



# TRANSFORMING MICHIGAN'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM THROUGH DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Presented by the Children's Services Agency Anti-Racism  
Transformation Team



# NATIVE AMERICAN LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*As we strive to become a more antiracist, multicultural organization, we'd like to honor and acknowledge Native Peoples, the original inhabitants of the land we are on.*

# WHAT IS CSA ARTT

## WHAT IS THE CSA ANTIRACISM TRANSFORMATION TEAM (ARTT)?

In 2019, the team was formed and was officially authorized by Erin Frisch, MDHHS Chief Deputy Director for Opportunity

MDHHS Directors from Kent, Jackson and St. Clair/Sanilac counties identified and invited public and private partners to apply to join

The team is comprised of about 40 diverse members from MDHHS and community partners – including Private Foster Care Agencies, the United Way, Health Department, ISD, CMH, the Courts, and those with Lived Experience

The team was asked to make a three-year commitment, including 12 days in the first year to train and form the team's vision and mission

The team has three primary areas of focus (Pink, Blue and Green Arrow Groups) and three workgroups (Team Life, Legislation and History)

# WHAT IS CSA ARTT CONTINUED?

## Children's Services Agency-Antiracism Transformation Team-Mission Statement

The Children's Services Administration Antiracism Transformation Team (CSA ARTT) exists to eliminate racial disparities and to reduce disproportionate representation of children of color in our child welfare system.

We must acknowledge and remediate historical trauma impacting communities of color caused by institutional racism through:

1. Establishing a racially diverse workforce and leadership who exemplifies cultural integrity.
2. Empowering and engaging voices and choices of communities of color in all decision making.
3. Institutionalizing antiracist policies, practices and legislation.

*Michigan child welfare must be an antiracist system with racially diverse leadership and decision making. CSA ARTT will advocate for equitable services, with a target of 90% prevention 10 % intervention, and outcomes that are accountable to communities of color.*

# WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- Understand the history of child welfare through an Anti-Racism lens
- Recognize and identify the systemic biases that exists today
- Learn how to find your voice to do DEI/Anti-Racism work
- Create a strategy to integrate DEI/Anti-Racism into your work
- Know what resources exist to help in your effort
- Learn and discuss DEI/Anti-Racism techniques with others

# ARE PARENTS OF COLOR MORE PHYSICALLY ABUSIVE?

Is the overrepresentation of children of color in child welfare due to more abusive parents?

The Federal Dept of Health and Human Services has conducted 4 studies related to maltreatment in the last 30 years.

- The first 3 studies showed no significant race differences in the incidence of maltreatment or maltreatment injuries.

# ARE BLACK CHILDREN MORE PHYSICALLY ABUSED?

The 4th study in 2010 showed racial difference with black children experiencing higher rates of maltreatment than white children, but those numbers were significantly dependent on socio-economic status.

That is, when black and white child maltreatment rates were compared from families in the same socio-economic class, there was little difference. Since more families of color are impacted by poverty, overall numbers showed more maltreatment of black children than white children.



# DESPITE THE SIMILARITIES IN MALTREATMENT RATES

We have decades worth of data showing that families of color, especially those affected by poverty and parental incarceration, have disproportional contact with the child welfare system at every point, from reports to the hotline, to removal, to the length children of color remain in foster care.





# WHY CHILD WELFARE HISTORY IMPORTANT?

At the 1930 White House Conference on Child Health and Protection of Dependent and Neglected Children, the Director of the National Urban League presented a paper that described discriminatory treatment of black children in four areas: welfare assistance, foster care, health services, and child care.





## WHY CHILD WELFARE HISTORY IMPORTANT?

Many of these inequities persist today.

The services are still inaccessible or inadequate for the large numbers of low-income families that need them.

In 1972, researchers Billingsley and Giovannoni, again highlighted the disparities that continued to exist in child welfare.



## EARLY HISTORY OF CHILD WELFARE

A century ago in America, foster care was a White-only institution.

Interventions included then-progressive reformers like Jane Addams taking European immigrant children from their impoverished homes and sending them to rural areas to be cared for by strangers.





