

## **REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**

### **Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Washington State**

RCW 74.13.096(6)  
Chapter 465, Laws of 2007, Section 3

December 1, 2016

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## Introduction

As required by the Washington State Legislature in SHB 1472, this is the eighth annual update regarding the efforts of the Children's Administration in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to remediate racial disproportionality in the Washington state child welfare system.

This report describes and reflects the thoughtful work of a network of DSHS leaders, staff, tribes, stakeholders, state partners and DSHS-Children's Administration (CA) philanthropic partners, such as Casey Family Programs, to reduce disparate outcomes for children of color in the child welfare system.

Racial disproportionality is defined as the overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system compared to their numbers in the general population in Washington state. Across the country, children of color enter and remain in the child welfare system at rates greater than their proportions in the population. Racial disparity in the child welfare system refers to the treatment and services provided to children of color compared to White children. Nationally, children of color in the child welfare system do not have equitable access to culturally appropriate services and supports delivered by culturally competent and sensitive staff and service providers.

The results of a 2008 study conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found racial disproportionality exists for Native American, Black<sup>1</sup> and Hispanic children in the Washington state child welfare system. In response to these findings, the Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee (WSRDAC) developed recommendations for remediation and Children's Administration began work to implement them.

In 2016, DSHS continued to address ways to safely reduce racial disproportionality. Overall, the results are promising for current efforts to reduce disproportionality in the child welfare system. Since 2010, the rate of disproportionality in all intakes as well as screened in intakes has decreased for all groups (figures 2 and 3), even though the rate of intakes has increased for all except for multiracial and Hispanic children (figure 1). Stability in placement has increased and disproportionality related to children in care more than 2 years has decreased for most groups of children.

Among the activities in 2016:

- A contract was established with the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) to develop Indian Child Welfare training.
- Diversity specialists serving the Native American, Hispanic and African American communities were hired by the Recruitment and Retention contractor for Regions 2 and 3.

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term Black in this report to be inclusive of all African populations around the world, which include Sub-equatorial African, African American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin American and Black Canadian.

- The Region 1 Recruitment and Retention contractor has hired several staff who are Hispanic to assist the Spanish speaking population.
- Spanish foster care recruitment radio broadcasts continued in CY 2016 in partnership with Olive Crest, the Children's Administration, Northwest Resources, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs and local staff from the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR).
- All three CA regions continue efforts to pull racial and ethnicity data which are sent to local offices for clean-up.

Work to address disproportionality will continue into 2017 and beyond with the Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee playing a critical advisory role.

## Measuring Progress

### Summary and Status:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children's Administration (CA) monitors the progress and impact of implementation of the remediation plan. This eighth report to the legislature highlights changes in disproportionality rates from 2010 to 2015. The table below lists each remediation activity and its current status, including the four supplemental remediation initiatives whose efforts began in 2012.

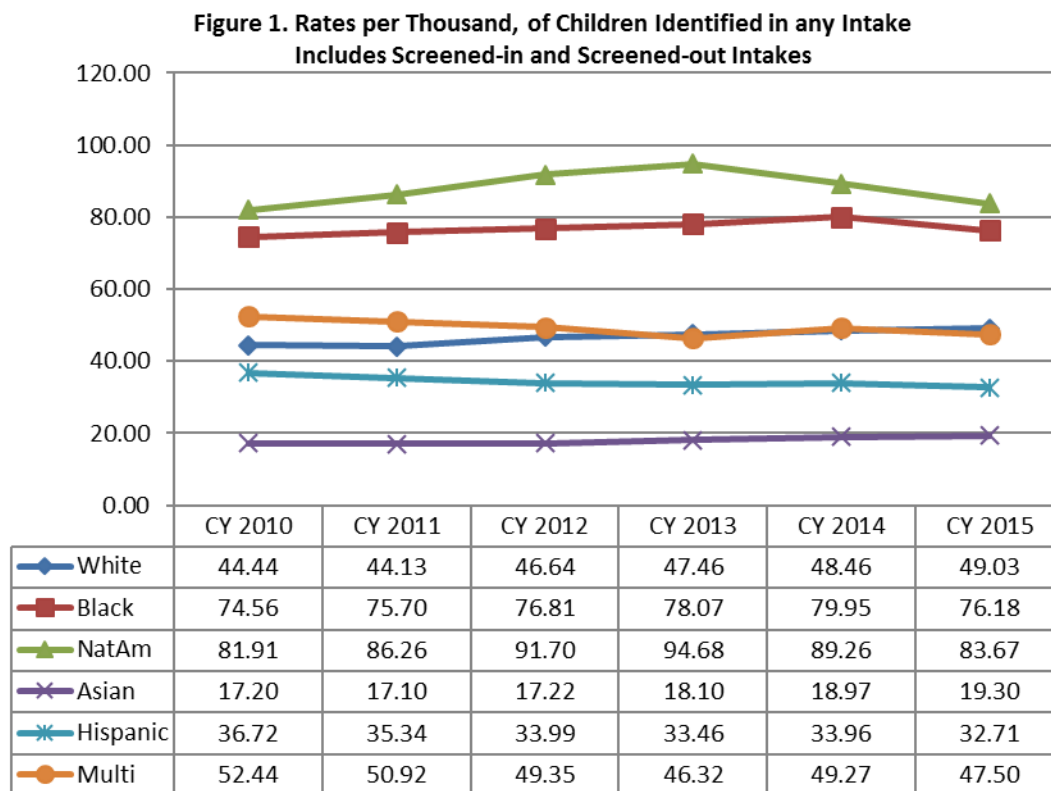
As used in the chart, "completed," means the initiative has been developed and is being implemented. It does not mean implementation is completed, because implementation often is a multi-year process.

