



The Issue:

DISPROPORTIONALITY OF CHILDREN OF COLOR IN YOUTH SERVICES

Children's Bureau, Inc. Position:

We support research, policies, and service delivery innovations that decrease the disparities of children of color in youth services.

We support the following Legislative and/or Policy Initiatives:

- Implementation of Indiana legislation passed in 2009 and 2010 to address school drop out prevention, student discipline coordination of services, suspension of Medicaid for delinquents, providing info on scholarships and developmental accounts to foster youth and recruitment of educators from underrepresented populations.
- Standardization of Data Collection Systems that is disaggregated on the basis of race/ethnicity/gender/age at all decision points in each child serving systems, so that underlying policies and practices can be identified and systemically addressed.
- Establish a standing interim study committee of the Indiana General Assembly with responsibility to study issues of service gaps and disparities in services for children of color in the state.
- Require mandatory ongoing cultural competency training for individuals working with children and families of color.
- Ensure provision of sufficient resources to implement and sustain programs and initiatives that reduce the level of disproportionality and disparities experienced by youth of color.
- Implement effective proven prevention strategies that will reduce the involvement of children of color in juvenile justice and child welfare and will ensure educational and mental health needs are met.
- Support the development of early intervention processes that will allow for quick responses to address issues for children of color in child serving systems.
- Support strength based interventions through in-home and community-based wrap around services for children and families of color.
- Expand programs or create new programs that demonstrate positive outcomes for youth and families of color.
- Develop collaborations that support linkages between community, faith-based and private/public organizations serving youth of color.

Background Information:

Based on continuous research, professionals and community members across the nation have become aware of the overrepresentation and disproportionate representation of children of color in human services. The recognition of the disparities on a national level has increased efforts to review and compare state statistics. Repeatedly, disparities in the number of children of color in the system and the level of services provided to them have been found in the child welfare, juvenile justice, education and mental health systems.

Research shows the following shocking statistics:

- ***Indiana is one of 16 states with extreme disproportionality of Black children in the child welfare system.***
- ***Black children are no more likely to be abused and/or neglected; however, the majority of these youth are placed in out-of-home care while their white counterparts are receiving in-home services.***
- ***Male youth of color within the juvenile justice system are 4 times more likely to die violent deaths and female youth of color within the juvenile justice system are 8 times more likely to die violent deaths.***
- ***Research suggests that Blacks have a greater likelihood of a social or legal contact with a referral agency, when compared to Whites. This may lead to overrepresentation in community mental health clinics.***
- ***There is no evidence to support that Black children misbehave or are more disruptive than other students in the school setting, but are suspended or expelled at higher rates.***

Although the terms “overrepresentation” and “disproportionality” are often used interchangeably, the terms refer to varying degrees of the problem. Disproportionality is used to define a higher number of children of color in a social service system compared to their proportion within the general population. By contrast, overrepresentation refers to a situation where a particular cultural group is represented at a much higher percentage than other racial/ethnic groups¹.

Due to the kind of evidence presented above, in 2007 Indiana created a Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services to examine disproportionality and disparities in the four child serving systems (Child Welfare, Education, Juvenile Justice and Mental Health) and create a list of recommendations to address these disparities and ensure every Hoosier child receives fair and equitable services. The work of the commission produced 74 recommendations as a blueprint to ensure that the child welfare, juvenile justice education and mental health systems respond to the needs of children of color in Indiana². Since the Commission on Disproportionality released its 74 recommendations in 2008, 8 pieces of legislation have passed the Indiana Legislature. These laws were championed by the Indiana Disproportionality Committee, which is a collaborative partnership of agencies, organizations, and individuals working together to maintain focus on disproportionality. In addition to legislative action, other changes are occurring through programmatic and administrative changes in child welfare, education, juvenile justice and mental health.

Child Welfare: Research has proven that children of color are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system and frequently experience disparate and inequitable service provision³. In 2009, 8.5 percent of all children under the age of 18 in Indiana were Hispanic⁴. The racial breakdown of the total child population in that year was 81 percent White, 10.6 percent Black, 1.4 percent Asian, 3 percent other and 4 percent two or more races⁴. Yet, the substantiated cases of abuse and neglect in 2009 demonstrated overrepresentation with 19 percent of the youth being Black, 73 percent White, 8 percent other⁵. Children who were Hispanic and had substantiated cases of abuse and neglect were at 7 percent, which was close to their percentage in the general population⁵. Foster children who are free for adoption but who are lingering in the system also represent a disproportionate amount of Black youth. Though only 10.6 percent of the total population in the State, Black youth comprised 28 percent of foster youth waiting to be adopted⁵. Indiana is one of the sixteen states with extreme disproportion of Black children in

the child welfare system⁶. The numbers are more dramatic when reviewed for Indiana counties with a more dense population of minorities, such as Lake or Marion.

Overrepresentation is found at every point in the system from reports and investigations, to out-of-home placements and termination of parental rights (TPR). The National Data Analysis System has found that Black children are no more likely to be abused and/or neglected; however, they are more often placed in out-of-home care while their white counterparts receive in-home services⁷. The 2010 National Incident Report showed contradictory results indicating that Black children were abused more frequently and harshly. These results demonstrate the need for more intensive research into this area. Marion County, Indiana is a model site and is working to find solutions to disproportionality in CHINS cases. The data collected as revealed disproportionality in Marion County's system and efforts are under way to address these issues through Undoing Racism Training.

