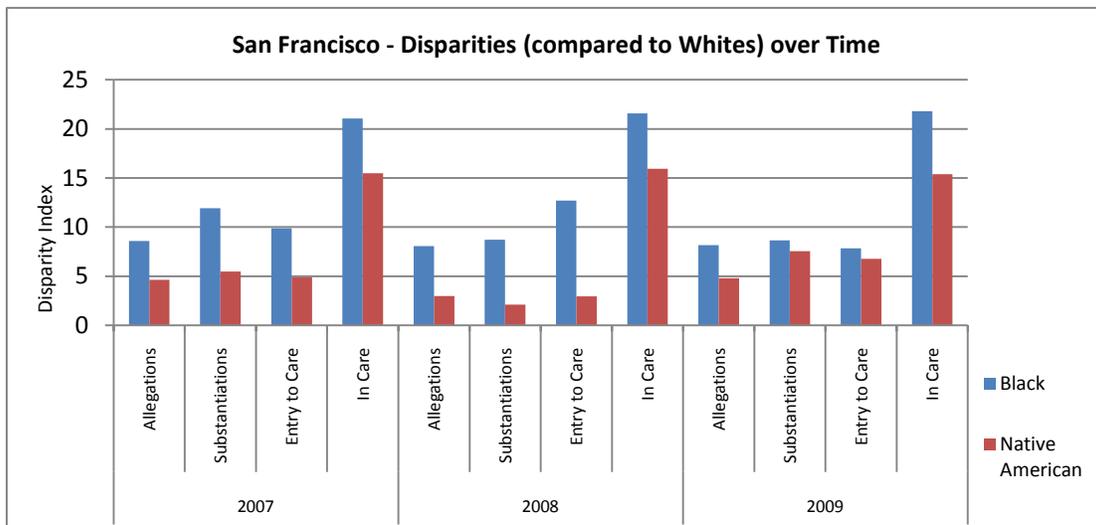
California Disproportionality Project: Final Report
 Section 3C: Reflecting on Data and Results



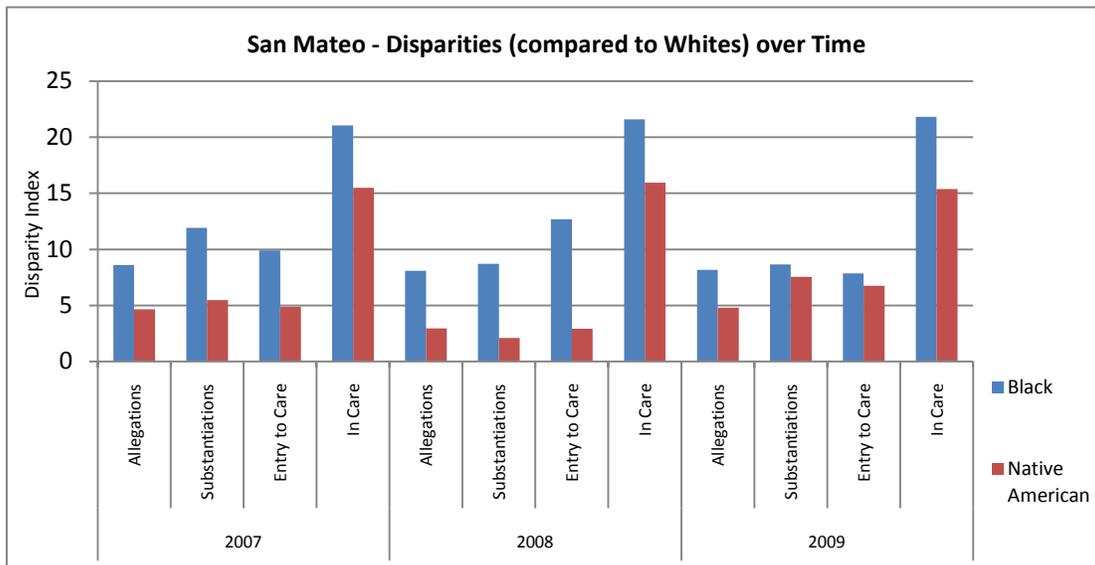
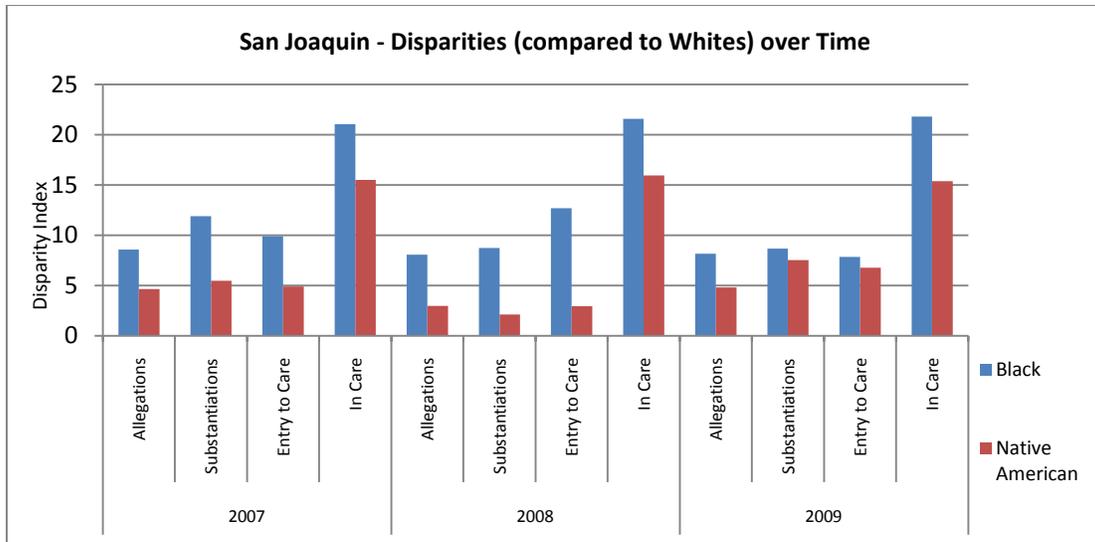
*California Disproportionality Project: Final Report
Section 3C: Reflecting on Data and Results*



[NOTE: For the three county graphs that follow, the disparity index scale has been changed from 12 to 25 to reflect the more significant disparities that exist in these three counties.]



*California Disproportionality Project: Final Report
Section 3C: Reflecting on Data and Results*



Data Sources

Allegations: Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Hamilton, D., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Lou, C., Peng, C., Moore, M., King, B., Ashly, L. & Clark, E. (2010). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved 2/14/11, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>

Substantiations: Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Williams, D., Simon, V., Hamilton, D., Lou, C., Peng, C., Moore, M., Jacobs, L., & King, B. (2011). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved

2/14/2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website.
URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

Entering Foster Care: Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Williams, D., Simon, V., Hamilton, D., Lou, C., Peng, C., Moore, M., Jacobs, L., & King, B. (2011). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved 2/14/2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website.
URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

Children In Care: Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Williams, D., Simon, V., Hamilton, D., Lou, C., Peng, C., Moore, M., Jacobs, L., & King, B. (2011). Child Welfare Services Reports for California. Retrieved 2/14/2011, from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website.
URL: http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

4 California Disproportionality Project

METHODOLOGIES USED IN THE CALIFORNIA DISPROPORTIONALITY PROJECT

A	The Three Core Methodologies	<i>A discussion of how three methodologies were integrated and applied to support this project</i>	1
B	Integrated Methodologies: Lessons Learned	<i>A description of the lessons learned from integrating these three methodologies to address disproportionality and disparities in child welfare</i>	16

This is the **fourth** of four sections that describe different aspects of the California Disproportionality Project. Each section can be utilized independently or they can be used in combination. This section provides information about the methodologies used to facilitate the changes made and associated lessons learned over the course of this project.

4

Methodologies Used in the California Disproportionality Project

A

OVERVIEW OF THE THREE KEY METHODOLOGIES

This section describes the three key methodologies used in this project to facilitate the awareness, change, and improvements to address disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian children and families.

Overview

In July 2006, the California Disproportionality Workgroup discussed the possibility of taking a statewide approach to tackle the issues of disproportionality and disparities in child welfare. This group identified key aspects of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology along with the Technical Assistance already provided to many counties across the state as part of the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) (AECF) and [Stuart Foundation's](#) California Family to Family (F2F) initiative as potential methodologies to help counties address these issues. Together these methodologies would be integrated to form the initial basis for the work that selected counties would be invited to do in what was then called the "California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative" (CDP).

Based on county input following the first Learning Session (in-person convening), a third key methodology was added to the project: an American Indian Enhancement Team. This team was funded through the Stuart Foundation to support, expand, and focus the work of counties addressing American Indian disproportionality and disparities.

Breakthrough Series Collaborative Methodology

The Breakthrough Series Collaborative methodology was developed by the [Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#) (IHI) and [Associates in Process Improvement](#) (API) in 1995. Their goal was to support health care organizations in closing the gap between medical science and health care delivery, dramatically improving patient outcomes while decreasing costs. They believed that by bringing together subject matter experts with clinical experts in a facilitated learning environment guided by quality improvement principles, health care

organizations could realize dramatic improvements in fairly short periods of time as they focused on implementation challenges¹¹.

In 2001, [Casey Family Programs](#) (CFP), a national operating foundation focused on foster care, identified the methodology as a possible way to address challenges faced by public child welfare systems across the country. Recognizing that mandates from the top were often not embraced – or even implemented – in the ways they were intended on the front lines, Casey Family Programs welcomed an opportunity to test innovative methods to help address longstanding and seemingly intractable problems in child welfare. Casey Family Programs contracted with IHI to learn the BSC method, co-locating a staff person at IHI to become fully immersed in their “learning organization” culture, the backbone of the methodology. Casey Family Programs and IHI collaborated on a BSC in 2001, and Casey Family Programs launched its first solo effort later that year. Since 2001, over 15 BSCs have been conducted in child welfare on a variety of topics.

Because child welfare practice differs fundamentally from medical practice, the BSC methodology was and continues to be adapted. But the goals of the methodology remain the same: closing the gap between what is known and what is done, and between best practices, promising approaches, clinical wisdom, and the collaborative work with families, children, and communities in the field.

The [California Department of Social Services](#), together with Casey Family Programs, the Foundation Consortium for California’s Children & Youth, the [Marguerite Casey Foundation](#), and the [East Bay Community Foundation](#), funded and oversaw a statewide California BSC from 2003-2005 focused on the implementation of differential response. This BSC involved 43 counties from across the state as the counties developed, tested, and began implementing differential response practice changes at the local level.

Additionally, many California counties participated in national child welfare BSCs sponsored by Casey Family Programs and others between 2002 and 2008. The experiences of California counties in using the BSC methodology to test and implement changes made it a natural fit when identifying possible methodologies to address the complex challenges faced in the work to eliminate disproportionality and disparities.

There are five key elements of a Breakthrough Series Collaborative: 1) Framework for Change; 2) the Model for Improvement; 3) collaborative learning environment; 4) inclusive

¹¹ *The Breakthrough Series: IHI’s Collaborative Model for Achieving Breakthrough Improvement*. IHI Innovation Series white paper. Boston: Institute for Healthcare Improvement; 2003. (Available online at www.IHI.org)

multi-level teams; and 5) faculty and staff support. Each plays a critical role and works with the other elements in dynamic and inter-related ways.

Framework for Change

The *Framework for Change* is intended to describe an ideal system and guide the work of the teams throughout the project. For the CDP it was written over the course of several months, with input from California and national experts including parents, young adults formerly in care, county-level practitioners at all levels from front-line through high level administration, tribal members, researchers, state-level partners, and policymakers. Additional review and refinement was done by [Family to Family technical assistance providers](#) who had been working closely with many California counties on various system change initiatives.

A *Framework for Change* provides the rationale for the entire BSC, including the overall challenges being addressed, the goals for teams to accomplish, the values and principles that guide the work, and the key elements that require improvement. In this project, the key elements of the *Framework for Change* formed the basis for the county self-assessments that teams were asked to do several times over the course of the project to reflect on their progress.

The Key Elements for the CDP included ten broad categories:

- Building authentic tribal and community partnerships
- Collecting and using data
- Raising awareness and providing training
- Leading by example
- Engaging birth families and youth as authentic partners
- Engaging the broader child welfare system¹²
- Preventing removal, diverting families to other supportive services, and ensuring equity for child welfare involvement
- Achieving practice and decision-making that does not result in racial disproportionality and disparities
- Ensuring least restrictive, appropriate, and supported placements
- Hiring, promoting, and supporting staff

From the beginning of the project, the expectation was that participating teams would address each of these nine elements in their work.

¹² The “Broader Child Welfare System” refers to other agencies and organizations that serve children, youth, and families involved with, or at risk of involvement with, the child welfare agency. This system includes, but is not limited to, courts, schools, juvenile justice, welfare, mental health, and public health.

Model for Improvement

The Model for Improvement is based on the notion that all improvement requires change, but not all change results in improvement. It emphasizes three key questions that teams are expected to use in testing changes.

- *“What are we trying to accomplish?”* This focuses on the overall goal of the change being tested.
- *“How will we know that a change is an improvement?”* This helps ensure that changes are resulting in actual improvements in outcomes.
- *“What changes can we make that will result in improvement?”* This provides a structured and systematic, yet rapid method for testing possible strategies that might result in improved outcomes.

In answering the last question, teams are taught to use Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles. These cycles are used to test small changes quickly, identifying an essential practice and working to adapt it to real situations. The PDSA method provides a structure for quickly planning changes, testing changes, studying the impacts of those changes, and then acting or adjusting based on what was learned. Over multiple cycles, the changes expand toward full practice implementation and are spread throughout a county.

Collaborative Learning Environment

A collaborative learning environment is central to the success of a BSC. In fact, one of the primary reasons that changes can be tested, implemented, and spread so quickly using the Model for Improvement and PDSAs is the collaboration within and across teams. Several vehicles help create and support this environment:

- ***Learning Sessions:*** Participation in four two-day Learning Sessions provided teams with an opportunity to receive in-person awareness building and training related to disproportionality and disparities; to learn about improvement methods; to meet intensively within and across teams; to report on progress and lessons learned; and to problem solve with faculty, project staff, and colleagues from other counties.
- ***All-Collaborative and Senior Leader Conference Calls:*** Monthly All-Collaborative calls were intended to help maintain the momentum of the work between the in-person Learning Sessions. These calls involved all participants, faculty, and staff. Focusing on a variety of topics, these calls provided an opportunity for teams to share successes and lessons learned from the changes

they had tested. Senior Leader calls were held specifically for the Senior Leaders of the teams, allowing them to focus more intensively on their unique roles in supporting and sustaining this work.

- **Extranet:** The Extranet was an interactive, password protected website to which all participants had access. This website was intended to facilitate communication by permitting participants to share resources, have online discussions, and post their monthly measures and PDSAs. Additionally, the Extranet allowed teams to view the progress and improvements being tested across the Collaborative, thereby serving as a vehicle to motivate teams to make progress toward their goals and to help them generate new ideas by learning from other teams' successes and challenges.

Inclusive Multi-Level Teams

In order to change beliefs in addition to changing practice, the BSC methodology focuses on engaging a cross-section of representatives in the change process, from high-level administrators to family members and community partners. This ensures that all perspectives being impacted by the changes are being used to inform the changes that are tested. There is a fundamental belief in a BSC that those closest and most deeply impacted by the work are the ones who have not only the greatest stake in improving it, but also the greatest insights on how to do so.

The CDP used a competitive application process to select counties. The application required counties to identify the members of their proposed eight-person Core Team, including a high-level leader from the child welfare agency (the director, commissioner, or administrator), a high-level agency manager, a direct line child welfare social worker, a child welfare supervisor, a birth parent, a youth, a community partner or representative, and a final member of the team's discretion.

Counties were also required to convene an "Extended Team." This team was expected to include all members of the Core Team plus additional representatives in each of the areas required. Counties were encouraged to think about this Extended Team broadly as it would not only inform their work but would also help spread and share the promising practices and successes that emerged.

Faculty and Staff Support

While each county participating in the CDP came with a great deal of knowledge, experience, and learning, the BSC methodology helped focus on teaching them quality improvement and content-related skills; keeping them focused on their own priorities; maintaining their momentum; and constantly encouraging them to accelerate their progress. The faculty and staff worked closely with teams

throughout the CDP and, through these relationships and their knowledge of where each team was, crafted agendas for calls and Learning Sessions to meet teams' needs.

The faculty for the CDP was a bit unusual relative to other BSCs based on the group's size and composition. A BSC faculty is usually a mirror of the Core Team, with roughly the same number of members. The core competencies that are required on teams are also required on the faculty. Because of the unique partnership that launched this project, the CDP included 18 faculty members initially, with an additional four added following the second Learning Session as part of the [American Indian Enhancement Team](#). Nine of these 18 initial faculty members were Family to Family technical assistance providers. This was designed intentionally to maximize the ability of counties to receive onsite consultation during the project as well as to help counties integrate their work on disproportionality and disparities most effectively.

The Mechanics: How a BSC Works

Immediately after county selection, teams begin their work. Prior to the first in-person Collaborative meeting, they meet as a team in their own county, complete standard assignments that orient them to the *Framework for Change* and to one another, collect baseline data, and establish priorities based on a self-assessment. They also participate on All-Collaborative conference calls and the Extranet to introduce them to the experience of the shared learning environment. The ultimate goal of this orientation period is to ensure that they are prepared to begin rapidly testing changes as soon as they return from the first Learning Session.

Over the course of the next 22 months, teams attend a total of four in-person Learning Sessions; participate on regular conference calls with other BSC participants; share their successes, learnings, tools, and data on the BSC Extranet site; and most importantly they test, implement, and spread improvements that are connected to their priorities. This is shown visually in the diagram below:

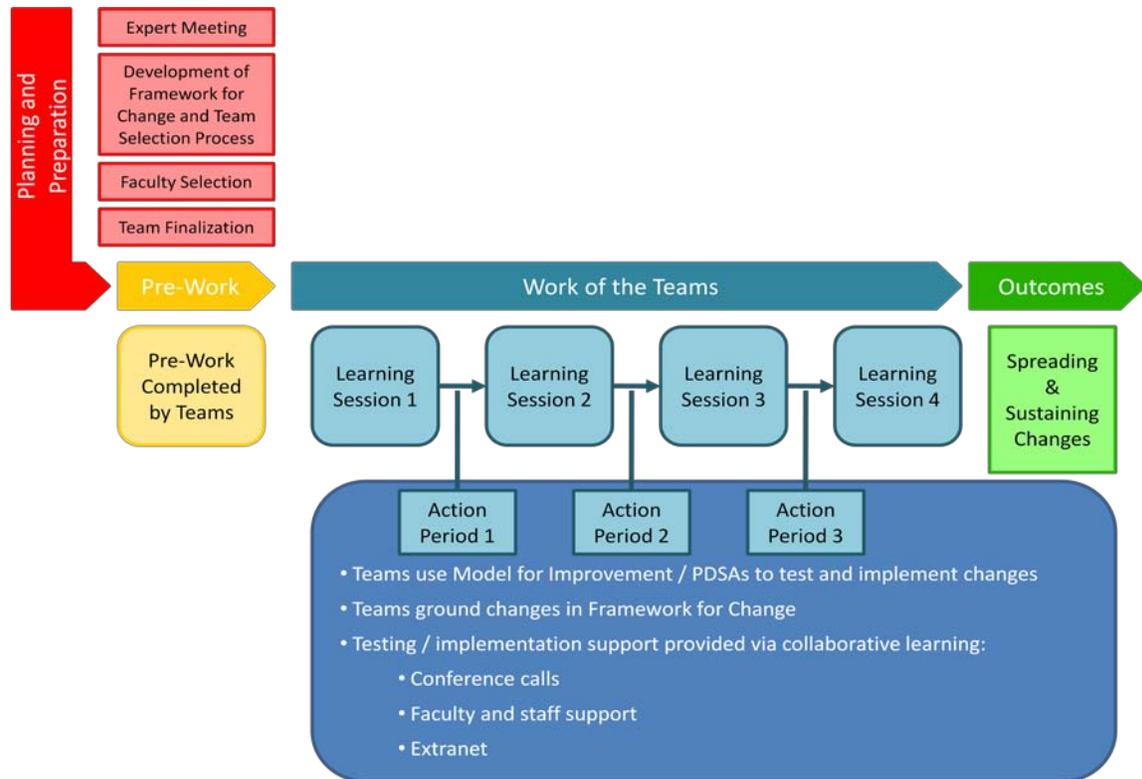


Diagram adapted from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement

The BSC methodology is focused on the testing and implementation of practice changes. While organizational changes and shifts in beliefs are often experienced by jurisdictions participating in BSCs (e.g., relationships between agencies and families; involvement and engagement of youth; partnerships with communities), these tend to be by-products of the practice changes rather than intentional foci of the methodology itself. The CDP planners recognized that in order to address disproportionality and disparities in the way they envisioned, a methodology that intentionally focused on process and system-level changes in this way would be critical for the project to achieve its goals.

Family to Family

The Annie E. Casey Foundation developed the Family to Family (F2F) Initiative in 1992. F2F is a national child welfare and foster care reform initiative that provides values, principles, strategies and tools designed to help states and local child welfare agencies achieve better outcomes for children and families. F2F includes 25 counties in California (11 of which participated in the CDP) through a public-private partnership between national and state foundations, including AECF, Stuart Foundation, the [Walter S. Johnson Foundation](#), the [Center for Social Services Research at UC Berkeley](#), and CDSS.

At its core, Family to Family applies four basic principles to all its work with states, counties, and communities¹³:

- A child's safety is paramount;
- Children belong in families;
- Families need strong communities; and
- Public child welfare systems need partnerships with the community and with other systems to achieve strong outcomes for children.

Family to Family Goals and Outcomes

Family to Family, as an effort to support states and communities in redesigning their foster care systems, is focused on achieving the following outcomes:

- A reduction in the number of children served in institutional and congregate care;
- A shift of resources from congregate and institutional cares to family foster care and family centered services across all child and family-serving systems;
- A decrease in the lengths of stay in out-of-home placement;
- An increase in the number of planned reunifications;
- A decrease in the number of re-entries into care;
- A reduction in the number of placement moves experienced by children in care;
- An increase in the number of siblings placed together;
- A reduction in the total number of children served away from their own families; and
- A reduction in any disparities associated with race/ethnicity, gender, or age in each of these outcomes.

Based on these outcomes, F2F has never considered itself a 'pilot project.' Instead, it is "a set of value-driven principles that guide a tested group of strategies that, in turn, are implemented by a practical set of tools for everyday use by administrators, managers, field workers, and families."¹⁴

¹³ Retrieved online from <http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/Family%20to%20Family.aspx> on January 5, 2011.

¹⁴ Family to Family Tools for Rebuilding Foster Care, *Implementing the Values and Strategies of Family to Family*, pp. 6-9.