### Status of Remediation Initiatives

REMEDATION INITIATIVES <i>These activities are expected to decrease disproportionality.</i>	Completed	Ongoing	Eliminated
Evaluate Structured Decision Making (SDM®). The SDM is a risk assessment tool designed to assist Child Protective Services workers in making decisions regarding child safety and risk. It was implemented by CA in October 2007. <a href="#">Report to the Legislature March 6, 2012</a>	X		
Evaluate Family Team Decision Making (FTDM). An FTDM meetings brings together family members, relatives and other supports to make decisions about safety planning, removal, changes in out-of-home placement and reunification. <a href="#">Report to the Legislature March 6, 2012</a>	X		
Implement Kinship Care Policies	X		
Maintain Compliance with Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)		X	
Enactment of a Washington State Indian Child Welfare Act	X		
Implement Cultural Competency and Anti-Racism Training (incorporated into supplemental initiative on training)	X		
Implement Council on Accreditation Caseload Standards. This initiative was rescinded by the WSRDAC in June, 2011 because it lacked a clear connection to reducing racial disproportionality and eliminating racial disparities			X
Implement Mandated Reporter Training	X		

Conduct Assessment of Children's Administration		X	
Implement a Racial Equity Impact Analysis Tool	X		
Explore Implementation of In-Home, Community Based Services		X	
<b>SUPPLEMENTAL REMEDIATION INITIATIVES</b>			
Increased Recruitment and Licensing of Caregivers of Color		X	
Increased Documentation of Racial, Ethnic and Tribal Affiliation Data in FamLink	X		
Elimination of the Use of Long-term Foster Care for Children of Color 12 years of age or older		X	
Make Disproportionality Awareness Training Mandatory for Children's Administration Staff	X		

CA began collecting information on all intakes by race in 2009. Intake rates for Hispanic and Multiracial children have decreased while the rates for all other racial groups have increased at least slightly from 2010 to 2015. (Figure 1) A steady increase in intakes of Native American children from 2010 to 2013 leveled off by 2015.



Source: FamLink Data Warehouse

## Disproportionality Index After Intake (DIAI) and Disproportionality Index after Placement (DIAP)

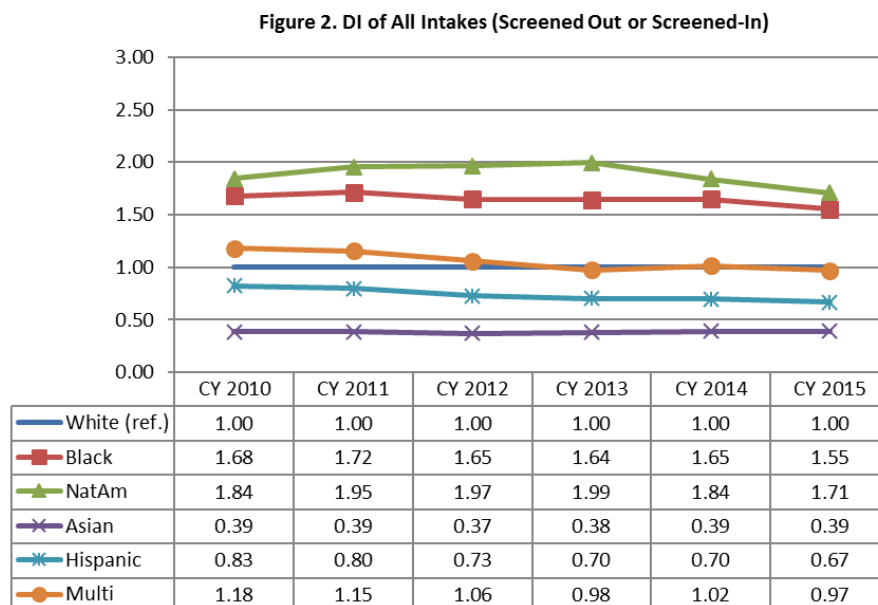
The DIAI is the ratio of the rate of a racial/ethnic group compared to that of Whites, which controls for disproportionality at the referral stage. The DIAI measures any increase in disproportionality after a CPS intake. The DIAP is used to measure performance related to disproportionality for those stages post-placement. The DIAP factors out disparity that may be at, or prior to, placement, allowing CA to better identify the actual stage-specific disparity and develop strategies for improvement. The meaning of the statistic is the same as in previous reports; values greater than one (1.0) indicate disproportionality; values less than one (1.0) indicate underrepresentation.

