

Equity in

Kansas Child Welfare

and Juvenile Justice System

Report to the Governor  
Fall 2009



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## Executive Summary

Recent national and state reports highlight the need for Kansas to engage in a rigorous analysis to understand jurisdictions facing issues of racial disproportionality and disparity across service and decision points in child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

- In Kansas, African American children and youth are disproportionately over represented in the state's foster care (out of home placement) system.
- Statewide during State Fiscal Year 2008, African American / Black children entered child welfare foster care at a rate three times their presence in the general population.<sup>1</sup>
- Specifically, there were ten Kansas counties with inequity in removals or entry of African American children into foster care.

On November 25, 2008, Governor Kathleen Sebelius announced a new effort, under the direction of her Health and Human Services Subcabinet team, to assure racial and ethnic equity is a standard outcome across all Kansas child welfare and juvenile justice programs. This new effort would convene ten counties with issues of inequity into six community teams focusing on four points:

- Understand the nature and causes of disproportionality in Kansas
- Understand the role poverty plays in contact with the child in need of care and juvenile justice systems
- Identify jurisdictions that face large issues of racial inequality in child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- Identify approaches to address these issues.

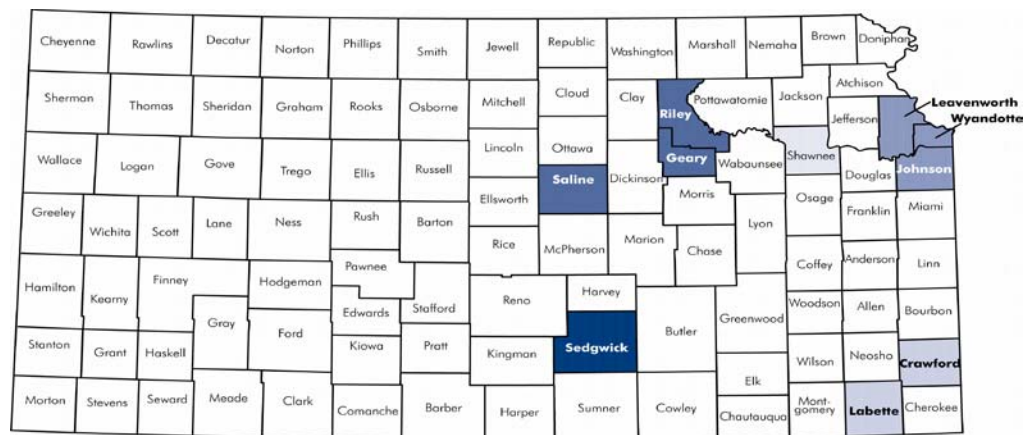
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<sup>1</sup> Race is self reported to agencies by families and individuals. Methodology source is U.C Berkeley , Disproportionality and Disparity Tool [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/dynamics/disprop/Disproportionality\\_Disparity\\_Methods.htm](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/dynamics/disprop/Disproportionality_Disparity_Methods.htm)

In the Spring of 2009, six community proximity teams set out to achieve the Governor’s charge. Community members of the ten counties with significant inequity issues comprised the following six teams:

- Kansas City Metropolitan Area, Johnson, Leavenworth, and Wyandotte
- North Central Kansas, Geary and Riley
- North Central Kansas, Saline
- Southeast Kansas, Crawford and Labette
- Topeka Area, Shawnee
- Wichita Area, Sedgwick

Map of teams is as follows:



National reports indicate data, leadership, and working across social service systems as key elements to address disproportionality. These three dynamics served as a foundation for the Kansas teams to diagnosis, assess, and address racial inequities in communities. Toward identification of approaches:

- There was extensive review of the data by teams as well as knowledge and experience shared by the individual team members.
- Teams engaged panel presentations with key system providers in the community to illustrate how children and youth come to the attention of and transition through the service system.



- Members engaged experts and participated in a statewide summit for topics of poverty and other states strategies.

Recurring discussion points were access to services and the barriers experienced by the African American population to obtain services. The confluence of discussion among teams fashioned a quilt of ideas and approaches.

