

SRJWG December 2018 Meeting Minutes

1:00-4:00 p.m.

Hosted by: Middletown Area Office

Notes by: Ryan Williams

**Members Present:** PAUL BERNARD; STEVEN BLOCKER; PAULA DAQUILA; TRACY DAVIS; Debra Borzellino; VANNESSA DORANTES; DURYEA, ELIZABETH; Elizabeth Flores; ROSIRIS ESPEJO; JOSH FISHER; JODI HILL-LILLY; YADIRA IJEH; Jen Agosti; LATOSHA JOHNSON; CARMEN KARECKI; Marie Spivey; Meghan Korn; Michele Stewart-Copes; DANIEL MORELAND; CANDY PHILLIPS; MONICA RAMS; GAIL REYES-WALTON; MELANIE ROSSACCI; Cecilia Singh; SUSAN SMITH; KIM THORNE-KAUNELIS; SIOBHAN TROTMAN; ISABEL TURMEQUE; JOYCE VOLTAIRE; RYAN WILLIAMS; JOETTE KATZ; CHANTEL GIBSON; WILLIAM RIVERA

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

Vannessa and Bill welcomed participants to the last SWRJWG meeting of calendar year 2018.

**II. Presentation of Candy Phillips, Director of Diversity and Equity (ODE)**

Vannessa Dorantes offered a brief overview of how the Racial Justice work dovetails with the Offices of Diversity and Equity (ODE) and Multicultural Affairs and Immigration Practice. She introduced Candy Philips as the new Director of the Office of Diversity and Equity. Candy shared how the Diversity Action Teams (DATs), are consistent with requirements established by CHRO (Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities) and required by and affirmative action regulations in CT. DAT's purpose is to consider any matter appropriate to the development and implementation of the DCF Affirmative Action Plan, including raise cultural awareness in the workplace. DAT co-chairs represent each area office and are responsible for identifying employee issues through various sources of data and utilizing the data to develop and implement programs/initiatives consistent with mandates. ODE is also charged with ensuring those who are employed or seeking employment opportunities with DCF are treated fairly throughout the process. Candy P. invited those present to visit the ODE office to review the Affirmative Action Plan which incorporates details about affirmative action hiring and promotional goals, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies, and Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.

The ODE/DATs are seeking to collaborate with Racial Justice on issues that directly impact the employee's ability to provide services to children and families in a fair and equitable manner. Candy P. stated she held a meeting with the DAT co-chairs on December 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss strategies (i.e. Collecting & Analyzing Relevant Data and Participating on RJ Committees) to ensure programs/initiatives effectively address employee needs while meeting the affirmative action regulations.

The DATs will continue sponsoring cultural events, but in addition, co-chairs will be asked to serve as liaisons to ODE assisting with collecting and analyzing data as well as participate on selected RJ workgroup Committees. According to Candy, a follow-up meeting with DAT Co-chairs is scheduled for January 9<sup>th</sup> to develop parameters for collecting and analyzing data (including the use of technology) and discuss strategies to proceed with collaborative efforts with RJ.

Vannessa D. emphasized there are areas of overlap but the purpose and scope of the DATs and the RJ work are distinct. The DATs and SWRJWG can reinforce each other, however there will be opportunities to understand the distinctions. Candy P. stated there are quarterly DAT meetings, but DAT's responsibilities had to be exercised independently of the SWRJWG. Bill R. offered that by ODE having a

place at the SWRJWG meetings, CHRO will be able to note the collaborative work between the structures reflected in the meeting minutes. Bill R. asked ask Candy if any complaints of harassment and discrimination of protective groups reported against children and families who are not employees were within the investigative scope of ODE. Candy P. was less clear about this but stated that ODE is exploring how this might move forward. Siobhan Trotman asked if the ODE provides mentoring different from the DCF Mentoring Program. Candy P. stated ODE would provide informal mentoring regarding employment issues and employee development matters.

