

OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNED



Casey's Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Reducing Disproportionality and Disparities for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare System

KRISTIN J. WARD, PhD Research Analyst
Casey Family Programs



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Executive Summary

Motivated by the disproportionately high number of children of color in their systems and the desire to connect with others to raise awareness of the problem and find solutions, 13 public child welfare agencies participated in Casey Family Programs' Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Reducing Disproportionality and Disparities for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare System, beginning in 2005. Throughout this publication, we refer to breakthrough series collaboratives as BSCs, and we refer to this particular BSC as the Disproportionality BSC. This executive summary highlights the main findings of the evaluation study of the Disproportionality BSC, including:

- The perceived impact of the Disproportionality BSC on the agencies and individuals who participated
- Participant satisfaction with the BSC as a process for promoting improvement and change
- Lessons learned about implementing and sustaining efforts to reduce disproportionality and disparities within the child welfare system

The BSC Methodology

The Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology was developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and Associates in Process Improvement (API) as a quality improvement method for the healthcare arena. Casey brought the BSC methodology to the field of child welfare in 2001 to support its child welfare systems improvement efforts.

In a BSC, teams from public and tribal child welfare agencies across the country rapidly test small-scale change strategies in order to improve practice in

child welfare. Teams are guided by a Framework for Change and mentored by a faculty of experts in the field as they develop, test, implement, and spread change strategies using the Model for Improvement. The Model for Improvement is cyclical, based on four stages: Plan, Do, Study, Act. Because of these stages, testing is often referred to as a PDSA.

As part of the collaborative, teams from across the country share their experiences—successes and failures—over a 12–18 month period through a secure Internet site, monthly phone conferences, and a series of two-day meetings (called learning sessions). In this fashion, successful change concepts and promising approaches are spread among jurisdictions.

The Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand the influence and perceived impact of the Disproportionality BSC at both the individual and agency target site levels. Multiple data sources were used to understand the experiences of Disproportionality BSC participants, including team applications, results from two different surveys, and qualitative interviews with key participant stakeholders.

Perceived Impact of the Disproportionality BSC

Participation in the Disproportionality BSC had an impact at both the agency and the individual participant levels. Changes at the agency level were categorized as either structural in nature (e.g., staff training) or oriented more toward direct practice (e.g., formal practice protocols or tools). Structural changes tended to dominate the work of the BSC teams.

Specifically, study participants highlighted the work they did to:

1. Engage the community and develop cross-system leadership
2. Educate staff and stakeholders
3. Engage child welfare constituents

Accordingly, participant ratings of current agency practice in these areas improved slightly by the end of the BSC. Because of the low posttest response rate and the low number of matching pretest and posttest surveys, these results must be interpreted with caution. Overall, our data suggest room for additional improvement in agency practice to reduce disproportionality.

Eighty-three percent of participant respondents said that their team successfully identified and tested concrete strategies for improvement during the Disproportionality BSC. Interview respondents spoke with pride of some of the strategies they implemented in their target sites. A subsequent final program report from Casey's BSC staff will highlight more of the specific strategies undertaken by the teams.

Survey respondents overwhelmingly (97%) reported that their own personal awareness and understanding had increased concerning the issue of racial disproportionality and the role that structural and institutional racism play in contributing to racial disparities in the child welfare system. Interview respondents spoke about the deeper level of understanding they now possess as a result of participating in the Disproportionality BSC. They explained how this understanding led to an increased commitment to making personal changes in the way they carry out their work and the positive impact this commitment has had on children and families of color in the system.

Along with personal commitment at the individual level, organizational level commitment also increased

as a result of this BSC. An abundance of evidence demonstrates team outputs and activities such as educational activities, trainings, outreach to community and cross-system leaders, and changes to organizational missions. Together, personal and organizational awareness and commitment to reducing disproportionality are fundamental building blocks of culture change and are important outcomes of the Disproportionality BSC.

There is less evidence to suggest that a high degree of formal implementation and spread of direct practice and policy changes occurred. While 70 percent of survey respondents believed that their team had successfully implemented practice change at the target site level, just 44 percent agreed that policy changes had been implemented, and only 35 percent observed that effective practice changes had been spread throughout their agencies at the conclusion of the Disproportionality BSC. The better news is that a solid majority (86%) felt strongly that their jurisdiction was committed to sustaining efforts to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities and is poised to do so through community partnerships as a result of the BSC. Importantly, 97 percent said additional agency resources would be needed in order for BSC improvements to continue to grow and be sustained.

Participant Satisfaction with the BSC

Participants reported a high degree of overall satisfaction with the BSC methodology, resources, and staff. Just over 90 percent of survey respondents rated the BSC as a worthwhile way for their agency to spend time and staff resources. A majority of participants believed the BSC was relevant to their work (93%), an effective way for child welfare staff to learn about a topic (87%), and an effective tool for child welfare agencies to use in order to implement practice change (76%). Interview respondents praised Casey for "lending credibility" to the idea

that reducing disproportionality in child welfare is important work and then supporting agencies by providing a concrete and practical mechanism for engaging and educating stakeholders and moving ideas to action. Casey's Disproportionality BSC staff was recognized for providing an environment of openness and respect, as well as for being well prepared, professional, and responsive.

Learning sessions were rated as "very or extremely useful" by 94 percent of survey respondents, while interview participants concurred that the opportunity to connect and "really focus with people who have similar concerns from around the country" was "powerful." Most participants also found the BSC faculty (73%), use of child welfare administrative data (73%), and team self-assessment data (71%) to be highly useful resources in their work. Satisfaction data indicated that greater effort could be made to encourage cross-team collaboration and the use of the BSC extranet. Respondents also expressed ambivalence concerning the usefulness of monthly all-collaborative calls and monthly reports, suggesting that these particular BSC resources could be improved.

Lessons Learned

Interview respondents provided specific recommendations about what public child welfare agencies need in order to reduce disproportionality. First, they emphasized the critical importance of having a knowledgeable and highly aware workforce, recommending that agencies build a common understanding of the problem and causes of disproportionality among their staff through training and education. A second essential piece of the work for agencies is to build critical alliances with community partners. Third, interview respondents stressed that commitment from agency leadership to a sustained, long-term effort at reduction is vital. A recurring theme among respondents was that racial disparities in the system "did not happen overnight and would not be

corrected overnight." Lastly, participants called for technical assistance, support, and strong leadership from foundations with resources—like Casey Family Programs.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The Disproportionality BSC did not result in a marked reduction of racial disparity within the target sites of participating jurisdictions. According to the BSC theory of change, however, this was not an expected outcome within the study time frame. Instead, these evaluation findings lend credence to the BSC theory of change, which suggests a developmental process of change over time in the context of this BSC work. This process does not start from a foundation of evidence-based practice but instead encourages the testing of innovative ideas on a small scale.

The evaluation findings demonstrate that the Disproportionality BSC was successful in realizing its vision to engage like-minded jurisdictions, create environments for testing change strategies, develop leaders, and create community and cross-systems partnerships. As well, teams successfully increased staff and stakeholder awareness, identified agency gaps, tested improvement strategies, and began to implement some of those changes. A large majority of BSC participants were satisfied with their experience, seeing their investment of limited staff time and resources as well spent. Further, participants at all levels reported that the Disproportionality BSC was a transformative experience and came away from it even more highly motivated to commit, in both their professional and personal lives, to eradicating disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color in the child welfare system. Together, the evaluation study findings demonstrate the need for the Disproportionality BSC and its value to participants, and they indicate that something important and meaningful happened through Casey's investment in this work.

Study findings demonstrate a need for sustained support of agencies engaged in this work. They also show a great deal of potential gain to be reaped by furthering these agencies' local efforts. One of Casey's goals is to safely reduce the number of children in foster care by half by the year 2020. If stakeholders are going to be the agents of change that Casey wants and needs them to be in order to reach this goal, then we need to heed respondents' call to lead a national movement. The following are some recommendations to this end:

- Continue supporting the original disproportionality BSC teams. To an extent, this is being done individually with former teams, but it may be worthwhile to explore ways of engaging teams again as a collective. Annual convenings or a more intensive relationship with the original participants may both have the potential for producing powerful results.
- Invest resources into conducting longer-term follow-ups to see whether initial program influences endured, grew, or vanished.
- Share and build on lessons learned from the original Disproportionality BSC jurisdictions and continue to build a national coalition by engaging new teams in a repeat-Disproportionality BSC. Find ways to include original Disproportionality BSC participants as mentors in the work in order to keep them engaged in both national and local

efforts. Continue to expose child welfare agencies, their staff, and their community partners to the Undoing Racism training that was part of this BSC.

Casey may be able to maximize the potential of the BSC methodology in general and for all topic areas by considering the following recommendations:

- Lengthen the timeframe of each BSC.
- Provide a greater level of technical assistance for setting clear and specific BSC-related change goals, as well as collecting and reporting administrative data at the target site level.
- Capitalize on the identification of successful change strategies by utilizing repeat BSCs.
- Invest more in evaluation methods that will allow a better understanding of the characteristics and pathways that lead to innovation and improvement and can document long-term change.

According to the findings from this study, as well as what we have learned from more than seven years of implementing this methodology in the child welfare field, the BSC is an excellent resource for child welfare agencies and an effective way to engage them in improvement efforts that promote innovation and change.

I. Introduction

Racial Disproportionality and Disparities in Child Welfare Services

That children of color are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system in the United States has been well documented (Hill, 2006; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2007; U.S. Children's Bureau, 2003). In 2005, nearly 60 percent of children in foster care were children of color, although children of color represented just 42 percent of the child population in the United States (Casey Family Programs, revised March 14, 2007). The problem is most pronounced for African American children and for American Indian and Alaskan Native children, who in 2005 were both overrepresented in the system at a rate of more than 2:1 (Casey Family Programs, revised March 14, 2007). Different theories exist to explain this phenomenon, including parent and family risk factors, community factors, and organizational and systemic factors such as institutional and structural racism (McCrorry et al., 2006). While several factors may be at play, no statistically significant differences in overall maltreatment rates between families of color and white families have been found in three separate national incidence studies (Hill, 2006). This fact certainly suggests that the child welfare system itself may be a contributing factor and that disproportionality and disparities could be reduced through systemic reform and improvement.

