

TO: Regional Administrators, Senior Administrators and Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup Members

FROM: Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup Leadership

RE: Upcoming Changes & Advances to SRJW

DATE: December 21, 2014

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The Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup (SRJW) was launched in July 2013 to actualize DCF's cross-cutting theme of *addressing racial inequities in all areas of our practice*. This workgroup has represented the six regions across the state as well as DCF facilities and Central Office staff, with regional designees appointed by the Regional Administrators. Since July 2013, the SRJW has convened monthly, formed four key subcommittees, and led racial justice conversations within the regions, facilities, and Central Office.

Following the August 2014 Statewide Expanded Leadership Team Meeting and the development of the 2015 operational strategies, the SRJW leaders identified a need to provide more intentional and structured support for this work across the state. We recognize that racial justice work is significantly different than other work done in the Department, requiring ongoing reflection, facilitated discussions, practice changes, and policy reviews. Moreover, as we see that the work related to racial justice is gaining momentum and moving full speed ahead, we must ensure we are ready to meet the challenges that lay ahead.

To these ends, there are two advances we are making to increase the support provided to this critical work.

- 1) **SRJW Staffing and Support:** In addition to the continued leadership provided by Deputy Commissioner Williams, and SRJW co-leaders Bill Rivera (Director of Multicultural Affairs), Vannessa Dorantes (newly named RA for Region 5), and Jen Agosti (consultant), Gail Reyes-Walton has been named full-time staff support as a member of the Training Academy team. Under the direction of Jodi Hill-Lilly, Training Academy Director, Gail will identify and respond to identified needs for this work with a training, coaching, and support lens. She will also have the dedicated time to support not only the SRJW broadly, but the individual subcommittees, and individual regional, facility, and CO programs.
- 2) **Regional / Facility / CO SRJW Representation:** The SRJW members have remained largely consistent since the SRJW was initially convened. Now that the roles required of SRJW team members have become more clear: program / office / site / regional liaisons, champions, advocates, leaders, and advisors, we are asking Facility Directors, Program Directors, and Regional Administrators to renew their commitment to this work by assuring that the representatives you have chosen have not only demonstrated consistent attendance, but are also appropriate to play these

strong leadership roles. We do not want any current members to be removed; however we do want to ensure that every region and program has the members needed to carry out this essential work and provide the leadership you need within your office, region, or facility. Please consult with the SRJW leaders if you have questions or concerns about your designated representatives.

This memo serves to share this information with the Regional and Senior Administrators and SRJW members simultaneously as we believe it is critical to share this information in real-time, rather than withholding it until our next face-to-face meetings. We will talk about these changes in more detail, as well as the implications for this broadened membership and potential restructuring to the workgroup schedule, at our next in-person meetings or via scheduled teleconferences.

All of the SRJW leadership are more than happy to respond to any questions and concerns, especially as we prepare a larger communication about this to the entire Department in the coming weeks. We continue to be inspired, encouraged, and committed to this work, and feel honored to be representing DCF on its behalf. We thank each of you for your continued support.