



## AFRICAN AMERICAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH OVER-REPRESENTED IN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

*All children need to be safe and loved.*

This issue of Insights focuses on the over-representation of African American and Native American children in California's child welfare system. Data show that these two populations are disproportionately represented and have much poorer outcomes than children of other races.

As we face the facts of racial over-representation, we know that we must be intentional in our approach and work to understand the causes – including poverty, access to services, difficulties in finding permanent homes and the role of racial or cultural bias in society. We must address the disparities that exist and build on practices that have been shown to improve outcomes.

Responsible policy decisions must be grounded in data and research findings. We hope this issue of Insights provides a window into what is needed as California works to address this critically important issue.

### IN THIS ISSUE

- *California's Performance on National Child Welfare Standards.*
- *Overview of Racial Over-representation.*
- *Targeting and Leveraging California's Efforts.*

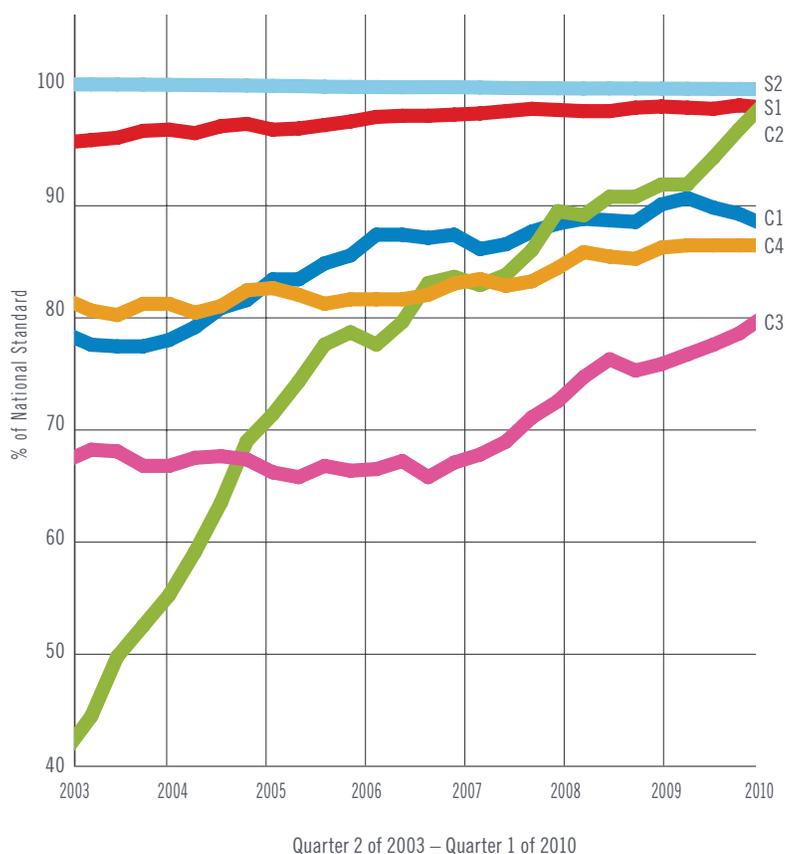
### HOW ARE WE DOING?

- **Over-representation data are striking.**
  - African American children are placed in foster care at more than four times their rate in the state's child population.
  - Native American children are placed in foster care at nearly three times their rate in the state's child population.
- **Outcomes are worse.** African American and Native American children stay in foster care longer and are less likely to be reunified with their families. They are also more likely to age out of foster care without a permanent family.
- **Opportunities for improvement exist.** California has an opportunity to improve these outcomes with a new 5-year, \$14.5 million grant from the federal government to reduce the number of children in long-term foster care through the integration of proven strategies.