Accordingly, public child welfare systems (e.g., see Colorado Department of Human Services, 2002; King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality, 2004; Michigan Department of Human Services, 2006; Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2005; Texas Health and Human Services Commission, 2006) and private foundations from around the country are dedicating resources to address this complex but solvable challenge. Casey Family Pro-

grams (Casey) is one such organization committed to helping the child welfare system address disproportionality and disparities for families of color. In fact, Casey considers the reduction of racial disproportionality and disparities a key component of its strategy to safely reduce the number of children in foster care by half by the year 2020. One way that Casey has offered such support to jurisdictions is through its nationwide Systems Improvement work, including the use of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology.

Casey's BSC to Reduce Disproportionality and Disparities for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare System

The Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology was developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and Associates in Process Improvement (API) as a quality improvement method in the healthcare arena. Casey brought the BSC methodology to the field of child welfare in 2001 to support its child welfare systems improvement efforts.

In a BSC, teams from public and tribal child welfare agencies across the country rapidly test small-scale change strategies in order to address a prevailing issue and improve practice in child welfare. Teams are guided by a Framework for Change. (See Appendix A.) Teams are mentored by a faculty of experts in the field as they develop, test, implement, and spread change strategies using the Model for Improvement, which is based on a four-stage cycle: Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA)¹. As part of the collaborative, the teams share their experiences—successes and failures—with one another over a 12–18 month period through a secure Internet site, monthly phone conferences, and a series of two-day meetings

1. For more information about Casey's interpretation and implementation of the BSC methodology, including the Model for improvement and PDSAs, see Casey's forthcoming program report detailing the work of the Disproportionality BSC Teams.

(called learning sessions). In this fashion, successful change concepts and promising approaches are spread among jurisdictions.

In the early summer of 2005, Casey convened a BSC on *Reducing Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare System* (the Disproportionality BSC). The stated vision for this Disproportionality BSC was:

That participating jurisdictions would contribute to the development of child welfare systems that are free of structural racism and that benefit all children, families, and communities by:

- Engaging with a group of like-minded jurisdictions in critical change activities
- Creating environments in which change strategies can be developed and tested
- Developing a cadre of leaders across the country who are working toward solutions
- Creating and sustaining partnerships to advance the work
- Disseminating lessons learned

(Disproportionality BSC Framework For Change. See Appendix A.)

Based on the IHI model and experience with prior Casey BSCs, Casey leaders generally expect to see a significant amount of strategy testing as well as the implementation and spread of successful practice and policy changes during any given BSC. Ultimately, the hope is that the BSC methodology promotes system change in participating agencies to such a degree that child and family well-being is improved in the long run.

Those planning the Disproportionality BSC anticipated that things might go a little differently in this context. Conducting a BSC on disproportionality would entail the bringing together of agency staff, constituents, and community members to seriously

explore and consider the impact of individual, institutional, and structural racism on agency practice. To some, it seemed that this particular BSC would not and could not be simply about practice change (in the sense that teams were not likely to be able to move straight to making changes to their practice). This BSC, to be sure, was unlike others in that it wasn't about improving standard assessment processes or foster parent recruitment efforts, for example. In fact, many expected that teams and participants would need assistance—indeed, practice—learning how to first engage one another and then their larger communities and target sites in courageous conversations about the work. This type of awareness raising and skill building would take time but would be instrumental in laying a foundation for sustainable change.

On the other hand, this focus on process was not consistent with the tenets of the BSC methodology, where the focus is squarely on moving agencies from talk to action. Moreover, because the BSC measurement strategy concentrates on practice change more than culture or climate change, there were serious questions about how the foundational work and its impact would show up. BSC staff and faculty had ongoing debates about the level of attention to spend on formal practice change versus awareness raising and relationship building, the expectations that should be placed on teams concerning the amount of work done in each area, and how to think about and measure success and improvement in this context.

Accordingly, a theory of change was developed for the BSC methodology that accommodates these concerns. This theory of change has six domains (see Figure 1):

1. Increased awareness and understanding
2. Strategy identification and testing
3. Implementation of improvements
4. Spread

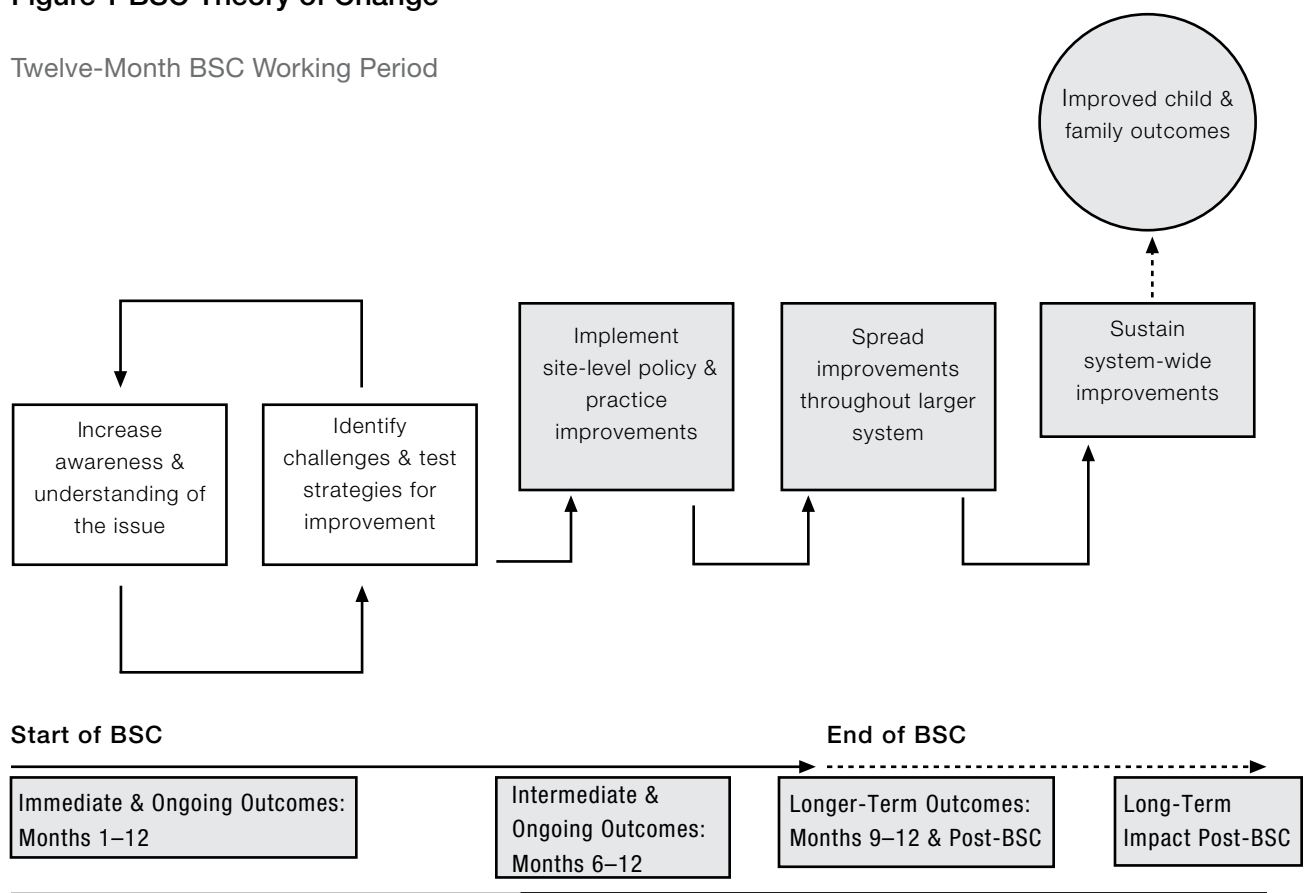
- 5. Sustainability
- 6. Improved child and family outcomes

This change theory suggests a developmental process of change over time. For instance, increased awareness should happen during the earliest stages of the BSC process, and continued awareness raising and strategy testing are postulated as ongoing and mutually reinforcing within the first months of the BSC. As evidence accumulates about successful small-scale tests, it is expected that particularly promising practice changes or policy improvements will be imple-

mented at the target site. Practice improvements that prove effective at that target site level should spread throughout the larger system over time, and we should eventually observe improvement in administrative child and family welfare indicators.

Figure 1 BSC Theory of Change

Twelve-Month BSC Working Period



Report Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to understand the influence and perceived impact of the Disproportionality BSC at both the individual and agency target site levels, building on the theory of change described above. The reader will gain an understanding of the type, quality, and breadth of work that took place as a result of the Disproportionality BSC. Throughout the report, several questions are answered, including:

- Who participated in the Disproportionality BSC?
- What was the need and motivation for participation and change?
- What was the perceived impact of the Disproportionality BSC on the agencies and individuals who participated?
- Were BSC participants satisfied with the BSC as a process for promoting improvement and change within the system?

- After participating in the Disproportionality BSC for over a year, what do participants think child welfare agencies need in order to successfully address the issue of disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color?

In the following section, data sources and data collection procedures are described, followed by a brief delineation of study strengths and weaknesses. Findings from the multiple data sources are then presented in a structure that follows the questions bulleted above. The report concludes with a discussion of the implications for Casey's future efforts to support system reform to reduce racial disproportionality and disparity, for Casey's ongoing use and implementation of the BSC methodology more generally, and for Casey's efforts to evaluate BSC effectiveness.

