

May 24, 2016

Center for the Study of Social Policy webinar

[CART Provider standing by]

Center for the Study of Social Policy webinar

[CART Provider standing by]

>> Hello everyone, my name is Jonathan Lykes and I'm a policy analyst at the Center for the study of social policy. Along with Tashira Halyard I work on the alliance for racial equity in child welfare. On behalf of the alliance and CSSP I would like to welcome you to this afternoon's webinar focused on the importance of data collection and analysis and system efforts to eliminate racial and ethnic disparity.

This is starting with the numbers.

The webinar will get started shortly, but in just a few moments I have a few reminders for everyone. We recommend that all participants dial-in using a landline to improve your sound quality and to avoid any kind of connectivity issues.

If you do have an issue with sound quality please hang up and dial back in, and that should help fix the problem.

If you have any questions for our presenters, they will be answered towards the end of the presentation. But feel free to submit questions at any point during the presentation. You can use the question feature in the GoToWebinar control panel.

Also this webinar is being recorded and will be publicly available after the webinar. The link will be shared via email to everyone who is registered for the webinar, and we will also send along a PowerPoint for all of the presentations that will be presented today.

A final note is that we also have live captioning on this webinar. We will be sending out a link to everyone's chat box, so if you are interested in viewing the live captioning function please look for the link in the chat function.

The mission for the alliance for racial equity in child welfare is to promote leadership and provide information and support the elimination of racial disparity and improving outcomes for children and families of color were involved in this nation's child welfare system.

One of our primary goals is to help individuals and organizations further their understanding of the nature and extent of the racial disparities we see in our system.

I would like to now and the microphone over to Janice Gruendel, and she is going to give some context for what has been going on with data collection and analysis and system efforts. Janice?

>> Thank you. I will speak on behalf of myself and also my partner, Joyce James, with whom -- and Tashira and to Oronde Miller for that matter, we worked together with probably a good number of you that are on the phone call to bring forward challenges and issues related to assuring that the child welfare system is ready, willing, and able to create conditions of racial justice within itself and among its partners.

At the end of our first year of that work, Joyce and I talked individually with a group of folks who were regular participants on a series of phone calls we did monthly together. We wanted to learn what had worked for them, what we could do differently and better, and what topics we would want to explore, you would want to explore with us in the coming year.

Topics that came up again and again and included the following; data as the base for policy review and practice change. State-by-state stories of challenges and successes. Specific policy and practice design issues that you are in the process of changing. Leadership strategies and challenges, especially when senior leadership changes in an agency along with elections and other events. And then, connections between child welfare and disparities that we also see among this group of children and their families in the context of health and also education.

When we had finished that round of conversations, we had accumulated a set of recommendations made by participants, and Joyce and I contributed too. Three of these suggestions are relevant today. One was to allocate a little more time in the sessions. We had been using an hour and we never quite got finished, which was a good thing.

Secondly, to meet using these forums every six weeks instead of four weeks which would allow us to spend a little more time each time.

And then lastly to include webinars and other presentation tools we had limited ourselves pretty much to phone convenings.

So our session today is the beginning of this new series, the new year's with a series of convening around the issue of racial justice, and we were able to accommodate two of these recommendations right off the bat -- a longer read of time and using a webinar presentation.

With that as a very brief context, I am so incredibly pleased to introduce you to deputy Commissioner Michael Williams from the Connecticut Department of children and families. Michael is a longtime friend and colleague. He and the DCF team have prepared a great presentation, and it will be I think incredibly revealing. And it takes us to the first issue, how we can use data to make substantive and very important change.

Michael and your team, thank you and welcome.

>> Thank you, Janice. We are grateful for this opportunity to present to you all. I am Michael Williams, and to both Janice and Joyce as cochairs and the alliance members, we are grateful that you have asked us to share the Connecticut story of what we have been doing here as it relates to our journey to achieve racial justice within child welfare by eliminating disparities.

As was mentioned I have a team of people who are here will be presenting with me who will be doing the bulk of the presentations, actually, because they had been instrumental in helping us move our system forward. And we are eager to engage you all in conversations after we present for about 40 or 45 minutes about what we have done. We would like to hear from others about things that they are doing and to share some areas of success you have had so we can continue to grow here in Connecticut, because we know our journey, though we have come a long way, we still have a ways to go.

So let me start with an introduction of who we have here, who makes up the Connecticut team. Starting at the top right is myself, next to me is one of the cochairs of our statewide racial justice effort here in

Connecticut, Vanessa. She happens to be a regional administrator and part of the senior administration team of the department.

Next to Vanessa in the corner is a consultant that we had brought on, and external consultant, Jen from a consulting firm.

Down at the bottom underneath me is the director of our Academy for workforce development, Jodi. Next to her at the bottom is our deputy Commissioner for quality and planning, Susan Smith. And a critical person who is not with us, unfortunately, due to personal reasons is a critical leader in this work, our second cochair of the statewide work, which is on the end.

And then in the middle is our Commissioner who joined us in the middle of the work, and she will talk a little bit more about our efforts and directions as it relates to this, Joette Katz in the middle.

So let me just share quickly what you are going to hear from us by way of this presentation. We are going to have a quick conversation around the foundations of this work and how we had to establish a good set of foundational pieces in order to move this forward.

Jodi is going to talk a bit about that, and then we are going to give you an overview of the timeline of work we did pre-Commissioner Katz, and then Commissioner Katz will come and share with you her views and directives on this work, and following that we will talk post Commissioner Katz in regard to another set of timelines of the work.

When that is over we will have a conversation around how we currently look, structurally. And the work that is occurring. And then we will finish the presentation with a very I think exciting conversation about how we shifted now to data and quality to move our work forward.

So when we started this we were clear that in order to be successful, this work had to be broad indeed. You know, picking up on Dr. King's cliché that an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, and we realized we cannot pilot this in certain places when we knew that disparities existed throughout the state. So we had to take a broad approach to this and take a statewide look at eliminating disparities, and we realized that we had to go deep. So going deeper for us meant it could not just be frontline staff concerned about this or top level executives concerned about it. It had to be everyone. So from top to bottom we have full inclusion, full participation across the entire department ready to work on eliminating disparities based on race and ethnicity within our system.

