Cuyahoga County strategies and implications: using race and poverty data to inform practice

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A local perspective on the Role of Poverty and Race Equity in Child Welfare

1. Some of our previous conversations and why we need to continue to talk about poverty, race and service equity

2. A non-child welfare example: the achievement gap in the Shaker Heights School District

3. Team Decisionmaking- a practice designed, in part, to improve service equity
In *Children of the Storm: Black Children and American Child Welfare*, Billingsley and Giovannoni (1972) document the treatment of African American children by private and public child welfare organizations. Their historical analysis illustrates two major failures of child welfare services:

“one was the failure to develop services for children in their own homes, which was particularly disadvantageous for Black children. The second was the failure to include Black children in existing services” (p. 101).
Turning to the specific case of Cleveland, Ohio in 1943, Billingsley and Giovannoni noted that seventy-five percent of the children in the care of the public child welfare agency were African American, while only twenty-five percent of the children in the care of the private placement agency were African American.

They argued that this disproportionate treatment was due, in part, to the private residential institutions’ reluctance to accept African American children.
Because African-American children are more likely to be poor, they have an even greater chance of having contact with DCFS. Between birth and their 10th birthday, 21 percent of white children will be involved in investigations of child abuse and neglect, and 4.1 percent will be placed in foster care. By contrast, between their birth and their 10th birthday, 49 percent of African-American children will be involved in investigations of child abuse and neglect, and 17.7 percent will be placed in foster care.

These disparities contribute to a high over-representation of African-American children in foster care in Cuyahoga County. While 35 percent of the children in the county are African-American, 74 percent of the children in the county's foster care are African-American.
A Community response:

Using the Department's own statistics, we can't ignore the role of racism in the fact that there is an over representation of African American Children in the child Welfare System. If poverty is the largest factor, why don't we just increase incomes for families so that they will not enter the Child Welfare system?

It just feels so much like blaming the victim.
So in the next Op-ed we said:

The reasons for the higher percentage of DCFS involvement with African American families are complex, but we need to further develop appropriate alternative resources and services. For example, how can we encourage greater use of community resources and neighborhood helping networks prior to involving families with DCFS?
Culture and Diversity Survey Methodology

• Survey developed by the CCDCFS Disproportionality Committee
• Methodology approved by the CWRU Institutional Review Board
• Surveys distributed primarily in staff meetings by MSASS
• Staff who did not have staff meetings were given the option of completing them and placing them in a drop box
• Analysis of results by MSASS and CCDCFS
• CCDCFS will use survey results to improve training and other programming related to cultural competence
### Role and Response Rate

Please indicate your primary role with the agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admin/ S. Sup</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Staff</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS Case Aide</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>654</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Overall response 65 percent
- Higher for administration, supervisors, case aides
- Lower for social workers and others
- Likely a result of surveying staff in staff meetings
• A lot of data to sort through- over 90 questions can be examined by a dozen individual variables (role, years of service, office location, gender, age, race, education, where you live, parent).

• Survey covers different organizational levels:
  – Organizational Environment
  – Outreach and Community Involvement
  – Service Delivery
  – Self Assessment
  – Perceptions of bias and differential treatment
    – Respondents’ cultural influences
    – Respondents’ cultural considerations
    – Respondents’ suggested diversity related issues
    – Respondents’ suggested steps the agency could take
Staff are encouraged to openly discuss cultural differences and influences with clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>654</td>
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</table>
Heighten Awareness

When asked to identify steps the agency could take, 59% of the respondents listed suggestions and over a third of the suggestions related to training.
Heighten Awareness

89.7% said they have attended a cultural competency training and 52% said they attended one in the last two years.
Shaker Heights, 2010

54 percent Caucasian
37 percent African American
4.6 percent Asian or Pacific Islander
2.8 percent other
2.2 percent Hispanic

Total population 28,417
## 2010-2011 Completion of Enrichment Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Economic Disadvantaged</th>
<th>Percent of Students with Disabilities</th>
<th>Percent of African American/Black Students</th>
<th>Percent of European American/White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Group</td>
<td>Number in Group</td>
<td>% of Group</td>
<td>Number in Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 5-12 Combined</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1202</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shaker Heights High School
2000-2005 Five Year Average