II. Study Approach

Data Collection Procedures and Data Analysis

Multiple data sources were used to understand the experiences of Disproportionality BSC participants and answer the research questions listed previously. In this section, we discuss the data sources and data collection procedures, including information about samples, response rates, and analytic techniques.

Application Document Review

Teams from public and tribal child welfare agencies were invited to submit written applications to be selected as part of the Disproportionality BSC. The applications asked teams to explain, among other things, the problem of disproportionality in their jurisdictions, what they perceived as the main challenges to addressing disproportionality in their agencies and sites, and what they hoped to achieve by participating in the Disproportionality BSC. A content analysis of selected responses from the 13 teams invited to participate provided insight into the reasons why agencies were motivated to take part in this work.

Team Self-Assessment Survey

We administered a pretest and posttest BSC Team Self-Assessment Survey to measure target site performance on each of the Disproportionality BSC Framework for Change components. See Appendix B for a copy of the Team Self-Assessment Survey. The pretest was administered online during prework for the first learning session and again approximately 12 months later immediately preceding the third and final learning session. There were 65 items on the survey. These items corresponded directly with the seven components in the Disproportionality

BSC Framework for Change:

1. Create Supportive Agency Mission
2. Develop Cross-System Leadership
3. Support Families in Context
4. Improve Community Capacity
5. Educate Staff and Stakeholders
6. Design Culturally Sensitive Services
7. Use and Share Data

Response Rate

At pretest, 158 participants were invited to complete the online survey, and 125 of them (80%) submitted data. At posttest, 167 individuals were invited to fill out the self-assessment survey; 58 participants (35%) did so. These participation rates resulted in matching pretest and posttest survey data from only 45 participants (27% of the original 167), despite several efforts to boost the response rate. While we present some information from these matching surveys, results should be interpreted with caution, as this is an extremely low response rate, and results may not be generalizable to BSC participants as a whole.

Data Analysis

Respondents were asked to rate each statement about a particular practice in their target site, using a scale ranging from “never happens” to “always happens.” Respondents also were asked to rate each statement according to its relative importance for addressing disproportionality. Each team used the results from the baseline self-assessment to determine priority areas for their BSC work. Post-BSC results were intended to be compared against baseline ratings in order to understand whether participants believed

that agency practice had improved as a result of participation in the BSC, and to help direct future work. The mean score was computed for each component. Again, due to the low posttest response rate and low number of matching pretest and posttest surveys, these results must be interpreted with caution.

Final Evaluation Survey

The Final Evaluation Survey was administered in order to collect information from participants about their perceptions of BSC effectiveness as well as their satisfaction with the BSC methodology and resources. A copy of the Final Evaluation Survey is presented as Appendix C.

Response Rate

The Final Evaluation Survey was administered to every BSC participant who attended the third and final learning session of the Disproportionality BSC (n=99), and had a 90% response rate among these participants. The number of invited participants for the final learning session was significantly lower than the invited participants for the prework self-assessment process. In addition, some attrition did occur between the first and final learning session, and one BSC team did not attend the final learning session due to leadership transition issues in its agency.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze survey data in order to gauge participant satisfaction and the degree to which participants felt their team had progressed along the BSC theory of change described above.

Post-BSC Videotaped Interviews

In March 2007, seven of the original 13 Disproportionality BSC teams convened for a final time. These

seven teams had participated in a six-month “Post-Disproportionality BSC Working Period” beyond the original BSC time period. The purpose of this post-BSC working period was for interested teams to go more deeply into testing promising practice changes and to continue sharing with and learning from one another. Thirteen qualitative interviews were conducted at this convening with a total of 20 participants (some interviews were conducted simultaneously with two participants). The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to capture the experiences and reactions of Disproportionality BSC participants in their own words and give them the opportunity to share lessons learned and perspectives about the work that would not be captured by the quantitative surveys. Each interview lasted between 20 and 35 minutes and was videotaped with permission. The interviews were videotaped as footage for a potential video project about the Disproportionality BSC. A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix D.

Sample

We used a stratified, purposeful strategy to select the interview sample of 20 participants. We made our selections to include a member of each team while making sure that different types of participants were represented (e.g., youth/alumni, senior leaders, birth parents, etc.). We also took into account active participation throughout the BSC, prioritizing for selection those team and group members who were active participants throughout the process.

Data Analysis

The videotaped interviews were reviewed, and a transcript of each was produced. The transcripts were then analyzed by identifying, coding, and categorizing primary patterns in the data. To a large degree, inductive analysis was employed, meaning that common themes across interviews were identified in the data and categorized accordingly. The focus of the

interview questions, however, undoubtedly shaped participants' responses. Disproportionality BSC staff and faculty members reviewed and verified observations and conclusions presented in this report. We use the qualitative interview data throughout this report to help address several of the research questions outlined previously.

Study Limitations and Strengths

The study is limited in several ways. First, the data collection efforts served a combination of purposes, not all of which were evaluative in nature. In fact, many of the data collection strategies were designed to be part of the BSC process. Additional resources for evaluation and a formal evaluation plan were not in place. Second, the data sources are all self-reported and may contain some social desirability bias or may not be an accurate reflection of behavioral change at the site level. Third, child welfare administrative measures were not included. Further, although data from the BSC Team Self-Assessment Survey were collected pretest and posttest BSC, the low response

rate at posttest limited our ability to draw definitive conclusions about changes over time. Finally, BSC staff and faculty perspectives are missing in the data and findings reported here, which focus solely on participant perceptions and experiences.

The use of multiple methods to help document and understand the influences of the Disproportionality BSC on the work of agencies and individuals is a clear strength of this study. Every team participant in the BSC process was afforded an opportunity to provide input and feedback through three quantitative surveys administered at different time periods. The use of qualitative interviews provided a measure of detail and depth not accessible via standardized survey methods. To blend methods and data sources in this manner widened the scope and enhanced the quality of this effort, which is the first Casey study to date that concentrates specifically and in great detail on direct participant reports of their work, experiences, and satisfaction with a BSC.

III. Findings

Who Participated in the Disproportionality Breakthrough Series Collaborative?

Jurisdictions, Target Sites, and Team Membership

Thirteen public and tribal child welfare agencies were selected to participate in the BSC upon completion of an application and interview process that was by invitation only. The desire was to select jurisdictions that possessed some foundational roots in this work and that could demonstrate steps they had already taken to address disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color.

Once selected to participate in the Disproportionality BSC, agencies defined their target sites and formed Senior Leadership Groups and Core Teams responsible for the BSC work at each site². A large majority of participants on each team represented the child welfare system, but other systems and “affinity groups” (e.g., birth parents, young adults/alumni, agency workers, and community partners) were included. According to BSC team composition guidelines, court system, birth parent, and young adult or alumni representatives each made up 10 percent of the team composition. A community partner representative also was part of each Core Team, and these representatives came from the healthcare system, juvenile justice, and mental health. A total of 10 people comprised each Disproportionality BSC team (including six Core Team members, three senior leaders, and one executive sponsor). The process of identifying target sites varied from team to team, but regional offices or specific supervisory units often were selected.

Participant Characteristics

The best data available concerning the ethnic background and gender of Disproportionality BSC participants come from the pretest BSC Team Self-

Assessment Survey. It is important to note that team composition did change somewhat over the course of the BSC, with some team members dropping out and others being replaced. Thus, the estimates on participant characteristics may not reflect the exact composition of the BSC at the end of the process. According to these data, 50 percent of participants were white and 35 percent were African American. Just over seven percent were American Indian or Alaska Native; three percent were Hispanic or Latino; and three percent were of a mixed racial and ethnic background. Nearly 75 percent of Disproportionality BSC participants were female.

Why Did Jurisdictions Participate? The Need and Motivation for Change

In their original applications, most teams provided data from their child welfare administrative data systems describing the problem of disproportionality in their target sites, agencies, or states. Those who did explained that children of color were overrepresented in their child welfare systems at anywhere from 1.5 to 6.5 times the rate of white children. Many also acknowledged that disproportionality and disparities tend to increase the deeper a child or family moves into the system.

Interview participants also described the ways that racial disproportionality and disparities manifest in their jurisdictions. We asked them to reflect on the reasons they were motivated to apply to be part of the Disproportionality BSC. Teams appeared to be in different places developmentally. Some explained that, prior to the BSC, they did not even have basic data to define the problem in their jurisdiction. In contrast, others seemed to be bogged down in data and were not moving as quickly to action as they would have liked. Below are several examples that depict both the universality of overrepresentation

2. For more detailed information about team selection and composition, reference the forthcoming Disproportionality BSC program report.

of children of color in these systems, as well as the common need and desire among teams for support to address the issue. This first quote is from a participant describing the problem of disproportionality in his site:

“At every stage, we are more likely to adjudicate children of color, remove them from their home, place them into foster care, they stay longer in foster care, they’re less likely to return to their families, and they are more likely to have their parental rights terminated than their percentage of the population would indicate that they should—because we know that there is no more abuse of African American children than Caucasian children. And, the most interesting statistic in all of this is that, when we return African American children to their home, they are less likely to reenter the system than white children. So, it’s cockeyed. It just is. We treat them unfairly.”