### **Acknowledgement of departing members and Commissioner Katz**

Vannessa D. expressed acknowledgement and thanks for those who have helped to move the work forward as we reflected on the year. She thanked Gail Reyes-Walton and Melanie Rossacci (who are moving on to new opportunities outside of the agency) for their great work as the Chairs of the Community and Contracts and Procurement workgroups. Susan Smith thanked Commissioner Katz for her support, leadership, and advocacy on behalf of the SRJWG. Susan S. emphasized the fact the leadership is key in the success of the SRJWG and thanked Commissioner Katz for her continued support by presenting her a plaque from the SWRJWG. Commissioner Katz thanked the group for their work, expressed her commitment and stated it's not over. Vannessa D. shared that the SRJWG has participated in national webinars and that child welfare agencies in other jurisdictions have asked for guidance on moving their racial justice forward. She shared that callers are excited to lead this, but stressed the importance of having leadership on board to guide it.

The workgroup presented and shared a cake for Commissioner Katz with her photo and the Rosa Parks quote to ***“Never be fearful of what you’re doing when it’s right.”***

### **III. Racial Justice Summit Debrief**

Bill Rivera transitioned the group to a time of debriefing and processing of the October 26<sup>th</sup> Racial Justice Summit: *Erasing disparities and breaking barriers*. He invited the group’s feedback about strengths, gaps, and recommendations for future planning. Many of those present at this meeting attended the summit. Elizabeth Duryea shared that participants were invited to complete a survey about the summit. The sample size was small but that there were some takeaways. There were five funders who were present at the Summit. Elizabeth stated the event was powerful and impactful, as it forced her to think about her own privilege. The keynote evoked strong feelings and thoughts. Elizabeth thanked those who made the event a success.

Yadira Ijeh presented the survey results. 181 people attended, 101 signed in and approximately 18% completed the survey. 80-90 percent of those who completed the survey were excited about the RJ work. The survey responses revealed that we are a leader in this area, participants requested more youth involvement, and they requested more data and resources. People stated they would commit to advocating for racial justice, incorporate it in their work and follow up with game changers in the racial justice work. “Saying yes to racial justice” and more youth involvement emerged as frequent themes. Those who completed the survey expressed a desire to incorporate others in the work by offering technical assistance. There were also requests to allow for more opportunities for staff to attend and to include foster parents and attorneys. One person expressed to desire to address issues related to the Hispanic community, which is very racially diverse.

Elizabeth D. shared that the registration process was free, but left it could have been better. We have an attendance list with the entire legislative leadership though not all of the legislative leadership attended the summit. In the initial conversations about RJ summit, the focus was on expanding external partners and not staff. The University of St. Joseph provided a lot of support. In the future, any proposed summits need to be offered at a time convenient for youth. Twelve judges were present and requested the materials to bring back to their administration. The Commissioner's team presented certificates of appreciation to all those that had a leadership and/or support function in the conference. Jodi Hill-Lilly recognized the work of Elizabeth D. and Susan S. for their organization of the summit. Promotional pencils etched with "Erasing Disparities & Breaking Barriers" were passed out to the group.

Siobhan Trotman shared her experience as a member of the work since the Casey Breakthrough Series in 2005. She expressed how proud she was to see how the department's racial justice efforts have grown and how amazing it has evolved. Vanessa D. shared that the first time she heard about disparity and disproportionality was through the RJ work. Tracy Davis reiterated how impactful the information Ken Hardy delivered was and how the conversations continued for days.

There was an acknowledgement that it wasn't possible to have everyone at the summit, but having staff present was important. Tracy D. emphasized the importance of having staff present to hear a national speaker like Dr. Hardy so as to bring the message back to their offices. Vanessa questioned how to build upon the success of the summit and spread the message further, i.e. having more staff attend. Jen Agosti encouraged those present to watch the YouTube videos and pull pieces of the summit for staff to gain insight into the work. There were more people at this summit than the first. Elizabeth D. recommended publicizing the summit in the future. Vanessa D. encouraged the group to view the youth panel video the summit. Elizabeth D. stated there was a press release regarding the DCF racial justice summit, but that the media did not participate.