### Racial Groups

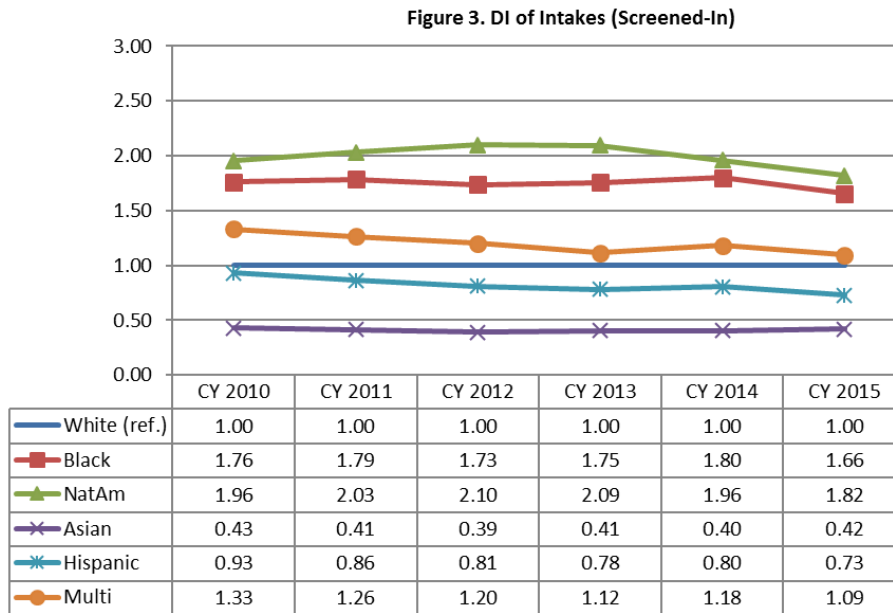
Beginning with the January 2012 report, for measures based on children in CA care, we separated the multiracial group into three categories: Multiracial Native American, Multiracial Black and Multiracial Other. When we separate the multiracial category into these subcategories for children in care, the results show different rates of disproportionality for these three groups. These additional multiracial categories are used for performance measures based on the child welfare population. However, we cannot calculate these new race categories for measures that use the state population estimates, so for those measures we used the original multiracial category (Figures 1, 2, and 3).

### Detailed Findings

Racial disproportionality in all intakes received by CA (Figure 2) and intakes that were screened in (Figure 3) decreased from 2010 to 2015.

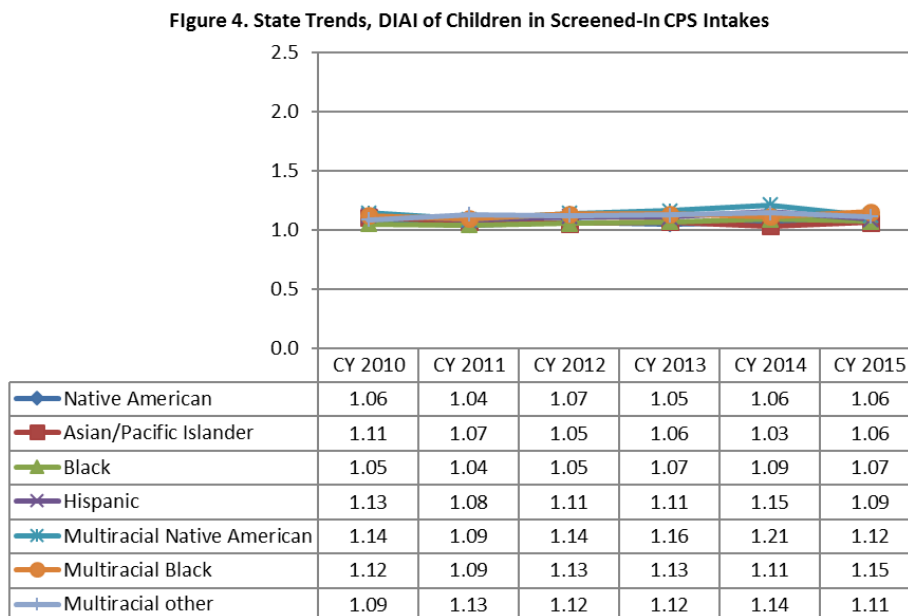


Source: FamLink Data Warehouse



Source: FamLink Data Warehouse

For screened in intakes, there is very little disproportionality for any racial group. This finding has been consistent since CY 2010. (Figure 4)

