

Reflecting on Racial Equity and the Child Welfare Workforce Discussion Guide



Capacity Building
CENTER FOR STATES

Changing child welfare practice and agency culture to advance racial equity begins by talking openly about where your agency is now. Listening to diverse experiences and ideas and using appreciative inquiry can help teams generate solutions for removing barriers to equity for families, children, and communities. As you consider the reflection questions individually, with teams, and across your agency, acknowledge that engaging in conversations about race and racism may bring up uncomfortable feelings like frustration, anger, grief, guilt, or sadness.

Begin by spending time exploring your own feelings and openness to change. Ask others to do the same before they join the conversation. Before engaging with others, consider:

- ▶ How might my own implicit biases affect coworkers and the children, youth, and families our agency serves?
- ▶ How can I pay attention to the intent of other's words and the impact of my own words on others?
- ▶ What can I do to stay engaged when I feel challenged or uncomfortable?
- ▶ What can help me stay curious, engaged, and open to learning when I experience discomfort?
- ▶ What is my role in disrupting inequities?

People may be reluctant to participate in these conversations if they fear being misunderstood or judged. What will make everyone feel safe and respected in sharing their thoughts and opinions? As the facilitator of difficult conversations, you can create an environment that supports psychological safety by:

- ▶ Explaining the purpose for the conversations and that they must be ongoing
- ▶ Setting up conversational agreements with the group spelling out the rules and parameters first
- ▶ Modeling the vulnerability and transparency that you hope to see from others

Start by examining your organization's core principles, values, and priorities. For initial conversations, choose a few reflection questions to begin making the connection between workforce development and racial equity. End conversations by considering action steps to take towards creating meaningful change.

Reflection Questions

1	What would it take to develop an organizational culture in which families and staff thrive?
2	How does our agency's workforce reflect the communities we serve?
3	What are we doing now to address racial equity that we can improve, expand, and build upon?
4	How are we learning from people with lived expertise about the child welfare system, racial equity, our workforce, and our agency? From our staff about organizational culture and climate? What can we do to learn more?
5	What data do we have about how staff with different racial and ethnic identities and those with lived expertise are represented at different levels of the agency? What can our data tell us about the influence of inequities and bias on retention?

6	How do policies support inclusive hiring, retention, and promotion practices? How could our practices be changed to help us become more reflective of our community and better equipped to address system bias?
7	How do our organizational policies reflect a commitment to racial equity as well as diversity? What tools exist or are needed to embed racial equity into policy, procedures, and practice?
8	What steps are we willing to take to ensure that our workplace is supporting resilience for people of color and people with lived expertise and not perpetuating harm?
9	How will we hold ourselves accountable for taking action towards meaningful change?

Resources to Help You Take Action

- ▶ [Intentional Inclusion: Creating Equity in the Workplace](#)
Explore strategies to help child welfare organizations create equity in the workplace.
- ▶ [Partnering With Families and Youth to Shift System Culture](#)
Examine strategies for building a healthy, innovative, and supportive agency culture.
- ▶ [Fostering a Healthy Workforce: Child Welfare Virtual Expo \(CWVE\) 2018](#)
Explore how to foster a healthy child welfare workforce through innovative and effective recruitment, retention, and practice strategies.
- ▶ [Becoming a Family Focused System: Improving Culture Begins With Leaders](#)
Find tips and strategies to initiate, promote, and sustain improved organizational culture through adaptive leadership and modeling collaboration.
- ▶ [Leading With Empathy](#)
Learn to be more intentional about creating opportunities to relate to the staff and families you serve and to infuse more empathy into your agency.
- ▶ [Coaching in Child Welfare](#)
Understand the role of coaching in supporting workers, including coaching functions, effectiveness, models, and strategies.
- ▶ [Quality Matters: Improving Caseworker Contacts With Children, Youth, and Families](#)
Browse this suite of publications and learning tools to help build capacity for conducting quality contacts.
- ▶ [Strengthening Assessment and Decision-Making for Improved Outcomes: Child Welfare Virtual Expo \(CWVE\) 2017](#)
Explore how to improve the quality of assessments and effectively use data to inform decision-making.
- ▶ [Becoming a Family-Focused System: Assessing Culture and Climate](#)
Get guidance, tips, and strategies for assessing agency culture and climate.
- ▶ [Inventory of Innovations: Workforce Development](#)
Read about approaches to common workforce challenges, including recruitment, retention, professional development, and organizational culture.
- ▶ [Keeping It Real: Simulation Training in Child Welfare](#)
Get firsthand accounts of simulation experiences, including benefits and lessons learned, presented by those familiar with simulation training in Illinois.

Visit the Center’s website for the most recent [Workforce](#) and [Racial Equity](#) resources.

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