While this report includes detailed recommendations from each team to address the disproportionate rate of African American children in foster care, common threads of recommendations across teams are:

- Continue collaboration in communities across child welfare and juvenile justice programs and providers to sustain momentum of teams and continue awareness of the significance of inequity in certain communities
- Increase collaboration for interventions with families between state and county government with local school districts. Nearly all teams identified gains to social service systems when schools and agencies increase their knowledge of respective resources to support families and match services to effective assessments of families needs.
  - Organize educational systems and social services in targeted neighborhoods with a higher disproportionate number of children removed from their homes to wrap services around families to include early childhood education, after school programs, parenting, etc.
  - Consider Harlem Children's Project or Freedom Schools as an effective model
- Adopt or create an integrated and interrelated cultural competency training and an anti-racism training available to all systems interacting with and, or making safety and, or placement decision regarding children and families.
- Identify , implement or sustain neighborhood based programs that assist parents in preventing out of home placement and navigating through the system when a child is removed from the parental home.
  - Increase resources for Wichita's Immediate Response Project or similar program to support families and prevent law enforcement protective custody
  - Consider viability and sustainability of peer to peer parent family navigator projects in some communities
- Identify and support affordable housing options for families to increase stability and prevent entry into foster care

- Continue to monitor performance data regarding the impact of community action with reduction or mitigation of disproportionality.

Many nuances and complex attributes in social and economic conditions impact over representation of African American children in foster care. In general, key factors fall into a few broad categories. Teams acknowledge no single factor fully accounts for differing rates of entry into care, rather, a set of complex interrelated factors influence incidence. Likewise, remedies to achieve parity in foster care will require an array of interventions and strategies. Information in the body of this report details a background of issues, workgroup activity and team recommended approaches for the state to consider as strategies to improve racial parity for children and youth removed into foster care and out of home placement .

## Background

Disproportionate representation of children and youth from certain racial communities within child welfare and juvenile justice systems is recognized nationally as a key issue for remedy. Over-representation of minority populations negatively impacts outcomes for children and families in these systems.

In July 2007, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released its report entitled, *African American Children in Foster Care: Additional HHS Assistance Needed to Help States Reduce the Proportion in Care*-(GAO -07-816). Among the findings, the report reflects:

- African American children were over-represented in foster care nationally (in 2004) at a rate of more than twice their proportions in the U.S. child population.
- Children of color enter the (child welfare) system at disproportionately high rates: specifically, compared to Caucasian children, African American children are four times more likely to be placed in the state's care.

For the past two decades, the federal government sought to reduce overrepresentation of minority children in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Two pieces of legislation signify those efforts:

- The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, which established addressing disproportionate minority contact as a core requirement for states' juvenile justice agencies to receive federal funding. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act requires states to "address juvenile delinquency prevention efforts and system improvement efforts designed to reduce, without establishing or requiring numerical standards or quotas, the disproportionate number of juvenile members of minority groups, who come into contact with the juvenile justice system".<sup>2</sup>
- The 2003 reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, which requires the federal government to support collaborative work across the child welfare and juvenile justice systems through data collection on youth known to be involved with both. Reference - Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice: A Compendium: Georgetown Public Policy Institute Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and University of Chicago Chapin Hall Center for Children

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<sup>2</sup> Public Law 107-273, Title II Subtitle B, Section 12209 (P) (23)

In Kansas, African American children and youth are disproportionately over represented in the state's foster care (out of home placement) system. Children and youth placed by a court order into the custody of the Commissioner of JJA or Secretary of SRS may be removed into a placement outside their home such as a relative, foster home, shelter or residential group home setting. In order for states and communities to gain understanding if rates of entry into foster care is equitable, analysis and comparison of United States Census data to state service data is a necessary and meaningful initial step.