And so after having that, we had to really talk about the foundation that we are going to build, and I will turn it over to Jodi Hill Lilly who will show the work we did there.

>> Thank you, Michael. As Michael mentioned, we have been very purposeful and strategic about weaving this work into the fabric of our culture.

We did this by utilizing the implementation science framework. Many of you may be familiar with the national implementation research network. We think this is a good example of this framework and that we wanted to make sure that this initiative would stick and it would be one that would be present beyond the leaders that are in place at this time.

And to do this we had to build this into the infrastructure of our work and maximize the skills of our staff.

So as you can see from the framework, on the competency drivers we were very purposeful about the selection process. So we had leaders appoint staff from all levels, and in one situation, for example, we have a clerical person who was representing an office. Up to the level of regional administrator.

And we not only did training because we know that training in and of itself does not change cultures, in fact the research is very clear that people retain probably about 20 percent of information obtained in a classroom. We decided that we wanted to have coaching along with our training..

And that has proven to be extremely successful in that we just recently put out a request or an offer for staff to receive some coaching. And we were very surprised and happy to report that even though this was a voluntary option for our leaders, over 85 percent of our leaders responded to this request.

To me that is a conversation changer in that leaders are very invested in this initiative and are willing to do this work differently.

The organizational drivers. Again, we were very strategic to partner with stakeholders in the community and inside of our agency. I recently participated on an interviewing panel for an IT manager, and one of the questions in the interview process was how would you build an IT system to make sure that we are capturing disproportionality. And again, we have been very purposeful about what we have been doing in terms of putting it into the infrastructure of our work.

We have created a structure whereby all policy must pass through members of the racial justice committee so that we can make sure that any policy that is put into practice has a racial lens to it.

And on the decision support and data system, you will hear from our deputy chief of quality and planning around how we are developing this infrastructure to make sure that this work actually sticks and is built into what we look at in terms of outcomes for our kids and our families.

Later in this presentation you will hear from our Commissioner about what leadership did to set the tone for this work and under the framework of high fits in adaptive leadership, what she did to give the work back to the people. Set the tone and then allow the people to do the work from the inside out.

So you will hear throughout this presentation how this work was in that it into implementation science very strategically.

And as we know with implementation science, that the exploration stage or the beginning stage of this work can last a very, very long time. Real change really does take time. And so we started this work back in 2009 as a result of public attention received regarding racial tensions in one of our communities.

And then at that time our deputy Commissioner, Heidi McIntosh, solicited the support of the people's institute to provide some training to key leaders inside of the agency and outside of the agency to look at how we were going to approach this work.

There was considerable buy-in from the inside and outside. And then we had what happens notoriously, and administration change. I wanted to say that it was the outside community folks who really were steadfast in helping us to see the need to continue this work.

And so with the nudging from the outside and the buy-in from the inside, we brought the issue up with our current administration who embraced it wholeheartedly.

And so we are going to let her talk about how she began, how Commissioner Katz began to embed this work into the mission statement and do what we call give the word back to the people.

Commissioner Katz?

>> Thank you, Jodi. When I came to the department I was new to child welfare, but I had been in the criminal justice system, I had been a public defender for years, chief of legal services, I was on the trial bench, and then for a lifetime I was on the Supreme Court.

So I saw from afar, and I certainly saw when I entered the system, through the doors of DCF, it was readily apparent to me that children of color were coming in at a much higher rate than their white counterparts, even though they had the same characteristics, their families have the same characteristics as comparable to white families.

So as we started down this road, and clearly as Jodi said, there was a work that preceded me, but one was very clear, and I saw this again through a lifetime of prior professional work, was about unintended bias, and that if we did not address it, racial equity could never be attained.

And cultural incompetence and racial bias I think becomes even more problematic or even greater factors when you combine those concepts, and they are quite real, with the definition, and it is generally pretty vague, of what neglect needs. And that is what goes on of the agency. Obviously we are dealing with neglect of our 93,000 calls that come into the care line, and half of them properly placed with DCF, about 92 percent of those involve issues of neglect.

So when you think about an underlying cultural incompetence and racial bias, and inherent bias, and you combine it with something that is by definition itself vague, and then you couple that with broad discretion that is generally allowed child protective service workers, and certainly their interpretation of the term, you could have a recipe for disaster. And certainly our numbers reflected that in my view.

And I think by looking at all of this I recognized that it was really -- I recognized how little I knew, and I felt I personally and the agency really have to get a much better understanding of the embedded inequities. How they evolved. Nobody intentionally behaves in these ways, but they are there. How they evolved and what were the consequences of all of this.

We could not challenge them, and more important we could not design the system to ensure that all children would thrive.

So in terms of giving the work back, because there were certain things that I could dictate from on high, but this is not one of them, this is something that really everybody had to be a part of and I think it really had to be almost -- not just top-down but really bottom up.

So before the community of practice which is a standing committee within the department specifically for our racial justice work. To raise awareness, to present disproportionality pathways data, to develop strategies, and to coordinate training for all employees as well as working with our external partners, that is the people who serve our families. And we looked at a variety of data, referrals, substantiation.

Again, it is in every point along the spectrum that we needed to be looking at what was happening. So from the first referral to substantiation to a case opening, out of home placement, length of stay in place, residential placement, the kind of placements, and permanency.

We had to do this using race ethnicity as crosstabs for key decision points. And the goal of all of this was to identify specific policies and practices that could be contributing to disparate outcomes.

And so the work had to be comprehensive, and it had to be infused again into everything we do from trauma informed care to engaging adolescents on identity development to contract procurement language -- everything. Focus on ways to correct what we knew to be inequities found within the agency and in the provision of our services.

Also this work had to be continuous, intentional, and not just another initiative. We are great at initiatives, but this, as you have heard, and I think I am the third person to echo this, it really had to be a constant.

And I also knew that this would be very challenging. That there would be people who would not want to engage. Somewhat be afraid to pick let's face it, it is are doing knowledge being part of a system that disproportionately negatively impacts the very people you are trying to help. And it is particularly hard, I think, if the implicit biases behind the policies and practices are held not just by people of privilege.

