



Race Equity Steering Committee Update

Dear colleague,

Late last Spring, as part of our 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, DCF launched a **Race Equity Steering Committee** - the members of which were chosen based on their role in the organization. David Sims, DCPD Area Director for Essex County and Cathy Schafer, Director of Grants, Integrity and Accountability, are co-chairs.

The Committee is charged with reviewing the department's policies and practices to identify areas in which implicit bias and racism may be impacting our work. This was/is a tall order and will take some time to 'unpack'. In the meantime, though, the members are meeting at least monthly, and sometimes bi-weekly in Steering sub-committees that are focused on:

- Communications
- Resource/Contracting/Prevention
- Data and Evaluation
- Practice and Policy
- Training

To date, the Steering Committee has:

- Learned about the history of racism in child welfare from Dr. Carol Spigner, former Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau at the US Department of Health and Human Services' and Professor Emerita at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice.
- Been presented with DCF data highlighting racial disparity in short stays and time to permanency.
- Discussed language and definitions related to race equity, including culture, disparate outcomes, equality vs. equity, implicit bias, institutional racism, structural racism and intersectionality.
- Considered how DCF's policies and practice work to exacerbate or eliminate racial bias with the families we serve.
- Considered how DCF's contracts with providers inhibit or support race equity with the families we serve.

Racism is real. It is deeply engrained and embedded in the systems, institutions and the structures that are designed to help and serve people. It is part of the make-up of government, industry, social services, law enforcement and every aspect of our collective work. Racial bias has negatively impacted families' livelihood, their educational prospects, housing opportunities, purchasing power and mental and physical health. This has been going on for generations in New Jersey and across the country. We must do our part to identify it and eliminate it in our work.

The Steering Committee has a [page on the Department's intranet](#) where some of its resources and regular communications are accessible to staff. As the Committee's work progresses, updates and data will be provided.

Sincerely,

Christine Norbut Beyer
Commissioner