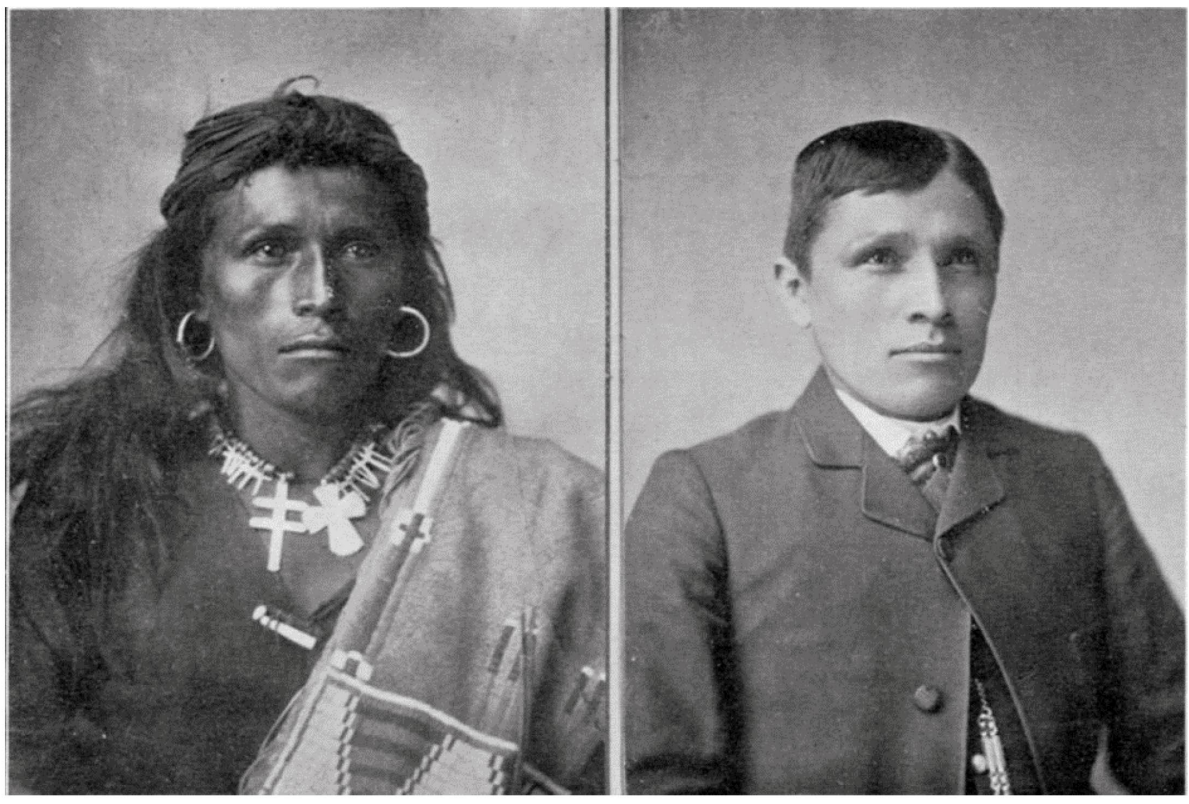
## AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN

African American children were ignored by this system and were either left to fend for themselves or left for their communities to handle.

Once African American children entered foster care during the 1950s, their numbers soared.

As a result, states began diverting funding from “family maintenance” programs to foster care services.

# NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN



Native American children were rounded up for over 100 years and sent to Boarding Schools where their language, clothing, and religion was forbidden.

Afterwards, thousands of these children were sent to non-Native family homes.

Children at the schools were later found to be malnourished, overworked, poorly educated, and harshly punished.

# BECKY'S STORY

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 is Federal law that governs the removal and out-of-home placement of American Indian children. The law was enacted after recognition by the Federal Government that American Indian children were being removed from their homes and communities at a much higher rate than non-Native children.

[The Heart of ICWA: Becky - YouTube](#)

# BIAS IN POLICY/PRACTICE

How has history impacted child welfare today?

- Bias in policy/practice
  - Policy created by those who lack cultural competence in communities most impacted.
  - Structurally supports stereotypical mindset that lower income communities are less capable of quality parenting
  - Cultural differences in parenting styles may lead to higher rate of removal in communities of color
  - Equity vs. Equality – One size fits all policies



# BIAS IN DECISION MAKING

Lack of input from the families and communities most impacted.

Decision makers have authority over communities they don't live, grow or have roots in.

Still an imbalance of Person Of Color in higher-level decision-making positions

- The largest number of removals are in urban counties.

# BIAS IN HIRING

Lack of Person Of Color on interviewing panels

Nepotism

- Hiring unqualified family and friends into higher level positions

Hiring staff that lack knowledge of community dynamics, culture and challenges lead to a higher rate of removal.

- May result in higher rate of single female-head of households in Communities of color being investigated and/or substantiated for abuse/neglect.

Dominant culture defines professionalism (attire, hair styles, etc.) causing bias for those that don't meet the criteria.

Anti-racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) was not supported.

# \*HOW\* TO TAKE THE FIRST STEPS IN YOUR ANTI-RACISM WORK.

Steps you can take to find your DEI/Anti-Racist voice. Concrete suggestions from the ARTT team for Black indigenous Person Of Color/white leaders.

- Video presentation: Voices of the ARTT team
- Ask yourself:
  - What are some of the first steps that I can be taking?
  - When am I going to start working on these steps?

# WE ALL START SOMEWHERE

## Themes:

- Opening space for conversations about race.
- Ask for help when the conversations get too difficult.
- Invitation to participate in anti-racism.
- Recognizing inequality.

# WHAT KEEPS US GOING?

We asked 16 people engaging in anti-racism within their agencies:

## Themes:

- Conversations about race with peers.
- Stronger, more authentic, and more honest relationships with co-workers.
- Finding about ways that everyday practice in child welfare does not align with personal values and vision of a fair and just society.
- Belief in a vision that one can actually make change in the child welfare system.



# \*WHAT AND WHO\* IS OUT THERE TO HELP

Free trainings/resources that we've used to start/expand our groups.  
Examples and how to find them.

ARTT team members favorite books, videos, resources to get started. Practical tips on how to use the resources effectively.



# **\*WHAT AND WHO\* IS OUT THERE TO HELP**

Planning what resources individuals will review and use after today? How do I see myself using them back at my office?



# REMEMBER: THE WORK OF BECOMING AN ANTI-RACIST IS A JOURNEY