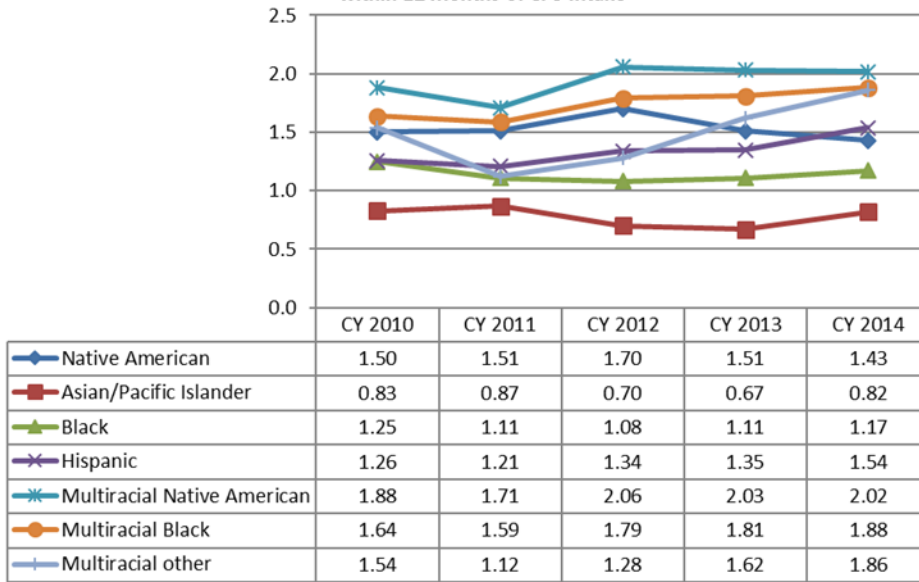


Source: FamLink Data Warehouse

From 2010 to 2014, disproportionality in placement within 12 months of CPS intake decreased for Native American and Black children and increased for Hispanic and Multiracial children (of all three categories). (Figure 5) Disproportionality of within-12-month placements of Multiracial Other children in particular steadily increased from 2011 to 2014. An increase of disproportionality of within-12-month placements of Native American children from 2011 to 2012 leveled off through 2014.



**Figure 5. DIAI of Children Entering Placement within 12 Months of CPS Intake**

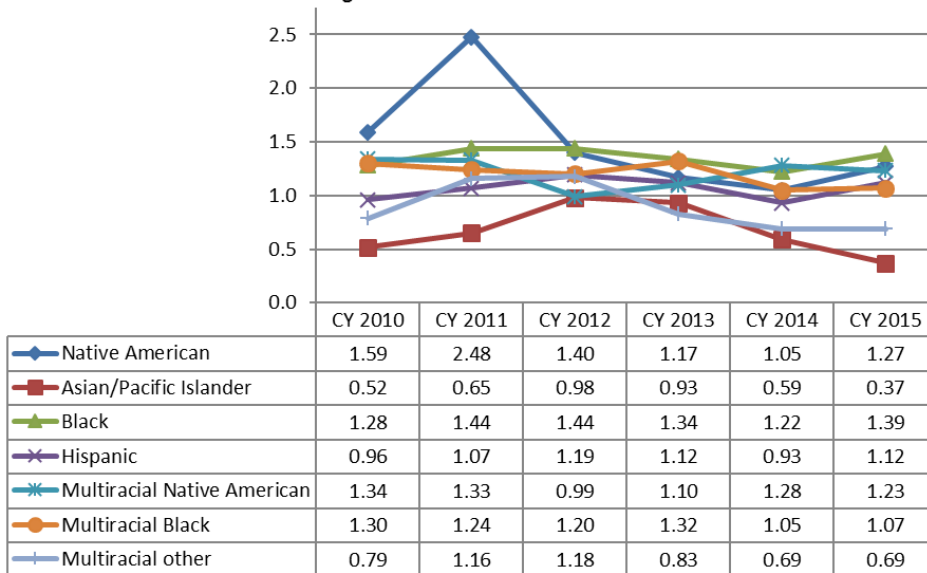


Source: FamLink Data Warehouse

### Post-Placement Measures

From 2010 to 2015, for children in care over 2 years, disproportionality decreased for Native American children and those in the Multiracial groups. (Figure 6) A sharp increase in disproportionality of Native American children in 2011 reversed to a moderate level in 2012 and has remained below the 2010 level through 2015.

