

**Racial Disproportionality
in Child Welfare:
Research Synthesis**

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Overrepresentation by Race/Ethnic Group, 2000

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

Black Overrepresentation: Key Theories

Parent/Family Risk Factors:

Poverty, Jobless, Drugs, Mental Illness

Community Risk Factors:

Poverty, Homelessness, Crime, Violence

Organizational/Structural Factors:

Bias, Practices, Policies, Systemic Racism

Increasing Significance of Institutional Racism

- 1. Oppression and control of minorities
by dominant organizations and systems**
- 2. Overt to Covert**
- 3. Conscious to Unconscious Bias**
- 4. Intentional to Unintentional Bias**
- 5. Structural (or Systemic) Discrimination**
- 6. Often Manifested by Good Intentions**

Paradoxes of Child Welfare

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

**Physically or sexually abused children receive
more in-home services, while neglected children
receive more out of out-of-home services**

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

Decision-Making Processes: Racially Disparate Effects

1. **Reporting:** Hospitals report Blacks more than Whites for child abuse and neglect.
2. More Black than White women reported for newborns who test positive for drugs
3. **Investigation:** Higher rates for Blacks than Whites
4. **Substantiation:** Higher rates for Blacks than Whites

Placement in Foster Care

- 1. Black children are twice as likely to be placed in foster care than Whites.**
- 2. Even when Black families have positive traits, Blacks are placed more than Whites**
- 3. Black children are less likely than White children to be reunified with parents**
- 4. Blacks are more likely to remain in foster care for longer periods than Whites**

Kinship Care: Disparities in Services

- 1. Black children are twice as likely to be in kinship care as White children**
- 2. After 1981: Crack Cocaine & HIV/AIDS**
- 3. Kinship care is more common in Black families**
- 4. Kin Caregivers: older, poor, on TANF and get lower foster care payments than non-kin**
- 5. Kin children remain longer periods of time**
- 6. Kin receive fewer services than non-kin**
- 7. Lowest rates of child abuse are in kin care**

Cultural Insensitivity: Myths About Kin Caregivers

- 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**

Impact of Related Systems on Child Welfare

Public Welfare

Welfare Reform, TANF, Child-Only

Mental Health

Special Education, Poor Access

Juvenile Justice

Disparate Treatment of Minorities

Youth Aging Out to Criminal Justice

GAO Report—Causes

Poverty and Substance Abuse

Lack of affordable housing

Lack of access to drug treatment programs

Less access to family preservation services

Poor legal representation for birth parents

Distrust of child welfare system

Racial bias or cultural misunderstanding

Emphasis on out-of-home public policies

GAO Recommendations

HHS should aid states in maintaining and tracking data on racial disproportionality

HHS should provide tools for states to monitor trends in racial disproportionality

Congress should provide more funds for Family Preservation and Family Reunification

Congress should help states to implement more effective recruitment of minority foster families—among both kin and non-kin

Congress should provide funds to create a new permanency option--IV-E Subsidies for Kin Caregivers