

# Equity and Inclusion Fellowship: A Deeper Awareness on Racism in Public Systems

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today, it is clear that race continues to be a major predictor of success and life chances. Public systems must undergo organizational transformations that involve a deeper awareness of racial justice issues. Napa County's Health and Human Services Agency's transformation involved a dedicated Steering Committee that implemented mandatory trainings for staff, including LGBTQ Best Practices and Diversity Foundation trainings, as well as a series of three half-day trainings about Implicit Bias, Cultural Intelligence, and Emotional Intelligence of Teams.

Next, Napa will launch their Race and Cultural Equity training that uses race as the primary lens for understanding racial disparities and focusing on systemic racism. Racism is embedded in public, political, economic, and social systems to intentionally continue to oppress people of color and indigenous peoples. Public systems can rise to the challenge of achieving equity and justice for people of color and marginalized groups by putting race squarely on the table.

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## Introduction

Statistics in education, health care, the juvenile justice system, and the child welfare system show disparate outcomes for specific racial groups compared to others in the general population. Black children are arrested for truancy at more than three and a half times the rate of white children. Nationwide, black students graduate at a rate of 69% compared to white students at 86%.<sup>1</sup> As of 2017 in California, for every white child entering foster care there are approximately five black children entering at the same time. Low-income individuals also experience more barriers to care and receive poorer quality care than high-income individuals.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals are more likely to experience challenges obtaining care than cisgender individuals.<sup>3</sup> Disparities are a result of long-standing policies, procedures, and organizational cultures that systematically disempower and oppress people of color. Alarming, trained individuals working within our public service systems implement and enforce policies and procedures that may be race-based and discriminatory. Organizations across the state and country have directly taken on a racial analysis of their system's procedures and policies, with a goal of equity and inclusion. We must recognize and applaud public systems that have begun to revise policies and procedures that are unjust towards certain groups. However, few have invested time and resources to delve into individuals' knowledge and views on racism and bias in the workplace.

## Alameda County

Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has elevated the issue of disproportionate numbers of African American youth in foster care. There have been strategies implemented over time to address this issue. In the 1990s, the focus was on increasing the diversity of child welfare staff to reflect the children and families served. An African American Advisory Committee formed to support new staff with recruitment and retention. The Committee also discussed issues of race and bias that existed within DCFS that may have negatively affected outcomes for children and families of color. It was also mandated that cultural competence be on each supervisor unit agenda for open discussion and feedback.

In 2006 and 2007, DCFS contracted services of a consultant to facilitate dialogue with staff in the Emergency Response Program regarding the biases that influence removals. The consultant met individually with Emergency Response Supervisors and with their units. In 2009, DCFS participated in the California Disproportionality Project along with other counties in California. The California Disproportionality Project was a 24-month collaborative learning effort to support Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparities (ERDD). Alameda County DCFS focused on African American children disproportionately represented in foster care. Team RAISE (Racial Awareness in Social Services Everyday) formed with key stakeholders that included parent and youth advocates. Their motto

was “Challenging Awareness and Responsibility for Equity in Public Child Welfare.” Team RAISE analyzed critical decision points of the child welfare system and disrupted practices based on personal biases, fear, or assumptions about the family. Team RAISE received training from California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and consultation as needed from Annie E. Casey Family Foundation. Team RAISE had protected time to learn about historical racism in the United States and its impact on child welfare systems policies and procedures. Team members became more self-aware of their individual biases, power, and influence in relation to others. In addition, team members brainstormed ideas and produced PDSAs (Plan Do Study Act) to eliminate biased practices and behaviors. In short, one meeting invoked team members’ emotional responses, feelings, empathy and self-reflection related to racial bias and discrimination. The second meeting required flexing the creative and analytical processes while using a racial lens to develop PDSA’s. Finally, in 2016, DCFS Senior Management members were required to complete Managing with a Cultural Lens Training. This training focused on how power and privilege contribute to the oppression of others. It provided senior managers with the knowledge, awareness, and tools to begin to share their power and invite others into the decision making process.

In summary, most of the efforts described above have made inroads in Alameda County to establish a common language and support dialogue on race and equity issues. However, the trainings and strategies that have been implemented mainly targeted management level staff. The opportunity for more impactful and meaningful change in Alameda County must include a direct investment in training, coaching, and supporting line staff in direct service work while using a racial lens in their practice.