**Figure 6. DIAP of Children In Care for more than 2 Years**

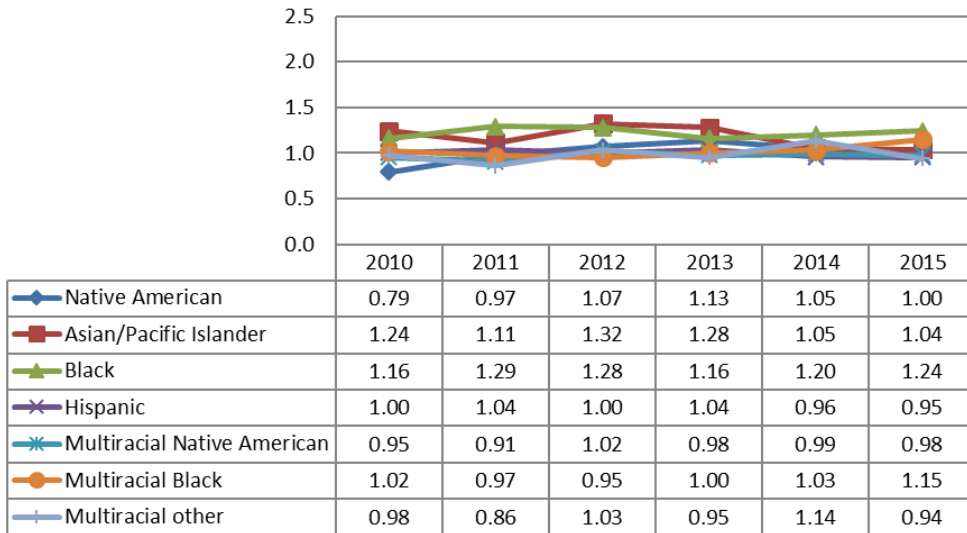


Source: FamLink Data Warehouse

From 2010 to 2015, Black children had a higher rate of not being placed with relatives during initial placement than did White children. (Figure 7) Disproportionality of Asian/Pacific Islander children on this measure in the period 2010 – 2013 was minimal

by 2014/2015. Following a long span of no disproportionality in placement with relatives for Multiracial Black children, there was an increase in 2015.

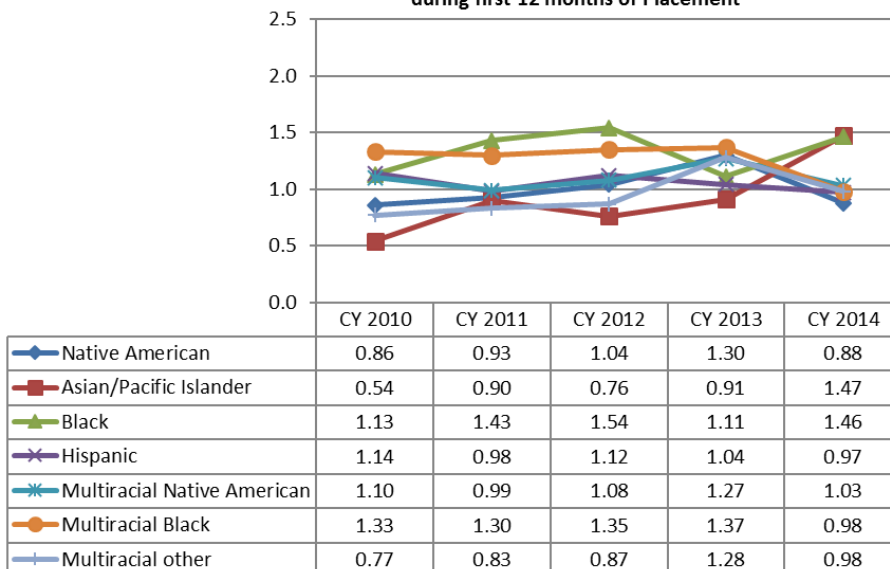
**Figure 7. DIAP of Children Not Initially Placed with Relatives**



Source: FamLink Data Warehouse

From 2013 to 2014, there was a sharp decrease in disproportionality of placement instability for Native American and Multiracial children (all three categories). For the Multiracial Black children this decrease was from previously elevated levels 2010 – 2013, whereas Multiracial Native American and Multiracial Other children had been disproportional in placement instability only in 2013. Asian/Pacific Islander children were not disproportional in unstable placements in 2010-2013, but became so in 2014. Black children, from a dip in 2013, returned to elevated levels of disproportionality in 2014. (Figure 8)