We now have legislation that requires reporting on our progress to eliminate racial disparities in our work. Latosha Johnson shared that the Reg. 6 video humanized DCF staff. Latosha expressed that outside folks don't see us in that light and it's important to highlight these experiences. Vanessa D. shared that the forum was also designed to provide additional tools to take back to our respective offices. Siobhan T. suggested facilitating brown bag lunches with staff from the courts. Elizabeth D. expressed that there isn't sufficient funding available to facilitate these cross agency experiences.

Josh Fisher and Jaquan are further exploring the relationship between child welfare and race equity. It's important for courts to look at their decision points in those areas. Yadira I. shared that the presentation Tina and Victor did supported the message that we're not doing this work in isolation. Seeing a written message "play itself out on stage" was very nice. Vanessa D. stated that a provider who attended voiced that the work is real. Siobhan T. shared that during RJ consultations in the regions, there was concern from a provider the racial justice work would stop. Jodi H-L stated that when Elizabeth D. was at judicial she kept calling DCF to enquire about our next steps to move the RJ work forward. Elizabeth stated that she kept calling Bill persistently to ensure that they were included in the work. It was external providers, then and now, that continue to hold DCF accountable for racial justice outcomes.

Vanessa D. asked if any of the external partners had feedback. Deborah Borzellino of The Connection, expressed that it's been an honor being involved with the SRJWG. Both she and her husband, who is also a provider, had an impactful conversation after the summit. Deborah will work to incorporate the racial justice work at The Connection. One of the providers expressed how they think about this work daily. The importance of the SRJWG meeting, the summit and integration of the work is key. It was reported

Tim Marshall (CLAS) always reminds their team of the importance of continued collaboration regarding the racial justice work. Bringing this work to the national level would be great. Dr. Marie Spivey thanked Commissioner Katz for taking a leadership role in racial justice when no other commissioner has. Marie emphasized the accountability factor to work on health equity, racial justice and respect for all. She shared that everybody throughout the country should know what CT DCF is doing. Marie S. shared that Deborah B. used to bring up the SRJWG all of the time in their meetings. CMHA talked about how they would integrate the RJ work and that now the Connection would do so as well. It was reported Tim Marshall would continue to incorporate a RJ lens into the work with CLAS standards. Elizabeth Flores (YAB) stated that integrating the youth delinquency component would improve the summit.

Josh shared that when Jaquan (YAB) emphasized there was no table for them on stage, some of the set up workers were offended. Josh shared that we need those who are offended to be included in the racial justice work. Vanessa D. recognized that the reason why there is disproportionality and disparity is because there is silence. The discussion can't just occur amongst people of color. Jen A. observed that there weren't a lot of white people at the summit. Josh clarified that the set up crew found Dr. DeJesus and expressed their feeling to him. Jen A. observed that there is a danger preaching to the choir and emphasized there are less whites in our meeting, whereas there was more balance in the past. Latosha and Jodi H-L emphasized the importance of active listening and using conflict discussions as teachable moments.

#### **IV. Racial Justice Legislation:**

Vanessa D. stated the Commissioner strongly suggested the racial justice work be codified, which happened in the last legislative session. Bill R. thanked Susan S. for providing guidance on how to approach drafting the February 1, 2019 legislative report. He had to review many data for the report. Bill provided a brief summary of what DCF is required to submit for the report in a separate document. Bill stressed that the report will provide a look at trends and limit recommendations to ensure that they are doable and measurable.

Bill observed that the data reveals that we've made progress in some areas and need to address others. He asked if there's anything the SRJWG believes needed to be addressed in the report, that he would incorporate if they provided feedback by December 28, 2018. One of the things that was noted over the past six years was that the Hispanic population has grown in each of the CPS pathways. Hispanic persons are coming to CT in large numbers, which affects access to services. Data shows black kids are overrepresented and stay longer in congregate care. Bill R. stated we have to look at why this is, examining racism and its overarching effects. Bill R. questioned how come we aren't seeing a statistically significant drop of kids of color in care and are we missing data concerning white kids in care. He also observed that stated our existing FAR data doesn't appear to tell us whether we're doing better regarding kids of color.