Kansas Demographics

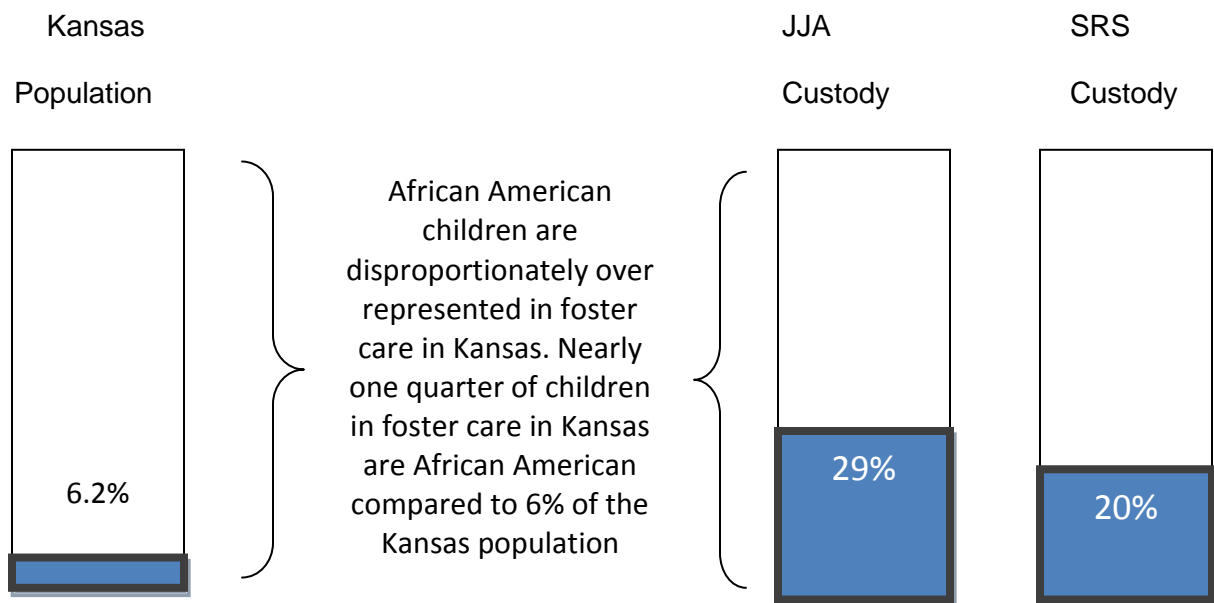
Specific Kansas jurisdictions facing inequity in foster care is detailed on future pages. Information in this section reflects statewide context and terms.

Table 1

Persons Race Information <sup>3</sup>	Kansas	JJA Custody	SRS Custody
% American Indian and Alaska Native	1.0%	2 %	1%
% Asian	2.2%	1 %	.45%
% Black/ African American	6.2%	29%	20%
% White/Caucasian	88.7%	68%	78%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	.1%	.03%	.15%

Disproportionality Illustrated:

Figure 1: Percentage of African American Children in Populations



<sup>3</sup> Source U.S. Census Bureau: State and County Quick Facts. Data derived from Population Estimates, Last Revised: Tuesday, August 18, 2009. Kansas Census information is reported as a percentage of all persons. Race information for JJA is youth in custody, SFY 2009. SRS data is children in out of home placement, SFY09.

## Defining and Understanding Terms

Each of the following words contributes to a complete understanding of equity issues within child welfare and juvenile justice systems:

- Overrepresentation - Situations in which a number or quantity is disproportionately high. For example, African American children are overrepresented in foster care.
- Underrepresentation - Situations in which a number or quantity is disproportionately low. For example, African American families in some Kansas counties are underrepresented among families receiving family preservation services.
- Disproportionality -Refers to the extent to which children of a certain race or ethnic group are over –or underrepresented in foster care relative to the proportion in the general (state or county) population. For example, Kansas African American children are disproportionately represented in foster care. “Racial disproportionality” refers to the level to which groups of children are present in the child welfare system at higher or lower rates than their presence in the general population.
- Disparity - Used to reference or characterize the extent of disproportionality between groups. For example, an index might show that African American children or youth enter foster care at a rate 4 times greater than Caucasian children and youth. “Racial disparity” occurs when the rate of disproportionality of one racial group (e.g., African Americans) exceeds that of a comparison group (e.g. White Americans).