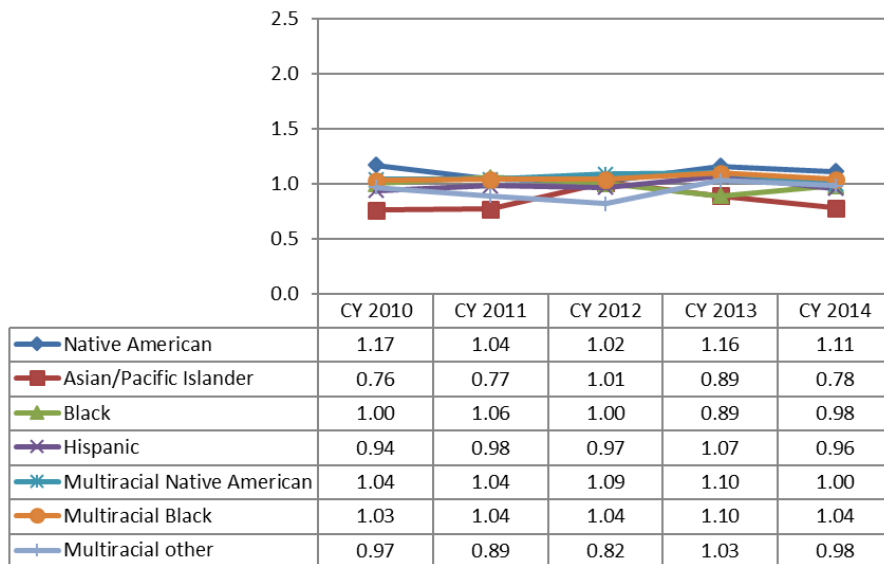
**Figure 8. DIAP of Children Moved twice or more during first 12 months of Placement**



Source: FamLink Data Warehouse

From 2010-2014, there was relatively slight to no disproportionality in the likelihood of reunification within 12 months of placement. (Figure 9)

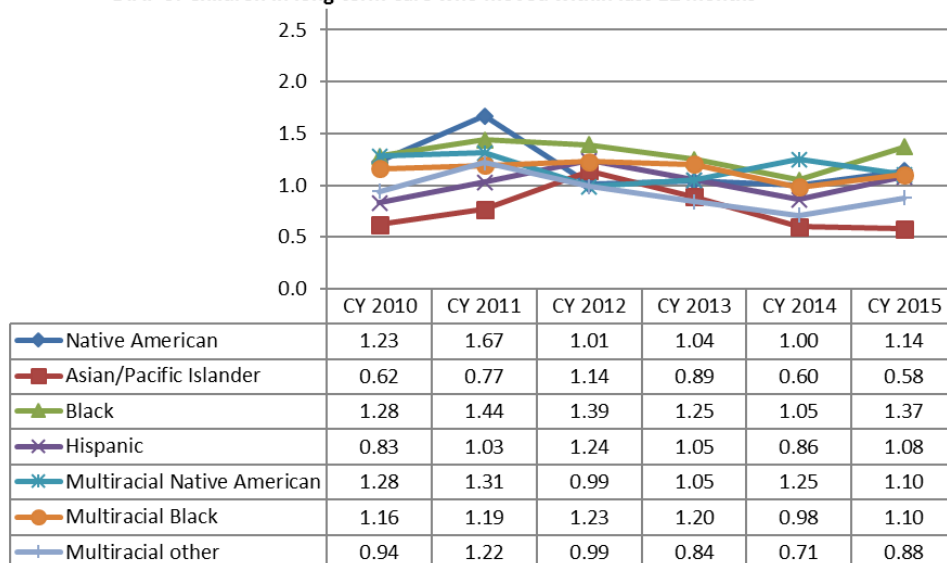
**Figure 9. DIAP of Children NOT Reunified within 12 Months of Placement**



Source: FamLink Data Warehouse

From 2010/2011 to 2015, disproportionality of unstable placements of children in care for two years or more decreased for all children except Black and Hispanic children. Following a sharp decrease in 2014 Black children returned to being disproportional in this regard in 2015. Disproportionality of Hispanic children having unstable placements in 2015 was slight, though higher than in all but one of the other years 2010-2014. (Figure 10)

**Figure 10. Ongoing (In)stability:  
DIAP of Children in long-term care who moved within last 12 months**



Source: FamLink Data Warehouse

## **Recommendation A: Compliance with Indian Child Welfare Act**

Recommendation from the Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee Remediation Plan, dated December 2008:

“DSHS should comply with ICWA. The Indian Child Welfare Case Review Model developed in collaboration with Tribal partners and the Indian Policy Advisory Committee (IPAC) should be the anchor for an enhanced ICW quality improvement/compliance measurement system.”

### **Status:**

In 2016, the following activities occurred:

- The statewide ICW case review report was completed and provided to tribes, Recognized American Indian Organizations (RAIO), external stakeholders, CA Indian Policy Advisory Subcommittee and to the CA leadership team. Report results are being used to shape practice improvement strategies.
- The Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence has contracted with the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) to develop Indian Child Welfare training. NICWA will provide 6 statewide trainings, two per Region.
- The Alliance is recruiting tribal social workers into social work education programs, developing agreements with tribes for graduates to return to work after graduation and tracking this information over time.
- CA continues to coordinate with tribes to update the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU).
- CA continues to focus on accurate data entry in FamLink on cases with a pending status related to membership inquiry. Cleanup of the data allows CA to more accurately identify children who are a member, or the biological child of a member and eligible for membership and that the Indian Child Welfare Act applies. This has resulted in more accurate estimates of disproportionality for Native American children.

