

**Statewide Racial Justice Work Group Meeting
September 9, 2016
Beacon Health Options Hartford Room**

Present: Bill Rivera; Vanessa Dorantes; Chrichton Stewart; Monica Montalvo-Rams; Shaun Punzalan; Andrew Ludwig; Melanie Rossacci; Jeri Beckford; Diane Rosell; Ryan Williams; Susan Smith; Fenando Muñiz; Tracy Davis; Christina Quaranta, Sara Díaz; Jennifer Volpe; Bill Rosenbeck; Nedra Muley; Michael Williams; Anne McIntyre-Lanher; Michael Gulce; Elba Caraballo; Elizabeth Duryea; Jodi Hill-Lilly; Sommaly Ounthongdy; Deb Borzellino; Commissioner Katz

Vanessa D. convened the meeting at 1:18pm. Participants were introduced.

Vanessa D. asked the group to review the minutes from the previous meeting. No corrections or amendments were made. The minutes were approved for posting.

Vanessa provided an update on the technical assistance sessions that were being offered by Joyce James, Jodi Hill-Lilly, Tracy Davis, Dr. De Jesus, and Susan Smith.

Committee Updates:

Contracts and Procurement Workgroup

Melanie R. stated that there was feedback from the contract review panels. They are expressing difficulty with scoring the racial justice-specific questions on the RFPs. It was time consuming, thus elements were combined. Melanie R. distributed and requested feedback regarding the revised proposal questions. Melanie R. announced two new subcommittee members, Sergio and Mary. Next year's goals have been updated. Melanie R. suggested adding info about service systems to the proposals.

A meeting has been scheduled for September 16th between the contracts committee and the Atty. General's Office. The purpose of the meeting is to clarify services and provider expectations. Bill R. observed the weakness the language access narrative and stressed the need to amend the language to distinguish the difference between cultural and linguistic competency. Vanessa D. stressed the importance of this distinction due the goal of expecting linguistically appropriate services that match the languages of the clients we serve.

Mike W. asked how this would be operationalized. Melanie S. stated that the scoring guide relates to the last RFP. The committee is trying to work with programs as situations arise. Contractors are also dealing with the tier system. For this reason the committee has requested information about the clients served and clients' primary language to have a better idea of the effectiveness of the services. Instead of just providing a written cultural competency plan, the workgroup needs to see what's going on within the provided services. Fernando M. stated that is easy to train review panel members on how to score an RFP, but it is equally important to determine if they truly can provide the service. DCF will have to decide whether or not to contract with the provider. Susan S. suggested to create language to specify DCF's expectations of contracted service providers. Bill R. stated that we are working through 56 languages across the state. Most of these are being facilitated through telephonic interpreter services and on-site interpreters. Although Spanish is the main language, the languages being spoken are becoming more diverse because of the influx of refugees arriving to Connecticut.

Region V hosted the Lost in Translation training for all staff. It appears as if there has been a disconnection between what interpreters say and what we're told. The training focus is on how to work more effectively with interpreters to maximize communication when interpreters are used. Susan S. asked if the committee looked at the budgets to see if there's funding that matches the proposed services. Melanie S. stated that there isn't anything specific to linguistic competence in the RFPs. Susan S. stated that contract dollars need to support what potential providers say they are doing.

Workforce Workgroup- Tracy D. informed us about their work on exit interviews, which includes internal transfers. This is in process and will have to be examined at a SAM meeting. The work within the committee is at a standstill while broader impacted stakeholder feedback is pending. The committee is considering focusing on new hires and the mandatory writing piece, i.e. having a writing sample as a part of potential staff's interview process. The committee will ask Debi Freund and HR if this could be done.

Community Workgroup- Crichton S. reported that there are monthly teleconferences continue. The committee is requesting that Joyce J. be available to offer suggestions regarding how to reach out to foster parents, the faith-based communities, youth and other providers to participate in our racial justice efforts. During the July teleconference, the workgroup discussed, and to gathering juvenile justice data concerning kids' charges, the route by which kids come into the system, and overrides. Bill R. stated that the info created by the Racial Justice Intern for our last meeting has been posted on Share Point. Andrew the Intern stated that he expanded the years of the data collected to make it more accurate. Bill R. encouraged the group to review the data on Share Point to get a better idea of what is needed for the committee.

