

DCYF Oversight Board

Supporting the urgent call for racial justice in our systems of care, communities, and society

We, the [Department of Children, Youth and Families \(DCYF\) Oversight Board](#), embrace an urgent call to action in the pursuit of racial justice. *“Reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in system involvement and across child and youth outcomes”* 43.216.015(3)(a)(viii). The Washington State Blue Ribbon Commission on Service Delivery to Children and Families of 2016, concluded that the creation of a continuum of care state model presents the opportunity to discard business as usual and restructure the commitment to *hold the hand of the child* for the goal of healthy, safe and healing outcomes.

We can no longer ignore the compounding impacts of child welfare involvement that all too often perpetuates the foster care-to-prison pipeline¹, nor the interconnected nature of all DCYF systems of care. The benefits promised by quality early learning opportunities cannot erase the trauma inflicted by removing a child from their families in the first few years of life. These systems need to be reconsidered, redesigned and restructured to repair harm experienced by children and families, while simultaneously supporting families to prevent continued or future system involvement.

To meet this call, as the Oversight Board, we are compelled to hold DCYF accountable for eliminating racial and ethnic disparities across its systems of care. We will prioritize engagement with those with lived experience, young people, families, the DCYF workforce and providers to understand the realities of the state’s child and family serving programs, operations and culture. We will engage with DCYF ceaselessly until necessary changes are made that put an end to the accepted status quo narrative of disproportionality and disparities in child and family services.

This commitment and expectation extends to our partnership with DCYF. We call on the Department to:

- Prioritize prevention and safety efforts. Equity starts prenatally;
- Decrease family separations;
- Re-prioritize funding for in-home services;
- Re-evaluate and restructure all trainings across the state’s continuum of care model for leadership, staff and providers alike. These trainings would assist DCYF staff in understanding the importance of viewing the system with a cross-sectional approach that supports equitable outcomes for all engaged with the agency;
- Genuinely provide an “open door policy” in support of the DCYF workforce to provide feedback on programs and policies producing racially disparate experiences or outcomes;
- Implement guidance in the [DCYF Oversight Board 2019 Annual Report specific to reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities across systems of care](#) (page 12-13).

We expect the DCYF leadership team to embrace the call for racial justice by exercising immediate, exact and transformative actions to change the experience for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) children and families in Washington. This not only includes changes to external-facing policies and programs, but also to intentionally increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the leadership team itself.

History has shown us that system development, design and change, led by an individual or group alone, does not result in equitable and just outcomes. In partnership with DCYF, we commit to this transformation.

“If we want a beloved community, we must stand for justice, have recognition for difference without attaching difference to privilege.” - bell hooks

¹ Abramo, Allegra. “Washington ‘State-raised’ Inmates from Foster Care Urge Better Youth Support.” *Juvenile Justice Information Exchange*, 10 Dec. 2019, <https://jjiie.org/2019/12/10/washington-state-raised-inmates-from-foster-care-urge-better-youth-support/>. Accessed 20 Jul. 2020.