Susan S. shared that it was noted that Black kids are overrepresented in FAR data. This language is confusing as it does not adequately reflect what we are attempting to capture and the progress we are hoping to measure. The rate of referrals needs to be reexamined. We must also examine if we seeing any differences between the traditional track as opposed to FAR track. Susan S. stated this data affects how we read the disparity index and emphasized how this data must be examined differently. Deborah B. asked if intergenerational patterns are being examined. Susan S. stated past case history could be explored, but the qualitative reviews could tell what things mean and what could be applied, i.e. are the same decisions being made? We have an opportunity to do a much deeper dive into the FAR data. We

have made progress in certain areas but we have to figure out how to eliminate data that doesn't need to be in our system. Jen A. shared that one of FAR's original purposes was to address disparity and disproportionality.

Elizabeth F shared that in examining the opioid epidemic, it was questioned how some family groups might be different than others. Elizabeth (YAB) stated that partnering with other agencies and using technology to provide an information portal for families via a phone app would be useful. Bill R. shared that data demonstrates that white people are highly represented in the opioid epidemic statistics, yet Black and Hispanic persons are more likely to be referred to CPS. Susan S. stated the numbers regarding substance abuse as a reason for removal for blacks is constant. Vanessa D. stated we don't control for what happens in communities and commended Elizabeth (YAB) for listening to her community contacts.

Bill R. expressed concern that existing PIE data limitations are our own. He observed that we have no existing way of capturing who or how many persons are being referred for services in PIE. PIE only lets us know which groups are being served. Bill R. stated finding the data was very challenging. One of his recommendations for the legislative report will be that we compile and post all racial justice data in one place on Share Point. Bill's analysis of the data also revealed that we've expended a lot of resources on technical assistance and training for workforce development to equip workers for racial justice practice, however, we have no measure of how effective it's been. Theoretically, these efforts should be moving the numbers lower in each of the CPS pathways but we are not seeing any evidence of that in the data he reviewed for the report.

Bill R. is proposing that we target two pathway points, children entering care and children in care, to assess why the numbers of Black and Hispanic children are growing and attempt to understand why this is happening and try to reverse the trend. Bill is seeking specific recommendations for the legislative report by close of business 12/28/18. The first integrated draft will be presented to management on 1/15/18 and the full report will be presented to the legislature in February.

It was suggested RRG be integrated into the racial justice work in order to be able to bring a different perspective to the racial justice lens regarding family dynamics. It was also observed that as failure to report statutes being enforced, this will impact the number of reports that are being made. Vanessa D. expressed that how we match services to families is key. Jodi H-L acknowledged Monica M-R for identifying a question specific to services and integrating it in the investigation protocol.

Joyce V. asked if we are looking at whether services are effective and for whom? She also commented that we've done a good job with TA, but it has to be measured and integrated. When we can tell if the race of the family affects the services they receive, we'll begin to see a change. Siobhan T. shared that the more RJ can be imbedded into consults and the more people are exposed to a RJ lens, it will be concretized in practice. Jodi H-L stated that Joyce James was supposed to focus on outcomes, but our own system was not ready, therefore, we had to work from where we were. We must now revisit the issue. Tracy D. shared that with the proposed Universal Referral Form (URF), we should have the ability to help staff refer folks to appropriate services. Tracy D. suggested looking at how to sustain the Case Consultation Model and package it for staff in a more digestible manner.