So we began a serious journey and studied, as I said, the impacts of race and racism in our work with the goal to cultivate and sustain an environment in which employees, families, and all of our partners could feel safe to discuss the impacts of racism, power, and privilege on agency practice and on the personal lives of our workers and our families.

So where did that go? Well, at that point I knew that we had a lot of work to do, and it was work that we could not do alone, frankly. And I think we have made a lot of progress, and certainly the agency has made progress prior to my arrival, but I thought at the time that if we are going to make real tangible progress, and everybody was looking at us to really do this, and frankly I personally felt in some ways was I being tested, was this real? Was this real for me or was this something that I was just going to pay lip service to.

And it was very important that people understood how very real this was for me. And so I needed a partner, and Jen of JRA consulting is our partner, and she has really helped us along the way and I will turn it over to her to tell you what she has done.

>> Thanks, Commissioner. I feel like I'm going to use a lot of the same words that my teammates in Connecticut have been using all along, which are things like purposeful and intentional. And really constant. Because I think all of us believe -- we are talking about this work, we felt really strongly about all the principles behind it.

But I wanted to highlight from what the commissioner discussed is really from the outside consultant perspective, something that I thought was really an incredible evolution that Connecticut did that is really worth noting for other places were working on issues of disparities and disproportionality.

And the conversation go something like this. It is about language. And really we started with a conversation about diversity. There are a lot of isms, there even action teams already existing in Connecticut that were called diversity action teams, they were doing some magnificent work. Some about race, some about culture, some about ethnicity, some about all of the other isms that are out there.

Through a lot of conversation early on the group said okay, it is necessary but not yet sufficient. And then we moved into a conversation about cultural competence and what that meant, and as the commissioner was describing, where were the lines between cultural competence and cultural responsiveness and impact on what was happening and what we saw the numbers that was happening.

And we again said cultural competence is certainly a piece of it, but it is not all of it.

We then looked at a lot of data, as the commissioner talked about, and had some really robust conversations about disproportionality and disparities and what that really meant about outcomes and numbers and data, and we said the disproportionality and the disparities, that is the problem. But that is not the solution. And if we talk just about disproportionality and disparities, we are always going to be focused on identifying problems as opposed to driving towards solutions.

So we then went to a conversation around equity and said is this work really about equity, is it about figuring out where the opportunities need to be found in where that proverbial playing field needs to be raised, not even equal but where it needs to be raised.

And we said again it is getting closer but not quite there. And the commissioner then, the commissioner and the leadership team at DCF did what I think is actually still a really bold and brave statement where they said we know all of these other words are out there in the lexicon, we know for years and years people have talked about race, but always in what I would consider code words. But they had not yet started using the word race.

They said we want to put a stake in the ground, and the commissioner said to move this work forward let's call it what it is, let's call it what we are really striving for, let's name it racial justice because that is really what we're talking about.

And it is not to say that all of the other issues are not critically important, and it is not to say that some isms take precedence over other isms, but it really is to say if what we are hoping to really focus on his race and what we really want is justice, let's call it racial justice and let's move that body of work, let's make it intentional and purposeful and make sure that it stays long after there is another leadership change.

So that is my reflection on some of the big decisions that I think are important noting because I think a lot of places land in one of these other boxes, and it is fine maybe for some places to stop there. But Connecticut said to do this work and to take the journey we really want to go, we will call it what it is, which is racial justice.

So Vanessa, can I turn it over to you for talking about what that meant in terms of the timeline?

>> Absolutely. So than the commissioner memorialize this commitment by issuing a 2012 [indiscernible] racial justice statement in which that gave leadership endorsement to the work that we do.

From then in June 2013, we included racial justice as one of the seven crosscutting themes that were added to the department's overall infrastructure to give it its own place among the very important issues that are the practice of our work.

That next month the racial justice workgroup was created, and you heard people talk about the appointed representatives from not only just our central office but our regional offices and our facilities and division leaders to really have people sitting at the table who were decision-makers around how we look at this work to a racial justice lens.

From that the workgroup started to get busy and do its work, and we realized towards the fall of that year, November 2013, that subcommittee specific to specific areas of practice and to be developed. And you will hear a little bit more about what that is and who the work of those groups.

From there we circled back to our senior administrators in January 2014 to check in and make sure that this group was still on target with what the commissioner and leadership charge was for us.

At that point, and the internal workgroup continue to work and continue to diligently meet monthly with the consultants and with representatives from the divisions and regions and facilities.

And then in August 2014, we went back to the expanded leadership and we asked each of the regional administrators, facility, and division heads, to present what they had been doing in their respective areas.

It was clear to us at that particular time that we then had to take it up a notch, and from there in 2015, once the department's operational strategies were issued to all of those groups, performance expectations about the infrastructure of our work were highlighted, and in expectation number three it was very specific to achieving racial justice across the DCF system.

We were very purposeful about our language there because it was not a reduction in disparities, it was not a decrease in disparities, but it was our overall goal of achieving racial justice that we wanted to come across loud and clear.

That particular performance expectation has carried is also into 2016. But the thing that I also think is paramount to understanding how we do this work and the broad tasks that we have in front of us was the inclusion of our external stakeholders.

So in June 2015, we held a kickoff event in which our larger provider network, our sister state agencies, representatives from our courts in different systems from across the state, met with us, and we shared in a very transparent way where we were in the work we had been doing and where we would like to go.

And we basically said to them we need you to partner with us. We ask them to be part of our statewide racial justice workgroup or to be part of the subcommittees or even be a part of the regional subcommittees that were happening across the state.

So from here I will transfer this over to the director of our workforce Academy again to talk to you about what some of the key components of our focus has been said that inclusion.

>> Thanks, Vanessa. So as you can see we were very committed to this just not being us talking the talk but walking the walk. And this involved a clear declaration and sponsorship from leadership. However, as the commissioner said earlier, it was a top down bottom up approach.

We were very committed to this work in that, you know, they say put your money where your mouth is. We actually funded the consultation. We are looking at our procurement of services. So all around we are building this initiative into our everyday work.

Aside from that in the busywork of child welfare, it is hard to really take the time to actually invest in this work. It takes time to change. And we have to allow staff to participate in initiatives such as this.

