

CWAC Racial Equity Meeting
Wednesday, November 20, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Dagenè Brown, Cady Landa, Chandler Farris, Jere Murry, Keith Smith, Lariza Fenner, Lori Brown, Lourdes Rodriguez, Mareema Ali, Mari Christopherson, Tanya McGhee, Wendy Ingersoll, Lindia Holmes, Sylvia Fonseca, Yeni Rojas, Amanda (Last Name Unlisted), Shanquay Schaeffer

FY2025 Charter Goals Discussion

- DB proposed a potential goal of solidifying a formal expungement process for families to have unfounded listings removed from child welfare databases and systems, such as SACWIS.
- Lourdes Rodriguez (submitted in chat): I want to promote education and look at high school graduation rates, 2- and 4-year college graduation rates, what are the barriers and what supports does DCFS need to have in place to increase rates of higher education, mentoring, tutoring, Big Brother program. Lack of higher education is tied to unemployment, homelessness, etc. I want to get data on high school and college graduation rates. How many DCFS children age out without a plan, stable home/housing. What supports are needed and what are the barriers.
- Lariza Fenner stated that over the last three years of her caseload, she had only seen Black and Brown families charged with this Allegation 51. RDI of Cook County is 2%, meaning that there is a disproportionality of 2% for Black families.

Co-Chair Updates:

- CWAC Summit (Jere Murry):
 - A lot of discussion surrounding *prevention* of youth coming into the system rather than *reacting* to youth coming into the system.
 - Race-informed conversations are now being discussed at-large rather than solely being discussed when promoted or encouraged.
- Public Implicit Bias Campaign
 - The DCFS Communications Team filmed up a video production on October 23rd that was well-received. OREP is awaiting final edits for the video.
- Allegation 60
 - Allegation 60 is defined by the law (ANCRA), and in order to change the allegation itself, the law must also change. Brian Dougherty is tweaking neglect definition to omit “blatant disregard” and to deter from considering poverty as neglect. Proposal is in veto now; Committee is hoping to submit proposal for the next congressional session.
- The KIND Act
 - The proposal passed the judiciary subcommittee and is awaiting a determination from the Senate.
- Bias-Free Pilot Program
 - Pilot rollout is set for January.

Presentation:

How do Kinship Payment Rates Shape the Quality of Kinship Care? by William Schneider, Associate Professor of UIUC School of Social Work.

- *The State of Kinship Care:* About 400,000 child and youth are in foster care placements in the U.S., a disproportionate share of whom are non-White and low-income households. Roughly 35% of these children are placed in kinship care.

- *Money, Race & Maltreatment*: Black children are overrepresented in the child welfare system relative to their proportion of the general population. Community reporting and child welfare decision-making is racially biased. Black families may experience greater contact with and surveillance by mandated reporters. A reason for the overrepresentation of Black families may be the result of higher rates of poverty, compared to White families.
- *Implications for Practice, Policy, & Research*: Payment increases appear to be a promising strategy to improve kinship care quality overall. Improvements in kinship care quality are strongest for relatives of children, and for non-White children—an encouraging result regarding equity and family preservation goals. Recent policy and rule changes to equalize kinship caregiver stipend rates may be positioned to reduce risk of re-investigation for children in relative foster care.

Public Comments

- N/A

Updates

- Jere Murry of LSSI has replaced Jasmine Mobley as Co-chair of CWAC RE Committee
- Committee motioned to continue meeting every other month on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
- Committee approved Meeting Minutes for May, July, and October.



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Next Steps

- DB will get data to support FY2025 Charter Goals pertaining to expungement and Allegation 51.

Next Meeting: Tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, January 22, 2025 @ 10:00 AM.