Shaker's 2009-10 numbers are AA - 76.8%, white - 95+%; SES - 68.5%
Recent openings for guidance counselors at SHHS have been filled with white internal candidates. With these two retirements you now have a tremendous opportunity to prioritize finding two highly qualified candidates of color to fill these positions. We strongly encourage you to proactively identify qualified candidates who reflect the diversity of our district and who have experience working with students from diverse backgrounds. With the entirety of Greater Cleveland at our disposal and these coveted positions in our world-class district, surely this should not be a hard sell. We look forward with excitement to meeting the candidates you select to bolster the counseling team at the high school.
What can we do in child welfare?

What are the child welfare practices that can improve service equity and where are they practiced?
Child-welfare program draws praise, attention

Diane Suchetka
Plain Dealer Reporter

Baby snatchers.
For years, that's what social workers who helped abused and neglected children were called.
A worker would decide if a child was in danger, then swoop into his home and whisk him off to a foster family in another neighborhood or even another city.
The kid was safe. But he suffered, too, cut off from school, friends, family and nearly every tie he had to the mom and dad who one day might get him back.
Often, his parents were angry, too. And because of that, they refused to cooperate with those who could help.
If you know about that child-welfare system, you should also know this: It's becoming a thing of the past.
America's child-welfare system is transforming the way it treats abused and neglected children.
And many of those changes began in Cleveland, at the Cuyahoga County Department of Children & Family Services.
"This is seen as the Mecca," Matt Bennett, director of community-based services at Denver Children's Home in Colorado, said of Cleveland.

Jeffrey and Rhonda Mays' children spent 18 months in foster care before they were reunited with their parents, thanks to the Family to Family program. The Mayses, seated, have been back together with their children — daughter Barbara (far left, holding her daughter, Amari), son, Jeffrey, and another daughter (not pictured) — for about four years.
Family to Family:
Integration of Core Strategies

- Team Decision-Making (TDM)
- Building Community Partnerships (CP)
- Recruiting and Supporting Resource Families (RDS)
- Self-Evaluation (SE)
Key Elements of Family to Family

TDM
- Live decision
- Parent involved in decision making
- Child welfare team
- All participate in decision making
- Trained facilitator

CP
- Meetings at accessible place
- Partners share in decision making
- Natural supports accessible

SE
- Outcomes & strategy data
- FP share in decision making
- Icebreaker meetings
- Info immediately available to FP
- FP work with BP
- Culture of respect for FP
- All participate in decision making

RDS
- Training includes youth & parents
- Community supports & safety net for families are enhanced
- Recruitment is community based
- Visitation in neighborhood
- Info immediately available to FP
- Natural supports accessible
- Homes in neighborhood
Removal TDM Key Elements

(1) the placement decision is “live” (i.e., a recommendation on a placement decision is being made during the meeting);
(2) participation by parent(s);
(3) participation by multiple child welfare agency staff;
(4) a dedicated and trained facilitator guides the decision making discussion;
(5) participation by community partners representing the community, but invited by the public child welfare agency;
(6) participation by family and friends invited by the family;
(7) participation by service providers from other agencies and organizations; and
(8) the meeting is held in a community location away from the public child welfare agency
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent, 1–4 elements</strong></td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent, 5–7 elements</strong></td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No parent, 1–4 elements</strong></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No parent, 5–7 elements</strong></td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TDM Quarterly Report (TDM meetings)

- Initial Removal/Court
- Placement Change
- Permanency
TDM Quarterly Reports
[Meeting Attendance]

- % Mother Attends
- % Father Attends
- % Youth Attends
- % Family Attends
- % Collab Attends
- % Friend Attends
- % Caregiver Attends
- % Agency partner Attends

Categories:
- Initial Removal/Court
- Placement Change
- Permanency
Summary

• We need to talk about differences in service receipt and outcomes by age, gender, geography, income, race, risk and safety.

• Many organizations struggle with discrimination and equity, but there are data, maps, interviews and other methods we can use to improve.

• Cuyahoga County is a national leader in practices that can improve service equity
Thank You !