—Judge

Next is an excerpt of dialogue between two interview respondents from the same team explaining both the problem of disproportionality in their jurisdiction as well as the sense of urgency they felt at the beginning of the initiative to start the work:

“In [our] county, the largest urban area in [our state], 19 percent of children are African American and 55 percent of our children in foster care are African American. So that’s our disproportionality statistic. And the disparate outcomes show up in several of our basic child welfare indicators. Some of our most disparate outcomes are our substantiation rates. Of all our investigations, 45 percent were substantiated on African American families, so we want that statistic to be closer to the 19 percent in the general population. Most of our children who are free for adoption, probably 60–70 percent of the ones who do not have identified adoptive families are African American ... [At

the beginning of the BSC,] there was nothing formally going on in the state or target site to address disproportionality ... In fact, one of our challenges was that we did not have the data to say what our problem was [prior to the BSC] ... There were feelings that we had these issues, but we didn’t have a way of quantifying them ... When we applied for this BSC, it was the first time we broke down a lot of our AFCARS (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System) data in a race-based kind of way. I always thought it was interesting [in our jurisdiction] that public child welfare drove the conversation. We didn’t have rallies [protests] or scathing editorials in our local paper about the problem of disproportionality. No one from the community ever asked these types of questions about our data or our outcomes. So it was very interesting that they weren’t ... ”

—Child Welfare Regional Administrator

“What I hear from the African American community is that we knew we had a problem, but no one would listen ... nothing would change ... this is just the way it is. I thought that was very sad, because they were accepting something that destroys the family and moves children through a system that doesn’t nurture them or help them to develop trust. This acceptance was mind-boggling. So overwhelming.”

—Human Services Administrator

While some jurisdictions had more statistical evidence prior to the BSC than the team above, they were not necessarily much further ahead in terms of taking action. Members of one such team articulated why participation in an initiative like the BSC was attractive to and necessary for them:

“[Our state] is 80 percent white, and we have over 70 percent children of color in our sys-

tem. As we started collecting more data, we found that, at every point, children of color were overrepresented. So we have a real serious issue and a lot of work to do.”

—Child Welfare Deputy Commissioner

“Work was going on prior to the BSC but in very small pockets and it was very disjointed. We spent a lot of time researching ... but we had never collectively done something to really address disproportionality. You know, participation in this BSC gave us the opportunity to really do something collectively.”

—Child Welfare Supervisor

Another team explained:

“Sixty percent of children [in our system] are African American, and it’s disproportionate because African Americans make up 30 percent of the child population in our county. Not only are they in our system, but they stay longer than any other race. We literally have children that we are raising in our system ... Prior to the BSC, we were collecting the data and that’s all we were doing. We weren’t going deeper into the question of why. And [asking ourselves]: how is our practice impacting this? How is our institution impacting families of color? We weren’t going deeper, we were just collecting data ...”

—Child Welfare Program Coordinator

“So, we have identified that [disproportionality] is a problem, but sometimes we feel a little bit stuck—okay, what do we do next? We see the areas where we’re stuck, but how do we meet the resistance? How do we keep pushing through that and try to come over those barriers with other agencies, within the community, and within the government [agency]?”

—Child Welfare Supervisor

Agencies vying to be part of the Disproportionality BSC acknowledged the severity of the issue of disproportionality in their jurisdictions while admitting that the individual and institutional barriers to addressing it are significant and daunting. Nonetheless, in their applications, teams expressed their commitment to addressing the issue, as well as a great deal of hope in the potential promise held by the BSC initiative. Though the jurisdictions were in different developmental stages in the work, all argued that participation in the BSC could strengthen their local efforts to make real and positive changes. Several believed that the BSC could help build a national movement to reduce disproportionality and disparities for children and families of color in the child welfare system.

More than half of the applicants hoped that, through participation in the BSC, they would raise awareness among agency staff about the issue of institutional racism and its impact on racial disproportionality and disparities. They also emphasized the significance of such a “rare” opportunity for agency staff to devote intensively focused time to the issue of disproportionality and disparities. Otherwise, they stated, the time and space to do so would not be afforded to them. Indeed, in their applications, a majority of teams noted the potential to move the issue “from margin to center” or to “shine a spotlight” on it. Teams also hoped to achieve other goals through participation in the BSC, including developing better support systems and services for families of color, and forging partnerships with critical allies like other jurisdictions and human services systems, community partners, youth, and birth families. Many looked to the BSC as an opportunity to better assess their systems in terms of strengths and gaps, to continue to develop their knowledge base by learning from and with others, and to move more quickly to action.

What Was the Perceived Impact of the Disproportionality BSC on the Individuals and Agencies Who Participated?

In the previous section, data appear that speak to the need for change and the motivations jurisdictions had to participate in the BSC. The remainder of this report presents information on the success of the Disproportionality BSC in strengthening the efforts of participating jurisdictions, including the ways in which the initiative met agency hopes and needs. In the pages that follow, this report begins to answer the questions of whether and how participation in the BSC influenced change at the individual and agency target site levels.

A word about what is meant here regarding individual- versus agency-level change: As the conceptual model in Figure 2 conveys, either can lead to or result in practice change, with individual-level change being more personal and informal and agency-level practice change being more formal and established in process or routine. Agency changes can also be more structural in nature—for example, agency vision or mission, mandated training, and leadership support. In the short term, both individual- and agency-level changes may have their own direct influence on the experiences of children and families in the child welfare system. But the change process is not necessarily direct or linear. Positive changes on both the agency and individual levels may, in a mutually reinforcing manner, feed off one another over time to effect culture change within an agency that ultimately improves child and family outcomes on a larger scale.

The findings presented below are organized in such a way that agency-level changes are described first, followed by individual-level changes. This is in keeping with the conceptual model in Figure 2 and reflects the fact that, by virtue of their Disproportionality BSC applications and the resources they were willing to devote to supporting their participants, the jurisdictions involved made a change at the agency level. This change (their commitment at the agency

level to participate and try to address the need for improvement) was a catalyst for many of the individual-level changes that participants credited to their participation in the BSC.

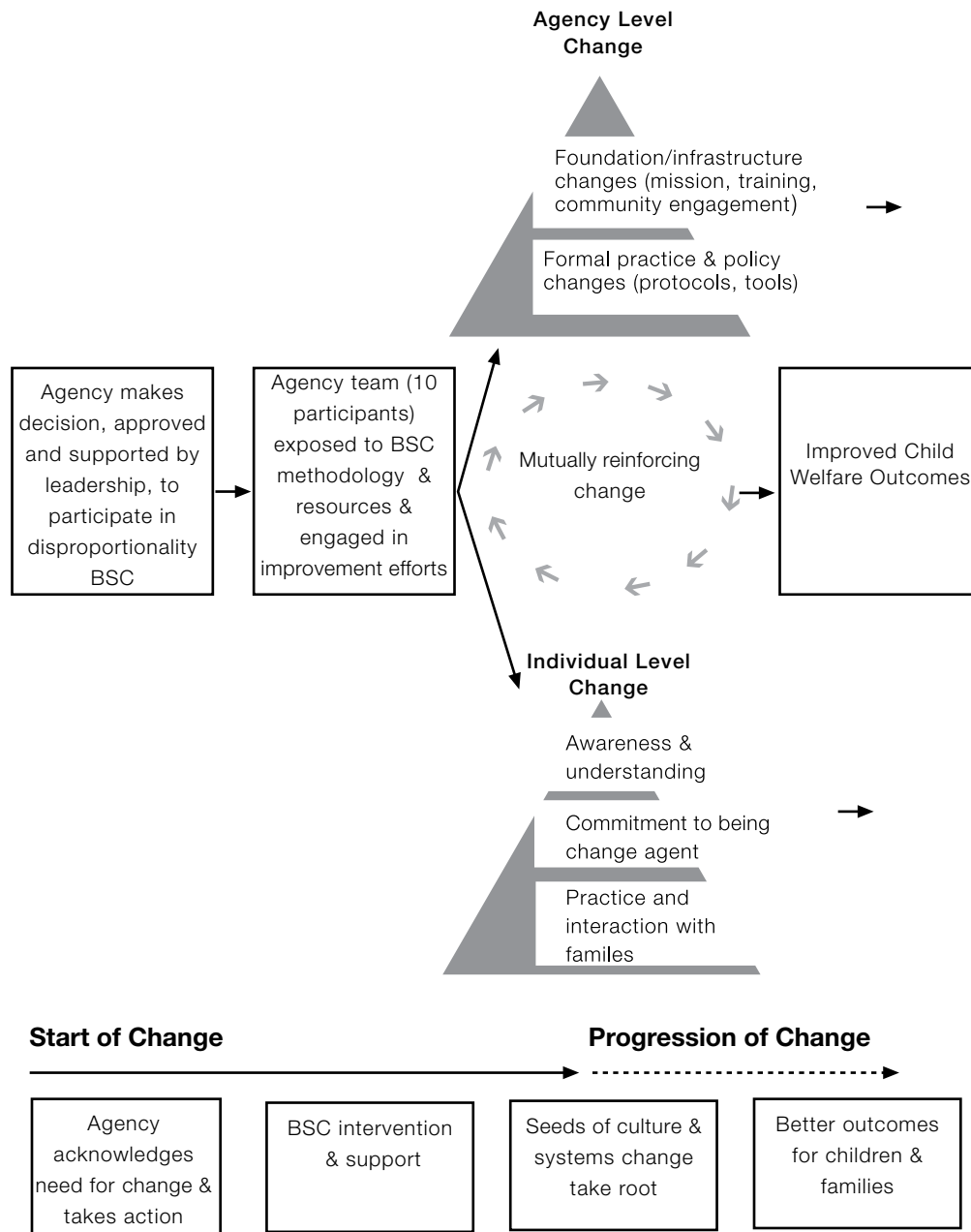
Agency-Level Change

As stated previously, changes at the agency level as a result of participation in the Disproportionality BSC can be described as either foundational/structural in nature or oriented toward more direct practice. Below, quantitative and qualitative data are used to describe the agency-level changes that were observed and reported by participants.

The team self-assessment data gathered from individual participants at the beginning and end of the BSC help to explain whether and where agency-level changes occurred in relation to the DBSC Framework for Change. As a reminder, the low posttest response rate and relatively small number of matched surveys mean these results need to be interpreted with caution and are only suggestive. Without knowing the representativeness of the sample, it is not possible to draw valid conclusions about improvement over time. Thus, we focus only on general trends in the data. Readers should interpret descriptive information from the pretest and posttest self-assessment survey below in that light.