Policy Workgroup- Bill R. stated that the Early Childhood Practice Policy was reviewed and approved. The workgroup has not received many policies for review lately. The revised Voluntary Services Policy is being reviewed by Barbara Claire. Most policies have been accepted. Vanessa D. suggested that we revisit the scope of these committees because committees want to expand and focus in other areas. Vanessa D. suggested that the group send the Chairs any suggestions.

Region / Facility Updates:

Region 1

Mike G. reported that they met with Jen A. for a specialty TA. He feels like there's a lot of talk but no action. He feels that this because staff haven't been included to doing the voluntary work to move the racial justice framework forward. There were discussions about this concern at the local level. Joyce James is scheduled to meet Reg. 1 in the near future for TA. Mike G. stated that Region 1 may be experiencing stagnation based on the perception the office is not a safe space for these discussions to occur.

Region 2

Nedra M. stated that the Case Consultation Model is being integrated into their racial justice work. They are asking staff to consider how their race and ethnicity may be influencing their work. Region 2 had a data TA with Susan S. They explored children in placement data to home in on what they needed to work on. Region 2's racial justice team shared that they are also having discussions with the community as well as having weekly discussions in the office about how to apply a racial justice lens to the case planning. On 9/23/16 the South Central Region of Care Kick Off will occur. At this meeting providers will discuss how they are applying a racial justice lens to their services and work. Parents will participate in this event as well.

Vannessa D. invited Jodi H-L provide an update on the Technical Assistance Sessions (TAs). Jodi reported that the Exec. Team was deliberate in their expectation regarding the focus of technical assistance (TA) offered. They are as follows:

TA-1: Joyce James, will examine Performance Expectation 3 management to determine if the components of the PEs are commensurate with the desired goals.

TA-2: Jodi and Jen A- Continuing will work with staff regarding where they are specific to culture and awareness. The technical assistance is staged so that each region, Central Office divisions and facilities will have each component of assistance.

TA-3: ORE Data Consults - Susan S. brings an invaluable piece to the puzzle. Susan's work will concentrate on examining data to answer the "Who's Better Off?" question.

TA-4: USJ (Dr. De Jesus) Case Consultation Model. What do we need to do, what's going on in the case as it relates to racial justice?

Example of this TA- What they found in Reg. 3 is that they need to engage the community in achieving the outcomes of PE 3. Reg. 3 included community providers in their TA session, which inspired the question: "Should the SWRJW subcommittees be involved in the technical assistance process?"

Region 3

Dr. Reyes reported that Joyce James advised them that they should focus on one community in their town. Middletown had a community collaborative person who brought the community together. Dr. Reyes replicated this and held two meetings, the last at a church in Willimantic. Willimantic asked the community for data, which the school provided and the meeting inspired the police to offer their services to the schools. There was also an exciting discussion about systemic racism. Shaun P. stated that conversations in the Norwich region have begun as well. Dr. Reyes requested TA 2 because they wanted to develop an open forum to discuss issues of race, as their first effort presented opportunity to learn more about how to present this topic to staff.

Region 4

Monthly RJ meetings are taking place. Region 4 developed different strategies because they understand there are areas that they need to improve, i.e. how bias influences the work. Their racial justice group is working with Jen A. on TA 2 and will present this on 9/23/16. The agenda for the event has been developed. Region 4 is working with the Academy preparing a video designed to help staff with how to approach the cultural questions and apply the racial justice lens to the work. Latosha stated that we should revisit the race / cultural questions in the investigations protocol due to feed back. "A Closer Look at Racial Justice- Making the Connection" was what they named their TA session.