Family to Family Core Strategies

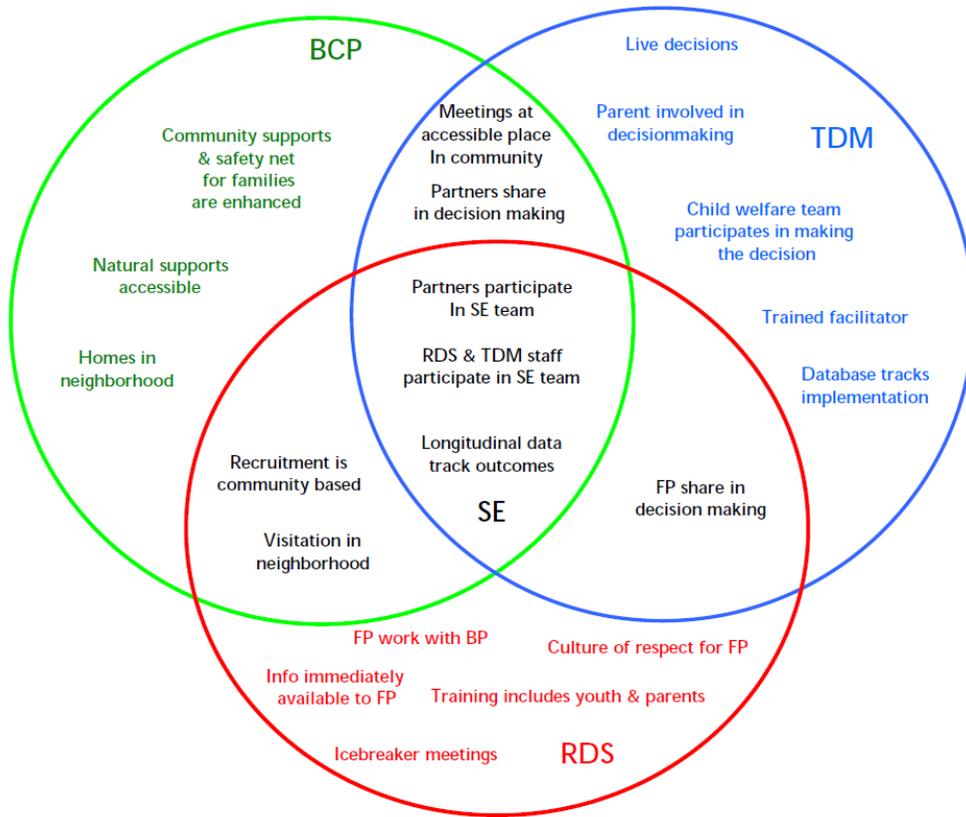
F2F is grounded in four core strategies. All F2F counties receive technical assistance from skilled trainers and facilitators in addressing each of these:

- **Building Community Partnerships (BCP):** Building relationships with a wide range of community organizations in neighborhoods in which child protection referral rates are high and collaborating to create an environment that is supportive of families involved with the child welfare system.
- **Team Decision Making (TDM):** Seeking to involve not just foster parents and caseworkers, but also birth families and community members in all placement decisions to ensure there is a network of support for children and the adults who care for them.
- **Resource Family Recruitment, Development, and Support (RDS):** Finding and maintaining foster and kinship homes who can support children and families in their own neighborhoods.
- **Self-Evaluation (SE):** Creating and using teams of analysts, data managers, frontline managers and staff, and community partners to collect, analyze, and interpret data about key Family to Family outcomes to assess whether sites are making progress and to determine how policy and practice needs to be changed to bring about further improvement.

F2F stresses that although these strategies are distinct unto themselves, they are inter-related in important ways that are necessary for agencies to achieve the overall F2F system goals, as depicted in the diagram below¹⁵:

¹⁵ Evaluation of the Anchor Site Phase of Family to Family, 2010. Lynn Usher, Judy Wildfire, Daniel Webster, David Crampton. P 2-11.

Exhibit 2.4: Key Elements of Family to Family



Family to Family in California

In January 2007, F2F was reorganized, resulting in a regionalized structure for all F2F sites. California joined Alaska and Washington to form the Pacific Region. Additionally, a three-year F2F evaluation was launched at this time, focused on 14 F2F sites nationwide (five of these 14 sites were in California). These selected sites were known as ‘anchor sites,’ in which additional technical assistance would be provided with higher expectations for implementing the core strategies.

In addition to the five California anchor sites that were selected through a comprehensive assessment process by AECF, the Stuart Foundation supported an additional four counties to receive this enhanced level of support and focus. Although these nine California anchor sites¹⁶ (counties) would receive additional support and assistance from F2F, all 25 F2F California counties would continue to receive general technical assistance through the unique public/private partnership that is used to support F2F in California.

¹⁶ Of these nine anchor sites in California, seven participated in the CDP.

Family to Family Focus on Disproportionality and Disparities

In 2006, national F2F TA providers identified the need to focus intentionally on issues related to racial disparities and disproportionality as part of their core work with sites. The awareness of these issues had been growing within the sites themselves, and it was becoming clear that the foster care system reform efforts being advanced by F2F could not be achieved without attending to these issues in addition to the four core strategies.

In 2007, those counties in California selected as anchor sites were required to address disparities and disproportionality (referred to as ‘eliminating racial disparities and disproportionality’ [ERDD] in F2F parlance) as part of their anchor plans. To support this focus, F2F TA providers began to work closely with three sites to build awareness about ERDD: LA County-Pomona, Fresno County, and San Francisco County. (All three of these sites participated in the CDP.)

By the end of 2007, examples of successful ERDD work done by counties in partnership with their F2F TA providers included¹⁷:

- Forming a task force to address ERDD within the agency system. Reviewing data including the number of African American families receiving reunification services; initial removal TDMs; substance abuse assessment practices and policies; and developing guidelines for progressive visitation to foster better outcomes for families.
- Building relationships with local tribes and developing policies and procedures in regards to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to better meet the needs of American Indian children, youth and families.
- Building awareness around ERDD issues and data with both internal staff and external community partners.
- Working with an external consultant to have facilitated discussions about ERDD with all levels of child welfare staff in addition to stakeholders. Using the results of the discussions to begin developing training as well as a strategic plan to address disproportionality by building awareness and identifying challenges and related solutions.

At the time of the CDP’s launch, F2F was well-positioned to not only support, but also to play a key role in understanding, developing, and integrating the work done by participating teams that were also F2F sites.

¹⁷ California Family to Family Highlights Report, 2007.

American Indian Enhancement Team

Prior to the application process for the CDP, the decision was made that teams in the project would only be able to focus on a single population: either African American or American Indian children and families. Although counties were interested in addressing multiple populations through this work, through past experience as well as through the recommendations of experts in addressing disproportionality and disparities, trying to focus on more than one racial or cultural group at once would make this complicated work nearly impossible as the issues are quite distinct.

Based on funding and applicants, a total of 14 county teams were selected to participate in the CDP: 12 focused on African American children and families, and two focused on American Indian children and families. Although there was a strong desire on the part of many to include another two teams focused on American Indian children and families, there was neither funding nor resources to support them.

The first Learning Session highlighted the challenge this construct had created. Both American Indian teams left the Learning Session feeling like outsiders looking in, rather than part of the project. Much of the agenda had focused awareness building specifically on African American history and the African American experience with child welfare. The discussions at the meeting felt exclusive to American Indians who were there.

The two faculty members with significant expertise in tribal issues shared feedback and recommendations with the Leadership Team, project staff, and faculty about this experience. They then worked closely with the project staff to develop and deliver specific education, awareness, and training about American Indian history and issues at Learning Session 2. They also ensured that Indian culture was brought into the CDP in intentional and respectful ways, including welcoming ceremonies, prayers before meals, and appropriate closings.

The CDP Leadership Team took this feedback farther, as they wanted to ensure not only that the counties focused on American Indians were intentionally included in this work, but also that the issues identified by these teams were acknowledged as significantly different from cultural, process, and practice perspectives. In response, the Leadership Team worked closely with project staff and the two tribal faculty members to craft a proposal that would expand emphasis on and support for addressing American Indian disproportionality as part of the CDP. Stuart Foundation funded this proposal, and the Leadership Team moved quickly to honor this commitment as quickly and responsively as possible.

Creating the American Indian Enhancement Team

The two initial CDP tribal faculty members brought decades of community development experience with American Indian/Alaska Native communities. They were affiliated with [Tribal STAR](#) (Successful Transitions for Adult Readiness) and Casey Family Programs respectively. Both are important partners in tribal work in California and brought many relationships and experiences, along with their expertise.

Tribal STAR is a program of the San Diego State University School of Social Work, Academy for Professional Excellence. It has been a key California partner since 2003 with a mission to “improve collaborative efforts that ensure Tribal foster youth are connected to culture, community and resources throughout their transition to adulthood by providing training and technical assistance to communities and organizations that serve Tribal foster youth with the goal of increasing positive outcomes during their transition to adulthood.” It has deep experience developing curricula and providing training to tribal and non-tribal professionals, leaders, public agency staff, and training staff across the state. It has also worked to develop and support collaborations between California tribes and public agencies in California.

The expertise brought by the Casey Family Programs faculty was in the form of a strategic advisor in the organization’s Indian Child Welfare Programs who has extensive experience working with Indian child welfare across the country. As one of the founders of the Denver Indian Family Resource Center, she came to the CDP with the experience of an Indian child welfare foster parent, national advocate, and policy expert.

These two project faculty members were joined by four new faculty members as a key part of the enhancement effort. These four new members broadened the breadth of expertise for the project. They included a Project Coordinator at Tribal STAR who has directed both American Indian and non-Indian foster care and adoption agencies; a retired superior court judge in California; a court analyst for the Indian Child Welfare Act Initiative of the Administrative Office of the Courts’ Center for Families, Children, and the Courts; and the Associate Director of the federally funded Child Welfare National Resource Center for Tribes.

Goals of the American Indian Enhancement Team

The initial goal of the proposal to the Stuart Foundation was to engage additional counties to develop their own teams to focus on this population, adding to the total number of teams in the CDP. But the timing of the proposal made this too much of a challenge. Despite outreach to additional counties, they were not interested in

joining with such short lead time for preparation as the third Learning Session was less than three months away.

Instead, the partners decided that the four additional faculty would pair up with the two existing faculty to get fully immersed in the background, process, and goals of the CDP. The six faculty members would then work closely together with the project staff and Leadership Team to add four additional “Enhancement Counties,” counties that already had teams in the CDP, but had been focused on African American families and children. They would also create an entirely new layer of support and focus on American Indian issues across the entire CDP.

Not only did they assume a more significant role in crafting and delivering Learning Session agendas, but they ensured that every Learning Session was infused with respect and understanding for American Indian cultures, ranging from the session openings to the way conversations were held. Additionally, they reviewed all sessions with an eye for responsiveness to and openness for American Indian cultures.

As the American Indian Enhancement Team (AIET) continued to assist the two existing counties in strengthening their relationships with tribal stakeholders, they simultaneously supported these four additional counties to begin increasing effective collaboration with their local American Indian communities and tribes. The overall goal for this team during the CDP was to build purposeful collaborations that would improve outcomes for American Indian children in participating counties through strengthening engagement skills, increasing awareness of tribal culture, history, and resources, and understanding and honoring the Indian Child Welfare Act.

American Indian Enhancement Team Program Model

The AIET implemented a simple assessment to determine the top priorities of interested counties. The assessment was based on a scale that rated counties from less ready to most ready as they moved from a) awareness of resources; to b) awareness of history, culture, and values; to c) established relationships with American Indian providers; to d) SIP/ICWA compliance; to e) self-determined technical assistance for collaboration and coalition development.

This assessment was done in the following areas:

- 1) Awareness of culturally-relevant resources to support addressing disproportionality (clinics, ICWA services, American Indian & Tribal services, Tribal TANF, etc.);

- 2) Awareness of American Indian culture, history, and values that can increase culturally responsive social welfare practice;
- 3) Desire to establish relationships with American Indian agencies, community members, community leaders, and providers that serve youth in the system;
- 4) Support for developing realistic and achievable goals and/or objectives in their county System Improvement Plan, which includes collaborating with American Indian / Tribal stakeholders, and ICWA compliance;
- 5) Technical Assistance and support for future or existing coalitions that are working to address gaps and challenges faced by county child welfare systems and local American Indian ICWA service providers and community service agencies; and
- 6) “Other” self-identified efforts that must be clearly related to supporting collaboration with Tribes and A.I. programs.

Each of these areas builds upon each other, and was used to determine readiness for achieving realistic goals and objectives.

The overall objective for the AIET was to support and enhance county readiness for addressing disproportionality. The ultimate stage of readiness was determined by establishing trust-based relationships between county principals, American Indian community, and ICWA service agencies.

Conclusion

In order to address African American and American Indian disproportionality and disparities in child welfare, many methodologies may be used. Just as there is no one-size-fits-all practice or policy that can address these issues, there is also no one-size-fits-all methodology. Instead, a variety of processes and strategies must be integrated and used to support jurisdictions in doing this work.

4

Methodologies Used in the California Disproportionality Project

B

INTEGRATING THE METHODOLOGIES: LESSONS LEARNED

This section describes how the three key methodologies used in this project were coordinated and integrated to facilitate the awareness, change, and improvement process. It provides key lessons learned over the course of the Collaborative along with recommendations for the future.

Overview

Three key methodologies, the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, Family to Family, and the American Indian Enhancement Team, were brought together to support the 15 teams participating in the CDP in practice, process, and system improvements related to addressing disproportionality and disparities for African American and American Indian families involved with child welfare. These methodologies have different formats, different foci, and different goals. Although they had never been intentionally used together before, they were able to provide a broad array of supports, resources, and tools to the counties that participated in the California Disproportionality Project (CDP).

Goals for Methodology Integration

The Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology was the first major methodology identified to facilitate the work of the CDP. A national BSC focused on disproportionality and disparities had recently concluded and provided significant lessons learned about this work. The California Disproportionality Workgroup, committed to launching a statewide project that would help counties move from the planning and discussion phases of the work into action, agreed this methodology could help achieve that goal.

While the BSC methodology is quite comprehensive in nature, the Disproportionality Workgroup was confident that the BSC process alone could neither accomplish nor address all of the nuances of addressing disproportionality and disparities. The BSC methodology is focused primarily on implementation. But disproportionality work requires process and system changes beyond mere practice changes. The work to address disproportionality and disparities is not sequential in nature; it requires a careful balance of simultaneous work – constantly attending to both practice-related action and process-related conversations and trainings. Thus, the Workgroup was equally committed to ensuring that the practice-

related actions did not come at the expense of continuing the critical work counties has been engaged in related to relationship development, awareness-building, and continuous and ever-deepening training with staff and partners.

A methodology focused on these components of the work was already strongly embedded in many California counties: Annie E. Casey and Stuart Foundations' California Family to Family (F2F) Initiative. F2F technical assistance providers had existing relationships within many of the counties that would likely be interested in participating in the CDP, thus integrating key aspects of the F2F methodology with the BSC model seemed a natural fit. While the BSC could help counties move from awareness-building, team-building, trainings, and courageous conversations to practice change, F2F would ensure that teams continued to deepen, become more skilled at, and learn how to make the awareness- building, team-building, trainings, and courageous conversations part of their daily fabric.

Initially, these two methodologies were thought to offer the necessary resources, tools, and supports to the participating counties. F2F would offer onsite technical assistance and support, particularly around long-term strategic planning, internal assessments, building and facilitating teams related to this work. The F2F technical assistance providers who would serve as CDP faculty would help counties focus on engaging families, youth, and the community, and developing skills around awareness building, training, and having courageous and crucial conversations. The BSC process would help place this work in the context of necessary practice and system change, focusing on rapid tests at the practice level to begin shifting the practice and beliefs of staff, families, youth, and partners. The missing piece from these two methodologies, which was not identified and addressed until after the second Learning Session, was an intentional focus on how this work looked necessarily different in American Indian communities.

In response to the two counties that were selected to focus on American Indian disproportionality and disparities and to other interested counties, the CDP Leadership Team committed to creating an American Indian Enhancement Team. This team, although not designed to be so, emerged as the third key methodology that the CDP relied upon and integrated into the project. This team fulfilled some of the technical assistance roles, similar to the F2F team. It also fulfilled some of the practice-level change roles, similar to the BSC methodology. But what set it apart as a distinct methodology is the way that it not only attended to the unique issues related to American Indians in this work, but also raised the visibility of these issues for all participants to make these issues cross all participating counties, far beyond those two that had initially been selected to address this population.

Key Benefits of Each Individual Methodology

Each of the three methodologies has key elements that are distinct. Several of these distinct elements had significant positive impacts for teams in the CDP.

Breakthrough Series Collaborative Methodology

Two of the core five BSC elements proved to be particularly valuable in the CDP: the Model for Improvement, including the use of PDSAs, and the shared learning environment. Taken together they helped accelerate practice changes that were tested across the state.

- **Model for Improvement:** This core element of the BSC methodology helps teams move from goals to strategies to small tests of change (PDSAs) that ultimately result

“The use of PDSAs has been effective and is a change from our usual way of doing business. I believe we will continue to do PDSAs and incorporate those that are successful into practice or policy.”

– San Mateo County

in improvements. By having a tool to break down large strategies, teams often felt less overwhelmed by the weight and magnitude of the issues and able to move into action. They described this as ‘helping make the work feel manageable.’ They also felt that the rapid feedback they received using

PDSAs felt rewarding as they could actually see progress and improvements right away. Many teams indicated that they plan to continue to use PDSAs in this work to keep translating ideas into action.

- **Shared Learning Environment:** The second core element from the BSC methodology that was essential was the shared learning environment created by the collaborative approach. The in-person shared Learning Sessions were cited by teams repeatedly as providing opportunities for rejuvenation, validation, reflection, rededication to the work, and general cross-sharing across teams and counties. Participants had shared experiences, including the chance to hear from faculty, trainers, motivational speakers, and facilitators; active participation in experiential exercises; and facilitated discussions in large groups, small groups, and one-on-one. Not only did this environment create a sense of common experience, which allowed for challenging discussions, it also create a venue in which promising practices and strategies were developed, described, discussed, and adapted. Practices such as cultural brokers became widespread as each county played its own variation on the theme.

Family to Family

By focusing on ERDD with its anchor sites in California beginning in 2007, Family to Family TA providers had a strong foundation upon which to build. TA providers were

highly skilled at supporting the development of workgroups, raising awareness around race and culture related issues, using data to inform and assess progress, leading and facilitating challenging conversations, and infusing work with underlying values and beliefs. There were three elements of F2F that were particularly valued in the support and progress of teams in the CDP: 1) focus on community partnership; 2) onsite technical assistance; and 3) the development and use of race-specific tools and resources.

- **Focus on Community Partnership:** One of the four core strategies of F2F is Building Community Partnerships. All F2F sites focused time and resources on identifying and developing these partnerships prior to the launch of the CDP. F2F has developed many strategies and tools over the years that help bring the community into child welfare system reform work in real and concrete ways.

Being that engaging community members as partners is essential to addressing disproportionality and disparities, F2F counties entered the project with a strong foundation. And as the work of the CDP moved fluidly between testing practice changes and continuing to raise awareness and conduct trainings, teams were able to engage and rely on community partners to support various aspects of the work.

- **Onsite Technical Assistance:** Family to Family provides sites with a frame for child welfare improvement work through its four core strategies. This frame is brought to life largely through the onsite consultation provided to sites by assigned Technical Assistance providers (TAs). By matching sites with TAs, each of whom bring specific expertise in each of the four core strategies, site receive the benefits of expert consultation and facilitation along with the opportunity to develop long-term relationships with these skilled individuals.

These TA relationships tend to be highly valued by the sites themselves, and the TA providers often become well integrated into the fabric of the agencies as consultants, strategists, and supporters of the work. They help sites prioritize their work; integrate F2F with other initiatives and priorities; and develop strategies for implementation and integration.

Specific to sites' work in the CDP, TAs were able to teach and facilitate crucial conversations beyond the Core and Extended Teams. Because of their unique roles outside the formal agencies, they were also able to 'push' some of these dialogues beyond the established comfort zones, further deepening the work. As they helped this work maintain focus and momentum, they were often strategic in helping teams plans and conduct trainings, ultimately expanding the work to staff and community members more broadly.

- **Tools and Resources:** F2F has developed many tools focused on its four core strategies. While ERDD work is newer to its portfolio, it brought expertise in translating the CDP’s *Framework for Change* into a practicable “self-assessment tool” before the project launched.

This self-assessment tool was modeled after other F2F tools, allowing agencies to rate themselves on a scale ranging from “pre-awareness” to “substantive change has been made” regarding a specific practice or process related to disproportionality and disparities work. This allowed teams to assess and discuss work they had done – or planned to do – as part of the project. Although it did not happen in a formal way in the CDP, the initial intention was for this tool to be integrated into existing F2F work with all F2F sites.

F2F brought many other tools related to disproportionality and disparities to their sites. Some of the highlights included the [Race Matters Toolkit](#), a toolkit developed by AECF providing awareness building and organizational assessment tools; [Race: The Power of Illusion](#), a three-part documentary focused on race in the context of science, history, society, and institutions in the United States; the [Walk of Privilege](#), an experiential exercise adapted from Peggy McIntosh’s work on white privilege; and through F2F’s use of self-evaluation teams as one of its core strategies, an interest in and sophistication with using data to raise awareness and identify areas of need and progress.

American Indian Enhancement Team

The American Indian Enhancement Team (AIET) developed as a methodology together with the CDP. It was not designed to be a specific stand-alone methodology, yet became one as the project progressed. There were four main elements that were most critical to the effectiveness of this model in the CDP, many similar to those provided through the BSC and F2F, but specific to American Indian work: 1) education and awareness-building; 2) focus on collaboration; 3) individual consultation; and 4) development of tools and resources.

- **Education and Awareness Building:** As the CDP began, two teams were focused on American Indian families and children. Although two teams was not a critical mass, their inclusion allowed for a different conversation to develop – one that acknowledged the differences between African American and American Indian disproportionality and disparities. Although there are some similarities in a general way, the histories and experiences, especially related to child welfare, are quite different.

The brief introduction to American Indian history provided at Learning Session 2 through an excerpt of [500 Nations](#) was expanded upon at subsequent Learning Sessions by the American Indian Enhancement Team. The Team reviewed all materials and sessions to ensure the American Indian experience was taught, acknowledged, and woven throughout. In fact, a breakout session at the final Learning Session focused on the Indian Child Welfare Act was overflowing with participants representing every team in the CDP. The education that was provided by the Team was cited by many participants in the final evaluation as one of the most critical learnings they experienced in the project.

- **Focus on Collaboration:** While the BSC methodology focuses on shared learning and F2F addresses community building, Native culture traditionally emphasizes collaboration as a core value. This is the culture and spirit that the American Indian Enhancement Team brought to the CDP – a fundamental value around collaboration, community, partnership, and sharing that focused on the collective rather than the individual. While the AIET was convened to help address the unique issues faced by American Indian families and children, the team ultimately helped identify and highlight similarities in the work, showing how much everyone can learn from one another regardless of differences.
- **Individual Consultation:** Similar to F2F, the AIET gave participating teams access to hands on support from a variety of experts in American Indian work. This consultation was not only available to the two teams initially focused on American Indian families and children and the three additional “enhancement counties.” Instead, it was provided to all 15 teams (including the state-level team) in thinking about the work each should be doing to actively identify American Indian children and families, work with them in culturally responsive ways, apply the laws of ICWA appropriately, and engage tribes as partners in all work.
- **Development of Tools and Resources:** As the AIET did this work with teams in the CDP, they developed several tools in response to teams’ identified needs and challenges. These tools included: [“Following the Spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act,”](#) explaining the background and intentions of the Indian Child Welfare Act, beyond the regulations and requirements; [“Tribal Projects Unit Fact Sheet,”](#) describing the purpose and support offered by this newly created unit of the Administrative Office of the Courts; and [Reasons Why People Do Not Claim to Be American Indian,](#) describing the historical relationship between American Indians and federal/state government institutions in this country and providing support to improve identification and ICWA compliance.

The AIET also developed [Faces Videos](#), two educational videos, one is one minute; the second is 12 minutes, to increase awareness about the Indian Child Welfare Act and strengthen social workers' ability to properly identify American Indian/Alaska Native children. The videos are part of a campaign to increase proper inquiry and notice, as well as supports, following the spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

Following the CDP, this tool and resource development was set to continue. The AIET has worked to develop a comprehensive toolkit and training curricula to support the toolkit implementation. They have a three year plan in place to continue working with CFPIC, CDSS, CalSWEC, Casey Family Programs, the Administrative Office of the Courts, and additional partners to ensure tools and resources are continually developed to support counties in doing this work with American Indian families and children. An online toolkit encompassing all of their products is due to go live in the Spring of 2011. Once the toolkit has been completed its implementation will be rolled out across the state with hands-on technical assistance from the AIET under the auspices of CalSWEC and with the guidance of the planning partners named above.

