

# CHILD WELFARE FACT SHEET

July 2020

## ACHIEVING RACE EQUITY IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

**N**ationally, Black and Native American children are involved in the child welfare system at much higher rates than White children, and Latino and certain Asian groups are also overrepresented. This disproportionality exists at multiple decision points in the child welfare system from reports of suspected abuse/neglect to removal to placement types to achieving permanency. While we do not know the exact causes of this disproportionality, structural racism (e.g., policies that have resulted in higher poverty, housing segregation, or lower wealth in communities of color), institutional racism (e.g., policies within child welfare that disproportionately place children of one racial group into specific placement types), and racial bias and discrimination (e.g., lack of understanding of different cultural practices or implicit beliefs held by workers about different racial or ethnic groups) all contribute to worse outcomes for children of color involved with the child welfare system.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

### RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE IN RHODE ISLAND

	ALL RACES	BLACK	HISPANIC	WHITE
Indicated Investigations (per 1,000 children)	14.2	19.2	15.8	8.3
Children in Out-of-Home Placement (per 1,000 children)	7.2	17.9	12.7	6.1
Children Reaching Permanency Within 12 Months (per 100 in Out-of-Home Placement)	15.7	11.9	17.5	15.6

Sources: Indicated Investigations data are for FFY 19 from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families. (2020). *Safety Report, October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2019 (FFY17 – FFY19)*. Children in Out-of-Home Placement data are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST Database, December 31, 2019. Children With Permanency Within 12 Months are from the Rhode Island Department of Children Youth and Families. (2019). *Permanency Report, FY14 – FY18 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2018)*. Population denominators for Indicated Investigations and Children in Out-of-Home Placement are the populations under age 18 by race from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010, SF1. Population denominator for Children with Permanency Within 12 Months are FY 2017 and FY 2018 entry cohort populations in Out-of-Home Placement.

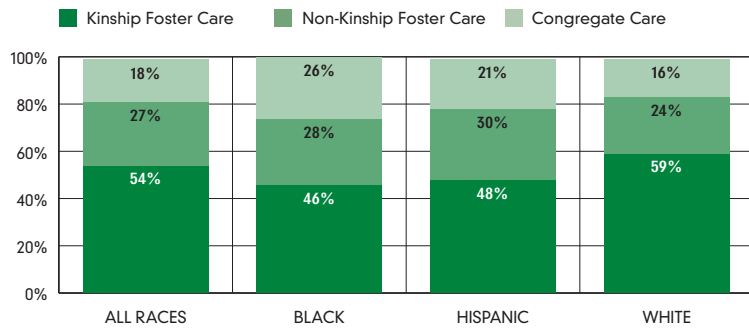
- In Rhode Island, Black children are almost three times as likely as White children and Hispanic children are twice as likely as White children to be put in out-of-home placements through the child welfare system.<sup>5</sup>
- Black children are also less likely than White and Hispanic children to reach permanency through reunification, adoption, or guardianship within 12 months.<sup>6</sup>

### MEASURING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPROPORTIONALITY

In order to understand where disproportionality is introduced in child welfare and be able to identify and implement policy and practice changes to eliminate it and improve outcomes for children of color, it is critical to systematically analyze data in the following ways:

- Regularly compare the percentage of children involved in each decision point in child welfare by race and ethnicity to their percentage in the general population.
- Regularly compare the percentage of children by race and ethnicity involved in each decision point in child welfare to their percentage in the previous decision point to determine if disproportionality is remaining constant, decreasing, or increasing at each point.
- Review trends over time considering any changes to policy and practice that have been introduced.<sup>7,8,9</sup>

## FIRST OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT TYPE BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, FY 2018 ENTRY COHORT



Notes: Kinship foster care includes relative and non-relative kinship. Congregate care includes acute residential treatment, assessment and stabilization centers, group homes, medical hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, semi-independent living, residential care centers (RCC), residential treatment – substance abuse and residential treatment centers. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Children Youth and Families. (2019). Permanency Report, FY14 – FY18 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2018).

- In Rhode Island, in the FY 2018 entry cohort, children of all races who entered out-of-home placement were more likely to be placed in foster care than in congregate care. However, White children were more likely to be placed in kinship foster care (households that included relatives or individuals with close relationships with their family) than Black and Hispanic children.
- In the FY 2018 entry cohort, Black and Hispanic children were more likely than White children to be placed in congregate care settings, such as group homes, residential treatment centers, and hospitals.<sup>10</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regularly analyze data disaggregated by race and ethnicity at all decision points in the child welfare system to identify any points where disproportionality exists or is introduced and disseminate the data broadly.
- Regularly review child protective services investigation data with information that could identify race and ethnicity hidden to screen for bias in removal decisions.
- Create an advisory body that is accountable to the Governor or the General Assembly to regularly review data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, identify ways to eliminate disproportionality, and work with DCYF to ensure implementation.
- Actively engage parents and youth from communities of color that are disproportionately involved in child welfare in this advisory board.
- Make every effort to identify, recruit, retain, and support family and non-family kinship foster families for children and youth of color.
- Diversify the child welfare workforce so that the racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of case workers and frontline staff align more closely with the children and families they are serving.
- Require continuous anti-racism training for all staff at the Department of Children, Youth and Families and contracted agencies.
- Partner with the juvenile justice system to support dually involved youth who are often youth of color.

## References

- <sup>17</sup> Children's Bureau. (2016). *Racial disproportionality and disparity in child welfare*. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov)
- <sup>2</sup> Watt, T. & Kim, S. (2019). Race/ethnicity and foster youth outcomes: An examination of disproportionality using the national youth in transition database. *Children and Youth Services Review, 102*, 251-258.
- <sup>3</sup> Miller, O. & Esenstad, A. (2015). *Strategies to reduce racially disparate outcomes in child welfare*. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.
- <sup>4</sup> Apollon, D., Keheler, T., Medeiros, J., Ortega, N.L., Sebastian, J., & Sen, R. (2014). Moving the race conversation forward: How media covers racism and other barriers to productive racial discourse. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from [raceforward.org](http://raceforward.org)
- <sup>5</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, RICHIST, December 31, 2019.
- <sup>6,10</sup> Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families. (2019). *Permanency report: Entry cohort of children in foster care FY14 – FY18 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2018)*. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from [dcyf.ri.gov](http://dcyf.ri.gov)
- <sup>8</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). *10 practices: A child welfare leader's desk guide to building a high-performing agency*. Retrieved June 29, 2020, from [aecf.org](http://aecf.org)
- <sup>9</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2017, June 4). Measuring disparities in child welfare systems: Five lessons. [Web log message]. Retrieved from [aecf.org](http://aecf.org)



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