# Insights into Data

## California's Performance on National Child Welfare Standards

The chart below has been updated to include the most recently available data on California's performance on the National Child Welfare Standards. While this issue of Insights focuses on the over-representation and poor outcomes for African American and Native American children in foster care, it is always important to look at data in the context of the bigger picture. California continues to improve on all six national standards. However, not all counties are improving in all areas, nor are all measures within a given composite score improving.



The federal government requires states to track performance focused on safety, permanency and well-being. It sets standards for safety and permanency. The six national standards include two safety standards with indicators that stand alone, and four composite standards that compress 15 separate measures of permanency and stability.

### Safety Indicator 1 (S1)

#### — No Recurrence of Child Maltreatment

California has always performed relatively well on this issue and has improved from 95.3% to 98.3% of the national standard in the past eight years.

### Safety Indicator 2 (S2)

#### — No Maltreatment in Foster Care

California's performance is currently at 99.9% of the national standard. The state has met or exceeded the standard for this measure in most years since AB 636\* was implemented.

### Composite Score 1 (C1)

#### — Family Reunification

California has improved from 78.8% of the standard to 88.2% of the standard – an 11.9% improvement in the past eight years.

### Composite Score 2 (C2)

#### — Adoption

California has improved from 42.7% to 98.8% of the standard – an improvement of well over 100% in the past eight years.

### Composite Score 3 (C3)

#### — Long-term Care and Permanent Connections

California has improved from 67.8% of the standard to 80.3% of the standard – an 18.5% improvement.

### Composite Score 4 (C4)

#### — Placement Stability

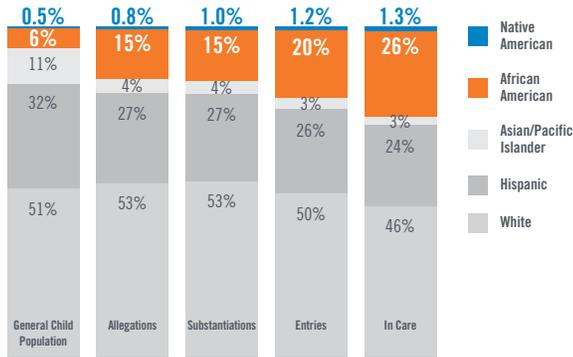
California has improved from 81.7% to 86.4% of the standard in the past seven years – a 5.7% improvement.

\* AB 636 (2003) is California's Child Welfare Outcomes and Accountability System. The system provides quarterly data on a range of issues in addition to the National Child Welfare Standards and enables the state to examine trends related to child safety, permanency and well-being.

The numbers reported in the above chart reflect data from California's Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). Baseline data on some measures may change slightly over time due to data entry and clean-up efforts by counties. The data are publicly available at: [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare).

## Overview of Racial Over-representation

**African American and Native American children are over-represented in every component of California's child welfare system.**



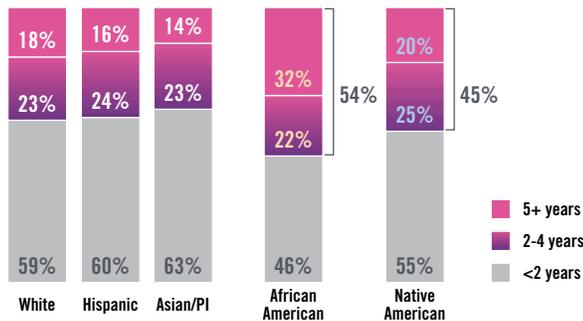
Racial Composition of Children in the Child Welfare System 2009

African American and Native American children are more likely than other children to be reported as abused or neglected, more likely to be removed from their homes, and less likely to be reunified with their families.

Across all age groups, African American and Native American youth are more likely to be in foster care than other ethnic populations.

- Approximately 6% of California's children are African American, yet they represent nearly 26% of children in foster care.
- Native American children make up approximately 0.5% of the state's child population but represent 1.3% of the children in foster care.