Juvenile Justice: The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJCPA) has mandated that state governments make an effort to research issues of disproportionate minority confinement and implement strategies to reduce this issue. Indiana is currently one of four states that have completed the identification and assessment phases, are implementing the intervention phase, and plan to update DMC identification data and/or assessment studies⁸. After being out of compliance with data collection, Indiana contracted to have data collected by race, ethnicity and location in 2011. Marion County has made significant reforms in the juvenile justice system through Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI). Indiana has expanded JDAI to 7 counties and is receiving private investment through the Annie E. Casey Foundation to facilitate this project. Children of color entering the juvenile delinquency system are more likely to have received out-of-home services in the child welfare system⁹. Researchers have also found a direct correlation between children of color being underserved in the mental health system and the number of children of color entering the juvenile justice system. Male youths of color from poor racial and ethnic backgrounds within

the juvenile justice system are four times more likely to die of a violent death, and female youths of color within the juvenile justice system are eight times more likely to die of a violent death¹⁰. It is extremely evident that the lack of knowledge and services provided to children of color are participating factors in the increasing number of deaths among youths.

Mental Health: Since the 1990's, studies have proven that Black adolescents, ages 13-17, are more likely to be referred to mental health facilities than White adolescents the same age. Research suggests that Blacks have a greater likelihood of a social or legal contact with a referral agency, when compared to Whites. This may lead to over-representation in community mental health clinics¹¹. However, Black, Native American and Latino youth are being underserved compared to White youths using services such as counseling and/or psychotherapy¹². Some experts believe that the causes of health disparities between races are due to cultural differences in seeking help, receptivity, accessibility, service delivery and the lack of minority health care providers¹³.

Education: Disproportionality has also been a concern within the educational system. For over 25 years, research has proven that racial and gender discrepancies are evident in school disciplinary outcomes. Despite the level of income, Black boys are more apt to receive suspensions or other disciplinary actions than students of another race. This has been a great concern within the educational system because there has been no evidence to support that Black children misbehave or are more disruptive than other students in the school setting¹⁴.

The problem continues to persist regardless of the federal, state and local governments' responsibility to "ensure that all children, regardless of their culture, ethnic, or racial identity, receive services that address the full spectrum of their needs in a manner that reflects the cultural strengths of their families"³. Efforts to increase cultural sensitivity, cultural competency, public awareness, and to provide community-based intervention and diversion programs are being piloted in 30 states to address disproportionality and overrepresentation⁸.

CBI Program Impact and Participation:

Overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system impacts all Children's Bureau programs. In 2010, Children's Bureau provided services to 23,402 children and 12,884 families. The racial distribution of these clients included 40.4 percent Black, 59 percent Caucasian, 4.8 percent Hispanic, .2 percent Asian, and 5.6 percent more than one race. These numbers reflect the disproportionate representation of Black children served at CBI. The racial distribution of staff is 35.9 percent African American, 56.4 percent Caucasian, 4 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Asian, 1 percent more than one race, 2 percent Other.

For More Information Contact:

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¹ Green, M. (2002). Minorities as majority: Disproportionality in child welfare & juvenile justice. *Children's Voice*, 11, 9-13. Retrieved from, <http://www.cwla.org/articles/cv0211minorities.htm>

² The Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services, (2008) *Findings and Recommendations*. Retrieved from, <http://socialwork.iu.edu/media/Commission%20on%20Disproportionality%20in%20Youth%20Services%20Final%20Report%20October%202015,%202008.pdf>

³ Child Welfare League of America. (2003). *Children of color in the child welfare system*. Retrieved from, <http://ndas.cwla.org/Include/text/Children%20of%20Color.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). 2009 American Community Survey: Child Characteristics. Retrieved from, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-state=st&-context=st&-qr_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_S0901&-ds_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_&-tree_id=308&-redoLog=false&-geo_id=04000US18&-format=&-lang=en

⁵ Indiana Department of Child Services. (2011). *Department of child services demographics and trending report state fiscal year 2009*. Retrieved from, <http://www.in.gov/dcs/files/DraftDemographicsTrendingReportSFY2009.pdf>

⁶ Hill, R. (2004). Overrepresentation of children of color in foster care in 2000. *Race Matters Consortium*.

⁷ National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. (1996). *National study of the incidence and severity of child abuse and neglect*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from, <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/statsinfo/nis3.cfm>

⁸ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2004). *Disproportionate minority contact 2002 update*. Retrieved from, <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/201240.pdf>

⁹ Johnson-Reid, M. (March/April 2004). Child welfare services and delinquency: The need to know more. *Child Welfare*, 133(2), 157-174.

¹⁰ Teplin, L., McClelland, G., Abram, K., & Mileusinic, D. (2005). Early violent death among delinquent youth: A Prospective longitudinal study. *Pediatrics*, 155, 1586-1593.

¹¹ Takeuchi, D., Bui, K., & Kim, L. (1993). The referral of minority adolescents to community mental health centers. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24(11).

¹² Garland, A. & Besinger, A. (1997). The color of mental health. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 19, 651-666.

¹³ National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice. (2003). *Best Practices/Next Practice*. Washington, D.C.

¹⁴ Skiba, R. Michael, R., & Nardo, A. (2000). *The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment*. Retrieved from, <http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/cod.pdf>