At pretest, mean scores for all of the Disproportionality BSC Framework for Change components were approximately at the midpoint of the response range, which goes from “never happens” to “always happens.” The DBSC Framework describes the ideal practices as actions child welfare agencies can take in order to reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color. On average, however, participants indicated that these actions only “rarely” or “sometimes happen.” (See Table 1.) On the other items, respondents at pretest were more likely to believe their target site did a better job providing culturally sensitive services, which includes such practices as involving families as partners in case decision making and using placement strategies

Figure 2 Individual- and Agency-Level Change



that support connections among parents, children, siblings, kin, and significant others. Collaborative participants rated *Developing Cross-system Leadership* lowest, believing that this practice rarely occurred at their site. Overall, ratings of practice prior to the Disproportionality BSC indicated significant room for improvement in all Framework component areas.

At posttest, participants rated their teams, on average, slightly higher in all component areas, with the exception of Component 6, *Design Culturally Sensitive Services*, where the ratings were static. Respondents reported the greatest level of change in the areas of *Educating Staff and Stakeholders* and *Developing Cross-System Leadership*. Collaborative ratings of *Using and Sharing Data* and *Creating Sup-*

porting Agency Mission also received positive rating bounces.

These findings converge with interview and Final Evaluation Survey data below that speak to the number of training and education efforts that happened as a result of the Disproportionality BSC, as well as the level of outreach to community partners and leaders from other systems. Still, it is important to recognize that ratings on the post-BSC Team Self-Assessment Survey remained just toward the high end of the “rarely” to “sometimes happens” range of the scale. That is to say, according to BSC participants, the opportunity for growth in response to the problem of disproportionality remains substantial within these target sites and, so it follows, in their respective agencies and larger jurisdictions. This finding is also consistent with what was reported in the BSC Final Evaluation Survey (i.e., 45% of respondents would have liked to see more practice change/improvement) and in participant interviews as well.

The component areas in which teams reported improved practice upon the conclusion of the BSC, *Educating Staff and Stakeholders* and *Developing Cross-System Leadership*, were central themes focused upon throughout the Disproportionality BSC. Not only did the Disproportionality BSC Framework for Change encourage teams to work in these main component areas, but these issues were discussed at learning sessions and during the action periods as well. Not surprisingly, then, both areas of work featured prominently in participant interviews as respondents discussed the substance and meaning of their Disproportionality BSC efforts. In addition, interview participants highlighted the contribution that the BSC made to enhancing constituency engagement within the agencies. Each of these three areas of agency change is elaborated on below.

Table 1. Disproportionality BSC Team Self-Assessment Ratings

Disproportionality BSC Framework for Change Component Areas	Average Self-Assessment Ratings on Current Practice (1= Never Happens 2= Rarely Happens; 3= Sometimes Happens; 4= Frequently Happens; 5= Always Happens)	
	Pretest (N=119)*	Posttest (N=56)
1. Create Supportive Agency Mission	2.70	2.99
2. Develop Cross-System Leadership	2.35	2.73
3. Support Families in Context	2.73	2.87
4. Improve Community Capacity	2.62	2.79
5. Educate Staff and Stakeholders	2.50	2.83
6. Design Culturally Sensitive Services	3.12	3.13
7. Use and Share Data	2.59	2.88

* Sample size indicates number of surveys that were submitted as complete.

Engaging the Community and Developing Cross-System Leadership

Given the multi-system nature of the problem of disproportionality in the human services, bringing together community partners as allies in the work was seen by most teams as an instrumental strategy for effecting longer-term change. Participants were appreciative of the push they received from Casey through the BSC to engage the community and to develop cross-system leadership in efforts to reduce disproportionality and disparities. As a result, they gained a greater appreciation for the fact that child welfare efforts alone would not be adequate in the long run to reduce disproportionality.

“I think a major challenge is that the disparities in child welfare are not in isolation. They exist in the context of similar racial disparities in who is poor, whose fathers go to prison, in who has AIDS, in who is being suspended from school and in who is not passing school. And all of those disparities, I think, reinforce each other. It’s my own personal belief that child welfare has to look inward, but we also have to involve the larger community, because you can’t get rid of child welfare disparities unless you’re also looking at the other disparities that have powerful impacts on child welfare reports and outcomes ... I think the Disproportionality BSC experience actually helped us to reach out to [those other partners]. The BSC pushed us to reach out to more partners. It pushed us to get our judges involved and to get our GAL [Guardian Ad Litem] administrator involved, and I think both of those things have been important and helpful.”

—Child Welfare Director

One way this was accomplished was by prescribing team composition:

“I think one of the best things [about the BSC] was that [Casey] mandated some of the

composition of the team. [Casey] demanded community partners, demanded birth parent and youth representatives, requested mental health system representatives and a judge. And we were able to get all of those. It was a great way to begin the conversation, and I would never change that. I think involving community partners [is critical]—they’re the key mandatory reporters. In the extended community team, we had the school system present and the health department. So I just think doing it with community partners is nonnegotiable.”

—Child Welfare Regional Administrator

As a result of Casey’s push for community involvement and cross-system leadership, participants began to see how their efforts alone would not be adequate. Participants described the importance and consequences of the work they did to engage community partners as a way to get others, in particular those who might be mandated reporters, to take ownership of both the problem and solution:

“It made us look at opening our doors. We had been doing things internally, but we weren’t impacting the referrals that come in our doors through the mandated reporters. We weren’t engaging the community enough around what we were seeing about the [poor] outcomes and how they could participate in change. We were not engaging the stakeholders who provide the service. So being part of this initiative [affected] the way we were going to do work and how we were going to be effective in getting good outcomes.”

—Child Welfare Agency Staff

Casey’s requirement that judges be part of the Senior Leadership group paid good dividends. Judges from several teams became strong allies in the local work and beyond. In one jurisdiction, a participating judge influenced several judges who were not a

part of the BSC to go through the Undoing Racism training. She also talked about her increased awareness of her role as “gatekeeper.” Another judge reported influencing the agenda for the Model Court in his state:

“We’re beginning to raise critical awareness [of disproportionality] in the courts ... We have made disparate treatment of children of color and kinship placement a goal for our Model Court for 2007. That wouldn’t have happened if we weren’t involved in this BSC. I pushed that through. I insisted on it.”

—Judge

Educating Staff and Stakeholders

According to interview participants, the need to engage stakeholders and agency staff went hand-in-hand with the need to educate them. These data attest to the great deal of energy teams expended in efforts to educate agency staff and community stakeholders over the course of the BSC and how critical they believed this work to be.

Efforts to educate staff and community occurred formally and informally. A worker on one team took it upon herself to provide monthly lunchtime talks for staff and interested community members on topics like institutional racism and disproportionality using different documentary videos or providing an article for discussion. In another jurisdiction, agency leaders went to all 14 regional offices to educate child welfare staff about the problem of disproportionality. This provided a wide range of agency staff with information about the issue but also sent a strong message that efforts to reduce disproportionality were taken seriously by agency leadership.

Perhaps nothing was perceived as more vital to spurring education and awareness raising efforts than the Undoing Racism training overview provided by the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond (see www.pisab.org) to most of the participants of the

Disproportionality BSC. Exposure to this training, according to participants, “afforded the opportunity to engage others in the conversation and create the conditions to help lay the groundwork for future work with both agency staff and the community.”

After a brief introduction to the Undoing Racism training at the first learning session, Casey sponsored a comprehensive two-day training for two participants from every Disproportionality BSC team, including a senior leader, from each jurisdiction. Resource considerations prevented Casey from providing the training to all BSC team members; based on this experience, however, several senior leaders were inspired to bring the training (or one like it) back to their agencies and communities. One participant described how the training helped staff in her agency discuss more honestly and productively the issue and causes of disproportionality:

“In thinking about how the BSC has effected change in our work, the first thing that comes to mind is the term “courageous conversations.” We’ve had a number of Undoing Racism trainings and just to be able to talk about racism and what that means and just to be able to have those conversation [is meaningful]. I think that even just before the BSC we were having the conversations, but not as courageously. And I think this [training] has really helped us open our hearts and our minds to all of the multiple, complex issues that are around disproportionality.”

—Child Welfare Regional Administrator

Another participant also explained how the training has changed the conversation within her child welfare agency and detailed how the educational opportunities have been made available beyond the child welfare agency to reach a large number of community members and to recruit them into the work. This respondent makes it plain that the work was a direct result and benefit of participation in the initiative:

“One thing we absolutely would not have done if we hadn’t been involved in the BSC is the Undoing Racism training. And the level of conversation that is going on among frontline staff, administrators, and supervisors now, we simply would not have been exposed to that. And I don’t think that we could do this work at a really deep level without having gone through that experience. I think we could have done some changes in how we contract [with providers] or assess families, maybe, but it would not have had the same impact and the same depth to it if we hadn’t been exposed to that training and brought it back. And now we have a series of workshops going on with staff . . . I would anticipate that the Undoing Racism training will probably touch a mix of community people and staff, other agencies, community families. It will touch several hundred people and hopefully more than that as time goes on.”

—Child Welfare Administrator

Another testament to the level of commitment BSC teams made to educating staff and stakeholders is the effort made to find funding so that other community systems and partners could receive training opportunities and so that these opportunities could be sustained beyond the period of the BSC. Teams looked for various funding options:

“The other thing is getting [state] legislators involved. We have legislators who have made commitments to helping us in terms of budget so that when we get through this year, where we’ve found money to sponsor the Undoing Racism workshops in the community, that the legislators have vowed to find money for us to continue the work . . . We want to move forward. There’s a lot of community for us to educate—social workers, police, doctors, and nurses all need this information in order to do their work better so that we can have

outcomes that are equal for all children.”