Our racial justice workgroup meetings are very well attended and staff have really committed their time and energy, and it is something that is a dedicated topic at all levels of leadership.

The conversation around the data infrastructure, that really changed our conversation. And I have to tell you, as you have data in front of you, what happens with leaders and people at all levels of the department, the data becomes embarrassing.

So it changes the nature of the conversation, and that is what data did for us.

So data may have been the conversation starter, but this conversation also is a personal -- it's a call for a personal change for all of us.

So Jen is going to walk through what she did with the workgroup to really prepare the staff and champion this work, to have these discussions with staff at all levels throughout the department. Jen?

>> Thanks. The one I have to correct, because I never correct Jodi, is that Jen really did not do anything. This is really much a team effort. And we as a leadership team, we had a chair, we had a chair for the statewide racial justice workgroup. As he saw on the slides, it was purposeful, it is and continues to be a black woman, a white woman, and a Latino male surrounded by our other leaders of various colors and races.

And we went to very strongly with the sense that this is not an issue that was going to be led by Blacks and not an issue that was going to be led by people in privilege or power, but this really was going to be an alliance and a true partnership every step of the way.

As a result we actually felt like there were five different areas that we would always continue to work at the statewide racial justice workgroup level, and part of that is, because as Jodi alluded to earlier with the coaching, knowing that many of our workgroup members were going to serve as de facto coaches in their home and regional offices as well as the central office, so almost every single monthly meeting we had a combination of activities and [indiscernible], and what we included was always a focus on awareness, and awareness on all of the different areas that the commissioner mentioned ranging from implicit bias to institutionalized and systemic racism to conversations about data to conversations about internalized racism, assumptions,, we really ran the gamut and continued to explore our own beliefs as well as those around us and constantly really driving on the fact that we cannot continue to do this work and we cannot really authentically do the work unless we are constantly aware of our own feelings and the world around us.

To do that we also talked a lot about safe spaces and to steal language from Oronde, I think it was around, I first heard it back and probably 2005, making a distinction between safe and comfortable. That the conversations would be incredibly uncomfortable, but as long as the space was safe we could have horribly uncomfortable conversations. But we need to get away from the notion that spaces were not safe just because they were uncomfortable.

So we constantly strived to create those but also to teach our group members how to do that back in their own respective areas.

We do all of these things through leading provocative and very intentional conversations. So every workgroup meeting has some activity infused into it where we spend time having some raw discussions, and then really stepping out of time and talking about what that meant and how we did it and how people felt and what they could carry forth to take back with them.

We always connected the work to overall good practices, and I am going to tie these two things together, these last issues about race specific practices and overall good practices.

Sometimes we hear not a contrary and viewpoint but a converse may be to what we say of we don't want to just focus on practices that are just about race. But we believe that there are some things that tend to be a little more race specific, and those probably fall into that broad categorization of what some people call culturally competent practices. And I will throughout just some things -- this is now Jen talking, my belief, you get into things that are more race specific practices when you get into cultural and family norms about things like father would engagement, kinship care, some other child rearing practices might tend towards that part of the continuum of race specific.

We also believe, however, that if we do all of these things well, we actually will be just contributing to this overall body of overall good child welfare practices.

We made a distinction on this slide because we don't want to talk about just one or the other, but really want to tie both of them together in the context of all of these other things relative to race and justice.

And I believe -- Jodi, I am turning it back to you to talk a little bit about how the statewide racial justice workgroup is actually organized to do this and take back some of what we do with the statewide level.

>> Thank you. So many interest of time I'm going to speed through this and hopefully we can use some of the question and answer if you have specific questions.

Again, there were four subcommittees that were developed off of the statewide group. Want to focus on policy and practice, want to look at workforce development -- who are we hiring, how are we disciplining staff and disparities by race, we looked at our procurement process -- are we making sure that we are providing culturally relevant services. And we strategically partner with our community, and in fact one of the strategic partnerships was with our courts, and our now chief of quality, Elizabeth, was on the other side of that equation at one point. She now works for us. And we continue this conversation now in her current role.

But we understand the importance of partnering with the community and getting that message out to the community and having them work with us.

Quickly, Vanessa is going to -- we want you to hear from our chief of quality, so we are going to speed this up so that you can hear from her. Vanessa?

>> So how this works at a practice level, we talked already about the structure of our operational strategies and performance expectations, but our agency were cuts across not just the regions but also our facilities.

In fact the awareness activities go beyond just workshops on cultural humility and implicit and it wasn't bias to really taking a self-awareness work and worldview. We have things like think tank consultations and really understanding that in order to invest this, it is not just extra work; it is the work. And it has to be a ready to our staff in terms of all of the decision-making points along the continuum. All of our policies and practice guides are being reviewed through a five-point equity analysis framework designed to ensure that our system and practices are not contribute to additional disparities in disparate outcomes.

Examples of that early childhood practice guides and our trauma informed care practice guide that provide frameworks for really understanding our base, culture, and language have to be considered when assessing the impact of trauma on our kids and considerations for case planning and placement.

Lastly we also have an opportunity to look at how we talk to and engage families by embedding specific questions along our protocols and practices to engage clients in conversations about brave and ethnicity and obtaining more accurate self-disclosure and consistency in our initial data.

All of this allows us to examine data from my more critically racially just lens. One of the models that most of you have probably heard of that we've used throughout and that is woven throughout the course of our work is results-based accountability to really have us focus and pay attention to our outcomes.

Our deputy Commissioner of quality in planning, Susan Smith, is going to walk you through what we ask ourselves as we look at and analyze our outcomes.

>> Good afternoon, everyone, thank you for inviting us and allowing us to tell our story and share some of our data.

As Vanessa indicated, result based accountability has been one of the foundational quality assurance frameworks for the department. We have been working in that arena for a number of years and felt that this was a basis for us to really think and look at our data very differently.

Folks are certainly familiar with the three core questions of how much, how well, is anyone better off. And it kind of donned on us that we needed to think more than just is anyone better off but who was better off pick and I think that really allowed us to look at and to embed our racial justice lens into our work.

For example, all of our program leads are inspected on a quarterly basis to develop RBA report cards. And by including this fourth question about who was better off, that did require that the data is analyzed in that way and is aggregated in that manner and that when folks are talking about the story behind the data, when folks are talking about how to turn the curve, that is an integral part of strategy development.