Rosiris E. stated that the ACR group should be integrated into the RJ work. Vanessa D. shared that we needed to put people in places that could promote RJ and bring it back to their offices. Rosiris E. stressed that supervisors must implement RJ and the Case Consultation Model must be implemented. Shantel Gibson, who is a trainee, shared that she took on the responsibility of DAT Chair of the Norwich

DCF office. She expressed frustration due to being discouraged from bringing racial justice concerns to her office management and there was no follow up. Vanessa D. encouraged Shantel G. to move forward with what she's doing. Jen A. suggested looking at specific TAs and matching accountability to gatekeepers. Latosha J. stressed that we have to look at who's at the table at the regional level so as folks dealing with RJ feel supported. Vanessa D. stated people in the room have to continue leading the messaging and the expectations as we transition to a new administration.

Vanessa D. shared that the Community and Procurement Subcommittees will need new chairs. Rosiris E. observed that the data isn't clear as Hispanics are being coded as white in LINK. We have to ask individuals their race and ethnicity. Susan S. stated whether folks are asking the question is something that must be examined. Data is as good as the action it prompts. Vanessa D. encouraged the regional racial justice teams to look at this issue. Jodi H-L voiced concern about what seems to be an increase in the "other" or "no designation" of race coming out of LINK.

## **V. Subcommittee Updates:**

### **Workforce**

Tracy D. provided a brief update regarding the Case Consultation model they looking at how to resurrect. The goal will be to help SWS and PS engage in RJ conversations with their staff. They hoping to start in Regions 5 and 6 with risk, safety and race being synonymous in any case practice discussions. They are also considering adding the "concept of race" into the supervisory agenda. SWS and PS need to develop a tool box, with supporting data, as to how the RJ lens applies. A half day learning forum is being developed. They have a presentation that has to be tweaked. The goal of the Workforce committee is to ensure this is embedded in practice. Tracy D. requested to present an implementation plan at the next meeting.

### **Policy and Practice**

Yadira I. suggested to Tracy D. that the case consultation guidelines be incorporated into the practice guide. This would give it a more formal place the model to be included. Yari shared that policy promulgation is suspended at this time. The committee is charged with reviewing new policy via a racial justice lens. Latosha J. proposed that the family arrangement policy might have to be revised as it was absent of a racial justice practice lens. Yadira I. questioned how often we look at family history and reminded the group of the difference between how the crack and opioid epidemics were handled, as it relates to family arrangements. Jodi H-L shared that this history is available via the new LINK build. Deborah B. suggested LMFTs being added to DCF's RRG roles. Jen A. suggested kinship care as an in-home service and to explore definitions for kinship care. Deborah B. suggested exploring how to change TPR language because you can't terminate a child's history emotionally.

Susan Smith provided and update on a new statewide data plan that is being proposed. She shared that she had written a DCF specific data sharing policy to protect the rights of clients as it is expected that the statewide plan may be asking for information that puts vulnerable populations at risk of exploitation. The policy will address the sharing of client level data, data integration and predictive analytics. DCF Legal is reviewing the policy and it will be promulgated sometime in January 2019.

Susan shared that concerns raised over client data protection were prompted by two recent publications: *Weapons of Math Destruction: How big data increases inequity and threatens democracy.* (O'Neil, 2016) and, *Automating Inequity: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*

*(Eubanks, 2018)*. Susan highly recommended we read these books to gain a better understanding of why we are moving in this direction.

**Contracts and Procurement:** No updates

**Community:** How to integrate community partners must continue to be explored.

Marie Spivey shared that the CLAS standards could be modified according to the community being served. Continuous feedback is important because people will forget what they've heard. Incorporating goals and objectives is another way to keep racial justice on people's minds. Vanessa D. stated the RAs have to look at how they are doing implementing racial justice.

The next meeting will take place on 2/8/19 at The Connection.

Commissioner Katz thanked everyone for their work. DCF is leading the state and the nation in the racial justice work. The work determines how we view our families and each other. The Commissioner thanked Bill, Vanessa and Susan for their efforts. Commissioner Katz encouraged the group to be bold, as we have the numbers, the vision and we're right. She encouraged the group to take pride in the work we're doing because we're making a difference.

Meeting adjourned at 4:03pm