## Measures, Metrics and Rates

Analysis of state program data is the initial step in identification of inequity in contact, services or removal into care. There is more than one index of disproportionality and disparity. Child welfare uses a calculation methodology from U.C. Berkeley known as Disproportionality Metric (DM) and Disparity Index (DI)<sup>4</sup>. Juvenile justice programs engage Relative Rate Index (RRI) calculations to examine contacts with racial groups at 9 points of intervention with youth (e.g. arrest, referral to court, detention)<sup>5</sup>. Both the DM and RRI yield information to determine rates of occurrence and context for whether or not contact with a minority population is significant for

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<sup>4</sup> Methodology source is U.C Berkeley , Disproportionality and Disparity Tool

[http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/dynamics/disprop/Disproportionality\\_Disparity\\_Methods.htm](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/dynamics/disprop/Disproportionality_Disparity_Methods.htm)

<sup>5</sup> For more information on Juvenile Justice Disproportionate Minority Contact requirements and metrics, visit <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/dmc>

a jurisdiction. To gain knowledge of Kansas communities and populations of disproportionality in child welfare and juvenile justice programs, county level data is utilized from agency information systems regarding children removed into out of home placement during a State Fiscal Year.

- Statewide in SFY09, African American / Black children entered child welfare foster care are at a rate 2 times their presence in the general population (DM = 2.76).
- Statewide in SFY08, African American / Black children entered child welfare foster care are at a rate 3 times their presence in the general population (DM = 3.24).

Table 2

	Total # of Races for Children Removed SFY09 (SRS)	# of Black/ African American races Indicated SFY09 (SRS)	Disproportionality Metric (DM)
Kansas	3,194	542	2.76

Jurisdiction and Issue Identification

One of the four focus points of teams was to identify jurisdictions facing large issues of racial inequality in child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

- All teams requested and completed significant analysis of metrics for foster care and other points of service provisions.
- Teams reviewed data for service points and attributes including, but not limited to arrests, juvenile intake and assessment, child protection intake, family preservation services, neighborhood zip codes and myriad other points of interest.
- Data was examined for trends across years and parallel with other information known from census or other well being data such as poverty thresholds, access to affordable housing, and participation in school lunch programs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Workgroups referenced in their written reports source data from Annie E Casey Foundation 2009 Kids Count Data book.

Table 3 displays a comparison across years of child welfare rates for the ten counties with work teams<sup>7</sup>. This metric reflects disproportionality rates for children who entered custody and care of the Secretary in a state fiscal year. As illustrated by data in Table 3:

- Johnson County increased equity for children entering foster care between 2007 and 2009. In 2007, African American children entered care at a rate 5 times greater (5.43) than their presence in the general population. In 2009, that disproportionate rate of entry into care was reduced to 4 times greater (4.47) than the general population.
- Six (6) of the ten (10) counties (60%) identified with moderate, high or extreme disproportionate entry into care in SFY 2008 reduced their metric score (of disproportionate entry into care) for SFY 2009.

Annual Detail is located at <http://www.srskansas.org/CFS/datareports2010.htm>.

**Disproportionality Metrics Comparison, counties ranked by SFY2009 Rate**  
Across Years SFY2007, SFY2008, and SFY2009

Table 3

County	SFY2007 DM	SFY2008 DM	SFY2009 DM	SFY2009 Disporportionality Class <sup>8</sup>
Crawford	5.6	2.34	5.63	Extreme
Riley	3.03	2.51	4.88	
Johnson	5.43	4.78	4.47	
Shawnee	3.52	4.38	3.32	High
Sedgwick	2.59	2.98	3.03	
Leavenworth	3.22	3.55	2.74	
Labette	3.02	3.20	2.58	
Wyandotte	1.78	2.02	1.72	Moderate
Saline	1.25	2.21	1.59	
Geary	1.21	1.71	1.66	

<sup>7</sup> These ten counties had at least fifty children removed into care during SFY 09 and five children of one minority race in that removal cohort population.

<sup>8</sup> Classification : Comparable Representation (rates under 1.50); Moderate Disproportion (rates between 1.50-2.49); High Disproportion (rates between 2.50-3.49); and Extreme Disproportion (rates of 3.50 and over)



## Nature and Causes of Disproportionality in Kansas

In general, factors impacting inequity in care fall into a few key categories. No single factor fully accounts for differing rates of entry into care, rather, a set of complex interrelated factors influence incidence. Among causes, work teams evaluated the impact of poverty related factors. Families facing issues of poverty have a greater degree of interaction with mandated reporters and experience challenges in locating affordable housing. Several teams evaluated details of community health, education and well being programs.