So that for us has really been simply a game changer in terms of really getting that to the core of the work that we do, particularly on the data side.

One of the foundational data presentations is what we call our disproportionality pathway. Folks who have seen me present know that this is probably one of the slides that I pull out every single time. And I think it has such great relevance to everything we do as a department.

Walking folks quickly through this, what it shows us is the representation of the general children's population in Connecticut. The green shades are children of color, African-American and Latino children. African-American and Latino children are about 30 percent of our population, yet they are well over 50 percent of the kids who are referred to the department, so about 54 percent of the kids referred to our department are children of color.

If you were to go across that pathway for almost every decision point, children of color are overrepresented. So 54 percent in some instances, 52 percent in terms of assistings, 52 percent of kids who enter care, 57 percent of the kids were DCF care, and it is 60 percent of the kids who are in congregate care settings.

So certainly that this has just been a real seminal document and a seminal piece of information to let us see what is the impact when kids are presented to the agency and what does it look like as they start to pass through the agency.

And this is actually one of actually a 15 deck slide presentation we had on the pathway. So I just literally pulled out one of the slides, and we have been doing this for three or four years. So maybe going back to 2012, we have been looking at our data in this way.

We also break it down by each of the area offices and regions. This is the statewide representation, but we also do it at a more local level. So as my colleagues noted, when we are looking at our performance invitations and when we are doing this work, we really cannot pinpoint what is happening and react and intervene in a very local and an area office and in a regional specific way.

We are also looking at using this pathway model in other ways. So on the juvenile justice side we just actually created a pathway that looks at kids in our juvenile justice system or delinquent kids and how they are varying at different points and are they having regressive moves, progressive moves, and other things in our system.

We are looking at creating this for court decisions and others potentially impact permanency, and we're looking at it in some other ways to really give folks this almost a multitask all-inclusive lens about what goes on with all of the children who come to our attention and again specifically to that racial justice lens.

Connecticut, as folks may know, is a consolidated child welfare agency. So in addition to having responsibility for child protective services we also have responsibility for juvenile justice, children's behavioral health services, and prevention to name a few.

And so there is often incumbency for us to look at our juvenile justice data and as I indicated in the previous slide when we're looking at that specifically under the pathway modality, but we have been looking at this generally in terms of where kids of color fall within various status types of interagency is, and as you can see from this data that children of color are greatly overrepresented in our juvenile justice ranks.

You will see this simplified in some additional slides, but again, this is one of the things that we knew we had to attend to and which are really needed to be looking at more carefully.

The next slide is arrest data. This actually comes from what we call our risk management database. But this represents of the children who are receiving services in a DCF funded care setting are other services that the department provides such as therapeutic foster care.

The children who are arrested at some point over the course of the period, in this case over the calendar year, and as you can clearly see from this data that African-American children in particular, but African-American and Latino children are more greatly arrested in the settings than other kids.

When we looked at the juvenile justice pathway that we are creating for those to liquid children, we are getting overrepresented really children of color once again the kids were being arrested at some point were much more greatly those children of color, and I think in that instance it was over 80 percent are close to 90 percent of the arrests were children of color.

So clearly an area of interest and an area from which we need to be attending just a real quick story about this risk management data.

When I was looking to run this, it's an old Axis database, to give you a little context about how long ago this was created, but we are still using it and maintaining it, and there were [indiscernible] reports and I was like okay, let me look for the race and ethnicity reports, and I saw gender and things related to age, but could not find a race and ethnicity report, so I talked to my staff and they said no, it was not you, that are not been created back in those days.

So again, it is kind of amplified and made it quite clear to me that a lot of progress has in fact happened, and there is no way in the last couple of years that we even consider standing up a data system or creating data reporting that did not allow us to readily and easily look at data and aggregate it by race and ethnicity.

So it was certainly quite eye-opening for me.

This next slide represents our voluntary services. As I stated before, the department has responsibility for children's behavioral health services, and one of the features that we have as part of our system is that we are able to support families that have children with very, very complex needs and have a variety of cross system service requirements.

We will work with those families to support and abate and ameliorate some of the children's behavioral health needs hopefully so that they can be maintained in a home in the community.

What we find, however, is that children of color, particularly African-American children, are woefully underrepresented in our voluntary services ranks. The contrast that to our pathway data, the kids that come to our attention on the CBS side, we contrast that to the number of kids who are JJ involved, it's really quite startling. This was a form of information we had not looked at in the past, and as folks talked about having these really courageous conversations, sometimes very accountable conversations, and being empowered to look at our data in ways that we had not before and being able to share this.

So these are data that we actually shared at a public meeting and that included some of our providers that because we wanted to have a conversation about engagement, we wanted to have that conversation about decision-making, we want to make sure that we are supporting all of our families in a way that makes some sense.

One of the things that I did not include in this deck but had talked about in the past was some of the data that we have seen in the state and recognizing that adults of color have a higher level of having adverse childhood events than other races, and then kind of suggested to me -- I am not a clinician, but it suggested to me that there may be these attending behavioral health needs and supports the children of color may have and we need to make sure that the book and of this, thinking about aces and reverse engineering back to opportunities for intervention and intercession makes sense.

This next slide is actually able of data from a data system that we use to collect our community-based services. The majority of the services in that system behavioral health related. So what you can see here is that again children of color at least appear to be under-utilizing these community-based services. So taking a couple of sentences back, I mentioned again the aces, I mentioned again the pathway.

One would expect that we would see a higher level of children of color using our community-based services, and we are not. And again, these were dated that we presented publicly and talk to our providers about because again we really need to get underneath this. This again is also part of the discussions we're having when we're looking at our [indiscernible] report cards and adding that fourth question about who is better off really has allowed us to start to look at are there pockets, is it specific services or specific providers, really allowing us to better get underneath worry announcing the utilization that we certainly expect and want and helping us think about what are the strategies that we need to employ in order to reverse that tied.

