

Memorandum

To: All Staff

From: Alysha MacDonald, Social Worker, and Racial Justice Workgroup Member

Date: 30 September 2013

Subject: Racial Justice Workgroup Updates

On June 24, 2013, Commissioner Katz announced the development of the Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup (Workgroup) to lead and manage the racial justice work moving forward for the agency. The overall goal of the Workgroup is to cultivate and sustain an environment in which employees, families and all of our partners feel safe to discuss the impacts of racism, power and privilege on agency practice and their personal lives.

The Workgroup is comprised of approximately 25 staff including office assistants, social workers, social worker supervisors, program managers, area office directors, representation from our state facilities, and central office. The workgroup has been charged with the task of meeting monthly to begin the planning phase of identifying priorities for the racial justice work in the agency.

The kick-off meeting for this workgroup was held on July 24, 2013. During this meeting, the group became acquainted with one another and began to develop a common understanding for the scope of and the expectations for moving forward. Some of the initial overall goals were to diminish disparities on all levels (i.e., for children, families, and staff and within our own agency leadership), achieving equity in meeting families' needs at the Area Office level, and promoting equity among all staff. We also agreed that focus needs to be given to issues of racial disproportionality and disparity from a systems perspective. We committed to developing a concrete definition of what "success" will look like for the work, analyzing the data of racial disparities within our system, looking at specific decision points in cases and understanding how race may play a factor in the decision making process (i.e. initial referrals, cases transferring and removals). The core theme in this discussion was how to operationalize racial equality into our daily work and outcome measures for children and families.

A second meeting was held on September 13th. All workgroup participants engaged in self-reflection. Specifically, we were asked to consider how this work would impact us on a personal level. We were asked to reflect on this as it pertains to oppression, discrimination, privilege and racial equality. In months to come, the Workgroup will develop specific action plans with the local Diversity Action Teams on offering area office staff members the opportunity to begin understanding the impact of self awareness on racial equality.

The workgroup will review the data gathered and examine the reality that racial disparity does in fact exist within our system. The group will then focus on what steps need to be taken with short and long term goals in mind. We also discussed the need for ensuring that each area office has an active diversity action team, that each area office has support from their management in order to create safe spaces to begin talking about racial inequality, and ensuring that all of the information discussed at the Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup is communicated back to the area offices and facilities.

The Workgroup will meet again in October. If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please contact your regional liaison below for more information and discussions.

Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup Liaisons

Region I (Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stamford) Regional Director Maria Brereton

Malcolm Blue - Bridgeport Area Office
Evelyn Ayala - Norwalk/Stamford Area Offices

Region II (Milford, New Haven) Regional Director Michael Steers

Bonita Robinson for Milford Area Office
Crichton Stewart for New Haven Area Office

Region III (Middletown, Norwich, Willimantic) Regional Director Allon Kalisher

Tara Hall - Norwich Area Office
John Lachack - Willimantic Area Office

Region IV (Hartford, Manchester) Regional Director Michael Williams

Tina Jefferson, the chair of the Regional DAT and
Natalia Liriano, Program Manager for Foster Care.

Region V (Danbury, Torrington, Waterbury) Regional Director Ken Cabral

Vannessa Dorantes
Sara Diaz
Alysha MacDonald (Internship)

Region VI (Meriden, New Britain) Regional Director Terry Nowakowski

(1) Monica Montalvo-Rams (Meriden DAT)
(2) Tracey A. Johnson (New Britain DAT)
(3) Mary Beth Hill (New Britain DAT)

CJTS - William Rosenbeck, Superintendent

Solnit North and South - Christopher Arnold - Training

USD

Steve Tracy, Superintendent

Central Office

Anastasia Pych - Human Resources
Gail Reyes-Walton, Office of the Ombudsman

Support

Debi Freund, Division of Diversity and Equity
Fernando Muniz, Deputy Commissioner
Jodi Hill-Lilly, Co-Director, Academy
William Rivera, Director, Multicultural Affairs