With regard to the nature of the problem, teams discussed worker bias and system bias, including perceptions of a general distrust of social services agency actions. Some perceptions exist that systems are not responsive to families needs for prevention services. One work team described discussion around perceptions of more contacts between African American families and law enforcement, resulting in more law enforcement referrals of African American families to SRS . In one jurisdiction, 52% of the children and youth brought into the Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center and also placed in police protective custody are African American children. Teams encourage ongoing review of data and information, and their detailed recommendations reflect consideration of the nature and causes with respect to their community's needs.

## Community Team Detailed Recommendations

The final focus point for work teams was identification of approaches to address issues. Recommendations from teams nestled within context of their observations and supporting information. Teams acknowledged some recommendations may be more challenging to implement given the climate of our economy, budget circumstances, and increasing needs in our communities; however, they are inspired in their consideration of approaches and will continue to advocate for progress in activity in their communities.

## Crawford and Labette Counties

1. Public Awareness and Education of Services Available
  - a. Provide community service agency information to a broader audience: school in-service, parent/teacher conferences, agency presentation mandatory at pre-enrollment, require parents to attend public education classes at time of enrollment to become familiar with local activities.
  - b. Include the county resource directory in school enrollment packets. Have listing of community service agencies and services they can provide accessible on City/Chamber website. Assure all agencies are responsible for updating. All services for adults/children should be available in one directory.
  - c. Mentoring: Provide incentives to businesses to allow employees to use work time to volunteer in the communities, such as mentoring programs. Provide tax credit for individuals who mentor. Look at intangible incentives for families to get involved, i.e. public recognition for community service.
  - d. Draw on Pittsburg State University and Labette Community College to give college credit to students who take part in mentoring programs/check with campus ministries. Make participation in mentoring program a requirement for anyone going into education or any service field.
2. State and Community Agency Actions
  - a. Agencies show collaboration for grants and funding.
  - b. Avoid duplicate services so funding can provide more variety.
  - c. Shift thinking to providing services in the home, build connection with families in the schools (teachers and school social workers).
  - d. Schools employ social workers and resource officers to assist principals in making home visits for behavior, truancy issues early on.
  - e. Make family reunification vouchers available (funded with federal dollars and are used in other states through the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, "Family Unification Program").
  - f. Bring back "reasonable effort" form for SRS for better tracking to make certain services including Family Preservation are offered prior to removing children from home.

- g. Kinship care: Establish minimum qualifications policy to outline basic kinship standards based on the best interest of child pre-custody kinship options (Texas offers \$1,000 for first year and \$500 for second year. )
- h. Increase cultural awareness training for staff. Allow payment for SRS to use consultants on a case; develop funding mechanism to consult with community cultural leaders with reference to specific case on a case by case basis.
- i. Provide education and awareness on how to budget for basic needs. Increase awareness of pitfalls of payday loans and rent to owns. Identify an incentive to get public to attend budgeting meetings.
- j. Agencies collaborate on classes/training. Send resource information out to parents and encourage them to accept help. Resources/provide incentives for parents i.e. Wal-Mart gift cards, cell phone cards.
- k. Require budget education participation in order to receive assistance from local food pantries. Require budget education to receive food assistance.

### 3. Judicial

- a. Support parents to raise their children.
- b. Maintain accountability for parents.
- c. Court should be able to order family services/counseling.
- d. Recommend mandatory school attendance at age 5 and if they can enroll in public school, truancy should be enforced.
- e. State of Kansas move forward with a research study that illuminate variables of poverty and other causes for judicial districts.
  - i. A matrix system in and of itself is not a total indicator of disproportionality because it excludes causal factors or variables, such as poverty, education levels, etc.
  - ii. Each judicial district and/or county should be able to integrate anecdotal and experiential evidence and indicators to determine appropriate disproportionality levels.

