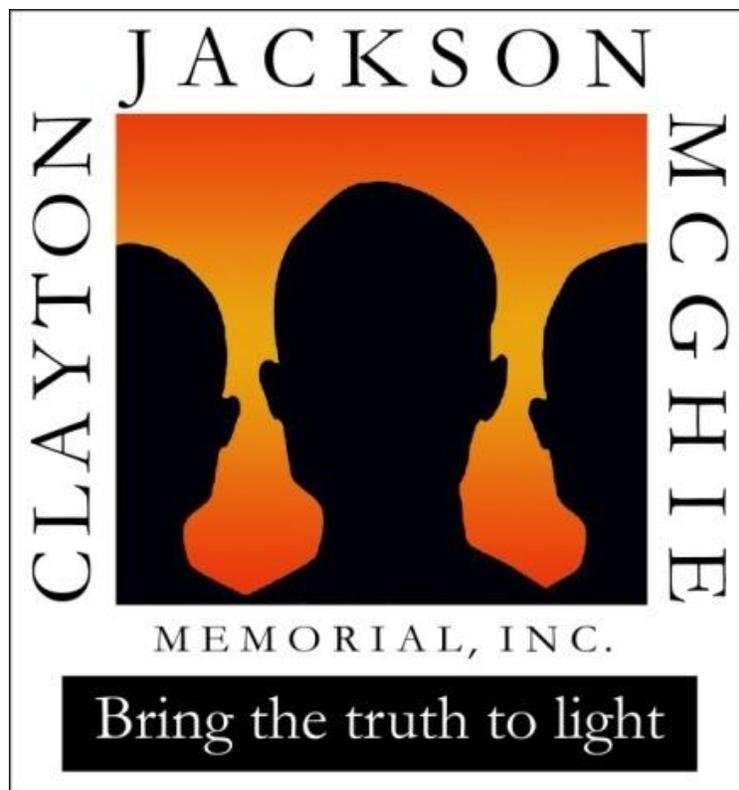


Bringing the Truth to Light: Policies for Racial Equity in Child Welfare

Policy Guide



CJMM Mission:

*Achieving racial justice through fostering education, reconciliation,
and healing within our communities.*

Bringing the Truth to Light: Racial Disparities in Child Welfare

In Minnesota, children of color are much more likely to be placed into foster care than their White peers. Federal and State legislation have been enacted to address these disparate rates, yet with little success.

Numerous factors, particularly economic and racial bias, persist and continue to negatively impact families of color. Our children need our attention to this critical issue.

Child Welfare Disparities

- In Minnesota, Native American children are 12 times more likely, African American children are 5 times more likely, and Latino children are twice as likely to be placed into foster care as White children.¹
- American Indian children who were placed in foster care and other out-of-home settings were mainly from Minneapolis and Duluth.¹
- In 2008, there were 13,596 Minnesotan children in foster care or other out-of-home placement¹, with an average total monthly cost ranging from \$2,340 to \$2,796 per child (including foster care rate, administration, and other related expenses), depending on age and other factors.⁴

Further Considerations for Family Preservation

Evidence presented by Dr. Joseph Doyle of the MIT Sloan School of Management suggests that children may be better off left in the care and custody of their biological parents, rather than placed in a foster care setting.

He notes that children in foster care have higher rates of delinquency, teenage pregnancy, school drop-out, and long-term problems with employment and low income.⁵ On the broad community level, this amounts to a cost to each and every citizen of the State of Minnesota, both in terms of expended taxpayer dollars and to the general security, stability, and health of the public.

Economic Disparities

- The jobless rate for African Americans in Minnesota is three times that of Whites – the worst unemployment disparity in the United States.³
- Economic stressors resulting in an inability to consistently access food, housing, clothing, and basic services are a risk factor for entering the child protection system.

Percent of youth living in poverty: 2006-2008²

Ethnicity			
Latino	American Indian	African American	White
27%	39%	41%	8%

Policy Suggestions to Facilitate Racial Equity in Child Welfare

While we recognize that these policy solutions are not exhaustive, they do reflect local, regional and state measures that would have a positive impact on the systemic issues perpetuating disparities in child welfare.

Pass the Family Reunification Act

This will allow a minor child, biological parent, social services agency, the child's Tribe, or the Guardian ad Litem to motion the court for re-establishment of the parent-child relationship.

Redefine “best interests of the child”

Presume that, absent imminent danger, a child's best interests include being in the care and custody of his or her parents.

Clarify the federal Indian Child Welfare Act's “active efforts” within state law

To prevent a child's removal from the home, and to hasten efforts to return the child to the family s/he was removed from.

Adjust risk assessment tools

Reduce risk levels for isolated incidents that do not appear to be the result of habitual behaviors, and to reduce risk levels for child neglect for teenaged youth.

Enhance the process for reports of non-compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act

Consider potential penalties to counties that are found to be in habitual violation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (i.e., 4 or more reports of non-compliance per calendar year).

Support and expand afterschool programming and positive youth development initiatives

Programs like the Boys & Girls Club, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts must be supported and expanded.

Clear unsubstantiated and screened-out reports

Clear unsubstantiated and screened-out reports of abuse/neglect from the caregiver's record and clear dismissed criminal charges from individual records.

Increase local efforts to eradicate poverty and increase affordable housing

Reduce stress on families by supporting affordable housing and reducing poverty.

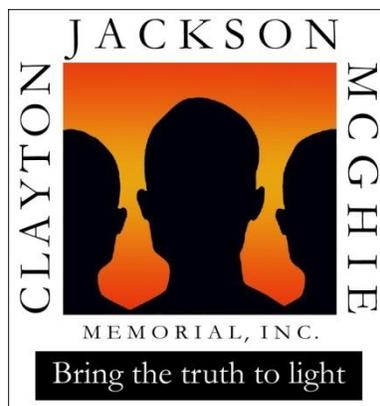
¹ Minnesota Child Welfare Disparities Report, Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2010.

² American Community Survey (ACS): Public Use Microdata Sample, 2006-2008.

³ Furst, Randy. "Dayton Offers Initiatives to Spur New Jobs for Blacks". Star Tribune, April 9, 2011.

⁴ Based on rates as reported in the 2004 House Ways and Means Committee "Green Book". US Congress. U.S. House of Representatives.

⁵ Doyle, Joseph J. "Child Protection and Child Outcomes: Measuring the Effects of Foster Care". American Economic Review, Vol. 97, No. 5, p. 1583-1610, December 2007.



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