—Human Services Administrator

Indeed, sustainability of these efforts was important, according to interview respondents. It was so important to one jurisdiction for child welfare workers to be adequately exposed to the principles taught in the Undoing Racism training that the jurisdiction began to “hard-wire” the principles into the culture by including many of them as part of both its continuing education curriculum and its new employee training academy.

Constituency Engagement

In much the same way that participants credited Casey with pushing their agency to involve community stakeholders, they also felt the BSC successfully encouraged and facilitated constituency engagement, both on the team, and, consequently, at the agency level.

“Another core piece of practice [the BSC] has brought to the surface is really the strong engagement of parents and kids. That’s something we had begun doing some, but through participating in the BSC, the voice of parents and kids is much stronger.”

—Child Welfare Administrator

While conceding that engaging constituents in the core team was sometimes challenging, respondents believed that, when they were able to really listen to their birth parent and young adult team members, they received insights that strengthened and catalyzed the BSC work. In one Disproportionality BSC jurisdiction, what started out as a small focus group to receive input from parents became an ongoing parent support, empowerment, and advisory group with nearly 60 participants:

“The engagement of [parents] gave us such a wealth of information. If we hadn’t have done those focus groups, we wouldn’t be doing the

work that we are doing now with families. We've learned so much from families, and they really are making a huge difference, and we are changing based on what families are telling us.”

—Community Agency Representative

Another team explained how the involvement of an alumni representative on the Core Team shaped their work in an important way:

“One thing that we've done that in a way doesn't seem very important, but in a way it's absolutely huge, we have begun to involve our customers in our work. Casey insisted that there be a birth parent and an alumni on our [BSC] teams. And we've been fortunate to have a young woman who has been with us from the beginning. And one of the things that she pointed out to us from the start was that when we place African American children in white foster homes, most of the white parents don't know how to care for African American children's hair. And it's huge ... As a result of the work that we've done, DHS now provides hair care kits (the products and instructions) for foster parents and shelters to better care for these kids' hair. And when you take these kids away from their families, away from their homes, perhaps away from their schools, and then we treat their hair so it starts falling out and they look funny—we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. And so that's one thing that we've done that's made a huge difference for children. It hasn't made a difference in the way the department functions, but from that grew the check-back idea (after children are removed, the worker goes back within 24 hours to see how things are

going). We've made a whole series of changes because we've been talking to the people whose lives we are affecting in ways we have never talked to them before ... We're doing things differently because we're listening to customers.”

—Judge

From the perspective of the constituents, involvement in the BSC had an impact on their perception of the child welfare agency.

“Sometimes you forget that the agency does care what people think. It's nice to know that Casey and the department want to hear the voice of the youth or young adult who've been through the system ... So it changed my view on the department—believing that they do care and want to change some things.”

—Young Adult Representative

Direct Practice Change

Neither the survey instruments nor the qualitative interviews were designed to capture detailed information about the implementation of direct practice changes³. However, interview respondents spoke with pride of the strategies they had tested and implemented in their target sites. A number of the strategies tested were provided by participants across team lines. Examples include the Fatherhood Initiative to better engage fathers and paternal relatives; co-location of early intervention social workers in schools to educate mandated reporters and divert children away from the system; 24-hour check-backs with children immediately after placement; and increased use and quality of Team Decision Making and Family Group Conferencing approaches.

3. More detailed information about practice change strategies that were tested and implemented as part of teams' Disproportionality BSC work will be available in the programmatic report issues by Casey's Systems Improvement staff. An article in *Child Welfare's* Special Issue on Racial Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes also provides more detail about the work (see Miller and Ward, 2008).

Testing, Implementation, Spread and Sustainability

The BSC Final Evaluation survey results speak to the intensive work that the teams accomplished in terms of outputs. Table 2 presents the BSC Final Evaluation Survey results by change theory domain and question. Eighty-three percent of respondents said their team successfully identified and tested concrete strategies for improvement. As anticipated, fewer believed that their team had successfully implemented practice (70%) or policy (44%) changes within their target site. Only 35% observed that effective practice changes had been spread throughout their agency, but larger percentages agreed or strongly agreed that their agency experienced a positive cultural shift (49%) and system changes (56%) that ultimately will reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes.

While participants were not entirely satisfied with team performance (45% of respondents reported that they would have liked to have seen a greater amount of formalized practice change), a large majority (86%) felt strongly that their jurisdiction is committed to sustaining efforts to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities and is poised to do so through partnerships within their community. That said, 97 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that additional agency resources would be needed in order for BSC improvements to continue to grow and be sustained.

Interview respondents at all levels, but particularly those in leadership positions, talked about the importance of engendering a supportive agency culture in which practice and policy changes had the best chance of being sustained. Some pointed to the ways in which they were attempting to make sure that current and future efforts to reduce disproportionality would be embraced in the long term. For example, one interview respondent who occupies a high level in her agency talked in general terms about how the Disproportionality BSC “has really changed the

dynamics in our site [so that attention to] disproportionality is now woven into all of our projects [in the target site].” By the end of the BSC, work had begun in at least a couple of jurisdictions to engage the state legislature and garner support at that level. As discussed above, several teams developed training strategies that would reach across participants and time, and in one jurisdiction the court system adopted the goal of addressing disproportionality as a key strategy for its Model Court.

Other participants talked about how reducing disproportionality was becoming wired into agency goals and missions. For instance, participants from one jurisdiction explained that the reduction of disproportionality was “now one of our key goals which, in the history of the agency, has never been publicly stated as something that is important to the commissioner’s office and therefore will be important to everyone at every level.” In another jurisdiction, “the goal of eliminating racial disparities across economic, social, and health issues has been formally adopted” by the county human services department.

Individual-Level Change

The data presented above outline the ways in which agencies changed how they did business as a result of participating in the Disproportionality BSC, in both structural and direct practice improvements. Some of those changes included training and formalized opportunities to learn from and with constituents. In addition, participants were exposed to content experts, additional educational resources, and other technical assistance during learning sessions and conference calls. As a result, survey respondents overwhelmingly (97%) reported that their own personal awareness and understanding of the issue and the role that structural and institutional racism play in contributing to racial disparities in the child welfare system had increased.

Table 2. BSC Theory of Change Survey Results

How much do you agree or disagree with each statement?	Strongly Agree or Agree	Unsure	Strongly Disagree or Dis-agree	N/A
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Increased Awareness and Understanding				
My awareness of the problem of disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color has improved since I joined the BSC (N=88)	95.5	2.3	2.2	0
I have a better understanding of the issues and complexities related to racial disproportionality and the disparities in child welfare since participating in the BSC (N=88)	98.9	1.1	0	0
Participation in the BSC has provided me with a better understanding of the role that structural and institutional racism play in contributing to racial disparities in the child welfare system (N=88)	96.5	3.5	0	0
Strategy Identification and Testing				
Through the BSC, I have learned concrete ways to improve my practice with children and families of color in the child welfare system (N=87)	85.2	13.6	0	1.1
Our child welfare system identified and tested strategies to improve its response to children/families of color in the child welfare system (N=87)	80.7	15.9	2.3	1.1
Practice and Policy Implementation				
Effective practice changes have been implemented in our BSC target site (N=84)	70.1	18.4	8	3.4
Effective policy improvements have been implemented in our BSC target site (N=80)	44.2	31.4	17.5	7
Spread				
Effective practice changes have been spread throughout our agency (N=82)	34.5	33.3	26.4	5.7
Through participation in this BSC, I believe our agency has experienced positive system change that ultimately will reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes (N=84)	56.3	34.5	5.7	3.4
As a result of our BSC work, I have noticed positive culture change within our child welfare agency (N=84)	48.9	27.3	19.3	4.5
Sustainability				
My BSC team successfully partnered with the community to address disproportionality and disparate outcomes (N=87)	74.7	10.3	14.9	0
I have confidence in my ability to help plan future practice improvements to reduce racial disproportionality and disparity (N=87)	90.8	9.2	0	0
After the conclusion of this BSC, our agency will continue to improve its efforts to reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color in the child welfare system (N=86)	86.2	11.5	1.1	1.1
I think that the BSC work in our target site will help spread practice improvement into the wider system and/or community (N=88)	80.7	19.3	0	0

Interview respondents explained how increased personal awareness and commitment on an individual level contributes to culture change within the agency. For instance, interview respondents spoke about the deeper level of understanding of race, racism, and disproportionality they possess as a result of the Disproportionality BSC. They described a pathway that led from a deeper understanding of the issues to an increased commitment to making personal changes in the way they carried out their work. They provided specific examples of how this personal commitment to see and perform their work through a different lens began to have a real impact on children and families of color on a case-by-case basis.

Many respondents saw education and increased awareness as necessary precursors to practice change. A young adult/alumni participant attested to the change that was happening at her site and summarized the importance of education and increased awareness this way:

“Some of the biggest changes [as a result of the BSC] are changes in people’s perceptions and their knowledge and education of the issue. It has to start there. If they don’t understand there’s an issue or problem, they’re not likely to move forward to fix the problem. So the education of a lot of people has been great. I’ve seen a lot of change there.”

—Alumni Representative

Below are several quotes from participants describing the deeper understanding afforded to them through participation in the Disproportionality BSC, all of which suggest an increased sense of personal responsibility and commitment to the work and hint at the fact that individual-level changes in awareness and understanding were beginning to bubble up as changes in individual-level practice that touched the lives of families.

“For me, personally, being a part of this BSC has just deepened my understanding of individual, institutional, and structural racism and the impact that has on the work that we do ... Looking at this issue and starting to talk about it is really crucial to seeing any successes here. At times it seems utterly overwhelming, but it has been very powerful for me to be involved in this—to understand it at a deeper level and make that commitment to this work. And also to educate my friends, family and co-workers about why it’s so important and why we need to be doing this work.”