Geary and Riley Counties:

1. Increase training in cultural Diversity for SRS Protection Report Center persons as well as Social Workers doing the investigations and providers who are providing services.
2. Create and support Community Prevention Programs
3. Develop Family Advisory Groups and to include Faith Based, Law Enforcement and judges

Kansas City Metro Area:

1. Organize educational systems and social services in targeted neighborhoods with a higher disproportionate number of children removed from their homes to wrap services around families to include early childhood education, after school programs, parenting, etc. Use Harlem Children's Project or Freedom Schools as a model for this approach.
  - a. There needs to be more programs provided for early education of children age 0-5. Success of these programs indicates a higher likelihood of successfully moving out of and remaining out of poverty.
  - b. The group had extensive discussion about the Harlem Children's Zone project and the impressive results they have seen. While most common education reforms, such as reducing class size, increasing teacher pay, and Head Start programs show gains of .1 to .3 standard deviations; the Promise Academy through the Harlem Children's Zone showed gains of 1.3 to 1.4 standard deviations. Furthermore, in math, the Promise Academy was able to eliminate the achievement gap between black students and the white student's city average (Brooks 2009).
  - c. Since a high number of referrals for Child in Need of Care originate from schools, we need to maintain regular communication and provide education to our schools.
  - d. Another program that our group discussed and showed interest in was the Freedom Schools program operated through the Children's Defense Fund. Over 70,000 children have gone to a Freedom School since 1995. The Freedom Schools intend to heighten student motivation to read and attitude

toward learning. Furthermore, the program seeks to connect children and families to resources within their communities (Children's Defense Fund). Freedom Schools have operated in the Kansas City area since 1995 and the Kauffman Foundation completed a study in September 2008 which documents the positive impact of the program, including the strengthening of relationships with family and community (Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation).

2. Child Welfare providers and other community service providers receive training on access to substance abuse treatment services and the guidelines to access these services.
  - i. Provide particular attention clarifying when people are told when they must go through RADAC for assessment, whether this is a state guideline or mandate or whether this is a decision of a particular program or area.
  - ii. It is recommended that this training be local in nature as each county and/or area may have different providers and therefore different guidelines for access.
3. Identify current providers increase capacity for current or new providers to provide treatment services on a sliding scale.
  - a. Increase accessibility of treatment to individuals who do not meet eligibility requirements for Medicaid or Addiction and Prevention Services (AAPS), yet are not able to manage the out of pocket costs of treatment on their own.
  - b. Conduct a review of the managed care levels of care for substance abuse treatment to determine if this system is effective. Such a review should address outcomes for individuals, not just efficiency of services.
4. Enhance the connections between the African American population and social services.
  - a. Model a program similar to the Family Navigator to work with African American families involved with the system. We envisioned a program which could match African American consumers involved in the child welfare system at the beginning stages with a Family Navigator who would be able to connect and work with them to successfully navigate the system.

- b. Provide financial assistance to minority staff so they may earn a degree in this field and become licensed to work with either SRS or a provider.
  - c. Recruit and hire a disproportionate specialist to work with the 3 specific communities.
5. Identify any and all community based resources that are already in our community but not currently at the table. These are resources that are already existent and may not realize what they can do to assist in their community. They also may be small and non established.
6. Faith based communities are underutilized and untapped resource in communities. Utilize these resources to focus on those areas of need with identified gaps.
7. Utilize current review boards that consist of various members of the system and/or community to review petitions to the court prior to removal from the home, if able.
8. Develop review boards within SRS that would consist of members other than social workers and supervisors to review cases in which removal is being considered (if not an emergency). Include members such as a parent, foster parent, faith based community member, provider agencies that we do not currently have a contract with, etc.

#### Saline County

1. Standardize definitions for data gathered and reported by SRS and JJA to enable better comparison of data-also clarification in the data of the number of unduplicated youth and the number of foster care entries
2. Combine the child in need of care and the juvenile offender teams in each of the identified counties to work on the racial disproportionality issue, as many of the same issues and possible resolutions will apply to both populations.
3. Actively recruit team participation from law enforcement, Judges, schools, medical professionals and other community stakeholders. It is believed combining the child in need of care and juvenile offender teams will assist with recruitment effort.
4. Expand the focus of the team to include children of any minority race which is overrepresented in the population of children entering the foster care system.

