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RACE EQUITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Children and families of color are overrepresented in child welfare systems in the United States and experience poorer outcomes. These inequities occur in the context of inequities that exist across a number of societal domains, including health care, education and public safety. There is an important role for child welfare policymakers to understand disparities and consider policy strategies that take into account disparate opportunities and outcomes for children and families of color and focus attention on those needs while also addressing the needs of the entire community.

One strategy that can be used to develop policies that advance equity is known as a racial equity impact assessment. A racial equity impact assessment is a systematic examination of how a proposed action or decision will likely affect different racial and ethnic groups. Using a racial equity impact assessment process and tool can help jurisdictions assess the actual or anticipated effect of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans and budgetary decisions.¹ Conducting a racial equity impact assessment can also help ensure that child welfare policymaking occurs in an environment that is transparent and engaging of communities and constituents.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy used the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Race Matters race equity impact assessment as a template to develop an assessment tool that is tailored to child welfare policy decision-making. This tool can be used by child welfare decision makers when developing new policy proposals or considering modifications to existing policy. It can be useful in efforts aimed at reducing or preventing inequities, confronting institutional racism and advancing policies that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

The race equity assessment process is aided by, but is more than, just the tool. The assessment questions help identify the information and conditions that allow for optimally supporting more equitable policy development. Several factors are important to incorporate through the policymaking process, including:

- A system for collecting and analyzing data
- Opportunities to meaningfully incorporate diverse stakeholders in decision-making
- Allocated funding to support and sustain meaningful policy and program implementation
- A plan for accountability that shares information and provides opportunities to track and adjust

¹ The Annie E Casey Foundation (AECF). (2014). Embracing Equity. Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide. Available at: <http://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide/>

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These questions can help you begin your race equity impact assessment.

- Have you identified the racial/ethnic groups in your jurisdiction?
- For this policy/program/practice, what results are desired, and how will each group be affected?
- What does the data say about different racial and ethnic groups?
 - ☐ Are there communities of color that are disproportionately represented in child welfare in your state/county/jurisdiction?
 - ☐ Are there disparate outcomes for children of color and their families in your child welfare system (more removals, fewer preservation services, longer stays in care)? What are the decision points where inequities appear?
 - ☐ Are you tracking and using child welfare data routinely to understand the experiences of ethnic and racial minorities in your state/ county/ jurisdiction?
 - ☐ Do administrative agencies (departments of education, behavioral health, health and human services, and juvenile justice) have shared access to relevant data? If not, is that an important consideration to advance the child welfare policy in consideration? For example: data on educational opportunity gaps for children in foster care placements.
- Are all racial and ethnic groups that are affected by the policy, practice or decision at the table?
 - ☐ Are you engaging racial and ethnic minorities that will be impacted by this child welfare policy or practice change?
 - ☐ Are you engaging tribal nations in this policy or practice development decision? Are you designing this policy in partnership with tribal child welfare?
 - ☐ Are you considering the views of communities of color by engaging diverse representation from families, foster parents, service providers, community members, and children and families formerly in contact with child welfare in your jurisdiction?
- How will the proposed policy, practice or decision affect each group?
 - ☐ How will this decision impact families in contact with child welfare that are not native English speakers?
 - ☐ How will this impact undocumented children or the children of undocumented parents?
 - ☐ How will this policy impact children in groups that are currently disproportionately represented or who are experiencing disparate outcomes?
 - ☐ How will this policy impact AI/AN children and families in contact with state child welfare systems?
 - ☐ How will it impact AI/AN children and families in tribal child welfare systems?
 - ☐ How does this policy or practice decision support healthy identity development?
- How will the proposed policy, practice or decision be *perceived* by each group?
 - ☐ Are you developing this policy or practice change in a way that is transparent and inclusive? How?
 - ☐ How have you included families of color meaningfully in this process?
 - ☐ On what basis can you assess whether families of color will view this decision as one they should have been a part of making? Will families feel they have valuable ideas to contribute?
 - ☐ How have you included tribal nations meaningfully in this process?
 - ☐ Do you have reason to believe that this policy will be viewed as important to tribal nations?
- Does the policy, practice or decision worsen or ignore existing disparities?
 - ☐ Could this policy or practice change create greater disparities in child welfare service provision?
 - ☐ Does this policy or practice change attempt to address existing disparities in child welfare systems? Are there ways that it could?
 - ☐ Is there a meaningful investment of resources and staff to support this policy or program change?
 - ☐ Have you developed a plan to track and adjust this policy or program? Is this process transparent and inclusive?
 - ☐ How does this policy reduce trauma and support the healthy development of children and youth of color?
- Based on the above responses, what revisions are needed in the policy, practice or decision under discussion?