## County of Napa

The Human and Services Agency of Napa County provides a template for other counties to follow in implementing Race and Cultural Equity workshops. Napa County is at the initial launch of this

progressive training that will include deeper awareness of historical racism, bias, and institutional discrimination.

In 2005 then Director Randy Snowden realized the need to be more inclusive with the community Napa County served in the development of policy, procedures, and programs. Prior experience as the director of a Bay Area program for youth involved with alcohol and substance abuse made him aware of the impact diversity and inclusion had on outcomes. Programs in existence were not having the desired outcomes for South East Asian youth; staff and clinicians were lacking knowledge and understanding of the needs and norms of that culture; and there was an absence of a relationship with that community. As a result, Napa County engaged in internal and external discussions about diversity to understand what it would take to implement and sustain diversity and inclusion initiatives in Napa County. After a two-day Diversity Futures Conference in February 2007, the recommendation was to develop a strategic plan, with a Steering Committee to drive the work, and support from leadership. In August 2008, senior management approved the Diversity Initiative Strategic Plan (DISP). A month later, the Diversity & Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC) formed and began to work on elements of the DISP. Napa County continued to work on elements of the DISP until efforts were suspended in 2009, due to lack of resources and a recession.

In 2010, Napa County realized that a viable deliverable was to develop the initial Napa County HHSA Business Case for Diversity, and in August 2012 launched the Diversity and Inclusion Foundation Workshops (DIFW). Passionate staff who took on informal “lead” roles contributed a few hours per week to maintain the effort, while at the same time performing their normal duties. In 2012, Napa County hired Jennifer Swift as a Staff Services Analyst II/Coordinator for part-time extra help for the first two years. Initially, Ms. Swift spent many months observing and interacting with HHSA staff in order to learn and understand what motivates



employees, what challenges they encountered, and what desires they had in terms of agency culture change. Director Snowden and Ms. Swift agreed that at that time the agency was not “ready” to talk about race and would need preparatory work and a shift in agency culture to get to that place. After having limited success in achieving progress on the DISP recommendations with some members of the original Steering Committee, she reconvened the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC) and selected members that demonstrated a passion about the issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity, the interest and capacity to expand their skill set, as well as assets particular to their job classification, including policy development, data analysis, group facilitation, and curriculum development. Not only did Ms. Swift help reaffirm Napa County’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, she restored the infrastructure, and selected champions for the work to achieve success.

The Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (BARHII) Implementation Planning Team (IPT) a subcommittee of the DISC, completed an organizational assessment, using a toolkit that organizations can use to address the social determinants of health through an assessment process. Although the study took two years, it provided critical information on how race and place contributed to adverse outcomes in terms of education, employment, health and housing. The findings of the assessment helped educate leadership and staff, introduced the concept of equity agency-wide, and afforded the opportunity to shift the conversation from diversity and inclusion towards race and cultural equity.

### **Preparation for Race and Culture Equity Workshops**

In the summer of 2011, long-time diversity consultants to Napa County HHSA, Amistad and Associates, provided train-the-trainers (TTT) to three dyads of HHSA staff from across the agency on diversity and inclusion. By November 2012, all staff had received foundational diversity training and all new hires continue to receive regularly updated

versions on a quarterly basis. In 2013, Napa County had some service need situations that required LGBTQ sensitivity. A transgender individual was in need of homeless shelter services, and there was no system in place to provide quality equitable services at the time. LGBTQ foster children were placed in foster homes that were not aware or sensitive to LGBTQ youth’s needs, as reported by foster parents at their required LGBTQ annual training. In addition, that year with funding from the Mental Health Division and local non-profit, Napa LGBTQ Connection conducted the first county LGBTQ needs assessment. One of the key findings was that respondents to the assessment did not feel safe seeking services in Napa County, and would either go without assistance or travel out of county to get their needs met. Ms. Swift reached out to Napa LGBTQ Connection as subject matter experts to develop and facilitate a workshop for HHSA staff that is also open to and attended by participants from community agencies and other counties. As a result, by the end of 2014, all staff completed the LGBTQ Best Practices workshop that continues to be available on a quarterly basis for new hires.