### Sedgwick County

- 1) Kansas support the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A).
- 2) Kansas Adopt in its entirety H.R. 6893 – Fostering Connections to Success Act and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, as reflective of the policy changes SRS has already implemented
- 3) Identify State General Funding (SGF) for FY2010 and future ongoing state match dollars to access federal grants
- 4) Governor Parkinson re-new the commitment to the New Communities Initiative and search funding to support the initiative.
- 5) Develop an objective screening tool to be utilized for admission to all juvenile detention facilities.
- 6) Identify the appropriate entity to review statutes governing Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center (JIAC) and make recommendations to the state legislature to modify current legislation regarding appropriate youth to be assessed by JIAC.
- 7) Implementation of the YLS/CMI risk assessment tool for use statewide in Court Services probation work to guide juvenile probation officers to a more consistent assessment of probation plans and sanctions to address violations.
- 8) Identify and adopt or create an objective screening tool that is culturally fair to guide mandated reporters to a more consistent assessment of reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect.
- 9) Adopt or create an integrated and interrelated cultural competency training and an anti-racism training that are available to all systems interacting with and/or making safety and/or placement decision regarding children and families.
- 10) Expand communication skills training with case workers to motivate youth and families to engage in planning and services. An example of training is motivational interviewing.
- 11) Study and design multi-system approaches to better integrate and coordinate service delivery for youth served by multiple systems to include: characteristics of the youth, information sharing, joint case management, single case plans, blended funding to pay for services, motivational strategies to engage youth and supportive adults (family members when possible), identification of appropriate and effective services and programs, and managed transition to adult services.

- 12) Identify and implement programs to assist parents, both to prevent out of home placement, as well as to navigate through the system when a child is removed from the parental home.
- a) DVD's regarding the CINC System, which could be played on monitors in lobbies.(e.g. Period of Purple Crying)
  - b) Public Service Announcement to reach families through cable television channels and radio stations.
  - c) A pocket guide be available throughout the community on "Factors to Consider Before Leaving a Child Home Alone." (Modeled after points in CFS Policy Manual Appendix 1-B) with wide distribution to include doctors, law enforcement and schools. (single page no larger than 3-1/2" x 6" to 3-1/2" x 8")
  - d) Any program or services receiving government funding should have evidence based practices. Proposals for programs will include adequate funding to allow for evaluation and research services. Evidence based practice is a broad term referring to a level of research based on trials allowing for different approaches. Note: funding tied to evidence based practice could be a stumbling block.
  - e) When a child is removed from home and State has jurisdiction, social determinates (income, education, medical history, etc.) will be identified for additional data.
  - f) Increase and improve the Immediate Response Program (IRP), provide additional funding, and replicate across the State of Kansas. Educate law enforcement of the availability of this collaboration with SRS.
  - g) Establish a guide that would identify a range of minimum standards of care for children which focuses on safety and risk of harm
  - h) Recruitment of same race foster care homes to ensure cultural matches are-available.
  - i) Explore and expand community prevention services by utilizing existing agencies to assist families with:
  - j) Integrating life education teaching for children
  - k) Expanded daycare options – such as evening and weekend
  - l) Mediation Services to be utilized as a pre-filing option to prevent out of home placement.
  - m) Development of a court liaison (point person) to interpret court activity, expectations, and or orders.
- 13) Zero tolerance policies and practices should be eliminated from school board policy, and judicial practice in making discretionary probation terms.



- 14) Consistent statewide data system which provides SRS and JJA data in the same methodology to measure disproportionality. Adopt the two question format for race and ethnicity information that is currently used by JJA.
- 15) Develop policies and practices to support Kinship Care that is family centered and culturally sensitive.
- 16) SRS Policy Manual defines kinship as: Placement of a child in the home of the child's relative or with an adult with whom the child or parent has a close emotional attachment