Key Benefits of the Integrated Methodologies

There were many goals expected by integrating the BSC and F2F methodologies. Most of these actually addressed the balances needed to address disproportionality and disparities in child welfare: 1) knowing versus doing; 2) feeling versus thinking; and 3) fast versus slow. Additionally, because F2F TA providers had relationships with several participating counties around this work already, continuing to draw upon these relationships throughout a project of this scope simply made sense, while also having forums to share these learnings through the collaborative approach. The CDP, by integrating two key methodologies in child welfare (BSC and F2F), allowed counties to focus on many aspects of the issue simultaneously.

Integrating the American Indian Enhancement Team into the CDP as a core methodology was less intentional from the outset, as it was not a part of the initial project design. Instead, as the methodology and the CDP developed together, the benefits of incorporating the AIET into the flow of the BSC and the technical assistance provided by F2F emerged.

Knowing and Doing

The rationale for using the BSC methodology together with F2F was primarily that F2F would help till the ground, help counties get ready, prepared, and engaged in this system work, build their awareness, and provide training around the issues, while the

BSC would give them tools, structure, and a process for testing practice changes based on this. Jurisdictions across the nation have suggested that awareness and training must be done extensively before practice changes can be tested. This hybrid construct did just that, with F2F working closely with counties prior to the launch of the CDP, and then joining with aspects of the BSC to continue to move the work forward.

The national BSC on disproportionality recognized the need to focus on practice changes while also attending constantly to awareness building, staff and community training, and the facilitation of crucial conversations. Both are necessary in this work, but neither is sufficient alone. And as the AIET was brought in as a third methodology, it further enriched the awareness, training, and overall education that was done while still being supported by small tests of change, a shared learning environment, and faculty support. Bringing together these three complimentary methodologies that had unique strengths in each of these areas balanced the tension between “learning and knowing about the issues” and “doing the work of practice change.”

“...concept of PDSA was the #1 thing for us in helping move this work forward. Prior to the project, most of our attention was given to awareness (two years). So when we were introduced to PDSAs, we had already raised awareness among staff and partners.”

– Orange County

Feeling and Thinking

All three methodologies also provided a balance of ‘heart work’ and ‘head work.’ In various ways they each facilitated crucial conversations, introspection, and renewed passion for the work. They also each emphasized data, history, facts, leadership, and concrete practices. Again, although the methodologies were complimentary, the contrasts they presented were equally important.

The BSC methodology focused on processes related to action – the use of PDSA worksheets, action plans, process planning documents, self-assessment tools, and other fairly structured assignments that helped teams focus on concrete easily observable ‘head work.’ F2F focused on more interactive and experiential ‘heart’ processes, especially in its onsite work with counties, including the facilitation of crucial conversations, exercises such as the Walk of Privilege, and trainings such as Undoing Racism and Racial Sobriety.

The American Indian Enhancement Team straddled the feeling and thinking work. The work that was often presented as ‘thinking’ work, such as presentations on historical facts, data, and objective history lessons often evoked such reactions from participants that it quickly became heart work as well. Much of this was likely because of the lack of information many participants had about the American Indian experience coming into

the CDP. The AIET was able to move effortlessly between the feeling and the thinking as they helped facilitate teams from these emotions directly to concrete practices, such as training on the Indian Child Welfare Act with all staff.

Fast and Slow

A hallmark of the BSC methodology is the rapid pace of change. In fact, the “breakthrough” part of the name refers to the speed at which improvements can happen. This was part of the reason this specific methodology was recommended to address disproportionality and disparities. The California Disproportionality Workgroup was ready for concrete practice changes to occur and people across the state wanted to see results.

F2F, while not slow, has a great deal of respect for the time it takes to build relationships, trust, partnerships, and move toward authentic engagement. Each of the core strategies is built upon these principles, thus the F2F work tends to be more systematic and intentional, in contrast to the ‘what can you do by next Tuesday?’ mentality that is the cornerstone of the BSC.

From a cultural perspective, many had concerns that the BSC methodology might pose the greatest challenge for the teams focused on American Indian families and children. Tribal teams had participated in national BSCs in the past and had reported that the emphasis on speed was not always consistent with their culture of consensus, thoughtfulness, and intentionality. The teams in the CDP, although focused on American Indian children, were different from the tribal teams involved in previous BSCs because they were actually county agency based teams rather than tribal agency teams. This, combined with the AIET’s ability to further support these teams helped teams continue to honor their cultural norms and values while also moving forward on practice changes, sometimes at a faster pace than would otherwise be possible.

Individual Consultation and Opportunities for Shared Learning

The final tension that was balanced in this project using the combination of all three methodologies was the model of individual consultation as compared to a model of shared learning. F2F relies heavily on individual consultation through long-term relationships with Technical Assistance providers who do much of their work in person onsite. The BSC is quite the opposite. It typically avoids the development of consultative relationships between faculty members and teams, and instead tries to build a learning community that relies on one other (the participating teams) as experts.

As the CDP evolved, it demonstrated that the construct had, in fact, allowed for a balance. The work that was done onsite with F2F Technical Assistance providers was

brought forward to the entire group of participants, allowing for substantive sharing that moved all participants forward. And the work that emerged from large group sharing sessions could be worked further with the support of the individual consultants back home.

The American Indian Enhancement Team concluded with even broader impact in this area. As American Indian history and issues were highlighted and woven into Learning Sessions, all participants became much more aware of issues they previously were unaware of and many requested individual consultation from members of the team. Likewise, the individual consultations provided by the AIET often resulted in group learnings that were developed into fact sheets and other tools to be used project wide. Possibly even more than expected, the CDP was able to provide a positive balance between the consultation that was done one-on-one between faculty members and teams and the learning that was done between all teams participating in the project.

Challenges Presented By and Lessons Learned from the Integration of Methodologies

Together these three methodologies supported the participating teams in building their awareness, learning how to have crucial and challenging conversations, setting priorities, developing action plans, and testing changes. But because there were so many different processes and partners working together on this project, the combination of the three methodologies also posed some challenges and limitations. These included challenges posed by the overall project design; by the way the project was structured and administered; and by unintended consequences that resulted in general confusion for the teams themselves.

Overall Project Design

There were several challenges created in the very design of the project. Some emerged as the project developed and others were only identified in retrospect. But all merit consideration when thinking about a project such as this in the future.

- **Selecting and Engaging American Indian Teams:** For a variety of reasons, only two teams focused on American Indian disproportionality and disparities were initially selected to participate. Once they had been selected, they were not treated differently from other teams to acknowledge the different issues they faced. Moreover, there was little outreach to better understand their cultures, work styles, strengths, needs, or challenges. Instead, the project included them with the other 12 teams without much intentionality.

As a result, these teams entered the first Learning Session feeling like something of a project afterthought. The cultures, styles, and approaches presented were intentionally focused on African American issues, without realizing that some members on the teams focused on American Indian issues perceived this as intentionally excluding them from the work.

Further, the two teams selected to participate in the CDP were not tribal teams, they were county teams focused on American Indian issues. This is a significant distinction as past BSCs have included tribal teams in which all members were Native (or part of the tribal social service system). This is a serious consideration as the difference between improving county-tribal relationships and improving tribal systems is a dramatic one.

- **Combination of African American and American Indian Work in a Single Project:** There were discussions that took place at the Expert Meeting in May 2007 about whether the CDP should focus on African American, American Indian, or Latino disproportionality and disparities. There were additional discussions as to whether teams should have to specify which group they would be focused on in this work. Based primarily on data that was available at the time, the Disproportionality Workgroup agreed that this project would be necessarily limited to a focus on either African American or American Indian children and families. Moreover, each single team would need to be dedicated to one or the other – not both.

This appears to have been an appropriate decision, but some participants raised the question throughout the CDP of whether these two groups should have been combined into a single project. While there was a great deal of cross-cultural awareness and learning that took place, there were also some insurmountable cross-cultural gaps that could not be filled.

Broadly and generally speaking (and acknowledging that there truly is no one single ‘African American culture’ or ‘American Indian culture’) the differences between the two groups stylistically was dramatic. The majority of the American Indian participants were noticeably quiet during the large group discussions at the Learning Sessions, of which there were many, simply based on cultural norms and comfort. This not only kept these participants out of the conversations, but it muted their voices and presence for the large group. If the two groups had more time apart, able to work more closely with teams that were focused on similar cultures (tribal or non-tribal), it is possible they would have been able to engage in a deeper and more meaningful level.

Overall Structural and Administrative Project Challenges

Once the project began, there were other challenges that arose, many of which were virtually invisible to project participants. They are noteworthy because they are directly connected to the decision to use multiple methodologies in a single project as occurred in the CDP.

- **Project Funding and Staffing:** Much like the vision and design of the entire project, the CDP was developed as a true partnership across several agencies and organizations. While partnership is an outstanding model for the work and has great potential for support and sustainability, it also requires constant attention, negotiation, and management. When leadership in a partnership is unclear, decisions, particularly hard decisions, can become extraordinarily difficult to make.

The partners contributed a mix of funding, staff, and other in-kind support. As a result, the funding turned out to be less than what is typically used to fund a similar project (e.g., statewide BSC). This required more flexibility than initially planned, including efforts to manage staff, the faculty members, and work with the participating teams. There was a great deal of frustration behind the scenes as these issues were identified and addressed, but was fairly invisible from the participants' perspectives.

In the future, partnerships should have more clarity about leadership, decision-making, and authority. There should also be adequate funding and staffing, regardless of in-kind contributions. And the partnerships between agencies and organizations should continue to be fostered, supported, and facilitated to ensure that work such as this continues, as it is essential to moving it forward.

- **Partnership for Project Oversight:** Similar to the challenges presented by funding, the overall leadership of the project also was perceived as unclear. Staff and faculty felt there was a lack of clarity in roles and communication – who should be talking with whom about what. Identifying someone early on, ideally someone in a facilitative rather than a partner role, would be ideal.
- **Role Confusion for Faculty:** The role confusion at the project leadership and management levels was mirrored at the faculty level. More than half of the faculty members were drawn from Family to Family TA providers, both California based and national. These faculty positions were in-kind contributions from F2F. The remaining faculty members were a mix of CFP staff and external consultants and national experts.

The F2F TA providers who were based in California seemed to have the most role clarity. They simply continued doing the jobs they had been doing with counties before the project began. The F2F TA providers not based in California provided great insights and experiences of working on these issues with their own respective sites and were able to provide TA-style consultation to teams when onsite at the Learning Sessions. But the F2F TA providers overall were less involved with the project between the in-person meetings. They seemed to see their roles primarily as onsite TA providers, rather than as advisors to and planners of the overall project.

The non-F2F faculty provided expertise of their own relative to disproportionality and disparities both onsite and between the Learning Sessions. They were the most 'typical' faculty (as compared to other BSCs), but often didn't have the personal relationships with counties that the TA providers already had established. This additional layer of consultation, while intended to provide additional support to teams, often resulted in a 'who's on first?' confusion for teams.

The exception to this was the American Indian Enhancement Team, who, although they joined the project following the first Learning Session, had a very clear and detailed role in the project. They were highly engaged with teams, both in person as well as between the Learning Sessions. They were also highly engaged with the overall project scope and direction, participating on most conference calls, reviewing documents, agendas, and materials, and providing valuable input to ensure American Indian perspectives and work were appropriately reflected.

The faculty team had incredible expertise. But they were never brought together as a single team. Instead they functioned much like separate consultants or TA providers, with little connection to the project itself. F2F TA providers identified with that role more than as project faculty. And as AECF began its own reorganization in the midst of the CDP, several of the F2F TA providers became less connected with this project as their roles and responsibilities within their organization were shifted.

Overall, faculty's primary purpose should be to support the work of teams in a seamless way that also promotes the goals and processes of the overall project. Because so many of the faculty members for the CDP had distinct goals and processes that were slightly different from the project itself, a gap was created that was never filled.

Challenges for Teams

Many of the challenges described above were challenges faced at the highest levels of project design, administration, and management. Although most of these were somewhat invisible to participating teams, some also emerged at the team level.

- **Project Confusion:** Most teams involved in the CDP were also F2F sites (either anchor sites or non-anchor sites). The goal of the integrated methodology was to use this project as a support – not as an add-on – to the F2F work focused on disproportionality and disparities. But for several teams, this message was missed.

As a result, many teams did not understand that their “Family to Family work” was the same as their “CDP work.” They sometimes expressed frustration that they remained separate bodies of work with different expectations, different types of accountability, and different facilitators. To add to their confusion, at times this was in fact true, based on some similar confusion at the faculty level. Although the integration of the methodologies had happened quite smoothly on a conceptual level, the merging of the F2F TA model did not always fit with the BSC faculty model at the ground level for the teams, sites, participants, TA providers, and project staff.

- **Access to Onsite Consultation:** As F2F moved from its broad reach to the anchor sites, the way technical assistance was provided also changed. Most teams in the CDP were F2F sites, but they had access to varying levels of onsite TA. Some reported that their F2F TA providers came onsite and helped facilitate major agency trainings, challenging and crucial conversations, and the development of thoughtful action plans for the work. Other counties reported that they saw their TA providers only once between each in-person Learning Session. And others did not have access to onsite TA at all, either because they were not a F2F site or because their TA arrangement with F2F was simply structured differently. With the onsite consultation and TA offering tremendous benefits to those who received it, creating opportunities for all participating counties to receive it would have served the project well. The benefits would have been magnified further if there were structured opportunities for communicating what was being done and learned by counties through the TA providers, rather than waiting for the counties to share this themselves at the Learning Sessions.
- **Team Size Limitations:** The diverse, cross-hierarchical team is a key element of the BSC methodology. Similarly, it is a key aspect of F2F work. And with collaboration at the heart of the American Indian Enhancement Team’s work, large teams are a necessity. While the eight person team allowed in the CDP seemed large from the outset, it turned out to be far too small to accomplish the scope of work developed. Most counties had much larger teams ‘back home’ and felt the inability to include

their full teams at the Learning Sessions really hindered the work, from team building, experiential, and skill-based perspectives. The size limitation was necessary for financial and administrative reasons, but it still impacted the ability of the county teams to do the quality and depth of work they wanted to do.

- **Limitations of Virtual Sharing / Maintaining Shared Learning Environment:**

The shared learning environment was both a great success as well as a great challenge. When participants were together at Learning Sessions, the collaboration and sharing were consistently noted as highlights of the project. But although conference calls were held and an internet site was established to support a virtual shared learning environment, neither was seen as particularly helpful.

Participants wanted to talk with one another between the in-person sessions, but wanted smaller groups and more focused, targeted, structured conversations. They wanted to delve more deeply into specific topics rather than talk broadly about the work they were doing. They found the phone made it difficult to have real or meaningful discussions.

Similarly, the internet site was not used much except when required for specific assignments. Teams said they felt they might have used it more if they received feedback or follow-up or if the material somehow were used on the calls, but they had difficulty seeing the purpose when it was not used as the dynamic sharing tool it was created to be.

A final missed opportunity in the shared learning environment was in how it was used over the totality of the project. Rather than being used to collectively identify and accelerate specific practices or processes across several counties simultaneously, each county focused on its own priorities. The Leadership Team expressed a hope that teams would be able to share with one another in substantive ways so that they would each be able to add more to their ‘tool belts.’ Ideally they hoped that a group of practices would have emerged from the CDP that had been tried in multiple counties with clear impacts that could be documented, manualized, and spread more broadly. This did not happen, despite the environment created. The learning opportunities were too diffuse and the work requirements too unstructured for this to occur.

- **Use of Data:** Data is a critical part of BSCs as well as of the F2F model. BSCs often talk about ‘change for the sake of improvement’ and ask questions such as “how will we know a change is an improvement?” F2F has self-evaluation, the collection, review, and use of data to inform improvements, as one of its four core strategies.

Despite the consistent foci of both methodologies, data did not receive much attention during the CDP. Financial support for technical assistance in this area was withdrawn midway through the project, due to funder reorganization. The Leadership partners as well as the teams themselves found this frustrating. They all want data, but all expressed it was a challenge to get and have it be meaningful and accessible.

Going forward every team requested additional support around data, including data collection, development of reports, access to data, and analyses of data. The [Performance Indicators Project at the Center for Social Services Research, University of California – Berkeley](#) provides a solid starting point and all teams look to this system as the model to emulate, but they are all craving more technical support and data that are closer to real time and can be easily customized to meet their unique needs.

- **Focusing on Sustainability at County-Level:** The overall project design did not focus explicitly on sustainability. While the BSC has a component that is introduced at the third Learning Session on spreading and replicating improvements, sustainability is not introduced in a formal way until the final Learning Session. F2F is more of a developmental process in which sustainability is woven throughout, but because of the timing of the F2F reorganization in California it could not be formally integrated as a support to the CDP. The AIET, although new and forming through this project, was able to create a plan for sustainability, but this occurred as the project developed rather than being established at the onset of the project.

Other models in California have developed this piece fairly clearly. One such example is the [Community Development Team model used by the California Institute of Mental Health](#). This model has many aspects similar to the BSC methodology, both striving to address the gaps between what is known to be good practice and what is done in the field. Exploring the potential of this model as a final element of the CDP could have served the counties well as they looked forward to continue this work beyond the fairly brief 22 month duration. As a result of its members' work in a number of areas, including the CDP, the Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership has been working with CalSWEC and CFPIC to discuss principles of implementation science in order to promote a theory of change that explicitly supports spread and sustainability.

- **Focusing on Sustainability at State-Level:** The participation of the state-level team was intentional from early discussions about the CDP. This state-level team, although unable to test practice changes of its own, was able to focus a great deal of attention on awareness building, training, and reviewing data, much of which was

completely new to many participants. But as the project came to an end, the focus of this group's work became unclear. They wanted to continue on their own, but remained somewhat disconnected from the work that had been done by the teams.

In retrospect, Leadership Team members wished there had been more forethought given to how practices would be documented, collected, assessed, and shared across the state. With the Child and Family Policy Institute of California on the Leadership Team, the ability to disseminate promising approaches would have been clear. If there had been more clarity about what constituted a 'success' in this project, the Leadership team could have thought more systematically about how these successes were spread and replicated. This lesson learned from this project is informing future work in California adding a more focused eye on spread and sustainability.

Conclusion

Each of the three key methodologies brought significant opportunities and benefits to the CDP. Each is rooted in its own values, principles, and theories of awareness, teaching, facilitation, and change, yet they were used in complimentary ways to help counties address disproportionality and disparities. By drawing upon specific elements of each, county teams were able to balance the tensions inherent in this work, while continuing to move forward in making practice, policy, and personal changes to impact African American and American Indian disproportionality and disparities.

In addition to the good work that occurred in the California counties to address issues of disproportionality and disparity, the statewide system has benefited from lessons that will inform its ongoing work to create systemic change in the state to the benefit of all families, with significant focus on the needs of African American and American Indian families. In great part, the lessons learned from this project, including lessons related to practice, methodology, and population focus, formed the basis for the successful \$14.5 million federal grant that was received by California to address barriers that keep African American and American Indian children in long term placement for too many months and years.

APPENDICES

- 1- Project Glossary
- 2- List of Participating Teams
- 3- Orange County One-Page Racial Disproportionality and Disparity Brief
- 4- Following the Spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
- 5- Administrative Office of the Courts Tribal Projects Unit Fact Sheet
- 6- Social Work Practice Tips for Inquiry and Noticing: *Reasons Why People Do Not Claim to Be American Indian*
- 7- San Mateo County Disproportionality Dashboard
- 8- Courts Catalyzing Change: *Preliminary Protective Hearing Benchcard*
- 9- California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Project Framework and Key Elements
- 10- California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Project Application
- 11- California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Self-Assessment Tool
- 12- California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Project Faculty, Leadership, and Staff
- 13- California Family to Family Counties by Cluster and Year Started

California Disproportionality Project

Glossary

Following are definitions of key terms used in the California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative (CDP).

AB636: This bill, Assembly Bill 636 – the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act, was passed by the California State Legislature in 2001. It was intended to replace the state’s process-driven county compliance review system with a new system that focused on results. It provides the legal framework for the California Child and Family Services Reviews, which was implemented in 2004. It has four primary components: quantitative data: quarterly reports; qualitative data: peer quality case reviews; a self-assessment; and a system improvement plan (SIP).

American Indian Enhancement Team (AIET): The American Indian Enhancement Team (AIET) included California-based and national experts working with tribal communities, understanding Indian rights related to child welfare, and facilitating partnerships between public agencies and tribes. This was the third ‘methodology’ used in the CDP. The Team provided additional support to the two teams focused on American Indian issues; worked with three additional counties in the CDP to add a focus on American Indian issues; and raised awareness about American Indian history and tribal issues to all participants, faculty, and staff in the CDP. In addition to its consultative and facilitative work with counties, the AIET developed – and continues to develop – documents, videos, and tools to be used by counties in this work.

Breakthrough Series Collaborative: The joining together of teams who are all working on improving their work in a particular area. It involves testing many small changes at the practice-level to see if they produce better results for larger change. Teams study their results so that they can continue with changes that work, and stop doing those that seem ineffective.

California Disproportionality Workgroup: This group, including partners representing the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the County Child Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC), select county child welfare directors, the Child and Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC), Casey Family Programs (CFP), and the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF), emerged from CalSWEC’s annual Leadership Symposium in 2005. The group had a goal of moving work related to addressing disproportionality and disparities in child welfare forward more intentionally and aggressively. Together they developed the initial plan for the California Disproportionality Project Breakthrough Series Collaborative.

CalSWEC: The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) was created in 1990 as a consortium of the state’s 20 accredited social work graduate schools, the 58 county departments of social service and mental health, the California Departments of Social Services (CDSS) and Mental Health (CDMH), the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, professional associations, and foundations. It launched its first annual Fairness and Equity Training and Education Symposium in 2003 to raise awareness about the issues of race, culture, disproportionality, and disparities. It

continues to lead annual symposia focused on these topics, as well as to develop, provide, and support trainings, tools, resources, and practice strategies.

Co-Chairs: Two individuals who served as lead advisors to the project staff and faculty in teaching, coaching, and mentoring teams throughout the CDP.

Core Team: The select group of eight individuals who represented the key disciplines involved in this work. They included a Senior Leader (high-level child welfare agency manager), a team Day-to-Day Manager, a direct line social worker, a social work supervisor, a birth parent, a youth, a community partner, and a seventh member of the team's choosing. They were responsible for driving, participating in, and championing the tests of change and the work more broadly.

Crucial and Courageous Conversations: These discussions are often best described as "the conversations you don't want to have." In the CDP, these terms referred interchangeably to the discussions that are necessary between individuals to address their values, beliefs, and experiences related to race and culture. The conversations are typically challenging and uncomfortable, but are critical to moving from superficial and abstract concepts to deep and concrete changes.

Day-to-Day Manager: This child welfare agency manager reported directly to the Senior Leader and was the leader of the Core Team. He/she had primary responsibility for this project within the selected county.

Disproportionality: The level to which groups of children are present in the child welfare system at higher or lower percents/rates than their presence in the general population. For example, disproportionality for African American children in the child welfare system is calculated by dividing the proportion of African American children in the child welfare system (the number of African American children in the child welfare system divided by the total number of children in the child welfare system) by the proportion of African American children in the population (the number of African American children in the population divided by the total number of children in the population).

Disparity: A lack of equity between groups. The disparity index is a means of comparing the levels disproportionality among various ethnic groups. It is also possible to use this as a means of examining levels of disproportionality for an ethnic group across different events in the child welfare system. To calculate the disparity index for African American children compared to White children, the Disproportionality Index for African American children is divided by the Disproportionality Index for White children. This is essentially the same as comparing the rates per 1,000 children in the population between groups.

ERDD: This term is the acronym used by Annie E. Casey's Family to Family initiative to refer to *Eliminating Racial Disparities and Disproportionality*. It became a focus for their Anchor Sites, those sites identified as priorities for enhanced technical assistance in 2007, in addition to the four core strategies of Family to Family.