And my last slide is actually part of a dashboard that we have created. I did not include the panoply of data that we have. I think we are one of the founding states who use the results-oriented management, so we have just a ton of data presentations under that system. And in fact we just relaunched it, did a huge update of that system, and one of the suite of reports is actually disproportionality and disparity reports, so we are very excited about that, that inclusion.

As well if folks are interested on our DCF website if you go to our homepage on the far right there was an icon, like a little speech bubble, and inside it has a pie chart and that is what we call the DCF data connector that will take you to a site that will link you to just a myriad of DCF data including a portal where we have put in some instances about a decade's worth of an identifiable data sets so folks can run data and look at different aspects of our system.

So again, just a lot of work as transpired in the past few years to really use data in a very meaningful way.

But I included the slide in particular because some of the work that we have done in Connecticut over the past year has been trying to reduce the number of kids who are in congregants, and I'm pleased to say we have been very successful in that. When they commission a static I think we had about 30 percent of our kids who were in placement in a sense in setting, and that is now about 11.3 percent.

We also had a very small percentage of kids in relatives and kinship settings, I think that was maybe 19 or 21 percent maximum. We have nearly doubled the percentage points of that, that is a 41 percent of our kids were now in kinship care.

So on its face you could spike the ball and walk off. But what we did is actually look at some of this data, and this is one of those things where I would have lost my shirt on this. I would have gotten cleaned out.

It's that we have discovered that actually our African-American children are not placed with kin at the same level as their white and Hispanic counterparts.

So white and Hispanic children are placed within about 30 or so percent, and African-American children about 24 percent. And having no one, no one would've taken that that and would've thought that. But that was quite again another example of the eye-opening of how Natalie sometimes the data will kind of let you confront some of those things you don't want to know about, but it can also debunk and that is been really critical because as the regions have developed their performance expectations, that is an area where they are attending. So not to simply looking about getting more kids in with kin, they need to be really thoughtful about what is the strategy that I need to employ to achieve that African-American children are getting into not only -- not only reducing the likelihood of going into congregate care by placing them with family and Ken.

So that is actually a pretty significant finding for us. So for us this journey and the inclusion of data and the empowerment to use the data, I think it has been tremendous and significant for us.

So I'm going to lateral to deputy Commissioner Williams.

>> Thanks, and this is our final slide. As we conclude and reflect on Susan's comments in regard to the data she was showing you, that is only a small percentage of a large amount of data we using this work. We are very intentional about data because we know if we want to really not make this an initiative but make this something that is sustainable within the department, we have to in a sense in views it in the bloodstream of the department, and in order to do that we needed to get a good footing around data and quality assurance. And Susan has done that for us well.

The data helps us to know better, and now our question is now that we know better, we definitely have to do better. And moving from a data informed to know data-driven decision-making is part of the process, a stage of the journey we are on right now.

So thank you for listening to us. And that is the Connecticut story in a nutshell. 45 minutes. We have enjoyed sharing this, we are always excited to talk about what we are doing, but most importantly we love to hear from others and what they are doing so we can be a learning organization as well.

Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, Michael and your team. It's absolutely an inspiring story that we are learning from and will continue to learn from.

So just as a reminder to all of the participants in the webinar, if you have any questions please shoot them through the chat app and we will read them off.

We have a few questions in already, but I want to give Joyce and Janice a chance to add any contextual responses if they wish at this point.

>> This is Joyce James. All I want to add is to say thank you to the Connecticut team for the great work that they are doing and the great presentation, because the data has really served to inform you about where and how you have to focus and do this work and to be inclusive of language that really gets to the heart of the issue. And I just want to applaud you for the work that you have done and for the great presentation today.

>> This is Janice. I would love to ask one question that reflects comments and that we heard in the first year of these convenings and also that we heard when we talked with people individually around the country. And it was their expression, quite poignant, of a sense of isolation in the work that they were doing within their state.

It does not feel to me based on this presentation that that occurred in Connecticut, and I'm wondering if someone could speak to that?

>> Sure, Janice. There was a time when we really had to go within to assure that we were ready to partner with others. I think that is a critical part of the process, self reflection and being honest with ourselves. And that required our ability to talk openly and honestly at a table and in a space that is safe like Jen talked about.

So that we will know when we talk to partners and stakeholder is that community folks who we engaged in this work, we will know what our vulnerabilities are, we will know what our strengths are, and we would have the courage to be transparent.

And so it is always good to have a partnership. I think as we know you cannot do this alone. Structurally across all human service organizations, there is disparities in disproportionality. We as a state have some of the largest gaps as it relates to quality of life indicators of this parodies in disproportionality. So we know we did other players and other stakeholders and agencies to do this with us.

But you just can't knock on the door and say let's go if you were not clear on who you are. And our work within was a critical step for us.

>> Fantastic. So now we will go to a few of the questions coming in from the webinar participants.

One is from Katrina, she is asking that -- she says numbers tell you where the problem resides, but do you follow up with qualitative data to figure out why disparity occurs at a specific pathway point? So a question about qualitative data and how you collect and analyze that.

>> Sure, and I also have some other folks who can jump in [indiscernible] administrator and to engages in this work regularly.

For qualitative, we have myriad of qualitative processes. We have a very comprehensive administrative case review process, for example. We have about 50 or so dedicated social work supervisor staff who work with our staff looking at case plants and then going over our case records and can sit down and do these about 15,000, I think, meetings and we do annually a year.

That certainly is a part of it. Connecticut, we are an agency that has been under consent decree for a while, so there is also a qualitative review that occurs as part of that.

And also we have worked to develop other -- I don't want to say ad hoc, but qualitative processes that promote our research agenda for us to really get underneath certain problems. So our office of research and evaluation has just really been a critical partner in helping us to look deeper and more broadly at these particular issues.

So having the racial justice workgroup, the performance expectations work that we do, and we have these every week, we have a senior leadership meeting. Those have been some of the points whereby

we're having these conversations and we try to populate those theories tables. So we are pulling that thread throughout.

That is really the partnering at a higher level with the qualitative and the quantitative data. But I think Vanessa can speak to it in terms of the performance expectations because I think having folks really understand how that works will better explicate how that qualitative piece gets operationalize picture make sure, because one of the things I think we can guard against is the fact that when you look at it from a practice 10 point, when you start seeing data and what the data is telling us, we have to guard against analysis paralysis in that more data and more questions just makes it seem insurmountable.