### **Timeline:**

In 2017, CA will continue to follow the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan for Indian Child Welfare. The CQI Plan focuses on the three following goals:

- Increase identification of native children
- Increase notification of intakes to tribes
- Increase the number of cases with active family engagement efforts

## **Recommendation B: Assessment of Children's Administration**

Recommendation from the Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee Remediation Plan, dated December 2008:

“CA, its service providers, and child placing agencies should assess their organizational cultural competency and commitment to the elimination of racial disproportionality for children of color. The National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA) Disproportionality Diagnostic Tool should be used to conduct the assessments. This tool is used to evaluate social, systemic, and individual factors that may be contributing to disparate treatment of children of color in the child welfare system.”

### **Status:**

CA conducted two rounds of surveys using the NAPCWA assessment; one in 2011 and one in 2013. Results of the surveys showed a continued need to educate and train CA staff about disproportionality – specifically, supervisors and social workers who provide direct service to clients. In addition, it is important for staff to understand how their actions both negatively and positively impact disproportionality.

The CA Leadership team, after reviewing the survey results, expressed interest in identifying other possible assessment tools. A new survey will be used to establish a new cultural competency and disproportionality knowledge baseline for CA staff. Once a new baseline is established, subsequent surveys will be conducted to measure the individual, social and systemic factors affecting disproportionality.

### **Timeline:**

The targeted date for initiating a new disproportionality assessment/survey has been extended to CY 2017.

## **Recommendation C: Implement a Racial Equity Impact Analysis Tool**

Recommendation from the Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee Remediation Plan, dated December 2008:

“DSHS, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), relevant legislative committees and staff, relevant judicial committees and staff should use this tool to review all policies and practices. The policy staff of legislative, judicial, and executive branch agencies, including DSHS, should be trained in the use of a tool that assesses the racial disproportionality impact of legislation, administrative policies, practices and procedures. These agencies should be required to apply the tool. The Applied Research Center has developed an analysis tool that is currently used in the child welfare system in Ramsey County, Minnesota.”

### **Status:**

In 2013, WSRDAC formed a subcommittee of CA staff and community members to develop a Race Equity Analysis (REA) Tool to help assess whether policy, programs or practice are negatively impacting disproportionality. After studying and reviewing four different analysis tools, the subcommittee developed and presented a draft tool at the WSRDAC 2013 Disproportionality Annual Workshop. In early 2014, WSRDAC presented the REA Tool to the CA Leadership Team who approved the use of the REA Tool to assess all new policies, budgets, practices and procedures.

As CA has moved forward with the implementation of the tool related to policy development and bill analysis, it has become evident that additional training and assessment of the tool’s use is needed. CA is in the process of developing a plan for how to best use the tool within available resources.

### **Timeline:**

In 2017, an updated training and implementation plan will be developed to strengthen practice related to the REA tool.

## **Recommendation D: Increased Recruitment and Licensing of Foster Caregivers of Color**

Supplemental Recommendation from the Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee, dated October 2011:

“The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children’s Administration (CA) should increase the number of Native American caregivers, caregivers of African descent, and mixed race caregivers by 10% by January 2013 through evidence informed, culturally focused recruitment and licensing efforts. To support this endeavor, DSHS CA should ensure that by January 2013 all recruitment and licensing materials, along with training tools are culturally appropriate and mirror the language of the potential caregivers.”

### **Status:**

CA established regionally based contracts for foster parent recruitment and retention services starting July 1, 2015. The contracts are performance based and include targets related to recruitment of families of color. The contracts are held by Eastern Washington University (Fostering Washington) for Region 1 North and South, and Olive Crest (Fostering Together) for Regions 2 North and South and 3 North and South. Supporting the recruitment and retention contracts is the State Recruitment Information Center (SRIC) managed under contract with Northwest Resource Associates.

Olive Crest has hired diversity specialists serving the Native American, Hispanic and African American communities in Regions 2 and 3. Olive Crest’s Native American specialists have helped launch a new Native American foster family and relative caregiver support group in Tukwila. Eastern Washington University has hired several staff who are Hispanic to assist the Spanish speaking population.

Each contractor participates in diverse community meetings and provides specific recruitment efforts to provide general awareness of the need for foster parents and targeted recruitment within Hispanic, Native American and African American communities and at local fairs, pow-wows, and other events in consultation with the local foster parent Recruitment Development and Support (RDS) teams. Radio Luz (1680 AM) provides ongoing public service announcements for recruitment within the Hispanic Community.

Spanish radio broadcasts continued in CY 2016 in partnership with the efforts of Olive Crest, CA, Northwest Resources, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs and local staff from the Division of Licensed Resources (DLR). These broadcasts are scheduled to continue in CY 2017. Partnership expanded this year to include Child Placing Agencies. These provide basic information to the Spanish speaking audience on the need for Hispanic foster families across the state. CA continues to experience increased inquiries about foster care from Spanish speaking families. Families who inquire are supported by Olive Crest liaisons, Northwest Resources Associates staff

and Spanish speaking DLR staff as they begin training and the licensing process to become foster parents. Interpreters for training and licensure are obtained if needed.