Extended Team: The large group of individuals who represent the multiple disciplines involved in this work. Both advisors and participants in this process, the Extended Team

was expected to expand the work of the Core Team; support the implementation and spreading of successful changes across the entire jurisdiction and the community; and assist in communicating the lessons learned to the broader community which the children and families come from.

Extranet: A limited-access website developed specifically to support this work. It contained a document library, which allowed teams to share resources, tools, and research; forms that allowed teams to document and share information, assignments, and their small tests of change; and an announcements section, which allowed the Project Staff to communicate easily and regularly with the teams.

Faculty: The group of 20 noted experts (in addition to the two co-chairs) who represented the multiple aspects of this work, including public child welfare agency managers, consumers (including a birth parent and alumna of the system), researchers, trainers, and tribal representatives. They provided critical input into the Framework for Change, project design, selection of teams, and Learning Session and conference call agendas. They also taught and facilitated at each of the Learning Sessions and provided phone and onsite expertise, coaching, and mentoring to teams throughout the CDP.

Family to Family: A national child welfare and foster care reform initiative sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that provides values, principles, strategies and tools designed to help states and local child welfare agencies achieve better outcomes for children and families.

Family to Family Technical Assistance Providers: Trained consultants and facilitators who work closely with Family to Family sites to implement the four core Family to Family strategies: building community partnerships; team decision making; resource family recruitment, development, and support; and self-evaluation.

Framework for Change: A document developed to guide the work of the CDP. It consists of ten key elements, all of which are believed to be critical aspects in eliminating disproportionality and disparities. Teams used the Framework to help prioritize their work and ensure that they were impacting the entire system.

ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act): A federal law passed in 1978 in response to an alarming number of American Indian children being removed from their homes and tribes. It seeks to keep American Indian children with American Indian families to "protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families."

Learning Session: A two-day meeting of all participating Core Teams and the Faculty to collaborate and learn more about key changes they could test. At each of the four Learning Sessions, teams had the opportunity to learn from faculty and presenters; share what they had tried; learn from other teams; brainstorm with other teams and the faculty about continuing challenges; get re-inspired and re-energized; and plan for their next phase of work.

Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) Cycle: This cycle is a core tool used in Breakthrough Series Collaboratives. It provides a structured method for planning small changes, making the

changes, studying the impacts of those changes, and acting again based on what was learned. By using this methodology to conduct very small tests of change, teams were able to learn rapidly and make practice changes in their systems in fairly short periods of time.

SIP: County System Improvement Plan that is based on the self-assessment. Counties are required to submit this plan to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for review and approval. This document is a strategic plan to achieve measurable outcome improvements within a certain time period and is updated annually by counties.

Senior Leader: The person on each Core Team who has the authority and responsibility for removing barriers and catalyzing change throughout the entire county. This individual was typically the head of the agency who supported the team and had primary responsibility for championing the work, spreading successful changes, and ensuring the work would be sustained after the project had concluded.

Structural Racism: A phrase often used to describe the complex combination of factors that work to produce and maintain racial inequities in America and in all aspects of human services delivery. As such, it identifies those aspects of culture and history that have allowed the “privileges” of being white and the “disadvantages” facing families of color to endure and adapt over time. In addition, it points out ways in which public policies, institutional practices, and cultural stereotypes produce and maintain these unfair outcomes.

White Privilege: An invisible “package” of unearned assets that a white person in the United States is privy to, often without even knowing it.

California Disproportionality Project

List of Participating Teams

- Alameda County Social Services Agency Department of Children and Family Services¹
- Fresno County Department of Children & Family Services¹
- Kern County Department of Human Services²
- Los Angeles County Department of Children & Family Services - Metro North Office¹
- Los Angeles County Department of Children & Family Services - Pomona Office¹
- Orange County Social Services Agency¹
- Placer County Health and Human Services Family and Children's Services²
- Riverside County Dept. of Social Services Children's Services Division¹
- Sacramento County Dept. of Health & Human Services Child Protective Services¹
- San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency Child Welfare Services (African American Focus)²
- San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency Child Welfare Services (Native American Focus)²
- San Francisco Human Services Agency¹
- San Joaquin County, California Human Services Agency Child Welfare Services
- San Mateo County Human Services Agency/Children & Family Services²
- California State Team (Statewide Integration Team)

¹ Family to Family Anchor Site

² Family to Family Network Site (non-anchor site)

Racial Disparity and Disproportionality Brief

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

Nationally, 61% of all children in the foster care system are children of color, although children of color represent only 39% in the general population. As a result of their significant overrepresentation, efforts to ensure equitable treatment and practices have focused on Black and Native American children.



Disparity is the disparate or inequitable treatment or services provided to children of color (non-White) compared to those provided to similarly situated (e.g., socioeconomic status) White children.



DISPROPORTIONALITY is the over- or under-representation of children of color in foster care and child welfare compared to their representation in the general population.





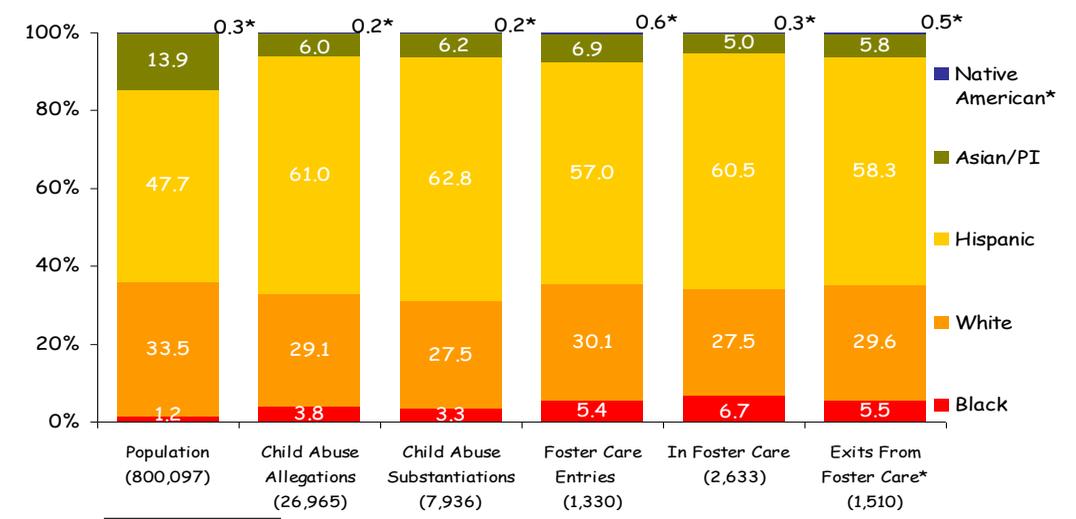
By Race/Ethnicity

Orange County	Number	Percent
African American/Black	9,327	1.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	111,332	13.9%
Caucasian/White	267,668	33.5%
Hispanic/Latino	381,274	47.7%
Native American	2,216	0.3%
Multiracial	28,280	3.5%
Total Child Population	800,097	kidsdata.org

2009

Research indicates that children of any race who face adverse circumstances such as poverty are at greater risk for maltreatment. However, even when such factors are accounted for, children of color are disproportionately overrepresented in child welfare and foster care.

For Orange County (OC), the table below illustrates the proportional representation of children's ethnicities at various decision points in 2009; from child maltreatment allegations received from reporters in the community, to child welfare, and foster care.



Note: Chart based upon January 2009 – December 2009 data except Children in Foster Care, which is point in time as of July 1, 2009

Definition of Terms

RACE: This term typically refers to a group of people of common ancestry, or national heritage that have common physical characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, eye color, body type, etc.

CULTURE: This term refers to a group who share common values, beliefs, assumptions and/or religion that guide each member's actions, experiences, and perception of events.

BIAS: Attitudes about things like race operate on two levels consciously and unconsciously. Our conscious attitudes are what we choose to believe or our stated values which we use to direct our behavior deliberately. Our unconscious attitudes can guide our decision-making without awareness. We don't deliberately choose our unconscious or implicit attitudes or biases and are often unaware that we possess them.

ETHNICITY: Identity with or membership in a particular racial, national, or cultural group and observance of that group's customs, beliefs, and language.

PREJUDICE: A set of beliefs or biases for or against an individual or a category of people without a logical basis.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM: Established laws, policies or practices that reflect or produce both unintentional and/or intentional racial inequalities in our society.

COLOR-BLINDNESS: The act of ignoring or choosing to consciously not recognize race that actually results in more rather than less bias.

Select Table and Data Observations:

- Black children make up 1.2% of the total OC child population, but account for 3.8% of child maltreatment allegations, and 6.7% of children in foster care (overrepresented). Currently, Black children are 5.7 times more likely to be in foster care than children of other ethnic backgrounds.
- Hispanic children make up 47.7% of the total OC child population, but account for 61% of child maltreatment allegations, and 60.5% of children in foster care (overrepresented). Currently, Hispanic children are 1.3 times more likely to be in foster care than children of other ethnic backgrounds.
- Asian children account for 13.9% of the total OC child population, but account for 6% of child maltreatment allegations, and 5% of the children in foster care (underrepresented). Currently, Asian children are significantly less likely to be in foster care than children of other ethnic backgrounds (0.4 times).
- White children account for 33.5% of the total OC child population, but account for 29.1% of child maltreatment allegations, and 27.5% of the children in foster care (underrepresented). Currently, White children are slightly less likely to be in foster care than children of other ethnic backgrounds (0.8 times).
- Less apparent in the table above, Native American children account for 0.3% of the total OC child population, 0.2% of child maltreatment referrals, and 0.3% of the children in foster care.



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Following The Spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

A guide to understanding the benefits of providing culturally appropriate services to Native American families from non–federally recognized tribes within the juvenile dependency and delinquency systems¹

In an effort to ensure proper inquiry and noticing and to reduce the number of ICWA-related appeals in child welfare cases, this handout is intended to help social workers and others respond when they encounter children and families that report American Indian or Alaska Native ancestry yet find they are not from a federally recognized tribe. What is good social work practice in these cases, and how can courts support culturally centered practice that results in positive outcomes?

How to Provide “Spirit of the Law” ICWA Services

- Find out which tribes and Native American resources are in your area.
- Visit and establish connections with local tribes and Native American resources regardless of federal recognition status.
- Request ICWA training from tribal resources, California Department of Social Services training academies, or the Administrative Office of the Courts.
- Conduct a proper inquiry of possible Native American ancestry in every case at the front end and throughout the duration of the case if family members provide additional lineage information.
- Connect a child and family with their tribe and local Native American resources regardless of tribal affiliation.
- Assist the child or family with the tribal enrollment process but understand it is up to the tribe to determine who is or is not eligible for enrollment.
- Conduct placements consistent with ICWA placement preferences even though not technically required. In the case of non–federally recognized tribes, tribal members would likely meet requirements as nonrelated extended family members because tribal communities tend to be related or close-knit communities.
- Consider the child’s tribal members as viable options for holiday visits, tutors, mentors, Court Appointed Special Advocates, etc.

¹ This document was developed with the Fresno County Department of Social Services, Child Welfare Services, and Placer County System of Care as part of the American Indian Enhancement of the Casey Family Programs/Child and Family Policy Institute of the California Breakthrough Series on addressing disproportionality 2009–2010 in collaboration with the American Indian Caucus of the California ICWA Workgroup, Child and Family Policy Institute of California, Stuart Foundation, and Tribal STAR.



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The Benefits of Providing “Spirit of the Law” ICWA Services

- If the child’s tribe is seeking federal recognition and is granted such recognition, formal ICWA case services, such as active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian family, will be required. If ICWA active efforts are attempted before the federal recognition, it is less disruptive for the child than having to change services and placement to make them in accordance with ICWA.
- Welfare and Institutions Code section 306.6 leaves the determination of services to individuals of non-recognized tribes to the discretion of the court that has jurisdiction.
- Even if individuals are not associated with a federally recognized tribe, they can still be part of an Indian community, which can serve as a strength and provide resources that enhance resilience factors for youth.
- Native American agencies that serve youth regardless of their tribe’s status can have youth groups that provide mental health and substance abuse services as well as fun trips, at no cost to the county.
- Many resources available to Native Americans do not require status in a federally recognized tribe (such as tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Native American health centers, and title VII Indian education programs).
- Some Native American health centers can access funding for residential treatment in and out of the state for children who are from non–federally recognized tribes.
- When culturally centered practice is provided as early as possible, it can result in positive outcomes for tribal youth.
- Linking a child to cultural resources that support his or her development into a healthy self-reliant adult can reduce the number of times the person may enter public systems.
- Culturally centered practice provided at the front end and throughout the lifespan of the case, regardless of the recognition status of the tribe, can reduce the public burden of cost over time.

Historical Background

- In 1848, gold was discovered in Coloma, California.
- In 1851 and 1852, representatives of the United States entered into 18 treaties with tribes throughout California that would have provided for more than 7.5 million acres of reserve land for the tribes’ use. These treaties were rejected by the U.S. Senate in secret session. The affected tribes were given no notice of the rejection for more than 50 years, and the promised reserve lands were never provided.
- In 1928, a census was conducted to determine the number of American Indians in California, resulting in the establishment of the 1933 California Indian Rolls (also referred to as the California Judgment Rolls). The purpose of the census and the rolls was



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to determine the number of Indians in California who had families alive in 1851–1852, when treaties were signed by the original Californians.

- From 1953 to 1964, called the “Termination Era,” the U.S. Congress terminated the federal recognition status of more than 40 California tribes. These tribes were deemed as not federally or state recognized, though previously descendants of these tribes were federally recognized.
- Many tribes that were terminated are currently seeking federal recognition by the U.S. government.
- Tribal communities throughout California are active and thriving, whether or not they have federal recognition.
- Descendants of family members listed on the California Judgment Rolls can use this documentation of Native American ancestry to provide information as to tribal affiliation. *Note:* Finding an ancestor on the roll does not mean an individual is an enrolled member in that particular tribe. Only one tribe can be listed on this document, and it is possible to descend from more than one tribe.
- Senate Bill 678, passed in 2006 by the California Legislature, allows participation of non–federally recognized tribes, on request and at the discretion of the judge in the dependency matter. This expands the option and availability of culturally appropriate services to children from non-recognized tribes.

Additional Tips for Practice

- Some tribes include descendants as members, not only those who are enrolled.
- Best practices will vary depending on the location, available resources, and tribe.
- If you are having challenges in working with the family, local Native American agencies or tribes can assist.
- If the family requests additional resource information to trace its lineage, you can provide the following resource information:
 - The tribe;
 - Mission church records;
 - Mormon genealogical records;
 - Historical societies and museums;
 - Genealogical Web sites; and
 - Historical statistical information and documents in the county of the family’s origin.



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FACT SHEET

November 2009

Tribal Projects Unit

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) has established, as part of the Center for Families Children & the Courts, a Tribal Projects Unit. The purpose of this unit is to serve as liaison and to assist the judicial branch with the development of policies, positions, and programs to ensure the highest quality of justice and service for California's Native American communities in cases relating to Indian Child Welfare Act, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Goals

The goals of the Tribal Projects Unit are to:

1. Conduct community outreach to California's Native American citizens who reside on reservations or rancherias and in urban communities to provide information about the judicial branch—the state courts and court-connected services;
2. Collaborate with tribes in California and California's Native American communities, organizations, and service providers to gather information about the justice-related needs of California's Native American citizens;
3. Develop and promote strategies and programs that are responsive to identified justice-related needs;
4. Provide education and technical assistance to state courts and court-connected services on Public Law 280, Indian law issues relating to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking, the Indian Child Welfare Act, and indigenous justice systems;
5. Act as a liaison between the state and tribal courts to build professional relationships and to improve access by tribal courts to education, technical assistance, and other resources;
6. Promote mutually beneficial intergovernmental cooperation among tribal courts, state courts, and appropriate tribal, state, and local agencies; and
7. Develop and disseminate justice-related information and reports needed by tribal and state agencies to work together effectively.

Activities for 2009–2010

Clearinghouse of resources

The AOC will maintain a clearinghouse of resources that includes: (1) a calendar of AOC educational events for tribal and state courts; (2) a directory of Native American services in California; (3) a listing of tribal justice grant opportunities; (4) information on indigenous justice systems; and (5) resources relating to compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in juvenile, family, and probate cases.

Collaborations

The AOC will promote communication and information sharing among tribal and state court systems, bringing together state and tribal court judges, as well as tribal and state/local agencies, to improve the administration of justice in cases relating to ICWA, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Curriculum development

The AOC will develop curricula on the following: (1) civil and criminal jurisdiction in a Public Law 280 state for state court judges; (2) Indian law issues that may arise in cases involving domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking for state court judges and practitioners; (3) the Indian Child Welfare Act for state court judges, attorneys, child welfare agencies, and probation departments; and (4) accessing and navigating the state court system in cases of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking for tribal court staff, tribal advocates, and tribal service providers.

Self-help and legal aid services

The AOC will work with local self-help and legal aid programs to provide effective services to Native Americans in California.

Training and technical assistance for tribal court judges

The AOC will make available to tribal court judges existing in-person and distance-learning educational programs and materials relating to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking that are provided to state court judges. The AOC will also provide technical assistance to tribal court judges interested in applying problem-solving, collaborative court principles and starting or enhancing a supervised visitation program.

Funding

These projects are supported with funds from the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice that are administered through the California Emergency Management Agency (CalEMA), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Court Improvement Program, and the California Department of Social Services. The CalEMA funding must be expended by January 1, 2011, and is limited to activities that must be awarded to state courts, and project activities must be limited to the issues described in this fact sheet.

Further Information

For additional information about the Tribal Projects Unit's activities, please contact:

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Social Work Practice Tips for Inquiry and Noticing *Reasons Why People Do Not Claim to Be American Indian*¹

There are many reasons why individuals do not claim their American Indian heritage. This has implications for ICWA compliance especially in the area of inquiry and noticing. If an Indian child is not known to be American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) how can social workers and service providers ensure culturally effective services and case plans?

Below is a brief list of responses that can be given by individuals that do not claim their American Indian heritage.

- *“I know we’re part Indian but not enough.”*
- *“I, my mom, or my dad was adopted.”*
- *“No one knows the real history anymore, that person passed a long time ago.”*
- *“No one talks about it.” And/or “We don’t talk about it with anyone.”*
- *“I heard our family was disenrolled.”*
- *“It was painful so we don’t talk about it.”*
- *“We heard different stories and are not sure if it’s true or not.”*
- *“Grandpa only talked about it late at night.”*
- *“It’s in the past now, you can’t go back.”*
- *“Someone lost the papers.”*
- *“I can’t prove it.”*
- *“I didn’t know until recently, so I don’t think we qualify.”*
- *“When dad came here to work we lost our history.”*
- *“I don’t know our history, but I heard something. We were told we didn’t need to know.”*
- *“No one speaks the language anymore, so we don’t talk about it.”*

Practice Tips to ensure effective inquiry:

1. It is important to ask every family and every child if they have American Indian/Alaska Native ancestry even though they may not “look” as though they have American Indian/Alaska Native ancestry. Remember that many American Indian families will have Spanish last-names as a result of the influence of Spanish Missions from 1769 – 1823.

¹ This document was developed as part of the American Indian Enhancement of the Annie E. Casey, Casey Family Programs, & Child and Family Policy Institute of the California Breakthrough Series (BSC) on addressing disproportionality 2009-2010 with support from the Bay Area Collaborative of American Indian Resources (BACAIR), Human Services Agency of San Francisco Family and Children Services, Alameda County Social Services, and in collaboration with the American Indian Caucus of the California ICWA Workgroup, Child and Family Policy Institute of California, Stuart Foundation, and Tribal STAR.



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2. Encourage social workers/intake workers to *state* (rather than ask), “if you are AI/AN or believe you may be affiliated with a tribe, there are additional services (ICWA) that are available to you.”
3. Talking to that family historian may yield a lot of information. Ask them “who are the keepers of the family history?” Usually there is one family member, or a few, who are gifted in this area.
4. Consider asking families about specific areas relatives may have lived or originated from. “Has anyone in your family ever lived on a reservation?”
5. Consider asking if they also have ever utilized Native American services, or if anyone has in the family?
6. Remember to continue to cultivate and build trust-based communication with children and families and continue to ask if they have AI/AN ancestry throughout the life of the case.
7. Document all your efforts of inquiry and document all you do to achieve proper inquiry and notice.

Background

It is a significant challenge for American Indians who have been removed from their tribe to claim tribal ties to a Native American community. This can be due to the complex process of identifying ancestors and being able to establish family blood lines. How an individual comes to know their heritage, and how much they know varies from region, to tribe, to family. With over 500 recognized tribes, over 100 terminated tribes, and countless unrecognized tribes across the United States each family has a unique history with their tribe. As a result of federal and state policies that promoted assimilation and relocation (1830s Removal Era through 1950s Termination Era), many individuals and their families lost connection to their relations, customs, and traditions. The effects of boarding schools, and religious proselytizing, left many with the perception that it was better to pass as non-Indian than to claim their tribal status. In 1952 the federal government initiated the Urban Indian Relocation Act designed to increase the American Indian workforce in eight cities (Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Dallas, Chicago, and Denver.).

Historical and federal efforts to quantify and track the American Indian/Alaska Native populations through the census, and the establishment of “Indian Rolls” resulted in documentation of enrollment in a tribe, often verified by blood quantum (amount/percentage of documented American Indian/Alaska Native blood). Tribal nations are not uniform in determining who is a tribal member through this manner. Some tribes acknowledge descent and ancestry verified by proof of family lineage rather than ‘how much Indian blood’. Conversely, in some cases, tribal enrollment policies exclude many individuals from enrollment for political, historical, and reasons known only to their tribal membership. Enrollment in a tribe may only be open at certain times, which can also affect an individual’s eligibility for enrollment.



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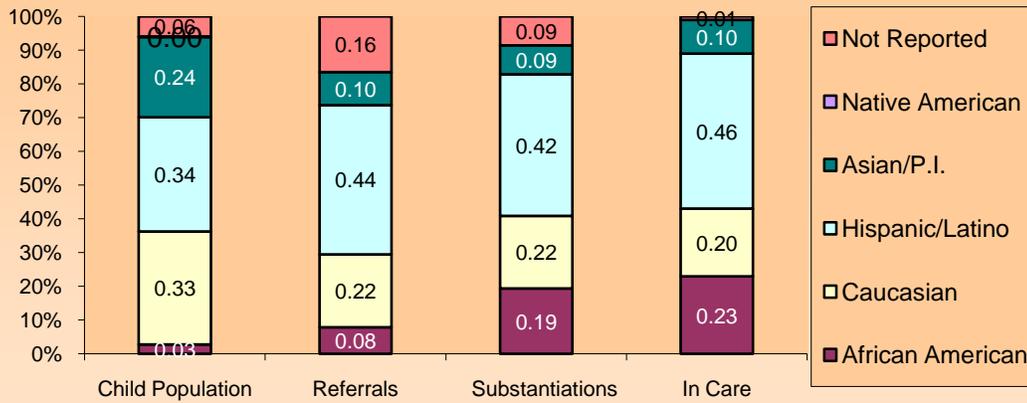
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Many descendants have only bits and pieces of information, sometimes passed along with quiet dignity, often with a longing to know more. What information was passed along may have been shrouded in shame or secrecy for unknown reasons resulting in reluctance to share the information. The number of families that are disconnected from their ancestral homeland grows exponentially each generation and many individuals find connection to Native American communities through intertribal, regional, and local cultural events. These community events enable a sense of belonging and kinship, and provide support for resilience through access to programs such as Title VII Indian Education, and Tribal TANF, that do not require proof of enrollment.