—Child Welfare Agency Staff

“At a personal level, it has made me think more about institutional racism and white privilege. The kinds of privileges I’ve had and the moral obligation I have to take advantage of that privilege to address issues like disproportionality.”

—Child Welfare Administrator

“[This BSC] has really forced me to look at the impact I’ve had personally on [children and families of color], and it’s not a lens you always what to look through, but it starts with yourself. I think this BSC helped me to process my role throughout my career in child welfare starting as a social worker and now as a deputy commissioner and a leader. So, as a leader, what have I done personally to effect change? I’ve got to be accountable to myself for that and to children and families of color. So, yeah, it has really changed how I personally think about it—how I go to work every day and try to address the issue at the state level.”

—Child Welfare Deputy Commissioner

“If I change the way that I do business today because of what I’ve learned as a result of this BSC, and if I commit to doing it that way for the rest of my life as a judge, then the system is better because of it. If nobody else does it, at least I am doing it.”

—Judge

These next two quotes exemplify the direct influence individual agency workers reported having had on families through their everyday practice. These are not examples of practice change implemented formally through policy or protocol. Rather, these examples are reminders about where the real work gets done and the power at the individual worker level to effect important change in the lives of children and families simply through their attitude, the approach they take, and the decisions they make:

“Once we could start having honest conversations about race ... that’s when we really started moving. During one of the meetings, a [Caucasian] worker brought up the issue of a family she was working with, and in particular a mother who had been involved with the system for nearly 20 years and the difficulties this worker was having in the situation. The team [explained] that many people of color are “relational” people—in order to get a foot in the door, one must build relationship and trust. Unfortunately, this often goes against the grain of child welfare mandates and court timelines. But [the team] encouraged her to work more slowly with the woman in this case to see what would happen. Because of the worker spending more time and developing the relationship, she was able to document strengths in the mother and the family that had never been documented before. As a result, the agency was able to serve the family without bringing it into the system.”

—Child Welfare Program Coordinator

“There was a situation where we were doing a home study for another county to place some children in a relative’s home, and the relative’s criminal history was not the most stellar. When she was questioned about it, she became defensive, indignant, angry. As I was talking with her on the phone, I realized that this was a moment when I could make a decision about whether I should give her a hard time for giving me a hard time, or whether I should take my [ego] out of this and look at it in terms of what kind of decision I am making that is going to impact the lives of children. We had five children sitting in foster care and a relative who was anxious to get them into her home. So, just by doing a little more research and slowing myself down—probably an hour more of work—those children were placed with her. And about a week or two later, she came to the office because she’d been given a list from us of things that were going to be expected of her. And she was going through this list and checking things off and doing everything she’d been asked ... And I felt good, you know, I did the right thing. I didn’t let her attitude when she was really ticked off at me prevent what was best for these kids. And it’s a little thing, but as a person of color, I didn’t think that I had that opportunity that I could have made a decision in a different direction [that would negatively impact a family of color], but I do. And it’s the matter of acknowledging that power and to use it in the right way. So I’m glad I did that, and I don’t think had I not been doing that [BSC] work that I would have slowed down in that manner. It give me a new perspective, as a gatekeeper, about what it is that I do.”

—Child Welfare Supervisor

Were BSC Participants Satisfied with the BSC as a Process for Promoting Improvement and Change Within the System?

The question of whether participants were satisfied with their BSC experience is addressed in this section using survey results and data from videotaped interviews. The paragraphs below include findings concerning participant satisfaction with the BSC methodology and the Model for Improvement (PDSA), BSC resources, and BSC staff. These findings demonstrate a high degree of overall satisfaction.

Satisfaction with the BSC and PDSA Methodologies

According to the Final Evaluation Survey, participants were highly satisfied with the BSC and PDSA methodologies. A large majority of respondents rated the BSC as a worthwhile way for their agency to spend time and staff resources (91%). Participants believed the BSC was relevant to their work (93%), an effective way for child welfare staff to learn about a topic (87%), and an effective tool for child welfare agencies to use in order to implement practice change (76%).

Interview respondents credited Casey both with “lending credibility” to the idea that reducing disproportionality in child welfare is important work and then backing that up by providing a concrete and practical mechanism for moving ideas to action. First things first, many spoke to the practical importance of simply “shining a light on this issue” that often is ignored or not given high priority. Others talked about the value of creating the space and opportunity to concentrate on the work—the gift of time that rarely is afforded child welfare workers and administrators. One high-level agency leader put it in these terms:

“I think [the BSC] gave us several things. It really gave us a way of focusing on the work. I think it was very energizing for us to come to the convenings. It was an opportunity to

hear what was being done in other parts of the country, to hear from BSC faculty. But also to think for ourselves and talk amongst ourselves about what we can do when we get back [home]. And it was almost that time away—having two to three days to really focus on the issue, talk about it that I think really energized us in terms of continuing to do the work.”

—Child Welfare Director

Along these same lines, several interview participants emphasized the sense of significance they felt from taking part in building a national alliance or change movement around this work alongside their Disproportionality BSC colleagues from across the country. They described the importance of shared commitment and mutual support that helped to nurture and energize them in this demanding work. As one participant explained:

“As women of color who work in the child welfare system, we have been really very interested in issues concerning children of color. And so this BSC really gave us a mechanism to tackle this issue in a collective way ... This gave us the opportunity to do something at a larger level, and we were really very excited about it. I know for me, working for the department for so many years, there are times when you just get tired. You feel like you’re working sometimes against the system. And when you see kids of color—all children, really—suffering, it’s just an exhausting experience. The BSC really revitalized us. It gave me a new passion for the work that we’ve been doing all along ... and makes me feel like I can continue to go forward.”

—Child Welfare Supervisor

Another interview respondent expressed similar sentiments:

“The BSC was a source of inspiration, a source of support—this collective energy that you can’t describe or articulate very well. But being in the room with folks who have the same level of commitment and energy really inspires you to move the work forward. And I think it’s powerful that you have groups of people from across the nation who are taking a stand. I think you can’t know the power of that. And so it has been probably one of the greatest experiences being part of this collaborative.”

—Child Welfare Deputy Commissioner

Others talked about how the BSC methodology itself provided something even more tangible than collective energy. They attested to the fact that the Disproportionality BSC brought much-needed direction to their work and helped them to be more strategic. One community partner shared the following:

“To me, [the BSC] was something long awaited. There have been other efforts, but it wasn’t until we were able to participate in this BSC that we were really with our true partners here doing this work. Before, it was not an organized effort. The tools that we received [through the BSC] allowed that to happen, and that’s what started making it so exciting. I think we knew that something needed to be done. We kept talking about it, but we didn’t know how to get from point A to point B. And having the tools that Casey [provided] gave us guidance and some direction.”

—Community Agency Representative

Some talked about how the mechanics of the BSC helped teams tackle an issue that is so complex it often leaves agencies feeling overwhelmed about how

to address it. The following quote is representative of this sentiment:

“When you think about tackling this issue of disproportionality, it’s such a complicated, complex issue in child welfare. Where do you begin? The BSC methodology really offered us the mechanism to take it on many different levels. The PDSAs—getting the frontline worker involved in tackling and testing things on a small level; the development of the extended community team to really pull the community into the work because we can’t do it alone; the senior leadership team to be able to work on the target site’s behalf and really spread things statewide. So, we’re taking a multifaceted approach to tackling a really complex issue. Because when we started we were thinking: Where do we begin with this? And the BSC really gave us that mechanism to begin the work.”

—Child Welfare Supervisor

A child welfare regional administrator added this perception about the importance of a concrete process and strategic focus afforded to teams via the BSC methodology:

“[The BSC] just brings a process and steps to go through. Like when we did the Concept Mapping [team self-assessment] from the very beginning. It was very helpful because it helped you decide where to focus. It showed us that we needed training and education first because we didn’t know anything about disproportionality or the problems. We decided, strategically, that if we started trying to do practice change without educating and training our workers and community partners, we would be doomed to failure. And we didn’t want that to happen. So [the BSC] helped us have a clear focus from the very beginning. And we had critics. There are critics that want

you to try things—practice change—more quickly ... You know, nobody knows what the practice change is, yet, that is going to improve this. First, we had to change our lens with the community and our workers and supervisors, and then let them help us decide what best practice change elements are.”

—Child Welfare Regional Administrator

Two things stood out as areas for improvement for the BSC. Notably, more than one-third of respondents felt that the PDSA methodology was difficult to understand. One interview participant explained how his team only became comfortable with PDSAs as the BSC came to a close:

“I think the frustrating piece of this work has been really trying to grasp the whole methodology around the PDSA cycles and how to utilize that methodology and eventually evaluate and measure full implementation. I think we’re to a point now where we are more comfortable with it than we were initially.”

—Child Welfare Supervisor

A member of a team working with tribal agency representatives suggested that the PDSA methodology was not necessarily intuitive or culturally relevant:

“Another of the challenges of this methodology has been balancing the PDSA methodology with our history and culture of consensus building. As a team, we have really struggled with the PDSA methodology because of that. It has taken us a long time, and I still think we’re not there—at really understanding and utilizing the PDSA methodology to its full extent. Although we all can see the value of it, we are so engrained in our consensus building as a group that it’s been a real struggle for us. I think our struggles with PDSAs held us up or slowed us down for a little while and we got bogged down in that a little.”

—Child Welfare Regional Administrator

Second, although a majority of interview respondents spoke to the importance and success of cross-team sharing throughout the initiative, roughly a quarter of survey respondents indicated that collaboration across teams was not as effectively facilitated during the Disproportionality BSC as they would have liked or anticipated. One interview participant, who had been involved in previous Casey BSCs and so had a basis for comparison, spoke directly about that frustration:

“I didn’t feel in this [BSC] that there was as much use of the intranet to share—or just sharing in general—among the teams. We had a really hard time if [another team] had developed something that we wanted to borrow. It was really hard sometimes to get those materials, and that was disappointing. Particularly because I had seen it work much better in past BSCs.”