Video recruitment messages have been developed to bring African American, Hispanic, Native American and LGBTQ messages to Washington's communities. These videos and other resources supporting the diverse populations of children in out-of-home care are available on Olive Crest's website and can be downloaded and shared for recruitment efforts.

- [Fostering Together Greatest Needs: Hispanic](#)
- [Fostering Together Greatest Needs: African American](#)
- [Fostering Together Greatest Needs: Native American](#)
- [Fostering Together Unique Needs: LGBTQ](#)

A wide range of Facebook online groups are available to help meet the diverse needs of caregivers and build small group communication among participants. The Facebook pages include Native American, African American, Hispanic and LGBTQ groups. Additional Facebook pages serve caregivers from different locales and other various needs/interests.

A new traveling recruitment banner focusing on the diverse families needed to become foster parents was created by CA. The banner is available for check out and has been displayed in a number of locations around the state. The banner has been well received by diverse communities in Washington.

FamLink data shows small increases in newly licensed Native American, African American and Hispanic families in various areas across the state.



## **Recommendation E: Increased Documentation of Racial, Ethnic, and Tribal Affiliation Data in FamLink**

Supplemental Recommendation from the Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee, dated October 2011:

“DSHS CA should increase documentation of the ethnic and racial background and tribal affiliation of the children and families it serves as well as the caregivers and service providers it uses by 10% by January 2013. This ethnic, racial, and tribal data should be entered, confirmed and/or documented in FamLink and other appropriate information systems and databases throughout the life of a case.

DSHS CA should develop and implement a process to ensure that the tribal affiliation of each child served by CA is identified and documented in FamLink.”

### **Status:**

All three CA regions continue efforts to pull racial and ethnicity data which are sent to local offices for clean-up. The updated status was provided at the WSRDAC Annual Meeting in June 2016.

### **Timeline:**

CA will continue efforts to maintain complete, accurate data regarding race, ethnicity and tribal affiliation and will keep WSRDAC abreast of this information in CY 2017.

## **Recommendation F: Elimination of Long-Term Foster Care for children age 12 and older**

“DSHS CA should eliminate the use of long-term foster care as a permanency goal for children of color age 12 or older (and for all children). In addition, long-term foster care as a permanency goal should be eliminated. In order to assess progress toward this recommendation, current children of color with this permanency plan should be identified and staffed. This will be the baseline discussed at the February 2012 WSRDAC meeting.”

### **Status:**

CA does not favor long-term foster care as a permanent plan. CA has changed policy to reflect long-term foster care as an alternate plan for youth 16 years and older in response to Chapter 270, Laws of 2015 (Senate Bill 5692), amending RCW 13.34.136, and Public Law 113-183 Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act. CA allows the use of long-term foster care for youth 16 years of age or older when the identified legal permanent plan options of adoption, reunification or guardianship have been ruled out through a shared planning process. Prior to court approval each child’s case must be reviewed and approved by a regional administrator when long-term foster care is the proposed permanent plan. A shared planning process must occur prior to each permanency planning dependency review hearing to rule out the suitability of the legal permanent plan options for the identified youth.

CA has continued to focus on emphasizing the importance of the Shared Planning meetings in the process of achieving timely permanency. The External Permanency Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Team and Statewide CFWS/Permanency Leads meetings examine data on length-of-stay, placement trends, compliance with state and federal laws and other permanency data points regionally and statewide. Permanency summits are being held across the state to focus on improving permanency for children in out-of-home care.

In 2017, CA will be implementing Rapid Permanency Reviews as a strategy to help children achieve permanency.

### **Timeline:**

CA will continue its work of eliminating long-term foster care and will track the results to determine if progress is being made.

## **Recommendation G: Mandatory disproportionality awareness training**

Supplemental Recommendation from the Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee, dated October 2011:

“To increase awareness of the issues underpinning overrepresentation of children of color in the child welfare system, all CA staff should be required to attend disproportionality awareness training, such as a Prejudice Reduction Workshop (formerly known as Building Bridges), Knowing Who You Are, or other identified training.

In order to assess progress toward this recommendation, staff that has completed training should be identified to establish a baseline.”

### **Status:**

In August of 2015, a new training was introduced to CA Supervisors/Administrators as a pilot training at the end of summer entitled: Racial Micro Aggressions: Developing Cross Cultural Communication Skills. CA Disproportionality Program and the Alliance Training Center collaborated with an outside facilitator to present this training. This training will be offered statewide to all employees in 2016/17.

### **Timeline:**

Sessions of Racial Micro Aggressions: Developing Cross Cultural Communication Skills will be offered statewide in 2016/17.