CFS DISPROPORTIONALITY DASHBOARD

Q2 2010-11

SMC Children by Ethnicity and Participation Oct - Dec 2010



Child Population: Based on 2009 population projection

Referrals: Unique count of children by primary ethnicity on referrals

$n = 1,148$

Substantiations: Unique count of referral IDs for children with substantiated allegations

$n = 93$

In Care: 12/31/10 Point in Time Data

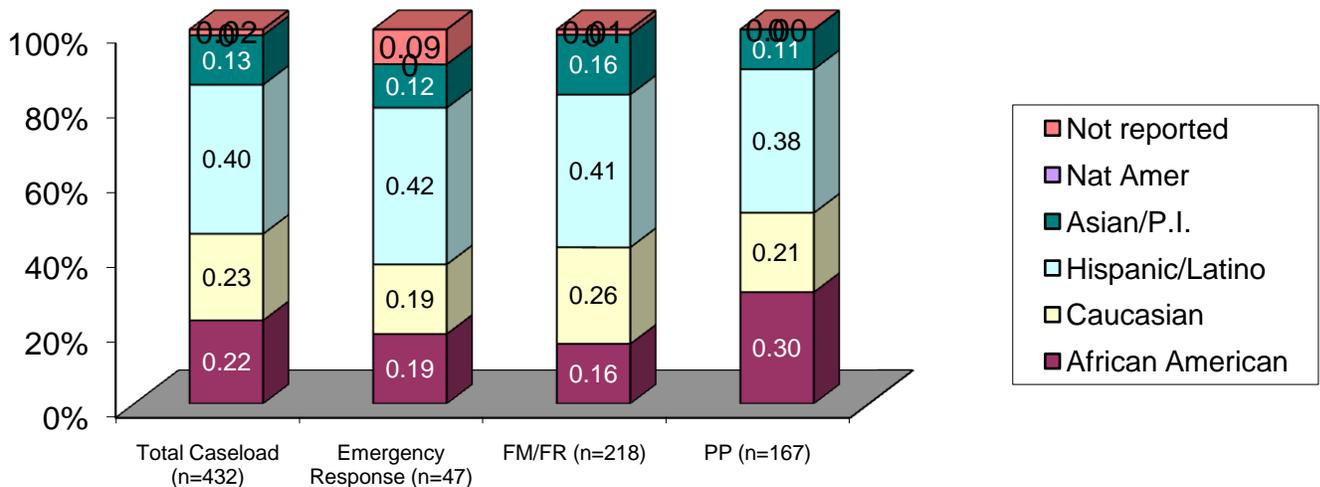
$n=300$

COURT-ORDERED & VOLUNTARY CASES			
Ethnic Group	# of Court-Ordered	# of Voluntary	# of Unknown
African American	6	2	1
Caucasian	2	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	9	6	0
Asian/P.I.	4	0	0
Nat American	0	0	0
Not Reported	2	1	1
TOTAL	23	9	2

TDMs	
Ethnic Group	# of children*
African American	3
Caucasian	8
Hispanic/Latino	14
Asian/P.I.	3
Nat American	0
Not Reported	2
TOTAL	30

*Includes case closure, transitional conferences, Probation.

Caseload Case Service Components by Ethnicity Point in Time 12/31/10

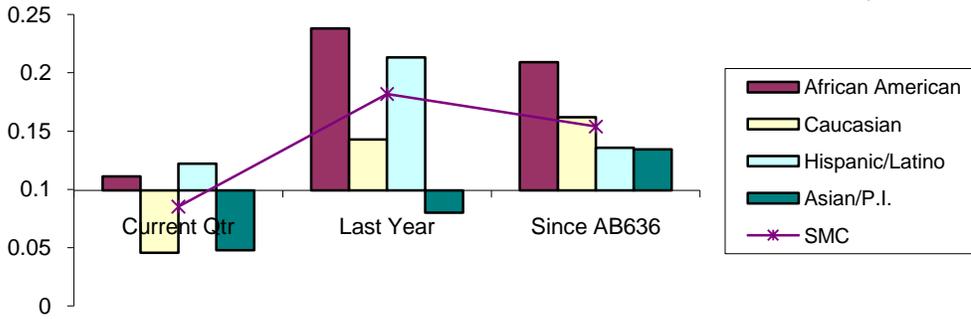


Data Source: CWS/CMS (BSG) and TDM Log

CFS DISPROPORTIONALITY DASHBOARD

Q2 2010-11

C1.4 Re-entry

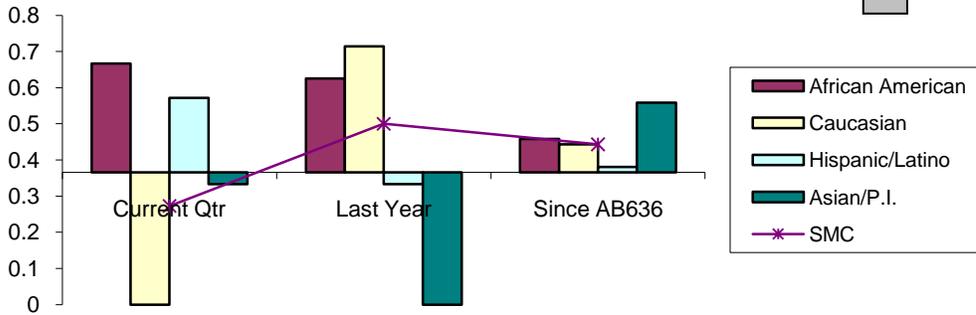


C1.4 Re-entry

Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification during the year, what percent reentered foster care in less than 12 months from the date of discharge?

CFS met the Re-entry standard overall and has shown dramatic improvement for all ethnicities from a year ago.

C2.1 Adoptions w/in 24 mos (exit cohort)



C2.1 Adoption within 24 months (exit cohort)

Of all children discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption during the year, what percent were discharged in less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from home?

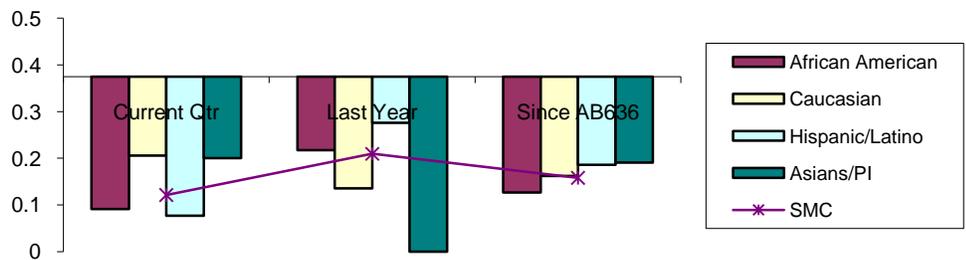
CFS met the standard for all ethnicities except Caucasian children in the current quarter. Since AB636 began, CFS met the standard for all ethnicities.

C3.1 Exits to permanency (24 months in care)

Of all children in foster care for 24 months or longer on the first day of the year, what percent were discharged to a permanent home by the end of the year and prior to turning 18?

CFS failed to meet the standard for all ethnicities in all three reporting periods. Since AB636 began, African American children had the lowest permanency rate.

C3.1 Exits to Permanency

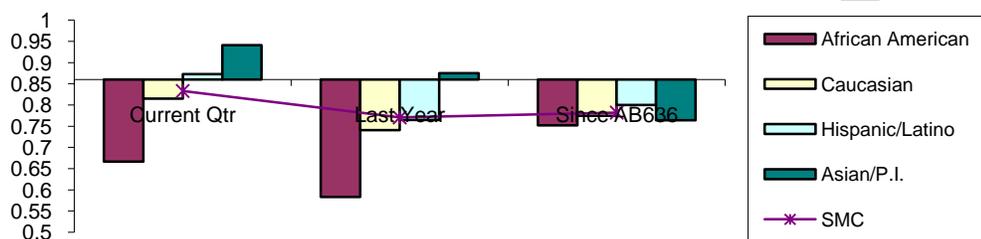


C4.1 Placement Stability

Of all children served in foster care during the year who were in foster care for at least 8 days but less than 12 months, what percent had two or fewer placement settings?

Although CFS failed to meet the standard for African American and Caucasian children in the current quarter, placement stability improved from a year ago.

C4.1 Placement Stability



PERSONS WHO SHOULD BE PRESENT AT THE PPH²

- Judge or judicial officer
- Parents of each child whose rights have not been terminated
 - Mothers, fathers (legal, biological, alleged, putative, named), non-custodial parents – all possible parents
- Parent partners, parent mentors if assigned/available, substance abuse coach, DV advocate
- Relatives – relatives with legal standing or other custodial adults, including adult half-siblings
 - Paternal and maternal relatives
- Non-related extended family, fictive kin (someone who is known and trusted by the families; godparents)
- Assigned caseworker
- Agency attorney
- Attorney for each parent (if conflict exists)
- Legal advocate for the child
- Guardian ad Litem (GAL)
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- ICWA expert (if ICWA applies)
- Tribal representative/tribal liaison
- Treatment and/or service providers
- All age-appropriate children
- Foster parents
- Cultural leaders, cultural liaisons, religious leaders
- Court-certified interpreters or court-certified language services
- Education liaison/school representative
- Court reporter
- Court security

COURTS CAN MAKE SURE THAT PARTIES AND KEY WITNESSES ARE PRESENT BY:³

- Ensuring that the judge, not the bailiff or court staff, makes the determination about who is allowed to be in the courtroom.
- Asking the youth/family if there is someone else who should be present.
- Requiring quick and diligent notification efforts by the agency.
- Requiring both oral and written notification in a language understandable to each party and witness.
- Requiring service/tribal notice to include the reason for removal, purpose of the hearing, availability of legal assistance in a language and form that is understandable to each party and witness.
- Requiring caseworkers and/or protective service investigators to facilitate attendance of children, parents, relatives (paternal and maternal), fictive kin and other parties.
- Facilitating telephonic or video conferencing appearance at hearings.

CONTINUE TO BACK

¹ The preliminary protective hearing is the first court hearing in juvenile abuse and neglect cases. In some jurisdictions this may be called a “shelter care,” “detention,” “emergency removal,” or “temporary custody” hearing.

² State and federal law determine who must be present for any hearing to proceed. Noted participants may or may not be required by law; however, as many as possible should be encouraged to attend the initial hearing.

³ State and federal law determine who must be present for any hearing to proceed.

REVIEWING THE PETITION

- A sworn petition or complaint should be filed prior to the preliminary protective hearing and served/provided to the parents.
- The petition should be specific about the facts that bring the child before the court.
- The petition should not be conclusory without relevant facts to explain and support the conclusions.
- Petitions need to include allegations specific to each legal parent or legal guardian if appropriate.
- If the petition does not contain allegations against a legal parent or legal guardian, the child should be placed with or returned to that parent or legal guardian unless it is determined that there is a safety threat to the child.
- Petitions/removal affidavits need to include specific language clearly articulating the current threat to the child's safety.

REFLECTIONS ON THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THAT PROTECT AGAINST INSTITUTIONAL BIAS:

ASK YOURSELF, AS A JUDGE:

- What assumptions have I made about the cultural identity, genders, and background of this family?
- What is my understanding of this family's unique culture and circumstances?
- How is my decision specific to this child and this family?
- How has the court's past contact and involvement with this family influenced (or how might it influence) my decision-making process and findings?
- What evidence has supported every conclusion I have drawn, and how have I challenged unsupported assumptions?
- Am I convinced that reasonable efforts (or active efforts in ICWA cases) have been made in an individualized way to match the needs of the family?
- Am I considering relatives as preferred placement options as long as they can protect the child and support the permanency plan?

KEY INQUIRIES, ANALYSES AND DECISIONS THE COURT SHOULD MAKE AT THE PRELIMINARY PROTECTIVE HEARING

INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT (ICWA) DETERMINATION

The court should require that the applicability of the ICWA be determined before proceeding with the preliminary protective hearing. If the court has reason to believe ICWA applies, the court should proceed accordingly.

- If Yes – different standards apply, refer to the ICWA Checklist.
- If Yes – determine whether there was clear and convincing evidence, including testimony of a qualified expert witness, that continued custody of the child by the parent or Indian custodian is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the child. 25 U.S.C. § 1912(e).

ENGAGE PARENTS

- What language are you most comfortable speaking and reading?
- Do you understand what this hearing is about?
- What family members and/or other important people should be involved in this process with us?
- Do you understand the petition? (review petition with parties)

DUE PROCESS

- Who are the child's parents and/or guardians?
- How was paternity determined?
- What were the diligent search efforts for all parents?
- Have efforts to identify and locate fathers been sufficient? What has been done?
- How were the parents notified for this hearing?
 - Was the notice in a language and form understandable to parents and/or guardians?
- Do the parents understand the allegations?
- Are the parents entitled to representation? Are there language issues to consider when appointing attorneys?
- Are there issues in the case that are covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act?

LEGAL THRESHOLD FOR REMOVAL

- Has the agency made a prima facie case or probable cause showing that supports the removal of the child?
- Have the family's cultural background, customs and traditions been taken into account in evaluating the event and circumstances that led to the removal? Have the parent(s) cultural or tribal liaison/relevant other(s) been asked if there is a culturally-based explanation for the allegations in the petition?

REASONABLE EFFORTS (TO PREVENT REMOVAL)

- Were there any pre-hearing conferences or meetings that included the family?
 - Who was present?
 - What was the outcome?
- What services were considered and offered to allow the child to remain at home? Were these services culturally appropriate? How are these services rationally related to the safety threat?
- What was done to create a safety plan to allow the child to remain at home or in the home of another without court involvement?
 - Have non-custodial parents, paternal and maternal relatives been identified and explored? What is the plan to do so?
- How has the agency intervened with this family in the past? Has the agency's previous contact with the family influenced its response to this family now?

CONTINUE TO BACK

KEY INQUIRIES, ANALYSES AND DECISIONS THE COURT SHOULD MAKE AT THE PRELIMINARY PROTECTIVE HEARING

WHAT IS PREVENTING THE CHILD FROM RETURNING HOME TODAY?

- What is the current and immediate safety threat? Has the threat diminished? How do you know that? Specifically, how can the risk be ameliorated or removed?
- What is preventing the child from returning home today? What type of safety plan could be developed and implemented in order for the child to return home today?
 - What specifically prevents the parents from being able to provide the minimally adequate standard of care to protect the child?
 - Will the removal or addition of any person from or in the home allow the child to be safe and be placed back in the home?
- If the safety threat is too high to return the child home, how have the conditions for return been conveyed to the parents, family and child, and are you satisfied that they understand these conditions?

APPROPRIATENESS OF PLACEMENT

- If child is placed in foster care/shelter, have kinship care options been fully explored? If not, what is being done to explore relatives? If so, why were the relatives deemed inappropriate?
- If child is placed in kinship care, what steps have been taken to ensure the relative is linked with all available training, services, and financial support?
- How is the placement culturally and linguistically appropriate?
 - From the family and child's perspective, is the current placement culturally and linguistically appropriate?
- How does the placement support the child's cultural identity? In what way does the placement support the child's connection to the family and community?
- How does the placement support the family/child's involvement in the initial plan?
- What are the terms of meaningful family time with parents, siblings and extended family members?
 - Do the terms of family time match the safety concerns? Is it supervised? Specifically, why must it be supervised?
 - Is the time and location of family time logistically possible for the family, and supportive of the child's needs?

REASONABLE EFFORTS TO ALLOW THE CHILD TO SAFELY RETURN HOME

- What services can be arranged to allow the child to safely return home today?
- How are these services rationally related to the specific safety threat?
- How are the parents, extended family and children being engaged in the development and implementation of a plan for services, interventions, and supports?
- How will the agency assist the family to access the services?
 - Does the family believe that these services, interventions and supports will meet their current needs and build upon strengths?
 - Has the family been given the opportunity to ask for additional or alternate services?
- How are the services, interventions and supports specifically tailored to the culture and needs of this child and family?
 - How do they build on family strengths?
 - How is the agency determining that the services, interventions and supports are culturally appropriate?
- What evidence has been provided by the agency to demonstrate that the services/interventions for this family have effectively met the needs and produced positive outcomes for families with similar presenting issues and demographic characteristics?

CLOSING QUESTIONS TO ASK PARENTS, CHILDREN AND FAMILY MEMBERS

- **Do you understand what happened here today?**
- **Do you understand what are the next steps?**
- **Do you have any questions for the court?**

CALIFORNIA DISPROPORTIONALITY PROJECT BREAKTHROUGH SERIES COLLABORATIVE

Project Framework and Key Elements

This document offers a framework that describes the key elements, values and assumptions that are necessary to guide the work of child welfare systems to address, reduce, and ultimately eliminate the disparities and disproportionality that exists in the child welfare system. This framework is not prescriptive but instead identifies principles to guide action and key elements that if incorporated in policy, programming, practice and training are likely to lead to positive outcomes.

Values

- V1. Every child, woman, and man has an intrinsic and irreducible worth and a right to social and economic justice/fairness. Respect for family must guide all agency actions.
- V2. Communities, including youth and families, must be full partners in the system change process.
- V3. Public child welfare agencies must be advocates and catalysts for social change.
- V4. All children and youth need and must have permanent families.

Assumptions

- A1. Structural and institutional racism impact every child welfare agency, key decision point in child welfare, and the use/availability of services, resulting in inequitable treatment of child welfare staff and the children, families, and communities affected by the system.
- A2. The consistent and comprehensive commitment to transform child welfare will ultimately eliminate structural and institutional racism thereby improving the outcomes and life chances for every child, youth, and family.
- A3. Every community has a network of committed and capable individuals who provide support, assistance, and advice to their neighbors.
- A4. Including families and communities of color¹ in authentic engagement for key discussions and at key decisions regarding policies, programs, and practices results in more racially appropriate, community-based, family-focused decisions.
- A5. Because they have experienced structural and institutional racism first-hand, birth parents, youth, and resource families who are or have been involved with the child welfare agency provide the best perspectives on system strengths and challenges and are strong advocates for individual, social, and racial equity.

¹ Throughout this document, the terms “Families of Color” and “Children of Color” are used to refer to Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and other non-White races, ethnicities, and cultures that experience disproportionality and disparities in outcomes in child welfare. The specific races, ethnicities, and cultures being addressed in each individual community should be specified at the outset of this work, and this document should be modified to clearly and explicitly name these groups.

- A6. Recruiting, developing, and supporting resource families from the child's community of origin builds on racial, cultural, and spiritual strengths, norms, and beliefs.
- A7. Tracking, analyzing, and using data disaggregated by race to inform practice changes at key decision points in child welfare will provide a basis to understand and eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare.

Key Elements²

K1. *Building Authentic Tribal³ and Community Partnerships.* The Public Child Welfare Agency (PCWA) works with Tribes/Sovereign Nations and the communities from which children come to create common language and a shared understanding about racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare. The PCWA, together with the Tribe/community, develops strategies and evaluates data to determine the impact of policies, programs, practices, and decisions designed to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities. This work is rooted in the Tribe's/community's values, as defined by the Tribe/community itself. The PCWA responds to a Tribal/community driven process to support the development and provision of needed racially and culturally appropriate services as identified by the Tribe/community itself, including services focused on prevention and diversion from child welfare involvement in the neighborhoods from which children come.

K2. *Collecting and Using Data.* The PCWA compiles quarterly information regarding patterns of decisions that includes age, race, ethnicity, and gender. The PCWA uses a Self-Evaluation Team, of which birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, and community members are active representatives. Self-Evaluation Team meetings and staff meetings (administrative, management, supervisory) review data related to racial disproportionality and disparities; develop a range of strategies designed to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities; and review the effectiveness of these strategies.

K3. *Raising Awareness and Providing Training.* The PCWA facilitates conversations and convenings with birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, service providers, staff, and partners from other agencies and organizations that serve these children, youth, and families to raise awareness about and inspire action to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities, using key data and information. Ongoing and continuous trainings are provided, particularly to all levels of PCWA staff and service providers, to raise awareness, develop clear and consistent language, create common understanding, analyze program, policy and system proposals through a racialized lens, and support forums for open dialogue.

K4. *Leading by Example.* The PCWA Director convenes and leads a group of internal and external stakeholders, including birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, service providers, staff, and partners from other agencies and organizations that serve these children, youth, and families, to develop a strategic plan for understanding and addressing racial disproportionality and disparities. As part of this strategic plan, the PCWA Director facilitates the development of clear and consistent messages and communications about this work.

² The Family to Family Four Core Strategies are noted in italics.

³ For purposes of this document, the terms "Tribe" and "Tribal communities" are intended to refer broadly to Native American Tribes that experience disproportionality and disparities in outcomes in child welfare. When working in jurisdictions, this document should be modified to clearly and explicitly name the specific Tribes and Sovereign Nations being addressed.

- K5. Engaging Birth Families and Youth as Authentic Partners. The PCWA provides birth families and youth with the information and access to resources they need to help them become successful parents and strong self-advocates. The PCWA partners with birth families and youth when developing and implementing agency policies, programs, practices, and decisions that support equitable treatment for all children, youth, birth families, resource families, and staff served by, and working for the agency.
- K6. Engaging the Broader Child Welfare System⁴. The PCWA engages “formal” partners, including provider agencies and other public agencies that serve the children, youth, and families involved with the PCWA, to evaluate data to determine the impact of policies, programs, practices, and decisions designed to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities; create strategies to address the issues identified through data; and pool funding and resources to finance and support these strategies. Financial allocations and funding commitments made by the PCWA demonstrate the elimination of racial disproportionality and disparities in outcomes in child welfare as a priority.
- K7. Preventing, Diverting, and Ensuring Equity for Child Welfare Involvement. The PCWA works closely with families, Tribes, members of the community, and informal organizations and agencies in the community to strengthen and support families and prevent them from entering the child welfare system. The PCWA uses a differential response approach that includes a focus on prevention and early intervention; actively engages families to address issues of safety and risk; and improves access to a broad range of appropriate services that are specific to individual families’ strengths and needs. Through raised awareness, education, and ongoing training (as described in K2), the PCWA eliminates racial disparities in referrals from mandated reporters, including hospitals and schools.
- K8. Achieving Practice and Decision-Making that Does Not Result in Racial Disproportionality and Disparities: Policies and tools that guide PCWA practice are free from bias and do not perpetuate structural or institutional racism. The PCWA includes birth families, youth, and resource families in all planning and decisions that affect their lives. To ensure that practice-level decisions are free from structural and institutional racism and do not result in racial disproportionality and disparities, practice-level decisions are reviewed individually and in aggregate on a regular basis by birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community partners, and child welfare staff.
- K9. Ensuring Least Restrictive, Appropriate, and Supported Placements: The PCWA works closely with birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, and partners from other agencies and organizations that serve these children, youth, and families to prevent placement whenever possible. When placement is necessary, the PCWA places with kin/fictive kin, as identified by the family, youth, and children themselves, as the first placement option. When kin/fictive kin are not viable options for placement, the PCWA recruits, develops, and supports resource families from the neighborhoods from which children come and places the children with those resource families. All resource families, whether kin/fictive kin, foster, adoptive, respite, or other caregivers, receive the same high-level support from the PCWA and are treated as authentic partners in the care of the children and youth as well as in the support of families to help achieve permanency.
- K10. Hiring, Promoting, and Supporting Staff. The PCWA examines current human resources and staff development in policy, program, and practice to ensure that racially

⁴ The “Broader Child Welfare System” refers to other agencies and organizations that serve children, youth, and families involved with, or at risk of involvement with, the child welfare agency. This system includes, but is not limited to, courts, schools, juvenile justice, welfare, mental health, and public health.

equitable hiring, promotion, and discipline practices are used consistently throughout the agency. The PCWA asserts in policy and practice that the elimination of racial disproportionality and disparities is the responsibility of all staff in the agency. The PCWA recognizes the critical role of supervisors and ensures that supervision of and support for staff is consistently provided in ways that focus explicitly on the connections between social worker practice, decision making, and racial disproportionality and disparities.



May 12, 2008

Dear Child Welfare Director,

We are pleased to invite you to participate in the California Disproportionality Project, a collaboration of Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the California Department of Social Services to support the work of California counties and the state in eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare.

Although available research tells us there is no significant difference between races or ethnicities in the rates at which children and youth are abused and neglected, we know that there is a significant difference in the rates at which children and youth of color, particularly for African American and Native American children, are reported to child welfare systems. Furthermore, we know that they receive fewer services while in out-of-home care; they are less likely to find a permanent home; and they leave the system less prepared for adulthood than white children and youth. Our goal in the California Disproportionality Project is to work towards eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families of color in the child welfare system.

