

Foundations of Supervision: Race Equity

Definitions

Please access and review the [FOS Series Themes](#) which includes additional information on how race equity and other themes are addressed throughout the series.

FOS 1 (definitions from (CSSP, 2019 - <https://cssp.org/resource/key-equity-terms-and-concepts-a-glossary-for-shared-understanding/>)

Race is a social and political construction--with no inherent genetic or biological basis--used by social institutions to arbitrarily categorize and divide groups of individuals based on physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestry, cultural history, and ethnic classification. The concept has been, and still is, used to justify domination, exploitation, and violence against people who are racialized as non-White.

Racism is the systematic subjugation of members of targeted racial groups, who hold less socio-political power and/or are racialized as non-White, as means to uphold White supremacy. Racism differs from prejudice, hatred, or discrimination because it requires one racial group to have systemic power and superiority over other groups in society. Often, racism is supported and maintained, both implicitly and explicitly, by institutional structures and policies, cultural norms and values, and individual behaviors.

Equality is the effort to treat everyone the same or to ensure that everyone has access to the same opportunities. However, only working to achieve equality ignores historical and structural factors that benefit some groups and disadvantages other social groups in ways that create differential starting points.

Equity is the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Working to achieve equity acknowledges unequal starting places and the need to correct the imbalance.

Racial Equity is achieved when race is no longer a predictor of outcomes, leading to more just outcomes in policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages.

Cultural humility establishes that families are the experts in their own culture, and that culture is multifaceted, influenced by structural factors which influence people in different ways, and that everyone has multiple cultural and social identities.

(Capacity Building Center for States, 2021)

Cultural humility is one skill toward moving from cultural awareness to cultural responsiveness. Practicing cultural humility is about shifting from only learning about how cultures are different to exploring power, norms, and values through asking better questions to increase understanding of and engagement with families. Cultural humility is not about getting past cultural differences and building a relationship in spite of them. Rather, it is about learning about culture to recognize and utilize its contributions, influences, and possible solutions in casework. Cultural humility is also about identifying one's own biases and addressing systemic inequities and disparities. Cultural humility:

- Acknowledges the layers of cultural identity
- Recognizes that working with cultural differences is a continuous process involving critical self-reflection
- Emphasizes understanding the families and ourselves
- Assumes that to understand families, must also understand communities, colleagues, and ourselves
- Requires humility and recognition of power differentials in client-provider relationships and in society
- Challenges power imbalances
- Requires institutional accountability
- Involves the practitioner, child and family, community, and agency

As a supervisor, you are in a unique position to encourage and model the use of cultural humility in practice. You can:

- Consult with children and families, address structural barriers, adjust practice and policy, and advocate for resources
- Engage children and families, community partners, colleagues, and supervisees in assessing your organization's environment, policies, procedures, knowledge and skills to identify needed improvements
- Model and encourage cultural humility as the normal process
- Build relationships that are respectful, authentic, and reciprocal and aim to address power differentials
- Advocate for professional development, coaching, and incentives for staff to learn about systemic racism, intersectional identities, implicit bias, systemic inequities, and how race and bias shape social norms and policies

(Capacity Building Center for States, 2021)

FOS 3 (CSSP, 2019)

Color-Blind Racial Ideology [Colorblindness] is the belief that people should be regarded and treated as equally as possible, without regard to race or ethnicity. While a color-blind racial ideology may seem to be a pathway to achieve equity, in reality it invalidates the importance of peoples' culture; ignores the manifestations of racist policies which preserves the ongoing processes that maintain racial and ethnic stratification in social institutions.

Institutional/Systemic Racism are the practices that perpetuate racial disparities, uphold White supremacy, and serve to the detriment and harm of persons of color and keep them in negative cycles. Institutional/systemic racism also refers to policies that generate different outcomes for persons of different race. These laws, policies, and practices are not necessarily explicit in mentioning any racial group but work to create advantages for White persons and disadvantages for people of color.

Racial disproportionality is the over or under-representation of a certain racial or ethnic group of people. In child welfare, it means that the percentage of children belonging to a certain racial group of people is higher or lower in the child welfare system than it is in the general population.

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021; The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, 2015)

Racial disparity is a discrepancy, inconsistency, or imbalance of services and outcomes. In child welfare, we consider the experience of children of one race to those of another and find disparities in the likelihood and type of placement, length of stay, and permanency outcomes.

Nationally, Black children are almost twice as likely to be the subjects of abuse allegations as are White children. Once a child abuse allegation of a Black child is reported, it is more likely to be substantiated, and that child is more likely to be removed from their home and stay away from home longer than a White child.

(The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, 2015; Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2015)

Pennsylvania analyzed disparity in CPS and GPS reports and recently reported the findings through the PA Partnership for Children report. These findings include:

- Black children are nearly four and a half times more likely to be in foster care than White children
- Black children and children of multiple races are represented in foster care more than two times their rate in the general population
- Black children are more than five times more likely to re-enter foster care than White children
- Children of two or more races are four and a half more times likely to re-enter foster care than White children

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021; Adapted from PA Partnership for Children, 2020)

In child welfare, disproportionality and disparity can occur at every stage of the decision-making process for Black families, beginning at the initial report of alleged maltreatment, acceptance of reports for investigation, substantiation of maltreatment, entries into out-of-home placements, and exits from out-of-home placements

There are a variety of factors that contribute directly to the racial disproportionality and disparity experienced in the child welfare system. One such factor is racial bias and discrimination exhibited by individuals when reporting and throughout families' involvement with the child welfare system. Other contributing factors include:

- Lack of resources in the child welfare system for families of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Geographic aspects such as the region or neighborhood where families reside
- Institutional and systemic racism

(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021; Dettlaff et. al, 2011)

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Tokenism - actions resulting from pretending to give advantages to those groups on society who are often treated unfairly, in order to give the appearance of fairness (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021)

Implicit bias - “The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, decisions, and actions, and that exists without our conscious awareness. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control” (The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, 2014)