HHSA in the 21st Century suite of workshops was established and launched in November 2015. The core components of the trainings included the following workshops that continue with topics introduced in DIFW and LGBTQ Best Practices:

- Implicit Bias (1/2 day)
- Cultural Intelligence (1/2 day)
- Emotional Intelligence and Teams (1/2 day)

Napa used DISC members and volunteers from across the agency to facilitate the trainings after working with consultants from Amistad Associates to develop the core content and do a train-the-trainers for facilitators. It was important to provide all staff with foundational skills and knowledge in order to prepare them for the more comprehensive Race and Cultural Equity training. More importantly, the foundational skill training would ensure that staff understood what the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) were, and the impact of inequity

on individuals' and families' quality of life such as physical health, education, employment, housing, emotional health, and well-being. The Race and Cultural Equity training would include topics, such as race, institutional and systems discrimination, disproportionality, and disparity issues.

In 2016, HHSA staff participated in Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). GARE is a national network of government organizations working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all people. The Alliance supports jurisdictions to advance racial equity work, builds pathways for new jurisdiction to begin doing racial equity work, and expands and strengthens local and regional collaborations that are broadly inclusive and focused on achieving racial equity. GARE provided Napa County with exposure to racial equity tools, interventions, and strategies that have proven successful in changing the norm of what is expected and possible from government. Napa County continues to participate with GARE and recently expanded membership with various stakeholders in order to have more of a collective impact on racial equity. As a result, the county re-designed their Race and Cultural Equity Survey and enhanced their Race and Cultural Equity Training.

Napa County will launch the more advanced Race and Cultural Equity workshops in collaboration with their Training and Organizational Development Department (T&OD). Analysis of the curriculum and content of the training continues with anticipated roll out in spring 2018.

## Results

Napa has measured performance by the number of staff that completed all of the mandated workshop offerings, monitoring EEO, reviewing Human Resources reporting, and utilizing information from all surveys to better design future offerings, programs, and practices. Surveys administered to staff showed retention of the knowledge and whether or not staff felt supported in talking about racial issues.

The surveys also reflected how effective HHSA was in responding, internally and county-wide, to issues of race and culture in connection with the social determinants of health.

Equity and inclusion are priorities and values for Napa County HHSA. The Agency Director, Howard Himes, and members of the committee talk to all new staff during their induction about all of the culture change efforts and groups, including Collaborative Management, Live Healthy Napa County, and Quest (quality improvement), to better prepare staff and the agency to provide quality services in collaboration with the community they serve. The message is clear and unambiguous; equity and inclusion are core values that must be part of new hires' practice and normalized as the way to do business daily.

## Recommendation

Alameda County is in an opportunistic position to launch efforts to increase staff's racial justice knowledge, awareness, and skills to deliver services that are equitable and fair. DCFS has already made progress towards ensuring that management staff apply a racial lens in their leadership practices. The Training and Consulting Team (TACT) provide training on Fairness and Equity to Child Welfare Workers as part of induction. TACT also provides Workforce Benefits and Administration (WBA) and Adult and Aging Services (AAS) inductees with cultural trainings including "Working Together in a Multicultural Environment," "Customer Service," "Declaration of Dignity," and "Speak Your Peace." The trainings provide basic knowledge and skill sets for customer service, diversity and respectful engagement. The current trainings do not delve into the many layers of racial injustice, institutional discrimination, and personal biases, nor do they address historical trauma experienced by people of color due to racism. Alameda County Social Service Agency would benefit from developing and training staff with a comprehensive Equity and Inclusion Training.

### **FIRST STEP: CONVENE EQUITY AND INCLUSION IMPLEMENTATION TEAMS PER DEPARTMENT**

Napa County dedicated a part-time analyst, Jennifer Swift, as the coordinator to move the work forward. Her substantial experience in the field of advocacy and diversity sustained their Steering Committee to forge forward with Diversity & Inclusion efforts. However, Alameda County has a much larger workforce and three separate departments (Adult & Aging Services, Workforce Benefits Administration, and Children & Family Services). The recommendation is for Alameda County to convene an Equity and Inclusion Implementation Team in each department. Equity and Inclusion Implementation Team members should include individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The Implementation Team should include at a minimum a Division Director, Program Manager, Supervisor, TACT staff, line staff, Management Analyst for evaluation purposes, parent advocate and youth advocate. Staff that provide direct service will be able to share and discuss the day-to-day practices, challenges, and organizational culture that either supports or impedes diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in Alameda County.