We have to take the information that we haven't really understand how it is impacting or practice. So by way of an example, when you think about the disparate number of children of color, particularly African-American kids in kinship care, we then as one of our operational strategies need to be not only talking to a child welfare staff that are out there terms of making placement decisions but going deeper and involving our foster care support staff and actually talking to children and talking to them about who was around the table and Thanksgiving, who did you spend time with this summer.

That really gets to the meat and quality of really understanding how we engage our kids and our families in a more purposeful way guided by the data.

>> Thank you. Another question coming in from Shirley asking do you also have an equity committee at DCF to hire and promote and retain people of color in management positions there?

>> Hi, this is Michael again. Yes, we do have an office of diversity and equity, formally an affirmative action office that enforced the laws of equity and affirmative-action related to race and other kinds of diversities.

They participate in this. We are -- I think one of the slides, we wanted to make sure that we did not want the issue of racial justice to get lost in the overall conversation of diversity.

So we have a great relationship with that office, but we are clear with regard to the scope and responsibility of each.

>> I think also that one of the things we do have is that we have a requirement that there is a diverse panel of folks that are part of the hiring which I think is actually a critical way of ensuring that [indiscernible]. What Jody noted about there being that question about racial justice at an IT manager, hiring, I think that really speaks to it.

That is something that we have been really adamant about, that is actually in dictation we have to have, racial equity representation on all of our hiring.

>> Go ahead, Jodi.

>> I would add part of what we are very sensitive to is that we want the population serving our communities in terms of our agency, we want our agency to reflect the population served.

So we work very closely with our HR department to make sure that we have applicants with a diverse background to actually reflect the population that we are serving, and we are very deliberate about -- for example we have a shortage of black males, and in our agency in Connecticut we get thousands of applications for one position, so we are going through -- when we are going to the screening process, we

will make sure there is representation on staff from candidates from the population that we actually serve. So we are very strategic about that.

>> This is Joette Katz. I just want to voice a word of caution. DCF is probably the largest employer of state agencies on a percentage basis of people of color. And I am very proud of that.

But clearly that does not immunize us. So again, it is a word of caution because it is a different issue. It is very easy to say look at all of the employees that they have, they could not possibly have racial justice issues, and of course that is not the truth.

>> Absolutely.

>> Another question in from Richard been asking how is Connecticut addressing the racial disparities in the reports may to child protection from communities? And in Richard's state he is saying they struggle with finding ways to stem the tide of calls made from schools and community members that result in more African-American children being reported to child protection than white youth. How are you addressing this challenge that starts with this point of contact with the child welfare system?

>> You will see on one of our slides that we very deliberately, one of the very first things we did, was we got to our training component on mandated reporters. And we very purposefully included information about proportionality.

That is a fine line to toe because we are not discouraging people from reporting child abuse and neglect. We are merely bringing data to their attention and asking them to critically think about that process.

So we have trained up our staff to have conversations about that pathway data that you see relative to the respect of community. But you are absolutely correct in that the entry into the system starts with folks and the community. So we are really training our staff to really have those conversations with our community providers as it relates to mandated reporting.

>> Another area that we chose to focus on and we are really deliberate on in our training and communications with the community is to highlight the fact that if these disparities exist for kids of color, the flipside of that is also are there other white children were not getting reported to the department because people are making assumptions about the safety and well-being that are just not so.

Even when we look at special reviews after fatalities and we look at those two a racial justice lens in determining whether or not reports should have or could have been made by members of the community, and maybe the response was just because of the race of the family.

>> Actually in one presentation that we had in one of our communities, we had people of color underrepresented. So the data was very interesting and it begs the question about how we adequately and appropriately referring kids who need to come to our attention.

>> It also -- this is Joette Katz again -- it also highlights the need for me to work with other systems. Because certainly schools historically, they would either call DCF or 911, so you had a huge spike in arrests.

And it is about letting hospitals and schools and providers know that there are other options. You can call 211, you can get EMP as it behavioral health issues arise. It does not always have to be a call to DCF.

>> We did a very interesting thing and we started asking for the race and ethnicity of the caller just so that we can begin to gather some information about that. So we are trying to get our arms around who was calling, and when we need to do some outreach around appropriate calls in the community.

>> Thank you for that, that is very, very helpful.

Are common to many question on kinship care and the kinship structure. There was a note from [indiscernible] Lewis saying going back to the using data slide, she is giving a comment on kinship care. She is saying the speaker was shocked. She is saying that remember that African-American kinship structures are also disproportionately represented in all of the other inequities that put strain on family such as incarceration, low income, income inequality, education, etc.

So she supports kinship care being the first choice, but additional resources should be incorporated into those placements.

You can respond to that comment but there is also a question; what are some of the reasons that African-American children are placed with relatives at a lower rate than other groups?

>> The first part of it, I think that is actually getting to the point. I think we have been very good about trying to make a great deal of resources available to families across the board. And I think it was a reflection of we have that and we have some of the other -- even the biases of what we might think about the rates of placement.

And we did not see that coming to fruition, and I think that for us that was important information for us to see. As I said, to really debunk and rock us from our maybe a little bit of our complacency in terms of thing that may have normatively been happening.

So I certainly appreciate and agree that we need to make sure that the resources, if that happens to be the need, is in place and that there are not other biases that are also impacting that occurring as well.

I think that has been one of those areas that we need to get underneath to make sure that we were not introducing other issues that were thwarting our ability to give the level of kinship placement that we want and had hoped we were getting.

>> I would say some of the reasons why not is systemic and historical. And when you think about those who have histories with the department, a call, 90 some percent of our cases are due to neglect, and 20 something years ago many families got reported on.

So history is there. And I think when people are having to make kinship placement decisions in light of histories that in the 20 years ago they spoke of neglect but really were due to other kinds of issues, it creates a level of hesitancy. And it takes a lot more time.

It's a critical thinking process that one has to go through, a full analysis of it, and sometimes without the benefit of time, people move on. And the work of this workgroup has been one to keep the data in front of everyone to say this can't -- I mean, we can do this, it's just going to require that we look at our practices a little differently.