Casey Family Programs and the Annie E. Casey Foundation in their work to improve the lives of children and families throughout the nation have come together with the California Department of Social Services to fund up to 12 county public child welfare agencies along with one State-level team to work intensively on these issues over the course of roughly 24 months through the California Disproportionality Project. This work will take place in a collaborative learning environment that will focus on sharing ideas and tracking what works and what doesn't, such that practices and strategies that work to reduce disproportionality and disparities can be spread across child welfare agencies, communities, and their partners. Pat Reynolds-Harris, founder of the California Permanency for Youth Project, will serve as the Chair of this project, providing vision, ideas, and technical assistance to counties. Additional technical assistance will be provided to project participants by researchers, public agency managers, community members, youth, and family members who have been intensively focused on this issue in recent years.

We are excited to begin this important endeavor and hope that you will consider submitting an application to participate in the Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Miryam J. Choca', written over a horizontal line.

Miryam J. Choca, Senior Director
Strategic Consulting
Casey Family Programs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Bettencourt', written over a horizontal line.

Bill Bettencourt, Senior Consultant
Family to Family
Annie E. Casey Foundation

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THE CALIFORNIA DISPROPORTIONALITY PROJECT APPLICATION CHECKLIST & KEY DATES

Participate in Informational / Q&A Conference Call (Required)

Date: Tuesday, May 20, 2008 - 2:30 PM P.S.T. – 3:30 PM P.S.T.

Call-in Information is as follows:

Dial-In Number – 866-248-0561

Room Number - *1017637 * (You must include the * at the beginning and end.)

Submit Completed Application (by email or fax only)

Date: June 10, 2008 (by close of business)

Receive Notification Confirming Receipt of Application

Date: Within One Business Day of Application Submission

Teams Notified of Final Selection

Date: On or about June 30, 2008

Section 1. Background and Overview

Background

Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the California Department of Social Services are pleased to be sponsoring the **California Disproportionality Project** (Project). In California, African American and Native American children are disproportionately represented in the foster care system along the continuum of child welfare services in the state overall and in the majority of counties in the state. As with data on the national level, rates of substantiated maltreatment, entry into out-of-home care, and length of stay are all higher for African American and Native American children in particular than for their White counterparts; while family reunification and exit rates are lower.

Yet this comparison belies the fact that outcomes for White children and families in the child welfare system overall are also less than desirable. The hope in this project is that by improving the system for children and families of color – those who are most disadvantaged by the current system – the system will ultimately be improved for all children and families.

This phenomenon is not a secret, nor is it confined to child welfare. Disparate outcomes and disproportionate representation of children and families of color are also an issue in juvenile justice, education, health care, and other systems. It is an uncomfortable and emotion laden issue but the sponsors of this project believe that child welfare leaders cannot continue to sleepwalk around it for it is an endangerment to children, families, and communities.

In 2005, Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Casey Family Services, and the Center for Community Partnerships in Child Welfare sponsored a three-year Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) on **Reducing Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare System**. The national BSC involved 13 jurisdictions including the city and county of San Francisco. The California Disproportionality Project will utilize the lessons learned from the national Disproportionality BSC, and many of the leadership and faculty from the national BSC will be a part of the California Disproportionality Project to further share their learnings.

Overview

The California Disproportionality Project will be an 24-month collaborative learning effort to support eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities (ERDD). The BSC methodology will provide the foundation for the California Disproportionality Project; however, this project also has the benefit of following the national BSC on Disproportionality, building on what was learned from that effort, and utilizing a base of disproportionality technical assistance and training resources throughout California and nationally.

Each county team will work together to form a **shared value** for what success will look like for this project in its own county and communities. This shared value will be created through conversations with families, youth, communities, partners, and agency staff. Ultimately, this shared value statement, together with the results of ongoing data review and a facilitated self-assessment process will form the core of a county-developed workplan that will serve as the foundation for the team's work. Work in this project will include:

- Four **learning sessions** providing an opportunity for collaborative learning with the other teams involved in the project;
- Continued **awareness building** around the issues of disproportionality and disparities in child welfare exploring underlying contributing factors, including implicit and institutional bias;
- On-going **technical assistance** for each team provided by experts in the field that will be focused on moving the work of each team forward – including many experts who have been utilized nationally on this work and who have been faculty on the national Disproportionality BSC;
- Collection and review of **data** to describe what disproportionality and disparities look like at the individual county and state level, so all participants will know the extent of the issue in their communities and be able to track improvements;
- Facilitation of open **communication** so that challenging conversations can occur within the teams, with others in the county, across the state, and ultimately across the country;
- Active **community engagement** that occurs on an ongoing and continuous basis in recognition of the fact that it will take the wider community to brainstorm ideas and implement solutions;
- **Training and engagement of staff** in order to educate staff on how their decisions and day-to-day practices impact disproportionality and disparities, as well as how to change those practices; and
- Active **family and youth engagement**, in both identifying challenges in the system and being part of the solutions;
- **Support and links to consulting and resources** to move each team's agenda forward in view of each team's respective data.

Section 2. About the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) Methodology

The BSC methodology was developed in 1995 by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and Associates in Process Improvement (API). This quality improvement method has been used extensively in the field of health care for more than ten years. The IHI has led BSCs in over 25 different topic areas, including

reducing delays and waiting times in emergency rooms; reducing Caesarean section rates; improving end-of-life care; and improving critical care. In 2000, Casey Family Programs (CFP) joined with the IHI to learn and adapt the BSC methodology for child welfare. Since that time, CFP has sponsored and led BSCs on six different topics and many child welfare jurisdictions have launched their own BSCs to address key issues in their agencies.

The BSC is a specific quality improvement method designed to enable participating teams to make dramatic improvements in a focused practice topic over a short period. The intention of a BSC is not to create an entirely new body of knowledge. Instead it is intended to fill the gap between what has been identified as best practice and what is actually practiced in the field. Often, particularly in public agencies, policies already reflect these best practices. But for many reasons, these practices are not always being implemented in the field. The key to a BSC is using a variety of techniques to bridge this gap between what is known and what is done. There are several critical characteristics of the BSC methodology that help agencies quickly test and then fully implement these practices in ways that are appropriate for the individual agency as well as sustainable over time.

- 1) **All BSC work is grounded in a comprehensive Framework for Change--** Each BSC is based upon a nationally developed comprehensive framework that guides the work of the teams. This Framework identifies the key components of an ideal system for supporting the BSC work and decision making and will guide agencies' testing and implementation of best practices. Rather than selecting one of these components to focus on, each team must commit to work in all component areas (not simultaneously, but throughout the life of the project) to ensure complete system-wide impact. It is the synergy that occurs when working on these components simultaneously that creates maximum system improvement.
- 2) **Rapid Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles are used --** PDSA cycles are one of the keys to the rapid changes witnessed in a BSC. Instead of spending weeks, months, or years planning for massive changes, teams are encouraged to test an idea as soon as it occurs. PDSAs are the cornerstone of the BSC; however, for the California Disproportionality Project, PDSAs will be one of several change models that will be available to teams. For this Project, teams may approach some aspects of their work using PDSAs and other aspects of their work in different manners – whichever best fits their needs, is most appropriately suited for the practice or strategy being tested or implemented; and what they ultimately want to accomplish.
- 3) **Anyone can have and test ideas --** Ideas for practice and system improvement do not come only from management. Workers throughout the agency, supervisors, managers, young people involved with the system, birth families, caregivers, community members, and everyone involved in the system have a great deal of experience and knowledge, and thus all have good ideas they can test.
- 4) **Consensus is not needed --** Instead of spending time trying to convince one another of a “better way” of practice, the BSC encourages team members to

test their ideas in the field instead of simply *talking* about their ideas in a meeting room. Team members do not need to agree with one another for an idea to be tested; instead the convincing comes naturally once people start to see the results of the tests.

- 5) ***Changes happen at all levels (not just at the top)*** -- All people have valuable knowledge and expertise, whether they are the senior leader of the project at a commissioner/director/administrator level or a young person on the team. As each person involved tests changes, the impacts occur at all levels -- from individual case-level clinical practice all the way through system-wide policies.
- 6) ***Ideas are “stolen shamelessly”*** -- This methodology is entitled the Breakthrough Series *Collaborative* for a very distinct reason. Each participating team in the BSC can benefit greatly from the successes and learnings of all the others. In-person meetings, a project extranet site, and monthly conference calls present opportunities for teams to capitalize on the successes of others as well as to learn from efforts that were not as successful.
- 7) ***Successes are spread quickly*** -- Many pilot projects begin and then remain in a pilot site, or, in other instances, once a “project” is completed, the pilot disappears. The BSC method prevents this from happening. Once a change has been tested successfully and fully implemented throughout the target site, the team is responsible for spreading that specific small change immediately throughout the entire jurisdiction. Lessons learned are shared between and across the state, county, or tribe, and each site has the opportunity to modify change strategies in order to ensure that the practice change works for that specific geographic, cultural, or ethnic community.
- 8) ***Measurement is for improvement, not for research*** -- Measurement is a critical aspect of the BSC methodology, as the BSC strives to gauge improvements over time. Measures will be tracked and reported on regularly throughout the course of the Project. By looking at progress in these collective measures, even when the numbers are small or not scientifically tracked, teams can tell if they are making a positive impact on children and families. Participating counties will receive a great deal of support around their data collection and review through technical assistance from UC Berkeley as well as project staff.

Section 3. The National Work on Disproportionality

The national BSC on Reducing Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare System brought together 13 jurisdictions throughout the country working on this issue. There were many successes and learnings from the national BSC that provide a good foundation for this work in California.

Themes from the BSC

The transformative work of the national BSC included:

Building awareness and understanding

– Using training resources like the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond’s *Undoing Racism Workshop* and Casey Family Programs’ *Knowing Who You Are* video and e-learning series were utilized in the efforts to reach out within the agencies and communities of the jurisdictions involved. The use of data and engagement of foster youth, alumni and birth parents were also important elements of this component of the work.

Community and stakeholder engagement

– Reaching out to the broader community, including community based agencies, partner governmental agencies, community leaders, and others who can become fellow champions was also an area of focus for many of the jurisdictions involved in the national BSC.

Child welfare practice and decision-making- Developing and strengthening decision-making was also a priority for the jurisdictions in the BSC. Strategies

Feedback from BSC Participants Surveyed:

- 98.9% indicated a better understanding of the issues (N=88)
- 96.5% better understanding of the role of structural and institutional racism (N=88)
- 95.5% indicated an increased awareness of the problem of disproportionality and disparate outcomes after joining the BSC (N=88)
- 90.8% indicated they have confidence in their ability to help plan future practice improvements to reduce racial disproportionality and disparity (N=87)
- 86.2% indicated they were going to continue to improve their efforts to improve disproportionality and disparate outcomes after the BSC (N=86)
- 85.2% reported having concrete ways to improve practice (N=87)
- 80.7% have identified and tested strategies as a result of the work on the BSC (N=87)
- 70.1% had implemented effective practice changes (N=84)
- 44.2% had implemented effective policy changes (N=80)

Note: A participant survey was administered at the final BSC convening. A total of 88 participants (90% of those in attendance) responded to the participant survey; however, some participants did not respond to every survey item.

developed to make decision-making more collaborative and effective included a 24-hour check-back initiative for new placements and a 48-hour family-community team meeting when CPS involvement appeared imminent.

Child welfare workforce development – The jurisdictions in the national BSC developed several strategies in the area of workforce development. Some of the efforts involved the personal work of the individual worker, supervisor, and manager around looking critically at issues of race, culture, and bias through trainings like *Undoing Racism*, *Knowing Who You Are*, and the video series *Race...The Power of an Illusion*. Other work involved developing workers' cultural competency for working with children and families of diverse backgrounds. And still other efforts related to policy changes in hiring, performance evaluation, and training practices to better address race and cultural considerations.

Agency policies, protocols and procedures – Several jurisdictions developed policies and procedures to work toward practice and system shifts to be responsive to the cultural needs of children and families and to ensure that same level of quality service from contracted agencies.

Roles of Judges and the Judicial System - The role of the judicial branch in the child welfare process was explored through the national BSC. Judges are a critical part of the child welfare decision-making process, and there is an important role that the judicial system plays in the systemic change effort around eliminating disproportionality and disparities.

In addition, some of the leadership and faculty from the national BSC will be working on the California Disproportionality Project directly with the teams to continue the forward movement and momentum of all of the great work that has come before and continues.

Section 4. Key Elements of the California Disproportionality Project

In May 2007, 47 experts from throughout California and the nation came together for a two-day meeting to develop a framework for the California Disproportionality Project building on the lessons learned from the national Disproportionality BSC and other work around eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities.

From this expert meeting, a framework and self-assessment tool to help guide this Project was developed. The key elements of the framework are as follows:

- ❖ **Building Authentic Tribal¹ and Community Partnerships.** The public child welfare agency (PCWA) works with Tribes/Sovereign Nations and the communities from which children come to create common language and a

¹ For purposes of this document, the terms "Tribe" and "Tribal communities" are intended to refer broadly to Native American Tribes that experience disproportionality and disparities in outcomes in child welfare. When working in jurisdictions, the framework and self-assessment tool will be modified to clearly and explicitly name the specific Tribes and Sovereign Nations being addressed.

shared understanding about racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare. The PCWA, together with the Tribe/community, develops strategies and evaluates data to determine the impact of policies, programs, practices, and decisions designed to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities. This work is rooted in the Tribe's/community's values, as defined by the Tribe/community itself. The PCWA responds to a Tribal/community driven process to support the development and provision of needed racially and culturally appropriate services as identified by the Tribe/community, including services focused on prevention and diversion from child welfare involvement in the neighborhoods from which children come.

- ❖ **Collecting and Using Data.** The PCWA compiles quarterly information regarding patterns of decisions that includes age, race, ethnicity, and gender. The PCWA uses a Self-Evaluation Team, of which birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, and community members are active representatives. Self-Evaluation Team meetings and staff meetings (administrative, management, supervisory) review data related to racial disproportionality and disparities; develop a range of strategies designed to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities; and review the effectiveness of these strategies.
- ❖ **Raising Awareness and Providing Training.** The PCWA facilitates conversations and convenings with birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, service providers, staff, and partners from other agencies and organizations that serve these children, youth, and families to raise awareness about and inspire action to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities, using key data and information. Ongoing and continuous trainings are provided, particularly to all levels of PCWA staff and service providers, to raise awareness, develop clear and consistent language, create common understanding, analyze program, policy and system proposals through a racialized lens, and support forums for open dialogue.
- ❖ **Leading by Example.** The PCWA Director convenes and leads a group of internal and external stakeholders, including birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, service providers, staff, and partners from other agencies and organizations that serve these children, youth, and families, to develop a strategic plan for understanding and addressing racial disproportionality and disparities. As part of this strategic plan, the PCWA Director facilitates the development of clear and consistent messages and communications about this work.
- ❖ **Engaging Birth Families and Youth as Authentic Partners.** The PCWA provides birth families and youth with the information and access to resources they need to help them become successful parents and strong self-advocates. The PCWA partners with birth families and youth when developing and implementing agency policies, programs, practices, and decisions that support equitable treatment for all children, youth, birth families, resource families, and staff served by, and working for the agency.

- ❖ **Engaging the Broader Child Welfare System²**. The PCWA engages “formal” partners, including provider agencies and other public agencies that serve the children, youth, and families involved with the PCWA, to evaluate data to determine the impact of policies, programs, practices, and decisions designed to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities; create strategies to address the issues identified through data; and pool funding and resources to finance and support these strategies. Financial allocations and funding commitments made by the PCWA demonstrate the elimination of racial disproportionality and disparities in outcomes in child welfare as a priority.
- ❖ **Preventing, Diverting, and Ensuring Equity for Child Welfare Involvement.** The PCWA works closely with families, Tribes, members of the community, and informal organizations and agencies in the community to strengthen and support families and prevent them from entering the child welfare system. The PCWA uses a differential response approach that includes a focus on prevention and early intervention; actively engages families to address issues of safety and risk; and improves access to a broad range of appropriate services that are specific to individual families’ strengths and needs. Through raised awareness, education, and ongoing training (as described in K2), the PCWA eliminates racial disparities in referrals from mandated reporters, including hospitals and schools.
- ❖ **Achieving Practice and Decision-Making that Does Not Result in Racial Disproportionality and Disparities:** Policies and tools that guide PCWA practice are free from bias and do not perpetuate structural or institutional racism. The PCWA includes birth families, youth, and resource families in all planning and decisions that affect their lives. To ensure that practice-level decisions are free from structural and institutional racism and do not result in racial disproportionality and disparities, practice-level decisions are reviewed individually and in aggregate on a regular basis by birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community partners, and child welfare staff.
- ❖ **Ensuring Least Restrictive, Appropriate, and Supported Placements:** The PCWA works closely with birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, and partners from other agencies and organizations that serve these children, youth, and families to prevent placement whenever possible. When placement is necessary, the PCWA places with kin/fictive kin, as identified by the family, youth, and children themselves, as the first placement option. When kin/fictive kin are not viable options for placement, the PCWA recruits, develops, and supports resource families from the neighborhoods from which children come and places the children with those resource families. All resource families, whether kin/fictive kin, foster, adoptive, respite, or other caregivers, receive the same high-level support from the PCWA and are treated as authentic partners in the care of the children and youth as well as in the support of families to help achieve permanency.
- ❖ **Hiring, Promoting, and Supporting Staff:** The PCWA examines current human resources and staff development in policy, program, and practice to ensure that racially equitable hiring, promotion, and discipline practices are used consistently

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throughout the agency. The PCWA asserts in policy and practice that the elimination of racial disproportionality and disparities is the responsibility of all staff in the agency. The PCWA recognizes the critical role of supervisors and ensures that supervision of and support for staff is consistently provided in ways that focus explicitly on the connections between social worker practice, decision making, and racial disproportionality and disparities.

Section 5. Collaborative Expectations

A) Readiness

Although teams involved in the California Disproportionality Project will be at different stages of readiness, it is anticipated that there will be some fundamental similarities, particularly with respect to leadership involvement, a developed understanding of the issues, some experience in reviewing relevant local data, and some work and/or activities related to disproportionality and disparities (e.g., workgroups, community forums, conferences, model programs, practice strategies, training approaches, etc.).

B) Accountability

Teams participating in the Project will be tracking and reporting on key process and outcome-related measures. These measures are for improvement, not research; thus, data will not be compared across teams. Instead, teams will review their own progress, and reviewed together with the changes they have tested, will be able to assess whether their changes are resulting in improvements for children, youth, and families.

Measures will fall into five general categories:

- 1) Improved child and family outcomes - Reductions of entries; less time in care; increased exits out of care; increased reunifications
- 2) Increased awareness and understanding within the Core and Extended Team about eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities
- 3) Improved child welfare practice
- 4) Improved child welfare organizational culture
- 5) Improved community engagement and awareness around eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities

Project staff and faculty will provide technical assistance and support to teams in identifying and tracking specific measures in each of these categories to ensure that the data being collected and reviewed are meaningful and useful to the individual team. In addition, a self-assessment tool has been developed to support the Project and be a guide and resource to teams to measure their progress and identify benchmarks to move towards substantive change.

C) Team Make-up

Eligible applicants are a public child welfare agency within a county or the state. Everyone involved in the Project, at all levels and in all capacities, must be willing to explore and address their own values, attitudes and biases and how those impact policies, their practices, and their relationships with colleagues, families, and communities. The Project staff and faculty recognize the significant challenges inherent in this work and are fully committed to engaging with you and supporting you throughout the effort.

1) Two Required Teams: Core Team and Extended Team

Each selected team will be asked to convene a Core Team and an Extended Team, both of which will remain constant throughout the entire Project team. The first team, known as the "Core Team," will consist of seven individuals representing specific areas of expertise, as described below, along with the Senior Leader as the lead member. The Core Team participates on all Project conference calls, actively uses the extranet site, attends all four in-person learning sessions, and will have the primary responsibility for conducting the Project work.

The second team, known as the "Extended Team," will consist of a much larger group with broader expertise. The specific composition and size of this team will be at the discretion of the Core Team.

Required Core Team Composition (Seven Core Team members and a Senior Leader):

- ❖ **Lead - Senior Leader** -- The director/administrator/commissioner of the public or tribal child welfare agency applying on behalf of the Core Team; he or she will provide leadership, support, and advocacy on behalf of the team.

Team Members:

- ❖ **Day-to-Day Manager** -- This high-level manager from the child welfare agency will oversee the activities and guide the work of the Core Team. He or she must have immediate access to the senior leader.
- ❖ **Child Welfare Agency Line Worker** -- He or she is directly involved in decision making as a frontline child welfare worker.
- ❖ **Child Welfare Agency Line Supervisor** -- He or she works directly as a line supervisor of child welfare workers.
- ❖ **Birth Parent** -- This individual should have past or current involvement with the child welfare agency as a constituent of the system. He or she should not work for the child welfare agency in any capacity.

- ❖ **Young Person** -- This individual should have past or current involvement with the child welfare agency as a constituent of the system. He or she should not work for the child welfare agency in any capacity.
- ❖ **Community or Cross-System Partner** -- This partner can represent formal supports (e.g., schools, mental health, substance abuse) or informal support services (e.g., faith-based, community outreach organization) from the geographic area that serves the children and families in the target site.
- ❖ The **Seventh Member** of the Core Team is at the discretion of the senior leader and day-to-day manager.

Along with the expertise and experience we have described above for Core Team members, we have also learned from BSCs that it is important that all Core Team members possess several key characteristics. These characteristics include:

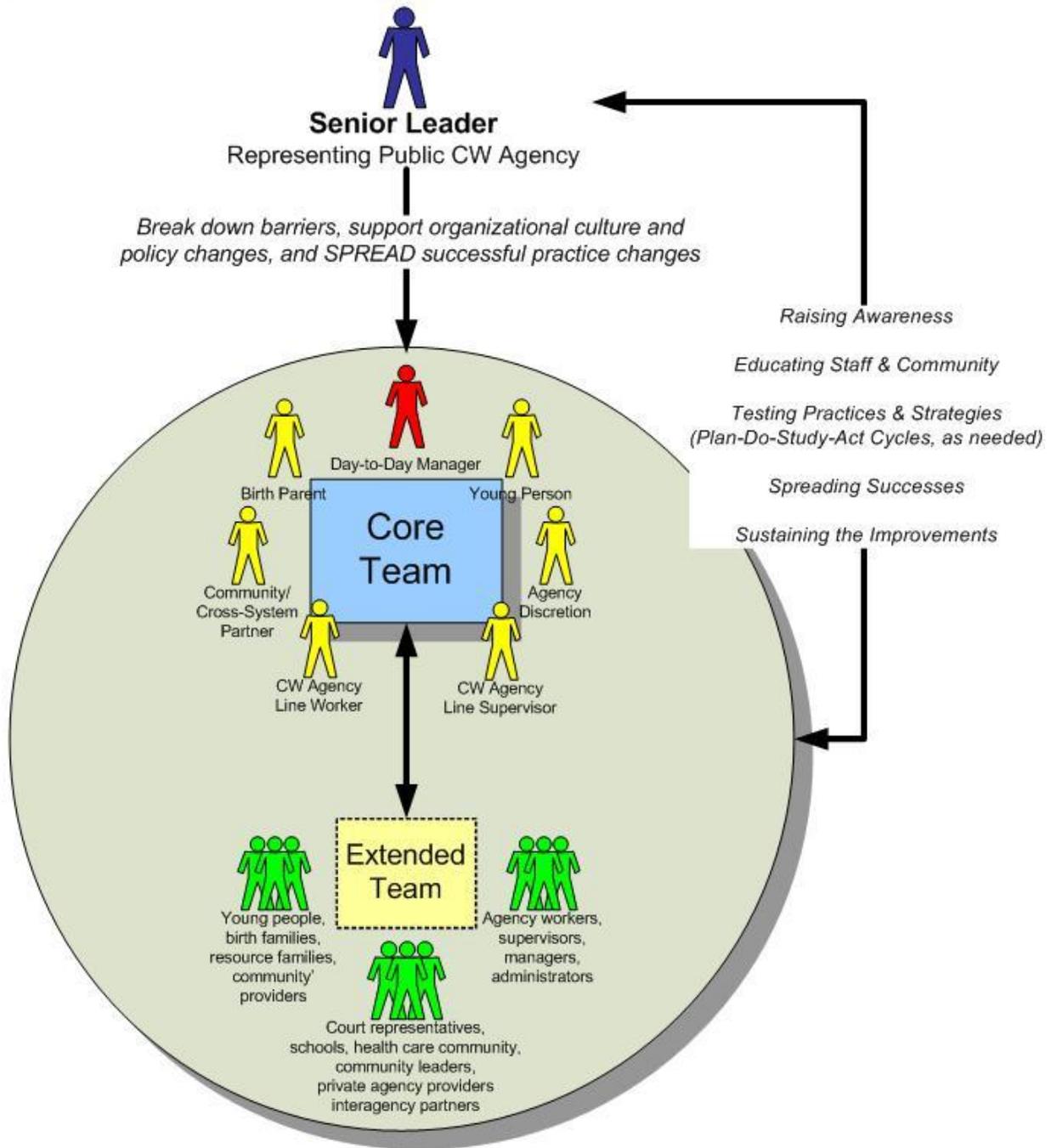
- ♦ Creative and innovative thinking;
- ♦ Being opinion leaders among peers and colleagues;
- ♦ Skills in working with others;
- ♦ Being good listeners;
- ♦ Open-mindedness to new ideas, ways of doing things, and changes;
- ♦ Adapting early to change; and
- ♦ Doing, rather than planning.