Region 5

Region 5 had its second planning session for their World Café Series. The next World Cafe is scheduled for 9/21, and will offer a Syrian refugee training. Case consults are occurring in Torrington every two weeks. SWS are assigned to present cases on a rotating basis. Region 5's racial justice team is reviewing data regarding the kids who came into care last quarter and what is driving those numbers up instead of the relative placement numbers. Members of their racial justice team have identified the cases to be mined. Bill R. is facilitating the Lost in Translation Training at the Waterbury and Torrington offices, dates pending. Torrington office is scheduled for The Journey towards Racial Enlightenment training. There have been 'courageous conversations' about the Orlando Castillo police shooting - "What's Race Got to do with it?" Communication designed to generate conversations in the office are being sent on a regular basis. There is also a one on one session with the Spanish community in October. The event is designed to increase the number of multilingual clinicians in the community.

Region 6

Tabled

SIU

The "Journey toward Racial Enlightenment" training will be presented to SIU staff the end of September, early October.

CJTS

CJTS will be revamping their racial justice team as previous team members left.

Questions and Concerns

Mike W. asked which Regions are participating in Case Consultation Model. He also asked if the racial justice lens presented in the model aligned with Needs Met and Case Planning. Mike W. emphasized that we want to make sure quality case planning is upheld. Monica M-R stated that in Region 2, a QA person and the court monitor were present to look at Needs Met, so as not to lose focus

on case planning, but also to talk about racial justice issues. Crichton S. stated that they have a draft of the case plan during consults to discuss needs and the domains within the case plan. When the weekly case consults occur, these elements are seamlessly integrated into the discussion. Vanessa D. suggested looking at how the plan did in the process as well as how the family fared. Nedra M. stated that they prepare people to make sure they are comfortable talking about the issues. Jodi H-L stated that as the workers talk about their own race and ethnicity to look at how their decisions affect the case planning. Nedra M. stated that in a workgroup discussion, a person talked about their experience and when the team presented the case, they asked the person about how their beliefs influenced a conversation with a youth whose actions were in contrast with the worker's values. Jen A. questioned if we need to be more purposeful in addressing the overlay and integrated case consultations more thoughtfully and purposefully. Fernando M. suggested integrating the work in the ACR process. Jodi H-L stated they are in the re-procurement process for USJ, as the contract hasn't been fully executed.

Vanessa D. stated that the work of the group is being chronicled. USJ Dr. Caraballo expressed excitement about the Case Consultation Model being integrated into the DCF system. Dr. Caraballo stated that interviews have begun and they have been capturing a lot of good information about the history of this group's work. Dr. Caraballo passed out blank sheets of paper and stated that they want to do a focus group and asked people to get involved. The focus group would occur in the context of the SWRJWG meeting. Dr. Caraballo thanked the group for the opportunity to be involved.

Vanessa D. asked us to save the date for the 11/14/16 Year in Review Event, and to invite stakeholders to participation. We are still working to confirm the venue. Bill R. stated that this is an opportunity for folks on the SWRJWG to create the event. Bill R. suggested combining the chronicling meeting, but this would have to be decided by the committee. Mike W. suggested that the group consider the time frame, which is short, to pull off a thorough event. Bill R. stated that this is an opportunity to reconnect to potential stakeholders previously invited and to invite new community providers to participate in our racial justice efforts. Monica M-R asked if this date was set because she questioned if the short amount of time was enough to get partners to participate in the event. Jen A. suggested giving providers a month to plan and consider who we want to invite and the objectives of the event. Vanessa D. reminded the team that our connections are deeper than they were at first. The group would also figure out what would be the "Ask" of the community. Dr. Reyes stated someone from Reg. 3 would be involved and Vanessa D. stated that someone from Region 5 would be involved. Region 4 suggested calling the event "Standing Tall for Racial Justice." Vanessa D. requested that people volunteer by 9/15 at 4pm.

Five Minute Break

Vanessa D. reconvened the meeting. It was suggested that the group take a look at what the foster care licensing process look like as it relates to racial justice. The group then watched a video of "What Would You Do?" (Foster Care Cruelty)

Vanessa D. stated that feedback from the YAB indicates that they've experienced similar situations to those highlighted in the video. Dr. Reyes talked about the unacceptable practice of not

considering children's culture in placement. Dr. Reyes questioned if we empower workers to go against superiors when the foster home isn't appropriate. Monica M-R questioned how the response from the people in the store in the video would have been different if the races were reverse. Monica M-R suggested that the team be on the same page as it relates to placing children in foster homes. Concern about foster parents who aren't willing to do their job because of being inconvenienced was voiced during the discussion. Tracy D. questioned the systemic aspects of foster care, mainly when the recruitment hasn't kept up with the turn over. We have to confront these issues. Monica M-R stated that she's heard grievances from staff regarding child placement agencies, as their guidelines are different than DCF's. Monica M-R questioned how to get child placement agencies on board and in line with our efforts, especially in the area of racial justice.