>> And here some of those decision-making tasks are to look at our practices and structure around even the licensing of relatives. And when you look to reduce the number and reliance is on congregant settings and if we say the value is for children to be with families, we have to look at how we were

licensing relatives, how we were excluding people, how we were discounting previous history with our system and really call it out.

If we thought there were issues and values and judgments and biases being made at the decision-making point, we have to call it out at the place where it really did impact particular cohorts differently.

So the data is not warning us, but it is helping a shiner reflection on some of the things we have done as a system to unintentionally contribute to some of that.

>> Thank you again.

Can you all speak a little bit to the notion of intersectionality? This idea that racism was intersecting with various identities that young people are experiencing. Can you speak about a little bit?

>> I can for my practiced in point and also from an awareness issue. When we had brought in various consultants across the department to really talk about issues of race and identity, we were very purposeful to understand that race is one of those carveouts that tends to happen, particularly in a state like Connecticut where the achievement gap and income gap tend to be very disparate.

But we as a group of very purposeful at bringing brace to the forefront because when you control for everything else, we continue to see disparities related to race unlike any of the other variables that you can factor in.

So although we understand intersectionality and the influence of various other factors and decision-making, we also know that when race is put to the test these disparities are so much more greater and so much more glaring in terms of our decision-making.

>> Thank you. Surely came as asking will you all be doing any specific interventions to address the high rate of out of home placements?

>> I think the interventions that we are doing or that will be done now that we have this critical focus through the data is within the regions and offices that are doing the practice, they have to create specific strategies to their particular child and placement population. And as we see disparities that exist, we have in Connecticut at the executive level a quasi-child staff process where facilities and regions create an annual plan on how they will operate and achieve performance toward five expectations that the Commissioner Lizette at the beginning of the cheer.

We call these the performance expectations. We talked a little bit about it. And one of those expectations is achieving racial justice. Every quarter they have to come and report on the progress they have made with data, achieving racial justice in those various areas.

One area that is very clear as the child placement rate and seeing whether or not children of color are experiencing permanency at a faster rate than before because that is one of the factors that we know was contributing to our increasing rate of children and placement being children of color.

>> Another model that has been instituted under this administration is what we call the considered removal conversations that we are having with families. And under the considered removal structure is simply that prior to the implementation of considered removal meetings in which family members bring their support to the table, we might just show up at their doorstep with police to remove the children.

What happens now because of considered removal is that families bring around the table people who are there biological kin, but also business connections and support they have within the community to help talk to and mitigate the safety factors that have us on the threshold of removal.

The other thing we had to do was once we implement a system I consider removal, we had to examine whether or not our kids of color will always getting consider removal conversations at the same rate as their white counterparts, and if not paying attention to what that meant in terms of the amount of children that were being diverted from coming into our system.

We have found particular success around having considered removal conversations at the point at which we would ordinarily just be making the decision to remove children.

>> Another follow-up question that Julia is asking on the topic of intersectionality. She says how are you ensuring that other issues are included when collecting data and analyzing it to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities such as kids of color who are disabled?

>> You want to make sure I understand the question, but when I talked for example about our administrative case review process is one of the examples, that is actually a pretty comprehensive look. And it's really predicated on much of the CFSR are as long as some other homegrown issues, and we're looking at a myriad of things that impact the needs of a child and a family.

So from the qualitative side that does allow us to get a more fine distinction. And generally from our quantitative side, we also have been trying to do a pretty good job of trying to have a variety of filters and data items in which folks are able to drill down upon.

So just how we create our data, sometimes those variables are not always as easy to glean or not as easy to be put together, but generally speaking when we are doing our higher-level complex analyses, that is the type of work that we are doing, that we're looking at a variety of different data points and really trying to get underneath it.

Our office of research and evaluation has a dedicated PhD level statistician, and part of our formal analyses, we are looking at a variety of multivariate items and looking at the typical significance of intersection of some of those things.

So we're looking at it at various levels but again trying to parse out and tease out what are some of the factors that are impacting our data and informing -- impacting our data and starting to paint the picture that we are seeing.

>> Thank you. Another question, how do you respond to critics who state that disparity in child welfare is a reflection of disparity of need, i.e., disparity and risk factors for abuse?

>> Again that is a value question and a judgment question. And I think that is where our conversations that Jen referenced earlier in the presentation got very provocative with the folks that percent to our racial justice workgroup.

We address those head-on and we continue to say that African American and Hispanic kids are not abused and neglected any more so than their white counterparts. And we looked that in the face whenever people use that argument in the child welfare discussion about how we view the work that we do.

>> Vanessa, this is Jen, can I add one more thing to that? Well, two more things actually, I will be quick.

Two things that we have done. One is asthma necessarily statewide racial justice workgroup we would do vignettes or activities where we had -- where he presented a family and said what would your judgment be, and what would it be if the family was -- we would have the black family, a white family, and see and have conversations about if there were different decisions and just be really, really upfront about some of the assumptions we would naturally make and linked it to conversations around implicit bias, internalized racism, and the real issue that we know impacts all of our decision-making.

The other way we have a conversations more explicit to that particular listener's question is we have actually looked, as Susan has pointed out, along all of the decision points.

I think you can make the case that if somebody makes the argument that the initial point more children are getting screened in because there is a higher actual incidence of -- it still begs the question of so why do the disparities grow and every time we have the opportunity to make yet another decision, because that doesn't answer that question.

So we have really try to tackle it, as the necessary, from a number of different ways ranging from the actual decision-making to going back to the data and having more conversations about different areas of data that might lead to some different hypotheses and conclusions.

>> Okay, well we -- go on.

>> We're fine, thank you.

>> Okay. So we will end here. We want to give a huge thanks to Michael and the team from Connecticut. We are truly inspired by the work that you all are doing and we are looking forward to continuing to work with you and the alliance for racial equity in child welfare.

Just as a reminder, we will be sending the slides and follow-up recording to everyone that participated in this webinar, and it will be available for public viewing on the CSSP website.

Thank you also to Janice and Joyce for helping and for your continued leadership and all of the efforts that are going on with the alliance.

We look forward to being in contact with all of you around the country, and we will be in touch with future webinars and future work.

Thank you everyone. Have a good day.