Extended Team Composition

For the California Disproportionality Project, the Extended Teams should minimally consist of key public agency partners serving child welfare families, youth, and parents. Previous BSCs have taught us that effective Extended Teams also have diverse representation, including birth parents, young people, representatives of the court system, leaders from the children and families' communities, private service providers, and interagency partners. The Extended Team will expand the work of the Core Team; support the implementation and spreading of successful changes across the entire jurisdiction and the community; and assist in communicating the lessons learned to the broader community which the children and families come from. Extended Teams may grow in size as the work grows and develops over time.

The following graphic depicts the structure of these teams and the relationships between these multiple players.

California Disproportionality Project Structure



2) Individual and Team Responsibilities

Each participant on the Core Team has specific responsibilities based on his or her role. These are outlined below.

- ❖ **Senior Leader** -- This individual is responsible for the following areas of leadership:
 - ♦ Leadership in Practice
 - Play a strong role in selecting and convening the Core Team according to requirements and recommendations from Project faculty and staff;
 - Remove identified barriers that impede progress from occurring on a practice level, i.e., the use of culturally responsive tools and training;
 - Monitor appropriate outcomes for children and families; and
 - Expand successful practice changes throughout the jurisdiction.
 - ♦ Leadership in Infrastructure and System Improvements
 - Create innovative tests of policy changes;
 - Provide the team with the resources, including time, materials, and equipment, access to local experts, and support from agency leadership;
 - Support the spread of successful practice and policy changes in real time throughout the agency;
 - Confront organizational culture barriers that impede improvements from occurring, including addressing issues of institutional and structural racism; and
 - Monitor appropriate system-level outcomes and decision making for children and families in the child welfare system.
 - ♦ Leadership in Community Awareness and Action
 - Make entire jurisdiction aware of the work on eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities
 - Actively promote consumer and client engagement;
 - Actively engage the judicial branch, other government systems, advocates, community providers, and school systems in the change effort; and
 - Develop relationships with and educate diverse community groups who are equally committed to opening up the discussion on eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities
 - ♦ Project-Specific Tasks for Senior Leaders:
 - Attend four learning sessions;
 - Participate in all Project conference calls
 - Participate in senior leader conference calls; and
 - Provide time for the Core Team to attend all four learning sessions (all travel expenses will be paid for teams selected to receive scholarships).
- ❖ **Day-to-Day Manager** -- This person has the following roles:
 - ♦ Lead the Core Team in ensuring that the team conversation is genuine and that all voices, including those of families and young people, are heard.
 - ♦ Lead the Core Team in testing changes; and

- ♦ Serve as the primary team liaison to the Project staff and faculty.
 - ♦ Project-Specific Tasks for Day-to-Day Managers:
 - Submit required reports and other assignments in a timely manner;
 - Ensure that data, monthly reports, and lessons learned are shared with team members and agency staff;
 - Attend four learning sessions; and
 - Update the senior leader on progress and team challenges.
- ❖ **Core Team** -- The members of the team will actively test changes in the target site as well as:
- ♦ Attend four learning sessions;
 - ♦ Complete pre-work, prior to the first learning session, which includes coming prepared to the first learning session with clear goals for practice and system improvements;
 - ♦ Ensure that birth families and young people are actively engaged as true and equal partners within the Core Team, Extended Team and in larger system discussions;
 - ♦ Communicate regularly with other teams, Project staff and faculty;
 - ♦ Participate on Project conference calls once per month;
 - ♦ Participate and share learnings where appropriate;
 - ♦ Use required data measures to help assess progress and guide future improvements;
 - ♦ Initiate, maintain, and evaluate the work; and
 - ♦ Participate in a larger evaluation of the Project.
- ❖ **Extended Team** -- Team Members will:
- ♦ Actively engage in the change process to improve outcomes related to eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities;
 - ♦ Provide feedback and insight to the senior leader and Core Team on racial disproportionality and disparities, practice and policy changes, and future improvements; and
 - ♦ Serve as vocal and active champions of this work throughout the broader community.

Section 6. Team Selection Process

Interested teams will submit their application (per the instructions that follow in Section 7). Applications will be reviewed by a panel consisting of California Disproportionality project sponsors, staff, and faculty.

The criteria for reviewing applications and selecting teams will include:

- ♦ **Agency Description and Readiness**
 - Leadership and agency attention to and dedication of resources related to awareness and decision making with the child welfare agency about the issue of racial disproportionality and disparities.
 - Collection and use of data to monitor outcomes and inform decision making.
 - Identification of barriers and challenges and strategies for reducing those barriers and challenges.
 - Agency rationale and goal for participation in the Project.
- ♦ **Team Composition**
 - Meet the pre-identified criteria.
 - All Core Team members have been clearly identified, with rationales for each clearly noted.
- ♦ **Demonstration Examples**
 - Approach to system change.
 - Integrating data into the work and the discussions around the issues.
 - Role of birth parent and/or youth in agency system improvement.
 - Community or cross-system partner engagement and partnership.

Our goal is to select teams that:

- ♦ Are excited to make changes and have proposed senior leaders, teams, and the infrastructure necessary to make systemic changes;
- ♦ Demonstrate the commitment of a senior leader to removing necessary barriers and supporting changes throughout the system;
- ♦ Exhibit a desire and commitment to championing this work to promote and develop innovative new practices to reduce and eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities;
- ♦ Display a willingness to implement rapid and widespread changes in organizations and the services they provide;
- ♦ Show a documented history of agency commitment to improve or enhance policy or practice in regards to eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities;
- ♦ Are committed to including the community, including community agencies, families and youth, in activities, as well as in policy development and implementation efforts in relation to eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities.

Next steps for selected teams invited to participate in the California Disproportionality Project:

- ♦ Based on the results of the panel review of applications, jurisdictions will be selected to participate in the California Disproportionality Project.
- ♦ If additional information is needed by the review panel, applicants may be contacted for a brief interview to provide additional clarifying information.
- ♦ Selected participants will receive technical and administrative support throughout the term of the project, as well as travel, hotel, and associated meals for the four learning sessions.
- ♦ All teams will be selected and notified on or about June 30, 2008.
- ♦ A series of conference calls will be conducted prior to the convening to explain processes and answer questions.
- ♦ The first convening will be scheduled sometime in November/December 2008 and will be held in Sacramento.

Section 7. Written Application

California Disproportionality Project Cover Sheet

County/State Child Welfare Agency Name	
Name of Contact Person	
Contact Person's Title	
Contact Person's Telephone Number	
Contact Person's Fax Number	
Contact Person's E-mail Address	
Contact Person's Mailing Address	
Summary of Team Focus (25 words or less)	

**E-mail or fax completed application, including cover sheet
no later than 5:00 p.m. on June 10, 2008 to:
acrowe@casey.org (e-mail) or 877-881-9975 (fax)**

Please use the following guidelines in submitting your application:

- ♦ *Clearly note your responses by responding to each question sequentially and including the number corresponding to each question below.*
- ♦ *Adhere to the maximum number of pages allotted for each of the parts as stated below.*
- ♦ *Include continuous and sequential page numbers in your application.*
- ♦ *Our preferred font is Arial, 11 point font size, single-spaced.*
- ♦ *No additional materials should be submitted with this application.*

PART 1 -- AGENCY DESCRIPTION AND READINESS

(DO NOT EXCEED 10 PAGES FOR PARTS 1 AND 2 OF THE APPLICATION)

1. Describe how receptive the culture and leadership of your agency and/or county are to tackling the issues of disproportionality and disparities. In responding to this question you should include a description of the types of efforts agency/county leaders have taken that will help you address this issue.
2. Describe how receptive the political climate of your county is to tackling the issues of disproportionality and disparities. In responding to this question you should include a description of what is happening within the political environment so that these issues can be heard and addressed.
3. Discuss the data that indicate that disproportionality and disparities are major issues for your county. These data may include service data, permanency data, reasons for coming into care, visits with birth parents, etc. Be as specific as possible in describing what these data tell you.
4. Describe what specific actions your agency and/or county has taken in the past 12 months to address the issues of disproportionality and disparities. (This might include specific practice shifts, staff education and conversations, community education and conversations, partnerships with community, etc.)
5. Describe what specific actions your agency and/or county has taken in the past 12 months to engage and include young people, birth parents, caregivers, and community partners as true partners in system improvement efforts. Please be as specific as possible about who was involved, how they were engaged, and how their inclusion impacted the work.
6. Name up to four key barriers and challenges the agency and/or county face in changing the rates of children of color entering the system and their disparate outcomes, as well as future plans for eliminating or reducing these barriers.
7. Describe your team's goals and expectations for participating in the California Disproportionality Project. Please be as specific as possible.

PART 2 – TEAM COMPOSITION

8. Who from your agency/team do you expect will lead this project at a high-level serving in the Senior Leader role? What is their current role in the agency and how do you see their involvement in this work? (This person should provide high-level organizational support to ensure that this work is an active part of the ongoing agency agenda. Please include this person's name and title.)
9. Who is the proposed day-to-day manager for this project? Please include the name, title, and a brief description of this manager's demonstrated commitment to these issues and why you have selected this person. How does the agency plan to ensure that this manager has adequate time, resources, and support to do this work?
10. Describe the proposed membership of the agency's Core Team. Please include the role each individual is expected to play, and indicate the ways in which each will contribute to the team's success (day-to-day manager, agency staff, birth parents, young people, etc.).
11. Describe the types of key public agency partners, organizational representatives, and community members you plan to include in this work on the Extended Team. Please explain the rationale for this team's composition, and how the team's membership will be selected.

PART 3 – SCENARIO DEMONSTRATIONS

(DO NOT EXCEED 2 PAGES FOR PART 3 OF THE APPLICATION)

For the following, please respond to two (2) of the four Scenario Demonstration. You may select and answer any two of the four Scenario Demonstrations of your choosing. Each response should be no longer than one page Arial, 11 point font size, single-spaced.

A. SCENARIO DEMONSTRATION 1 – TAKING A LEADERSHIP ROLE ON THE ISSUE

Please describe a situation the agency has encountered in the past 2 years where you had to: a) defend your agency practices as you were trying to address disproportionality; **OR** b) where you had to challenge existing community practices that you believe contribute to disproportionality.

Please describe a conversation in which your agency was recently engaged that best depicts your jurisdiction's political climate around the issue of disproportionality.

B. SCENARIO DEMONSTRATION 2 – SYSTEM CHANGE

In many agencies changes often occur or are achieved using a "top down" approach. Please provide an example of a change in your agency that was achieved using a "bottom up" approach. Please include the strategies used to communicate the change and to obtain the buy in of your agency's leadership.

C. SCENARIO DEMONSTRATION 3 – USE OF DATA AS A TEACHING TOOL

Please describe the steps your agency has undertaken to make collection of data on disproportionality, race, ethnicity and disparities a high priority.

What specific barriers has your agency faced in collecting/obtaining these types of data? Please describe one example of how a barrier to collecting data was surmounted.

Please describe up to three examples of how the agency uses data to raise questions, inform decisions, and/or change policies and practices?

D. SCENARIO DEMONSTRATION 4 – ROLE OF BIRTH FAMILIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN AGENCY SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

Please describe a specific way in which the perspectives shared by birth families and young people served by the child welfare system informed policy or practice within your agency. In what ways has this inclusion process been valuable to your agency?

Self-Assessment Tool

The purpose of this self-assessment tool is to support public child welfare agencies (PCWA) in assessing their strengths and challenges related to eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities in outcomes for children and families of color involved with the child welfare system. Results from this tool should be used by PCWAs to develop a comprehensive workplan that will guide continuous improvements.

In using this tool, PCWAs should assemble a diverse group, including PCWA staff at all levels, birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, service providers, and cross-system partners. This tool should be used as the basis of discussion for this group, with the questions in each category serving as prompts to ensure that the difficult questions are being asked and discussed. The overall objective of this tool is to facilitate the challenging conversations that must take place in order to address the issues of racial disproportionality and disparities, thus completing it as part of a group process is essential. After discussing the questions provided here, as well as reflecting on additional questions that others may have, the group should agree upon the sentence in each row that best applies.

Based on the intensity and complexity of this work, jurisdictions should not expect to complete this tool in one sitting. Instead, these discussions and ratings should happen over the course of several meetings. By identifying the stage in which the jurisdiction's work most closely fits, the group will then be able to develop a comprehensive workplan both to sustain the progress that has already been made as well as to focus more closely and intentionally on those areas that need improvement. As changes are made across the system to address the issues of racial disproportionality and disparities, the full group (including birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, service providers, and cross-system partners) should be reconvened, per the target dates established in the workplan, to complete the appropriate sections of the self-assessment again to assess progress and re-assess priorities.

K1. Building Authentic Tribal and Community Partnerships

- a. How has the PCWA intentionally engaged the Tribe and/or community to ensure that the Tribe's/community's values are articulated and heard? How does the PCWA prepare and train staff to ensure that the Tribe's/community's values and the importance of Tribal/community partnership are understood? How is this communicated to staff through expectations, encouraging social relationships, and creating learning and sharing opportunities to create working partnerships with Tribes/communities where children and families are disproportionately represented and have disparate outcomes in the child welfare system?
- b. How are Tribal/community members included as partners with the child welfare agency for both policy development and specific case planning? How are Tribal/community values reflected in child welfare agency practices and policies? What are the key events in the Tribe's and/or communities' histories related to racial, ethnic, and cultural inequities (both positive and negative events) that impact these values?

Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparities: Key Elements & Self-Assessment Tool

- c. What services are readily available within the Tribe/community for families, youth, and children of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural populations? How do PCWA staff work with, engage, and utilize culturally appropriate, Tribal-based/community-based resources, including informal Tribal/community supports, e.g. youth centers, faith-based organizations?
- d. How has the PCWA worked with the Tribe/community to develop needed services in areas where families are at risk of becoming involved with the PCWA and children and youth are at risk of being removed or have been removed?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
1a.1 The PCWA does not engage the Tribes/communities where children reside in discussions explicitly focused on racial disproportionality and disparities at the beginning of this work.	1a.2 The PCWA has discussions with the Tribe/community about racial disproportionality and disparities using its own language and definitions. Some staff have relationships and partnerships with the Tribe/community, but this is on top of their other job responsibilities and expectations.	1a.3 The PCWA uses language and definitions informed by the Tribe/community itself to talk about racial disproportionality and disparities. Some staff have Tribal/community partnership and support as a key responsibility in their job description. These partnerships reflect PCWA values of shared power and inclusion with Tribal/community members' active participation.	1a.4 The PCWA has ongoing and regular conversations with the Tribe/community about racial disproportionality and disparities. These conversations are used to inform staff training, expectations, and responsibilities. Language defined by the Tribe/community is used in PCWA policies, programs, and practices. Most PCWA staff believe that working with the Tribe/community is a part of their every day job responsibilities.	1a.5 The PCWA has created a process by which the Tribe/community itself drives the discussions around racial disproportionality and disparities. Members of the Tribe/community serve as trainers for the PCWA to help ensure that staff understand the importance of engaging and listening to the Tribe/community around these issues. Developing and nurturing Tribal/community relationships is part of PCWA staff job responsibilities, reviews, and evaluations.
1b.1 The PCWA does not include or value the voice of Tribes/communities where children reside in discussions around racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare outcomes. Key events in the Tribe's/community's racial, ethnic, and	1b.2 The PCWA has evaluated data around issues of racial disproportionality and disparities and begun conversations with Tribal/community partners around data evaluation and its impact and implications for the children, their families, and their Tribe/community.	1b.3 The PCWA has developed partnerships within the Tribe/community to address issues of racial disproportionality and disparities. These partnerships are rooted in explicit discussions about the Tribe's/community's history and key racial, ethnic, and cultural events that have shaped the Tribe's/community's values.	1b.4 The PCWA and Tribal/community partners have developed strategies that are family-centered and Tribal-based/community-based to address issues of racial disproportionality and disparities. A shift in PCWA practice and in grassroots contracted service provision reflects these strategies.	1b.5 The PCWA and Tribal/community partners regularly evaluate outcome data and strategies implemented to address racial disproportionality and disparities. The PCWA and Tribal/community partnership strategies have impacted racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparities: Key Elements & Self-Assessment Tool

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
cultural past are ignored by the PCWA.				
1c.1 The PCWA does not evaluate or contract with providers that explicitly have racial awareness or competence serving families of color.	1c.2 The PCWA has begun to review and evaluate contracts with service providers to assess if service provision is addressing issues related to race and offered in the Tribes/communities where children of color reside. Discussions with providers around issues of racial disproportionality and disparity has begun.	1c.3 The PCWA develops clear expectations to providers around service provision to families of color.	1c.4 The PCWA issues contracts with clear value statements related to expectations around contract deliverables that support and address issues related to families of color.	1c.5 The PCWA holds and evaluates contracts with service providers that ensure service provision reflects values of anti-racism provided in communities where families of color reside.
1d.1 The PCWA does not provide any additional funding to support capacity development in the Tribe/community.	1d.2 The PCWA knows that additional funds are needed for the Tribe/community to support families and prevent child welfare agency involvement. The PCWA recognizes the need for Tribal-based/community-based services to prevent and support placement and maintain children and youth in their Tribes/communities of origin.	1d.3 The PCWA actively works with other systems and partners to secure funds for the Tribe/community to support families and prevent child welfare agency involvement, prevent placement, and support placement when it is necessary.	1d.4 The PCWA listens to the Tribe/community as it identifies its own needs and develops formal partnerships with other systems and partners to secure funding to develop service capacity within the Tribe/community based on these Tribal/community-identified needs.	1d.5 The PCWA secures and allocates funding in the Tribe/community to support families and prevent child welfare agency involvement. Tribal-based/community-based services are responsive to the needs identified by the Tribe/community itself and are available and accessible for birth and resource families to support placement, reunification, and other types of permanency. Funding is leveraged to ensure sustained funding over an extended period of time.

K2. Collecting and Using Data

- a. What systems are in place by the PCWA to gather practice-level data specific to outcomes for children, youth, and families of color? How does the PCWA track necessary and appropriate information? How does the PCWA verify that staff enter valid and timely information?
- b. How are data on the racial, ethnic, and cultural breakdowns across decision points shared with PCWA staff? How are individual PCWA staff supported in interpreting these data?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
2a.1 The PCWA does not regularly collect data.	2a.2 The PCWA regularly collects data on age, race, ethnicity, and gender.	2a.3 The PCWA regularly collects key decision point data on age, race, ethnicity, and gender.	2a.4 The PCWA regularly collects, tracks, analyzes, and uses data on age, race, ethnicity, and gender and shares this data with key Tribal/community stakeholders and partners to develop a concrete plan.	2a.5 The PCWA use longitudinal data on age, race, ethnicity, and gender to continuously evaluate and improve program, policy, practice and placement to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities.
2b.1 The PCWA does not make data on race, ethnicity, and culture easily accessible to staff at all levels.	2b.2 PCWA staff at all levels of the agency recognize data as an important tool for tracking agency and individual workers practice, although they do not have access to most data, particularly around the impact of decision making on racial disproportionality and disparities.	2b.3 PCWA staff at all levels have access to compiled data to understand the nature and extent of racial disproportionality and disparities. These data are aggregated and focused on key decision points.	2b.4 Data that notes trends by worker/unit/division in the PCWA to measure connections between practice and outcomes and ensure accountability is gathered and reviewed by staff at all levels.	2b.5 PCWA staff, together with families, youth, and Tribal/community members, actively use decision point data on a continuous basis. These data are used to inform practice and policy changes. Improvements are demonstrated in these data toward the elimination of racial disproportionality and disparities.

K3. Raising Awareness and Providing Training

- a. How does the PCWA encourage (or require) diversity and cultural competency training at all levels of the agency? How are child welfare workers trained specifically about racial inequities, disproportionate representation, and disparate outcomes for children and families of color?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
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Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
3a.1 The PCWA has no trainings in place that focus explicitly on racial inequities, disproportionality, or disparities.	3a.2 Trainings on racial disproportionality <u>or</u> disparities are required for all staff.	3a.3 The PCWA provides training and forums for dialogue on racial disproportionality and disparities. A diverse group, including PCWA staff, birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, and community partners work together to plan the trainings and forums.	3a.4 Participation in trainings and forums for dialogue on racial disproportionality and disparities are required for all PCWA staff.	3a.5 Data on cultural awareness, competency, and respect are collected to ensure PCWA staff practice in these ways. These data are reviewed by PCWA staff, birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, and community members and corrective action plans, including additional training when necessary, are put into place.

K4. Leading by Example

- a. How does the PCWA leadership demonstrate a commitment to addressing the issues of racial disproportionality and disparities?
- b. How is a commitment to addressing racial disproportionality and disparities reflected in the PCWA’s vision, mission, values, and goals?
- c. What is the PCWA’s message about racial disproportionality and disparities? How is it backed by data? How has the PCWA embedded that message throughout the organization? What specific strategies are used to communicate around the issues of racial disproportionality and disparities?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
4a.1 The PCWA leader does not believe that the issue of racial disproportionality and disparities exists in the policy, program, or practice of the agency.	4a.2 The PCWA leader/director publicly acknowledges that the agency has a problem with racial disproportionality and disparities and is committed to addressing it.	4a.3 The PCWA leader/director commits resources to planning and convene a group of internal and external key community stakeholders to review agency data, engage in trainings/dialogues on racism and racial disproportionality and disparities, and determine a strategic response.	4a.4 The PCWA leader/director makes a public commitment to a plan addressing racial disproportionality and disparities and dedicates resources to implementing the strategies in that plan.	4a.5 The PCWA mission, vision, values, policies and protocols have been altered to support anti-racist practice and the key decision point data are beginning to reflect a positive change in outcomes for children, youth, and families of color.
4b.1 The PCWA	4b.2 The issue of diversity	4b.3 The issues of diversity	4b.4 The issues of diversity,	4b.5 The PCWA’s written

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
does not acknowledge diversity, disproportionality, disparities, or structural racism in its vision, mission, values, or goals.	is reflected in the PCWA’s vision, mission, values, <u>or</u> goals	and racial disproportionality are reflected in the PCWA’s vision, mission, values, <u>and</u> goals.	racial disproportionality, and racial disparities are reflected in the PCWA’s vision, mission, values, <u>and</u> goals.	policies, along with the vision, mission, values, and goals of the agency, reflect the issues of diversity, racial disproportionality, racial disparities, and structural racism.
4c.1 Information about racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare is not clearly or consistently communicated within the PCWA, to families, youth, Tribal members, community members, or cross-system partners.	4c.2 The PCWA has a clear message about racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare rooted in conceptual beliefs and values. The message is delivered by a few PCWA leaders on a periodic basis.	4c.3 The PCWA has worked together with birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, and cross-system partners to develop a clear and consistent about racial disproportionality and disparities. The message is rooted solidly in PCWA data that clearly demonstrates the magnitude of the problem.	4c.4 The PCWA, together with birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, and cross-system partners, has developed a clear communications plan and strategy to deliver this message to a variety of audiences. This communications strategy engages families, youth, community members, cross-system partners, and PCWA staff at all levels as messengers.	4c.5 The broader community has a clear understanding of the PCWA’s beliefs and role in addressing the issue of racial disproportionality and disparities as demonstrated by clear and fair reporting by the media, legislative support/political will, and vocal advocacy for the work across the jurisdiction.

