

Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup Meeting: 3/11/15
New Haven Area Office Large Conference Room
Notes by Ryan Williams

Bill Rivera participated via telephone.

The scope of the meeting is to describe how the goals, structure, and scope of the Racial Justice Initiative and Workgroup will proceed moving forward.

Welcome and introductions. Members were asked to participate by sharing feelings or comments regarding the direction of SRWG since our last meeting in November. Overall, participants expressed positive feelings about the racial justice work and its impact in their local offices. There were some members that expressed feelings about needing direction with respect to the work moving forward given the memorandum of pending changes sent on December 21, 2014

http://www.ct.gov/dcf/lib/dcf/multicultural_affairs/srjw/Workgroup_updates_121814.pdf.

Michael Williams expressed positive feelings about the work done by the department in the area of racial justice. There is a level of awareness about the work within the department, i.e. that we are focused on eliminating disparity and realizing racial justice within our practice. Senior level management is looking at and considering racial justice in their various positions, and vocalizing the good things we've done amongst our partners. In order to do better we have to expand the resources and support we give to this work, thus it was decided that the work would be implemented through the Training Academy. According to Michael Williams, the Academy would be the executive branch of racial justice for the department. We have to set some benchmarks to let us know how we've made progress.

The role of the Racial Justice Workgroup will continue to be represented in our respective offices and facilities. Our role in the offices / facilities will be the governing role of the work, ensuring that the day to day work is occurring. We have to look at the Operational Strategies and their impact - whether activities have been effective. We have to stay focused on cross cutting theme number four to address racial disparities in all areas of our practice and implement activities to measure progress <http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=2534&Q=563696>. Offices and facilities have to access the Academy and utilize any resources they will offer to help us move the work forward.

The framework will be as follows: Offices and facilities do the day to day work, regional racial justice teams meet, the Academy will assist by providing with tech support, and results will be reported and recorded as measurable data. The Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup will assess to determine if we've made a difference in the lives of children and families. We're going to take a comprehensive look at our progress by Dec. 2015. The Statewide Subcommittees will also be asked to be more active and focused in their roles.

Four Subcommittees:

Policy and Practice workgroup (also referred to as the Data workgroup): Charged with organizing around demonstrating a reduction in disproportionality and disparity at key decision points in practice. We will monitor to determine whether or not the disparity gap has closed as a result of the work.

Workforce workgroup: Build a racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse staff to meet the needs of our children and families. We'll have to look at all levels of HR in order to facilitate this

Community workgroup: Reduce the disproportionate number of accepted reports of abuse and neglect for children of color from mandated reporters and increase the number of families of color being diverted to the FAR track

Purchasing and contracting workgroup: Provide a framework for cultural and linguistic service compliance in the contracting process. Must create a tangible product as it relates to how we purchase services. We must strive for culturally and linguistically competent service providers. (Tier system, adding accountability to our contract providers)

It was recommended that the subcommittees expand their membership.

Members of the Statewide Team must attend regularly and participate in at least one of the subcommittees. Subcommittee chairs are encouraged to invite folks under the Commissioner's name via email.

The Academy has been designated as the division responsible for the implementation phase of the Racial Justice Performance Expectation. : The Academy will oversee the implementation of initiatives specific to operational strategies proposed to address the racial justice performance expectations identified by regions.

<http://cm.dcf.ct.gov/sites/CM/Operational%20Strategy/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fsites%2FCM%2FOperational%20Strategy%2F2015&FolderCTID=0x012000E60FB29A5EE9F6478BCBB3A1A9F36600&View={784B7CC4-0B69-4452-9201-75F67BF6F082}>.

Director Jodi Hill-Lilly chairs the Office Director Community of Practice meeting. Racial Justice is a standing agenda item.

Jodi shared that the department has a Natl. Child Welfare Institute grant. At the end of 5 yrs. they hope to have 35 people to take part in the grant. We have to get DCF staff into the recruitment efforts, as this will help those grant participants go to grad school.

Jodi shared that a racial justice curricula has been implemented for Academy trainers so that they will be comfortable speaking about issues regarding racial justice in all staff training.

Jodi has spoken to Regional Administrators to access where they are with respect to implementing a racial justice lens in their performance expectations.

The Academy has also discussed with mandated reporter trainers regarding new content slides designed to inform mandated reporters about agency commitment to practice from a racial justice lens. (The trainers have to be comfortable and confident speaking about racial justice matters to mandated reporters, i.e. getting the reporter's race and ethnicity info., as well as the town from which they are reporting). Racial justice workgroups at all levels must reach out to and educate all sectors of the community regarding this work.

For example, both internal and external partners must explore specific challenges such as decreasing the number of Hispanic males in residential care (Data), increasing Hispanic / Latino therapists within a certain provider agency (Purchasing and Contracting) and work toward correcting the identified needs.

The conversation then moved to addressing who from the community should be present at the statewide and subcommittee levels? There was discussion about having providers be a part of the change, and having providers be able to help with the specific purpose of the racial justice workgroup, but we have to sow the field before we reap the fruit regarding the racial justice work.

It was proposed that June kick off meeting take place with vetted stakeholders. The plan will be to present a comprehensive picture of why we are doing this work, what we have done and how we are organized and then to invite stakeholders to join one or more existing tables (i.e. the statewide or local workgroups or committees), and/or to identify how they believe they could contribute otherwise.

The group agreed that the community should be at the Statewide and Subcommittee tables by end of June. Any provider proposed to sit at the table would be vetted at the Commissioner level. Please forward community participant suggestions to Bill Rivera.

Workgroup members were reminded that all of the regional Performance Expectations and Operational Strategies were posted on the DCF SharePoint site. Guidance was provided for how to access the Dashboards for most current disproportionality data and additional information.

Moving forward, it was determined that future agendas include a standing placeholder for Academy to provide updates progress made towards “moving the needle” on the agency performance expectations for racial justice.

The revised mandated reporter training was vetted by legal. If you want to change the mandated reporter training IN ANY WAY, it must be approved by the Academy. Email Jodi with any suggested changes to the training.

Current Subcommittee Chairs

Data (changed to Practice): Tara Hall, need Co-chair

Workforce: Tracy Davis and Anastasia Pysh

Community: Gail Walton and Crichton Stewart

Purchasing and Contracting: Mike Grahm, need Co-chair

Next meeting is 4/8/15, from 1pm to 4pm at the Middletown Office. Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup meetings will occur the second Wednesday of the month, from 1pm to 4pm through May 13, 2015. The May meeting will take place at the Hartford Area Office at 250 Hamilton Street. There will be protected time at the statewide meeting for the Subcommittees to do their work.

The meeting adjourned shortly before 4:00 p.m.