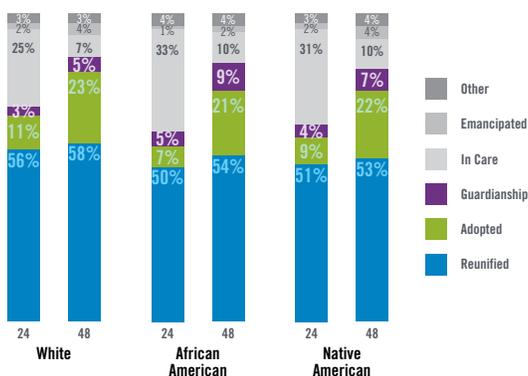
## Foster care outcomes are worse for African American and Native American children and youth.



Length of Time in Foster Care April 1, 2010

African American and Native American children stay in foster care longer than other children without the benefit of a loving and permanent family.

- 54% of African American and 45% of Native American children in California's foster care system had been in care for more than two years. This compares with 37% for Asian children, 40% for Hispanic children and 41% for white children.
- 32% of African American children in foster care had been in the system for more than five years. This compares to 14-20% of children of other races.



Percent of Children with Permanency 24 and 48 Months After Entering Foster Care First Entry Jul-Dec 2005

Fewer African American and Native American youth return to their families or find loving and permanent families before leaving foster care.

- Fewer African American and Native American children were reunified with their parents.
- It took African American and Native American children longer to find permanent families, and a higher percentage emancipated or left foster care by other avenues such as running away and incarceration.

## Targeting and Leveraging California's Efforts

### We need to know more.

- **Data.** We do not have all the information we need to understand the underlying causes of the over-representation of African American and Native American children and youth in foster care.
- **Analysis.** In a federal government study, factors influencing this national trend for African Americans suggest that higher rates of poverty and challenges in accessing support services, racial bias in society and difficulties in finding appropriate permanent homes play a role, but little research exists to help guide us in our understanding of over-representation.
- **Diligence.** We must be diligent in our efforts to understand the contributing factors in order to arrive at the best solutions.

### Permanency and Family Reunification need to be a central focus.

- **Continued progress.** California has made great strides in improving permanency outcomes for youth in care – we must promote, integrate and expand the use of practices that we know can reduce long term foster care to ensure that all children benefit.
- **Supports and safety.** Permanency means strengthening families to keep their children safely at home whenever it is possible to do so. An important first step in preventing the over-representation of children in foster care is to provide the supports and services needed to keep African American and Native American children safely in their homes.
- **Barriers.** Since African American and Native American children and youth are less likely to be reunified with their families, we must better understand the barriers that prevent reunification and actively support the strategies that improve this outcome.

### We should leverage new and emerging opportunities to improve services and practices that target African American and Native American children, youth and families.

- **New federal grant.** California's new 5-year \$14.5 million federal grant to reduce long term foster care focuses on how we can increase permanency for African American and Native American youth, and proposes an innovative approach to casework that will improve outcomes for these two populations.
- **Other resources.** Other key opportunities that target African American and Native American families and caregivers include:
  - The State Department of Mental Health's California Reducing Disparities Project funded through the Mental Health Services Act that seeks to identify and implement new service delivery approaches.
  - The federally funded Diligent Recruitment Grant Program that focuses on increasing the number of foster families for key populations.

### Awareness and commitment are essential.

- **Educational outreach.** Increasing awareness of over-representation and the resulting differences in outcomes is crucial as we seek to resolve what can be a challenging and emotional subject.
- **Continued research.** We need to constantly work to improve our understanding of the issues and commit ourselves to reducing disparities in California's child welfare system so that we can achieve our ultimate goal of ensuring that every child has a safe, loving and permanent family.



California Child Welfare  
Co-Investment Partnership

The California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership is a collaborative group of state agencies, foundations and other nonprofit organizations. Our goal is to ensure a coordinated approach to the investments needed to improve the lives of children and families who are in, or are at risk of entering, the state's child welfare system.