Commissioner Katz stated that this particular video is too blatant and easy to dismiss. Latosha J. stated that the realities are much more subtle. Dr. Reyes stated that if we show this, we have to be ready for the response. Elizabeth D. stated that we might have to be blatant to open up the issue to the lay people in order to bring about the conversation. Mike W. was surprised that people responded the way they did in the video, and stated that those people were potentially foster parents. After viewing the video, Mike W. stated that we have to look at our recruiting strategies. Mike G. questioned what do foster parents do, i.e. those who don't want to do anything.

Vannessa D. stated that "foster child" becomes one's identity. The notion of how are we preparing children to live outside from DCF, i.e. life skills, is key. Bill R. from CJTS stated that he and his wife, who are foster parents. They watched the video and were upset by it. Bill stated that foster parents would be upset by the video because many foster parents are the opposite of what was represented in the video. Jen A. stated that the video plays on implicit biases of foster care. Jen A. went on to question the threshold, akin to safety and risk, i.e. what is negotiable and what is not. Vannessa D. brought up the scenario of the individual who wanted to take only black kids, which brought up many questions. Again questioning where is the threshold. Susan S. talked about asking foster kids questions to find out if they felt like a part of the family. The results showed responses above 80%. Susan S. stated that we have the ability to break the survey down in various ways; by race, gender, etc...

Fernando M. stated that it would be good to know how many kids are in homes that if we had the choice, they wouldn't be there. Commissioner Katz asked why we are afraid to put demands on our foster families, for fear they would walk away (VETTING / RECRUITING!!!!!!!!!!). Dr. Reyes stated that she pushed back on foster families, stating they have to step up. Debora from CMHA stated that families have to be asked what needs to happen for a child to be thrown out of the house, because all families have a line. We have to know where the line is so that they don't reach it. Then consider what you know about the family's culture, race and ethnicity, as well as their own self-awareness.

Jodi H-L suggested thinking about this in terms of a continuum, as there are blatant and subtle actions by foster parents. The majority are more implicit and subtle. Do we need a renaming? Words beget identity. Jodi H-L brought up the learned helplessness of the workers and the need to address systemic issues. Susan S. stated that we don't know the races of foster parents, as this data isn't currently organized. Jen A. stated that we know about racial patterns in our country and questioned at what point do we care more about the patterns than the treatment of the kids in the house. Mike W. stated that he thinks about what it would take for DCF staff to be foster parents.

Latosha J. stated that we have to consider what staff is able to tolerate so that a child could stay in a home. Then there are the veteran foster parents who require negotiation to lessen the burden to the staff. Latosha J. stated that workers don't want to do it because it would be burning the candle at both ends and would need different supports, as the demands interfere with foster family's availability. Vanessa D. asked where staff are as it relates to kin placements, at which point Dr. Reyes stated that we can't assume that kin placements are appropriate.

Fernando M. stated HR and Legal have a reminder schedule and suggested a reminder to staff regarding Prudent Parenting Standard, Racial Justice, etc.... Vanessa D. reminded the group that Racial Justice is a movement designed to bring about systemic change. How do we make it happen as a result of what we've learned? Mike G. asked if there are report cards for foster care, as there are for other services, so as to gauge whether it's appropriate for kids to be in homes. Vanessa D. stated that this could be talked about in the COP which starts in October. Mike D. suggested foster care be changed to "community living". There is an opportunity to delve into this issue deeper. Susan S. stated that she wants to have an event that shows growth and participation of the community and suggested that the event reflect the synergy of the group. Susan S. offered to take suggestions and encouraged the group to send suggestions to the chairs of the SWRJWG.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55pm