NCWWI Innovations Exchange 2: Inclusivity, Racial Equity, and Community Engagement

This document contains the feedback and recommendations from participants of the August 18, 2020, NCWWI Innovations Exchange on Inclusivity, Racial Equity, and Community Engagement.

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Qualities of an Equitable Organization

What an equitable organizational environment looks like

Leadership:

- Work closely with community-based organizations led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) leaders
- Link strongly to prevention services as well as court-based interventions
- Recognize systemic racism
- Take a hard look at how we read data and are willing to accept disparities without excuses
- Balance power across systems
- Have the hard conversations on race

- Be open and willing to listen to all suggestions and ideas - we are all different and think differently. There is no one "right way."
- Get everyone at the table and engaged in conversation. Everyone takes part in decision-making.
- Ensure inclusivity at every level, including making sure that facilities meet everyone's needs, by providing family bathrooms, ensuring accessibility, meeting gender neutral needs, etc.
- Hold open forums addressing race and inclusivity
- Have an office of equity and multicultural services

Workforce:
- Diverse workforce from the field to the highest leadership that looks like the community it serves
- Recognizes implicit biases and seeks all perspectives
- Consists of well-trained staff who are aware of bias and how not to let that interfere with providing quality service
- Has equality in wages. Equal wage for equal work.
- Holds monthly groups to connect
- Learns the cultures of the families we serve
- Diverse workforce with culturally aware employees
- Values open, honest learning about others' cultures and their own
- Reflects population, immersed in understanding and respecting culture

Policy and Practice:
- A system that values empathy and attempts to have a "small footprint" on the community
- Addresses inequality and disproportionality of BIPOC children in care
- Structures include voices from faith communities and communities of color
- Agency is accountable and subordinate to the intentions of the public
- Policies informed by families/youth, resources dedicated to enhancing equity
- Diversity in communications – social media and written communications
- Explicit commitment to promote racial equity in our programs, practices, and methods
- Multicultural guidelines when training or facilitating discussions
- No disproportionality. Race does not determine outcomes for children, families, or staff.
- Removals comparable to demographics of our community
- Provides fair and equal services to all families as much as possible
- Engages families as a unique unit
- Listens to children and treats them with respect
- Welcomes others to sit at the table
- An equitable child welfare system is one where families are treated fairly, understood, and helped in the same ways
- Partnering with community members, such as tribes, cultural brokers, parent partners, etc.
- Equity across the board re: rendering of services

- Families are seen as partners, not seen as "them" or "the other side" of an adversarial system
- Teamwork with the families; family-led meetings
- Self-direction, feeling welcomed and valued
- Hate-free zone signage in agency

How to create an environment of inclusivity, advance racial equity, and assure community engagement

Continuing the Conversation:
- Have the conversation: don't let it die, and keep the passion going
- Have a "check yourself" group for allies
- Have affinity discussion groups for BIPOC
- Share research with colleagues to feed into racial equity work going forward
- Create a racial equity team and find ways to include everyone in the conversations
- Have disparity and equity conversations at the executive level
- Make sure BIPOC are represented on all teams and in conversations where decisions are made
- Implement a strategic plan to become an anti-racist organization
- Create safe spaces and brave spaces for discussions
- Perform a diversity audit
- Recognize there are cultural, economic, and religious differences, and that's okay
- Strive for cultural humility instead of competence

Education, Training, and Coaching:
- Require trainings on racial equity, race-based implicit bias, and microaggressions
- Infuse ongoing training on and commitment to racial equity into in-service trainings and continuing education
- Acknowledge need for ongoing training
- Education, education, education
- Design ways of getting information and education and evaluate them with feedback from colleagues
- Educate staff on data and use
- Educate the community, schools, hospitals, and others who are mandated reporters on these issues
- Provide opportunities for training
- Commit to poverty simulation participation by all
- Provide coaching on diversity and implicit bias training
- Provide coaching on practice model and policy

Policy and Practice:
- Commit to completing an institutional analysis
- Implement code of inclusivity, diversity, and engagement
- Develop safety decision-making model to look at implicit bias in developing new policies
- Develop an assessment to identify the ideal social worker based on the current social workers in the field
- Implement implicit bias training for all employees to ensure that we are all aware of racial equity and how to be intentional in our work
- Provide more employee assistance
- Perform family partnership meetings without information about race
- Use blind removals (focus on determining who comes into care without looking at demographics to avoid biases)
- Commit to answering questions children may have when they are placed with caregivers of a different race
- Shift from mandated reporters to mandated supporters; making sure that our biases don't dictate who gets reported to the hotline
- Enhance kinship placement
- Work on diversity in foster home placements
- Use data to uncover disparities
- Provide social-emotional learning for youth
- Understand how white fragility impacts child welfare practices and policies
- Prioritize vendors to ensure selection of businesses run by people of color and women
- Look at where referrals are coming from
- Identify disproportionality and disparity within programs and map or track back to policies and system procedures that contribute

Leadership:
- Call for individuals in power to surrender some or all of their power to BIPOC or other marginalized people
- Hire a director of diversity and inclusion at the executive level
- Ensure diversity at leadership and higher up levels
- Involve someone in the field of equity and inclusion in writing personnel policies and policies that govern practice
- Enhance family and youth voice in building our systems
- Hold leadership accountable for lack of involvement or "look-the-other-way" behavior
- Ensure organizations and leadership have a growth mindset
- Truly dismantle the power structure
- Speak up to the old guard
- Restructure leadership and departments around a culture of inclusion

Hiring/Recruitment:

- Diversify human resources and hiring teams
- Embed an expectation (minimum qualification) for the skill of advancing equity in each position description
- Provide a framework for accountability in performance management
- Hire people who are aware of their own biases and can inhibit them
- Strive for more diversity in leadership (promotions) and more recruiting from historically diverse universities and colleges

Ineffective and outdated policies and practices that stand in the way of creating an environment of inclusivity, advancing racial equity, and assuring community engagement

Policy and Practice:

- Stop identifying race in case documentation (vs. allowing the family to self-identify)
- Stop using predictive analytics
- Consider that mandated reporting may be a negative influence
- Stop removing children from their homes without first holding a family session so family members and friends can create a plan together for the child rather than immediate removal and the resulting trauma for the child
- Stop considering race in removal decisions
- Reform laws so poverty is not a justification for substantiated child abuse or neglect

Organizational Change:

- Address disparity of BIPOC in management and leadership
- Address personal responsibility within organizational structure
- Dissolve "us vs. them" and either/or thinking and shift to both/and thinking
- Address the policies that govern how we respond and interrupt racism/microaggressions
- Acknowledge that undoing systemic racism requires deconstructing practices that reinforce it and that have been built over time across all systems
- Restructure hiring process to ensure more equitable hiring practices

Continuing the Conversation:

- Stop ignoring the conversation because it is uncomfortable
- Acknowledge that diversity is not enough – there need to be equal voices as well
- Acknowledge that avoiding the conversation only leads to fear of taking risks and stagnation
- Stop leaving community voices out of decision-making and the development of policies/practices
- Acknowledge cultural competence frame needs to be left behind and focus on intercultural capacity
- Adopt a willingness to change outdated rules
- Get rid of the word "entitled"