### Shawnee County

- 1) Consider Implementing a more contemporary approach, one that is dedicated to ending poverty among African-Americans in a particular neighborhood in Harlem, New York, and showing great achievements, is Geoffrey Canada's Children's Zone.<sup>9</sup> The Children's Zone is a comprehensive neighborhood approach that begins with a Baby College for parents, followed by customized school services and integrated programs that seek to cultivate broad improvements in children's life chances by building a "conveyor-belt" into college and the middle class. So far, its success has been phenomenal.
- 2) Consider gathering the addresses of significant events and mapping them. Use this information to identify the highest needs and to identify possible locations for integrated, neighborhood-based services. Design the services to cultivate trust—for example, by offering non-stigmatized services, like childcare, and parenting programs like Baby College, with family preservation services.
- 3) Once potential local sites are identified and thorough community input is gathered, make long-term commitments to improve parenting and life skills in those communities.
- 4) Collect the racial data on service providers and encourage diversity of staff. However, no one should be hired just because of their race—the most important qualifications of community workers must be their commitment and their ability to engage the local community and cultivate understanding and trust.
- 5) Launch public awareness campaigns to reduce misconceptions about parenting and appropriate discipline. Make the rules clear—how the law defines parental obligations, physical and mental abuse and neglect. At the same time illustrate and model respect for cultural differences.

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<sup>9</sup> Tough, P. (2008). *Whatever It Takes*. NY: Houghton Mifflin.

- 6) Improve management information by using theory to design data collections. Data should be able to refute or support and quantify the theoretical causes of disproportionality and child removal.
- 7) Data systems should be designed to facilitate preventive interventions.<sup>10</sup> Preventive systems require the early identification of risks and their causes—the earlier the better—and interventions designed to remove the identified risks before they do harm. African-American overrepresentation isn't only a problem in child protective services and juvenile justice, but in infant mortality<sup>11</sup>, child disabilities<sup>12</sup>, some toxic exposures like lead exposure, academic failure, school dropouts, poverty and its risks, and illnesses like heart disease and cancer.<sup>13</sup> Rather than working on these problems in isolation, with isolated and poorly designed data, agencies could be sharing longitudinal information about child development and risk and testing interventions to remove and reduce the identified causes. New discoveries about fetal exposures and programming, and how early life conditions shape adult mental and physical health, put a new emphasis on early childhood and preventive approaches.<sup>14</sup> Effective preventive approaches promise to not only save the state and federal government money, but systematically improve the life-chances of African-Americans and economically disadvantaged children.
- 8) Consider negotiating with the federal government for waivers to divert money into prevention.
- 9) Consider consulting with the experts who have constructed successful neighborhood programs like Harlem's Children's Zone and adapting their model to Topeka neighborhoods and public agencies.

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<sup>10</sup>Washington State uses a comprehensive risk index. See the Washington Risk Assessment Matrix, developed in 1987 by the Division of Child and Family Services, Children's Administration, Department of Social and Health Services, Olympia, WA. A copy is included in the Op. Cit. *The extent and consequences of child maltreatment*. New developmental research, for example, in fetal programming, and new technologies, like data mining, could make longitudinal risk assessment and prevention much more powerful tools than has been previously possible.

<sup>11</sup> See the slide presentation of Dr. Gianfranco Pezzino to the Kansa Blue Ribbon Panel on Infant Mortality at [http://www.datacounts.net/infant\\_mortality/default.asp](http://www.datacounts.net/infant_mortality/default.asp).

<sup>12</sup> Wagner, M., Marder, J., Blackorby, J. and Cardoso, J. (2002). *The children we serve: The demographic characteristics of elementary and middle school students with disabilities and their households*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

<sup>13</sup> Ward, E., Jemal, A., Cokkinides, V., Singh, G.K., Cardinez, C., Ghafoor, A., and Thun, M. (2004). Cancer disparities by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*, 54, 78-93.

<sup>14</sup> Gluckman, P.D., Hanson, M.A., Phil, D., Cooper, C. and Thornburg, K.L. (2008). Effect of in utero and early-life conditions on adult health and disease. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 359, 61-73.

## Looking Forward

As community teams conclude their activities and responses of recommendations, many teams acknowledge positive steps currently in place in communities.

- Juvenile Correction Advisory Boards and other community groups are partnering to continually assess and address inequity.
- Several teams created through this effort will continue their collaboration, engage work to reduce inequity in their community and hope to have measurable reductions of disproportionality rates across years.
- Leavenworth County has established racial parity as a custody prevention project for their community with a measureable goal to decrease disproportionality by 12% for African American children entering the custody of the Secretary.

Teams appreciated the opportunity to convene, review their community dynamics and look forward to further collaboration, innovations and demonstrating accountable change toward assuring equity in outcomes for children in foster care.