

Reducing Disproportionality in Child Welfare

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Important Facts to Know--1

- Disproportionality by Race/Ethnicity
- Disproportionality vs Disparities
- No Racial Differences in Maltreatment
- Effects of Disproportionality
- Multi-Level Causes of Disproportionality

Important Facts to Know--2

- Racial Factors at CPS Decision Stages
- Kinship Care: Example of Disparities
- Implications for Public Policies
- Implications for Improving Practice

Overrepresentation by Race/Ethnic Group, 2000

RACE/ETHNICITY	Disprop Rates	Disparity Rates
Non-Hispanic Whites	.76	----
Blacks	2.43	3.2
Hispanics	.79	1.0
American Indians	2.16	2.8
Asians/Hawaiians/PI	.39	0.5

Race/Ethnic Disproportionality

- At national level African Americans and Native Americans are overrepresented.
- But Whites, Hispanics and Asians are underrepresented nationally.
- Sub-nationally, all minorities are over-
- represented at state and county levels
- Blacks and American Indians are 3-4 times more likely in FC than White children

Disproportionality vs Disparities

- Disproportionality refers to whether children of color are over- or under-represented in FC compared to census
- Disparities refers to whether children of color are treated inequitably or have poorer outcomes than white children
- Disproportionality is concerned with more than numbers, but also with inequities

No Racial Differences in Abuse

- Many experts criticize CPS reports to state hotlines as class-biased, since low income families reported more than middle income
- The federally-funded National Incidence Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS) found no racial differences in maltreatment between Black and Whites in 1980, 1986 and 1993.

Effects of Disproportionality

- Minorities removed more than whites
- Remain in foster care longer than whites
- Children removed from homes more for neglect than for physical or sexual abuse
- Removed children have more trauma than children receiving services at home
- Less likely to be reunified or adopted
- More likely to age out without families

Causes of Disproportionality

- **Parent/Family Risk Factors:**
Poverty, Jobless, Drugs, Mental Illness
- **Community Risk Factors:**
Poverty, Crime, Homelessness, Violence
- **Organizational Factors:**
Worker Bias, Agency Culture & Policies
- **Systemic/Structural Factors:**
Institutional/Structural Racism

Paradoxes of Child Welfare

Most (65%) children are placed in foster care for neglect or for reasons related to poverty

Children who have been physically or sexually abused receive more in-home services than children who have been neglected

Most youth who age out of foster care return to their birth parents or extended families

Race at CPS Decision Stages

1. **Reporting:** Hospitals report families of color more for child abuse and neglect.
2. More women of color reported for newborns who test positive for drugs
3. **Investigation:** Higher rates for families of color than Whites
4. **Substantiation:** Higher rates for families of color than Whites
5. **Placement:** More removals from home

Kinship Care: Example of Racial Disparities

- 1. Children of color are twice as likely to be in kinship care as White children**
- 2. Prior to 1980's, few kin foster parents**
- 3. After 1986: Crack Cocaine & HIV/AIDS**
- 4. Kin Caregivers: older, poor, on TANF and get lower FC payments than non-kin**
- 5. Kin receive fewer services than non-kin**
- 6. Lowest rates of child abuse are in kin care**

Cultural Insensitivity: Myths About Kinship Care

- 1. The apples do not fall far from the tree**
- 2. Kin caregivers only do it for the money**
- 3. Kin are too old/poor to care for children**
- 4. Kin care is not as permanent as adoption**
- 5. Kin placements are not as safe for children
as adoption**
- 6. No relatives or godparents can be found
who want to be caregivers**

Implications for Public Policies: GAO Disproportionality Report

- Assist more states and counties to monitor disproportionality in their local areas.
- Urge more federal funds for family preservation, prevention and reunification
- Support more cultural competence training for workers and mandated reporters
- Urge more use of kin as resources
- Provide guardianship subsidies for kin

Implications for Practice

**Culturally Competent Mandated
Reporters and Caseworkers**

Family Preservation to Prevent Entry

Diligent Search for Kin at Entry to Care

Diligent Search for Paternal Kin

More Family Reunification Services

Family Connections for Older Youth

Aid Kin Inside and Outside Child Welfare