K5. Engaging Birth Families and Youth as Authentic Partners

- a. How are youth engaged and included in planning and decision making about their own lives in meaningful and authentic ways?
- b. How are birth families engaged and included in planning and decision making about their own lives in meaningful and authentic ways?
- c. How does the PCWA engage birth families and youth in agency policy development and review, RFP responses, and funding decisions, as related to the issues of racial disproportionality and disparities? How are birth families and youth included in continuous quality improvement and overall PCWA review processes with a focus on racial disproportionality and disparities? How does the PCWA train, support, and pay birth families and youth to participate with the agency in these ways?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
5a.1 The PCWA leader does not	5a.2 The PCWA recognizes the value of	5a.3 The PCWA is open and responsive to informed	5a.4 The PCWA has incorporated the values and	5a.5 The PCWA collects, analyzes, and shares data on

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
recognize the value of including youth in planning and decision making, nor does the PCWA understand the connection between including youth and biased decision making.	including the voices of youth in planning and decision making.	opinions and input from youth and youth advocates realizing they are primary and valued partners in the racial disproportionality and disparities movement.	strategies of youth engagement into agency policy.	the youth engagement activities and outcomes, and the impact this work has in eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities.
5b.1 The PCWA leader does not recognize the value of including birth families in planning and decision making, nor does the PCWA understand the connection between including birth families and biased decision making.	5b.2 The PCWA recognizes the value of including the voices of birth families in planning and decision making.	5b.3 The PCWA is open and responsive to informed opinions and input from parent advocates/mentors realizing they are primary and valued partners in the racial disproportionality and disparities movement.	5b.4 The PCWA has incorporated the values and strategies of birth family engagement into agency policy.	5b.5 The PCWA collects, analyzes, and shares data on the birth family engagement activities and outcomes, and the impact this work has in eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities.
5c.1 Birth families and youth are not routinely involved in agency planning or decision making activities.	5c.2 The PCWA develops plans to train birth families, parent advocates/partners, youth, and staff on the impact of racial disproportionality and disparities on the outcomes for children in out of home placement.	5c.3 The PCWA provides the resources needed to support birth families, parent advocates/mentors, and youth to participate in policy and decision making activities, and to work with other birth families and youth involved with the child welfare system.	5c.4 Birth families, parent advocates/mentors, and youth are represented in all strategy workgroups, particularly those groups working to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities. The PCWA expands its hiring practices to include birth families, parent advocates/mentors, youth, and direct services staff of different ethnicities and from different backgrounds. Birth families, parent advocates/mentors and	5c.5 The PCWA ensures training/education opportunities from various sources in and outside the agency are available to all birth families and youth involved with child welfare, progressing toward the goal of eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities. Birth families, parent advocates/mentors, and youth are trained to use and share data as a means to promote betterment, self-

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
			youth are co-located with direct services staff.	advocacy, and system reform. Birth families and youth are financially supported by the PCWA to be active partners in this work. Birth families and youth hold the PCWA accountable for improved outcomes related to disproportionality and disparities.

K6. Engaging the Broader Child Welfare System¹

- a. What cross-system partners has the PCWA engaged in this work? How has the PCWA engaged them? In what capacities are they partnering with the PCWA?
- b. What funding streams exist, within or external to the PCWA, to intentionally support this work?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
6a.1 The PCWA has not formally engaged any cross-system partners specifically around the issue of racial disproportionality and disparities.	6a.2 The PCWA has identified key cross-system partners and has initiated discussions about racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare.	6a.3 The PCWA has met with cross-system partners. They have formed a formal group or team with regular meetings dedicated specifically to addressing racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system.	6a.4 The PCWA, together with cross-system partners, has taken action to address racial disproportionality and disparities. Policies and practices have been changed and data are beginning to demonstrate improvements.	6a.5 The PCWA, together with cross-system partners, has formal collaborations with cross-system partners to ensure that children, youth, and families who interact with multiple systems receive comprehensive and integrated support. Cross-system data demonstrate improved outcomes and reduced racial disproportionality and disparities.
6b.1 The PCWA is not actively pursuing any additional	6b.2 The PCWA recognizes that additional funds are needed to	6b.3 The PCWA, together with cross-system partners, has identified additional	6b.4 The PCWA, together with cross-system partners, has secured funds to explicitly	6b.5 Funding secured by the PCWA and its cross-system partners has been allocated

¹ The “Broader Child Welfare System” refers to other agencies and organizations that serve children, youth, and families involved with, or at risk of involvement with, the child welfare agency. This system includes, but is not limited to, courts, schools, juvenile justice, welfare, mental health, and public health.

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
funding resources to address racial data are beginning to demonstrate improvements..	explicitly support this work across the child welfare system.	funds to explicitly support this work across the child welfare system.	support this work across the child welfare system. A resource and staffing plan for this integrated work has been developed.	across the system to explicitly focus on addressing racial disproportionality and disparities. The programs and staff needed to do this work have been hired and the collaborative work has begun.

K7. Preventing, Diverting, and Ensuring Equity for Child Welfare Involvement

- a. How does the PCWA work with birth families, Tribes, members of the community, the informal organizations in the Tribe/community, and other agencies and organizations that serve children, youth, and families to strengthen and support families of color in an effort to prevent and/or divert child welfare intervention?
- b. How does the PCWA provide training and awareness to mandated reporters about racial disproportionality and disparities? How are these trainings used to eliminate disparities in reporting children and families of color to the child welfare agency?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
7a.1 The PCWA focuses its work exclusively on children, youth, and families who rise to the level of needing child welfare intervention. It does not work with the Tribe/community or other agencies/partners to prevent or divert children, youth, or families of color from entering the child welfare system.	7a.2 The PCWA uses a model of Differential or Alternative Response to work with the Tribe/community and other agencies/partners to support children, youth, and families of color who need support and strengthening, but do not rise to the level of direct child welfare involvement.	7a.3 The PCWA leads Tribal/community partnerships through Differential or Alternative Response to develop services and supports focused on preventing children, youth, and families of color from needing child welfare intervention. The PCWA actively engages families who are not involved directly with the agency to address issues of safety and risk.	7a.4 The PCWA has staff dedicated to the prevention and diversion of children, youth, and families of color from entering the child welfare system. These staff have formal partnerships with the Tribe/community to strengthen and support children, youth, and families within their own communities. The PCWA accesses a range of appropriate services in the community that are specific to the strengths and needs of families of color, regardless of the families' child welfare involvement.	7a.5 The PCWA is viewed by families and the Tribe/community as a service and support for children, youth, and families of color. Other agencies serving children, youth, and families of color regularly access services and supports directly through the PCWA. A wide range of appropriate services that are specific to the strengths and needs of families of color are easily and openly accessed in the Tribes/communities in which the families live.
7b.1 The PCWA does not provide any training to mandated	7b.2 The PCWA provides training to mandated reporters on a one-time	7b.3 The PCWA provides training to mandated reporters about racial	7b.4 The PCWA provides regular and ongoing trainings to mandated reporters about racial	7b.5 The PCWA provides regular and ongoing trainings to mandated reporters about

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
reporters specifically about diversity, racial disproportionality, or disparities.	basis focused on racial diversity, but does not address racial disproportionality or disparities.	disproportionality and disparities. Conversations are facilitated at this training to ensure that mandated reporters understand the impact of their reports on families, Tribes, and communities of color.	disproportionality and disparities. Youth and families of color along with Tribal/community members participate as trainers in these trainings. The PCWA is beginning to see changes in the rates at which children, youth, and families of color are reported.	racial disproportionality and disparities. Regular conversations take place between PCWA staff and mandated reporters about these issues. Dramatic improvements are seen in the rates at which children, youth, and families of color are reported, with no corresponding changes in child safety, severity of reports, or repeat maltreatment.

K8. Achieving Practice and Decision-Making that Does Not Result in Racial Disproportionality and Disparities

- a. How does the PCWA develop, review, and revise policies to ensure that they eliminate biases and do not perpetuate structural or institutional racism? How are tools developed and used by the child welfare agency at each of the key decision-points listed above to assess and address their impact on racial disproportionality and disparities?
- b. How do inclusive family-based decision making meetings, such as Team Decision Making meetings, demonstrate that PCWA staff are committed to engaging families and youth in all discussions and decisions about their own situations; focusing on families’ and youths’ strengths; and do so in ways that are inclusive regardless of families’/youths’ races, cultures, or ethnicities?
- c. How do PCWA workers and staff talk about the impact of racial disproportionality and disparities on practice and outcomes for children, youth, and families? How do PCWA workers and staff demonstrate respect for the individuals and families within the Tribe and/or community (including extended family)?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
8a.1 The PCWA has not reviewed agency policies or tools to assess their impact on decision making resulting in racial disproportionality and disparities.	8a.2 The PCWA has a strength-based, culturally competent safety, risk, and protective capacity tool.	8a.3 The PCWA has integrated strength-based, culturally competent safety, risk, and protective capacity tools in all decision-making processes.	8a.4 The PCWA is transparent in its decision making processes, clearly integrating strength-based, culturally competent safety, risk, and protective capacity tools in all decision-making processes. Birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, and community	8a.5 The PCWA, together with birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, and community members, continuously reassesses and updates its decision making tools and practices to ensure strength-based, culturally competent assessments are

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
			members are part of all review processes that assesses the use of these tools and the associated decisions.	being conducted. Data collected at all key decision points are reviewed to inform these reassessments and revisions.
8b.1 Family-based decision making meetings are not mandatory for all placement decisions; participation of families is sporadic; and the PCWA has not developed a pool of community representatives from communities of color. Fathers and significant others who have fathered children are not sought out to assure attendance at the table. Family-based decision making meeting data is not regularly used to plan and strengthen practice.	8b.2 Family-based decision making meeting facilitators are aware of racial disproportionality and disparities and how decisions made at the table can impact these disparities. The PCWA acknowledges the lack of Tribal/community participation at the table, as well as fathers, and has implemented strategies to engage communities of color in order to increase the pool of community representatives and to increase participation of fathers in family-based decision making meetings. The PCWA is beginning to use family-based decision making meeting data to plan and measure improvements.	8b.3 The PCWA has begun to look at the family-based decision making meeting data on a quarterly basis to analyze whether and to what extent racial disproportionality and disparities are evident in the decisions made at the table and services provided. Tribal and community partners in neighborhoods where there are high numbers of families of color receive regular family-based decision making meeting orientation opportunities and attend family-based decision making meetings as do fathers, service providers, and resource families.	8b.4 The PCWA uses its knowledge of structural and institutional racism to support family-based decision making meeting facilitators in becoming competent, confident, and committed 'gate keepers.' Strategies to impact racial disproportionality and disparities at the family-based decision making meeting table have been implemented, including awareness and content training of staff, facilitator skill-building, development of performance expectations regarding racial disparities, and service/practice provisions.	8b.5 Family-based decision making facilitators successfully gate keep, as evidenced by family-based decision making meeting data that reflects a significant and continuing improvement in racial disproportionality and disparities. Families of color attend family-based decision making meetings at a rate of 90% and people of color who represent the Tribe/community attend family-based decision making meetings at a rate of at least 75%. Fathers now participate in family-based decision making meetings at rate of 75%.
8c.1 PCWA staff do not talk about race, ethnicity, and culture and their impact on decision making or racial disproportionality and disparities.	8c.2 PCWA staff talk with families about their race, ethnicity, and culture, but PCWA staff do not believe that these factors impact their decisions.	8c.3 PCWA staff understand that their personal beliefs and experiences about race, ethnicity, and culture impact the decisions they make. The PCWA supports an environment where staff can talk freely about their beliefs, both generally as well as	8c.4 The PCWA requires all PCWA staff to attend training and address their personal beliefs about families, youth, and racial disproportionality and disparities prior to working directly with families and youth.	8c.5 Birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, and community members provide regular feedback to the PCWA about individual PCWA staff's performance as it relates to racial disproportionality and disparities. This feedback is

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
		related to the specific families, youth, and children with whom they are working.		used for training, supervision, and in performance reviews, and promotion decisions.

K9. Ensuring Least Restrictive, Appropriate, and Supported Placements

- a. How does the PCWA work with the Tribe/community to prevent placement while keeping children and youth safe? When placement is necessary, how does the PCWA engage birth families, youth, and Tribe to identify their own placements? How does the PCWA strive to place with and support kin whenever placement is necessary?
- b. When kin placements are not available, how does the PCWA engage the community and communities of color to ensure that resource families that look like and respect individual children’s and youth’s races, ethnicities, and cultures are available and prepared? What culturally appropriate strategies are used to recruit, train and license resource families from various racial and cultural backgrounds? How does the PCWA strive to keep children and youth with families (rather than congregate care) whenever placement is necessary?
- c. What strategies does the PCWA use to provide culturally appropriate, available, and ongoing support to all resource families equally, including kin, foster, adoptive, guardianship, and respite caregivers?
- d. How are resource families engaged and included as authentic partners with the PCWA, including participation in planning and decision making meetings?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
9a.1 The PCWA does not strive to identify non-custodial parents (fathers) and engage them as a first priority when placement is necessary.	9a.2 The PCWA is aware of the importance non-custodial parents (fathers) can play in preventing placement and or achieving quick reunification and begins to devise strategies for identifying fathers and involving them in placement decisions.	9a.3 The PCWA has convened a group of birthparents, PCWA workers, and other key staff to discuss increasing the involvement of fathers and identify practice strategies to try.	9a.4 PCWA staff are trained, and rules and procedures address increasing father involvement in placement. The agency has devised specific plans and strategies to identify, engage and support birth fathers in assuming the care of their children.	9a.5 The PCWA has demonstrated marked improvement in the involvement of fathers at placement decisions, in using fathers as placement resources and father involvement with service plans.
9a.1 The PCWA does not strive to identify and engage kin as a	9a.2 The PCWA acknowledges the positive outcomes for children	9a.3 The PCWA has convened a workgroup consisting of PCWA staff,	9a.4 The PCWA implements specific strategies aimed at increasing the use of kinship care	9a.5 The PCWA has shown a significant increase of kin caregivers. Kin caregivers play

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
first priority when placement is necessary.	when placed with kin, has looked at outcomes for children placed with kin, and has shared this data across departments and with the community.	kin care providers, foster care staff, Tribal/community members, and others to address issues around kinship care and share ideas on how to build an effective kin care program.	for children needing placement and ensures that kinship families receive training, support, and rates of reimbursement which meet their specific needs and are on par with that of traditional/licensed foster care providers. The PCWA has shown a net increase of kin caregivers.	an active role in resource parent and staff training, recruitment, and PCWA policy and planning around kinship care programming. Kinship care supports, training, and reimbursement have been brought on par with that of licensed foster parents.
9b.1 The PCWA recruitment unit is unaware of the need to target recruitment for children of color and has no creative strategies to identify resource families in the communities where children of color reside. Recruitment is done as a "one size fits all" approach. Children and youth of color are often placed in congregate care.	9b.2 The PCWA has taken a critical look at its intake and placement data and identified diligent recruitment targets. Staff are encouraged to place children and youth of color in family settings whenever possible.	9b.3 The PCWA has convened a workgroup consisting of birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, community members, key family serving organizations, and members of the faith community from targeted community areas to discuss the specific recruitment needs of the identified community, brainstorm strategies, and form partnerships. The agency's training and licensure processes have been reviewed and redesigned with a goal of eliminating practices that discourage or do not actively support resource family recruitment, development and licensure from targeted communities.	9b.4 The PCWA has a concrete, action oriented recruitment plan that clearly outlines the roles of birth families, youth, resource families, Tribal members, and key community stakeholders in the recruitment through licensure process. The recruitment plan has clear benchmarks and data is used to track outcomes for families as they move through the process and assess the overall success of recruitment in targeted communities. The recruitment plan is comprised of customized strategies to engage specific communities of color. The PCWA has shown a net increase in resource families in the neighborhoods and communities where children live before they enter care and the number of children and youth of color being placed in congregate care settings is decreasing.	9b.5 Benchmarks for resource family recruitment and licensing in targeted areas have been achieved. There is a significant increase in the number of resource families that reflect the race, color, and national origin of the children needing foster/adoptive placements. There are no disparities in the services or supports that families of color receive during the training or licensing processes. Children and youth are placed in their own neighborhoods with culturally appropriate resources 90% of the time.
9c.1 The PCWA does	9c.2 The PCWA builds	9c.3 Peer to peer mentoring	9c.4 Resource families of color	9c.5 Resource families of color

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
not provide specific support to resource families on a Tribal, community, or neighborhood basis. The PCWA has a one-size-fits-all model of resource family support. Staff in both the public and private agencies are unaware of the need to be racially and culturally respectful and supportive to resource families.	networks of support with and for resource families in communities of color. These networks are actively supported by the PCWA through regular meetings.	programs are created from the support networks. Experienced resource families of color are identified, trained, supported, and paid to fill staff positions that support other resource families. New and innovative supports are identified. Strategic plans are developed to create and deliver services and supports. The PCWA has allocated money, time, and staff to ensure that all staff are culturally respectful and supportive to all resource families.	actively mentor and train other resource families as well as PCWA staff. These mentors and trainers are paid and supported by the PCWA. Supports that reflect the racial and cultural values of the resource families are available and accessible. The PCWA's strategic plan includes objectives and activities that promote culturally respectful interactions and supports by all staff to all resource families.	report high levels of satisfaction in their interactions with the PCWA. They call the PCWA responsive, supportive, and culturally appropriate across their interactions. There are no differences in the licensing, utilization, or closure rates between resource families of different races or ethnicities.
9d.1 The PCWA has not oriented resource families of color on family-based decision making meetings and the importance of their presence at the family-based decision making table.	9d.2 The PCWA invites resource families of color to family-based decision making meetings, but does not make special efforts to provide them with orientation, training, or accommodations for their schedules.	9d.3 The PCWA provides resource families of color with training and orientation on family-based decision making. Resource families of color are specifically invited to express their beliefs and opinions at these meetings.	9d.4 Resource family participation is required for family-based decision making meetings. Resource families of color have multiple opportunities to communicate with PCWA staff about the children or youth in their care and their observations, recommendations, and concerns are heard and addressed.	9d.5 Resource families of color participate in 90% of all family-based decision making meetings where a child is in out of home care. Resource families of color are full partners in policy decisions affecting their services and the care of children in their homes. The PCWA hires resource families of color for agency positions focused on outreach, support, and retention of resource families.

K10. Hiring, Promoting, and Supporting Staff

- a. How does the PCWA's workforce, at all levels, reflect the diversity of the communities being served based on the general population or caseload population?

b. What types of supports are in place for PCWA staff to discuss concerns, challenges, or biases in open and safe ways? What type of supervision is in place to ensure that PCWA staff are held accountable for their practices related to these issues?

Pre-Awareness	Awareness	Commitment	Concrete Plans	Substantive Change
<p>10a.1 The PCWA does not collect statistics on the recruitment, training, hiring, retention, development, promotion and discipline of staff from a racial disproportionality and disparities perspective.</p>	<p>10a.2 The PCWA is aware of the demographics of its staff as well as the need for ethnic, racial, religious, socio-economic, and other relevant characteristics in hiring and promotional decisions.</p>	<p>10a.3 Policies and practices are being implemented in areas of recruitment, training, hiring, development, promotion and discipline of staff.</p>	<p>10a.4 The PCWA collects, reviews, and shares data on the promotion, hiring, and discipline of staff with Tribal and community members to enlist their support in recruiting staff. The agency has developed competencies for all positions including competencies in the area of racial disproportionality and disparities work.</p>	<p>10a.5 The PCWA has an external community council that regularly reviews the hiring, promotion, and discipline practices of the agency to ensure equitable treatment of social work staff. A competency-based system is in place and the agency is now implementing processes to support its work force from targeted communities through educational, internship, and promotional tracks.</p>
<p>10b.1 Issues related to the race, ethnicity, and culture of children, youth, and families are not part of PCWA supervision or support for staff.</p>	<p>10b.2 The PCWA provides training to supervisors about the impact of social work decisions on racial disproportionality and disparities.</p>	<p>10b.3 PCWA supervisors use individual case consultations with staff to focus on cross cultural and cross racial issues and how they affect practice and racial disproportionality and disparities.</p>	<p>10b.4 PCWA supervisors focus on racial disproportionality and disparities with staff during individual case consultations and during group supervision. Staff are invited to discuss their own biases, concerns, and challenges in working with families, youth, and children of various races, ethnicities, and cultures.</p>	<p>10b.5 PCWA staff address issues related to racial disproportionality and disparities during all conversations about individual families, youth, and children. Regular and ongoing forums are held by the PCWA for all staff to review race, ethnicity, and culture data and discuss the connection between those data, PCWA policies, and workers' practice.</p>

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California Family to Family Counties by Cluster and Year Started

4 Regional Clusters/25 counties

For more Information – please visit <http://www.f2f.ca.gov>

Central/Coastal Cluster (6 Counties)

- Fresno, 2003*
- Kern, 2005
- San Luis Obispo, 2001 *
- Santa Barbara, 2001
- Stanislaus, 2001
- Ventura, 2003

Northern Cluster (7 counties)

- Glenn, 2004
- Humboldt, 2004
- Placer, 2004
- Sacramento, 2004 *
- Solano, 2005
- Tehama, 2004
- Trinity, 2004

Bay Area Cluster (7 counties)

- Alameda, 2003 *
- Contra Costa, 2001 *
- Monterey, 2003
- San Francisco, 2001 *
- San Mateo, 2001
- Santa Clara, 2000
- Santa Cruz, 2006

Southern Cluster (5 Counties)

- Los Angeles, 1996* (*see description*)
- Orange, 2003 *
- Riverside, 2004 *
- San Bernardino, 2003
- San Diego, 2004

***= Anchor Sites (9)**

Central/Coastal (2): Fresno,
San Luis Obispo

Northern (1) Sacramento

Bay Area (3): Alameda, Contra Costa,
San Francisco

Southern (3): Los Angeles, Orange,
Riverside

Network Sites (16)

Central/Coastal (4): Kern,
Santa Barbara, Stanislaus, Ventura

Northern (6): Glenn, Humboldt, Placer,
Solano, Tehama, Trinity

Bay Area (4): Monterey, San Mateo,
Santa Clara, Santa Cruz,

Southern (2): San Bernardino,
San Diego

Los Angeles Clusters

1. Los Angeles Cluster 1 (SPA 1, 2, 3)
BSP Covina, Santa Clarita, *
Lancaster,* Palmdale*, North
Hollywood, Pasadena, Glendora, El
Monte, and Pomona*
2. Los Angeles Cluster 2 (SPA 4, 5, 6)
BSP Wilshire, Wateridge,*
Hawthorne, Century, Compton, West
L.A., and Metro North*
3. Los Angeles Cluster 3 (SPA 7, 8 &
Adoptions) Torrance*, Lakewood*,
Santa Fe Springs, and Belvedere

* = Los Angeles Anchor Offices