### **SECOND STEP: IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE TRAINING**

Equity and inclusion is a difficult and emotional issue that may bring up personal experiences of discrimination in the workplace or community. Emotions and feelings may surface that may disengage members or contribute to unhealthy dialogue. Values and beliefs may be challenged, which may cause conflict and dysfunction in the team. It is necessary to experience those moments of discomfort so that meaningful discussions can lead to personal growth and development, and ultimately effective solutions. However, the team should have clear purpose and understanding of their task and roles. Implementation Science provides fundamental elements and principles on how teams work together effectively through a change process when taking on important issues. Specific methods for coordinating,

organizing, communicating, and interacting with each other are essential components to have in place while managing systemic change. The Implementation Team would develop a Terms of Reference that would detail logistics, expectations, roles, decision-making, and communications with Agency Executive Team.

In addition, Implementation Science Training also provides a framework on how to study evidenced-based interventions or programs. It guides a team on how to implement programs or interventions effectively that are compatible with available resources, current workforce capacity and the organizational and community cultures. One central component of Implementation Science is developing strong relationships with diverse partners. The goal is to implement well-defined programs or interventions (training) that are needed for innovations to be teachable, learnable, doable, assessable, and repeatable in practice.

### **THIRD STEP: SELF-ASSESSMENT**

Napa administered an internal survey to staff to ascertain how well they were doing with race and equity in their work with each other, community partners, and clients they serve. Alameda County should also engage in an internal self-assessment to identify staff's skills and organizational practices that would reveal how diversity and inclusion shows up in the agency. The self-assessment must include questions that capture staff's knowledge of historical racism, institutional and systemic bias, power and privilege, and socio-economic disparities. The survey results will inform each of the Equity & Inclusion Implementation Teams on which programs and service areas need attention, and the training needs.

### **FOURTH STEP: DEVELOP EQUITY AND INCLUSION FELLOWSHIP CURRICULUM**

Napa County staff have all received Diversity and Inclusion Foundations, LGBTQ Best Practices, and HHSA in the 21st Century trainings that are prerequisites for the next training phase: Race and Cultural Equity Workshops. The workshops will take

on the issue of historical racism, institutional and system discrimination, power and privilege, and cultural equity. Instead of workshops, Alameda County should adopt an intensive and integrated Equity and Inclusion Fellowship to train a cohort of staff in the various Departments over a period of four to six months. The goal would be for a cohort of 20 to 25 participants to enhance knowledge and skills about subjects related to disproportionality, disparity, racism, and diversity.

Participants would learn how to use Racial Equity Tools that help to analyze practices, budgets, policies, and decisions that may be biased and result in unintended negative consequences on other groups. Participants would engage in PDSA's (Plan Do Study Act) as a strategy to implement or modify interventions that are equitable and socially responsible in serving a diverse community of families and children. Moreover, the transfer of learning to actual practice would support retention of skills and knowledge.

Each respective Department's (CFS, WBA, and AAS) Implementation Team would have to understand their staff's baseline knowledge on the issue at hand to develop a curriculum that meets staff's needs. The consultant assigned to support the Implementation Teams would help with mutual learning, share challenges and successes among the teams, and guide the teams in developing their curriculum. Each Department's Equity and Inclusion Fellowship will educate and expose all participants to the complexities of the cycle of oppression and racism, and their impact on people of color and other marginalized groups. The cohort of participants will take a challenging and emotional journey through United States history in order to understand the evolution of race and racism. Participating in this deeper analysis will provide a better understanding of how racism influences the very institutions in which we work, the policies and procedures we follow, and how values and beliefs shape our behaviors as social

service agents who serve communities of color who are marginalized and oppressed.

#### **FIFTH STEP: TRAINING STAFF**

The fellowship would focus on operationalizing the agency's values of respect, integrity, customer service, initiative, and responsibility. Each Department's Equity & Inclusion Implementation Team would launch a training cohort of participants. Pre- and post-surveys will provide feedback regarding the level of engagement and effectiveness of the fellowship. Upon assessment of the first cohort of Equity & Inclusion Fellows, SSA must determine a budget to sustain the training for future fellows. The budget will need to support a consultant, Implementation Science Training, and training materials.

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