—Child Welfare Administrator

Satisfaction with Specific Resources Provided

Overwhelmingly, survey respondents indicated their appreciation for the usefulness of learning sessions, with 94 percent rating them as “very or extremely useful.” Interview respondents concurred:

“For me, the most powerful part of the BSC process was the convenings and the opportunity to really focus with people who have similar concerns from around the country.”

—Child Welfare Director

According to the survey results, a majority of participants also found the BSC faculty (73%), use of child welfare data (73%), and the self-assessment data (71%) to be highly useful resources in their work.

The BSC extranet is intended to be a tool to help participants share resources, change strategies, and lessons learned among collaborative members in between learning sessions. With this in mind, it is important to note that just one-third of participants

rated the extranet favorably. Tellingly, one-fourth of respondents did not rate this resource because they felt it was not applicable to them. Respondents also expressed ambivalence concerning the usefulness of monthly all-collaborative calls and monthly reports. All team members were supposed to participate in one all-collaborative call per month for the duration of the BSC. Fewer than 40 percent found the calls to be very or extremely useful, while almost 20 percent rated them as not very or not at all useful. Here again, a sizable percentage (16%) declined to offer a rating, believing that the calls were not applicable to them as collaborative members. Only one-third of respondents rated the utility of monthly reports highly; an additional 40 percent found them “somewhat useful.”

Satisfaction with BSC Staff

Disproportionality BSC participants were highly satisfied with the quality of the experience provided by the BSC staff. More than 95 percent of survey respondents perceived the staff as well-prepared and professional, while sizeable percentages also found the staff to be accessible (86%) and responsive to the needs of the collaborative members (82%). Nearly all respondents (98%) felt that they personally were treated with respect by the BSC staff, and 94 percent believed the BSC staff created an environment of openness and respect for diversity in general. One interview respondent had this praise for the BSC staff:

“The BSC staff has been very committed to really see this through—to get all of the jurisdictions stabilized and off and running successfully. The BSC [staff] in this series also provided a lot of support, in my opinion, for us. The ongoing calls and checking in with us and providing support other than the [learning sessions]. So I think they have been supportive ... I think they have nurtured us to be creative in our own way, in our own setting. So I’ve felt that they have been there for

us. I have not felt that, at any time, we have reached out and they have not responded.”

—Child Welfare Agency Staff

Lessons Learned about Doing and Sustaining this Work

Teams cited numerous barriers and challenges to successfully addressing disproportionality in their jurisdictions and target sites when they first applied to be part of the work. The most frequently cited challenge, expressed in various ways by the applicants, centered around the values and attitudes of agency staff and, to a lesser extent, community members. Some applicants labeled the challenge of values and attitudes as racism, while others referred to “bias” or “resistance” among staff. More than half of all applicants pointed to the lack of agency resources, especially around prevention, as an ongoing challenge for those striving to successfully reduce disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system. The multi-system nature of the problem of disproportionality, lack of culturally diverse staff, and poverty-related issues also were cited frequently at the beginning of the BSC as things that impede progress and might hinder ultimate success.

After over one year of engaging in the Disproportionality BSC, did participants still have the same concerns as those described in their original applications? Interview respondents spoke about lessons learned in terms of the things they believe public child welfare agencies need to accomplish the work to reduce disproportionality in the child welfare system. The post-BSC interview themes signify that the overarching challenges described above remain of concern and are the things that agencies must pay attention to if they want to build a foundation for successful long-term change efforts.

Interview respondents emphasized the critical importance of having a knowledgeable and aware workforce and recommended that agencies build a

common and shared understanding of the problem through training and education. The second essential piece of the work for agencies, according to interview participants, is to build critical alliances with community partners. Possessing and sharing reliable data was mentioned specifically as a practical tool for engaging partners in the work. Third, participants stressed that commitment from agency leadership to a sustained, long-term effort is critical. A recurring theme among respondents was that racial disparities in the system “did not happen overnight and would not be corrected overnight” and that the work to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparities would be “a marathon, not a sprint.”

When asked directly, a majority of interview respondents said they were hopeful about the possibility of eradicating disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system and were dedicated to the mission, but none were naïve about the work that lies ahead. While many were clearly responding to the interview questions with pride, energy, and conviction around what they had started—or were continuing—to build and achieve as a result of BSC participation, most also expressed impatience at what, in their minds, clearly has not been adequate progress:

“If [our BSC work] benefits anybody today, I’m not aware of that. We’ve been talking about a lot of things, and we’re starting, but it seems to be a long process. I wasn’t born with patience, but in time we’re going to see some very good things come out of this [BSC work].”

—Community Agency Representative

“I think there have been improvements, but there are more to come. Improvements might be there, but not all people are receptive to the change. It’s more comfortable to keep things the same ... I believe there have been good changes—I just think there should be more of them.”

—Parent Representative

Almost all interview respondents expressed concern that the momentum which had been built in their agencies as a result of the Disproportionality BSC might “fade,” “be put on the back burner,” or be replaced by “the next thing to come around.” It was in this context that participants called out the fourth thing that agencies need in order to address the problem of disproportionality and disparities in their jurisdictions: technical assistance, support, and leadership from foundations with resources—like Casey Family Programs. One respondent stated, “My hopes are built on the fact that there is a growing body of people who are really working together on this issue.” Another declared, “If we’re going to be successful, it’s going to be a collective voice. So you have to build your champions, and I think that is what we’re really starting to do.” In fact, one of Casey’s explicit aims for the Disproportionality BSC, as stated in the Framework for Change that guided the teams’ work, was “to develop a cadre of leaders across the country who are working toward solutions.” Several participants considered Casey’s Disproportionality BSC to be exactly that type of national coalition building and believed it to be a vital component of collective change that needs to be extended beyond a 12-month BSC period.

“[We need] partners like Casey. If we could keep this BSC going for the next 5–10 years, that’s the kind of commitment we need ... because the issue isn’t going to be resolved overnight. We need partners like Casey who have the resources and vision to help bring states together and to give a national voice to the issue of disproportionality. We need them to be at the table with us, because it’s going to be a very long and hard road. It’s an uphill battle. But somehow, when you have partners by your side continuing to encourage you to go on, it feels like it is possible.”

—Child Welfare Deputy Commissioner

IV. Discussion and Recommendations

Together, the findings presented above clearly demonstrate both the need for the Disproportionality BSC and its value to participants. A large majority of BSC participants were satisfied, seeing their investment of limited staff time and resources as well spent. It is particularly significant that senior leaders had such high regard for the quality and impact of the initiative, given the priorities and important matters vying for their time and attention. Further, participants at all levels reported that they came away from the experience even more highly motivated to commit, in both their professional and personal lives, to eradicating disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color in the child welfare system. These are indications that something important and meaningful has happened through Casey's investment in this work.

But were Casey's goals for the work achieved? To answer this question, we can look both to the vision for the Disproportionality BSC as laid out in the Framework for Change as well as to the Disproportionality BSC Theory of Change. Between them, the two sets of stated or implied expectations are quite comprehensive—and even ambitious, considering the relatively limited timeframe of the 12-month BSC and the audience of child welfare agency teams who are often already stretched to or beyond capacity in their daily work. The timeframe is still short, even considering that the Disproportionality BSC was extended an extra six months for interested jurisdictions. In fact, the clamor of participants for more time to work on the issue of disproportionality as part of the collaborative is that much more telling in view of how overloaded the system and its workers are.

Based on these evaluation findings, the Disproportionality BSC was successful in realizing its vision to engage like-minded jurisdictions, create environments for testing change strategies, develop leaders, and create community and cross-system partner-

ships. As well, teams successfully increased staff and stakeholder awareness, identified agency gaps, tested improvement strategies, and began to implement some of those changes.

An abundance of evidence demonstrates positive team outputs and activities such as educational activities, trainings, outreach to community and cross-system leaders, and changes to organizational mission—all of which are fundamental building blocks of culture change. Slightly less evidence is available to suggest that a high degree of formal implementation and spread of direct practice and policy changes occurred. Data were not collected or submitted consistently at the target site level to enable assessment of changes in child welfare indicators from administrative data over time. Nonetheless, the reported low levels of implementation and spread indicate that we would not be likely to see changes in such indicators as a direct result of the Disproportionality BSC.

Casey Support of System Reform Efforts to Reduce Racial Disproportionality and Disparities in Child Welfare

Study findings demonstrate a need for the sustained focus of agencies engaged in this work and support for their efforts. They showcase the potential that the BSC methodology holds in furthering agency efforts to address disproportionality in their jurisdictions. Participants left the BSC feeling energized and committed to change, excited about being part of something larger, and optimistic about the real possibility of making a difference in the lives of children and families of color. At the same time, participants did not shy away from expressing their need for technical assistance and support from foundations and other entities like Casey. Reducing disproportionality and disparities could be a key component of reaching Casey's goal of safely reducing the number

of children in foster care by half by the year 2020. If stakeholders are going to be the agents of change that Casey wants and needs them to be in order to reach that goal, then we need to heed their call to lead a national movement. The following are some recommendations stemming from this report:

- Continue supporting the original Disproportionality BSC teams. To an extent, this is being done individually with former teams, but it may be powerful to explore ways of engaging teams again as a collective, perhaps through annual convenings or an even more intensive process.
- Invest resources into conducting more long-term follow-ups to see whether initial program influences endured, grew, or vanished. This approach has been incorporated into future BSC evaluation plans, albeit at a modest level.
- Share and build upon lessons learned from the original Disproportionality BSC jurisdictions and continue to build a national coalition by engaging new teams in a repeat-Disproportionality BSC. Find ways to include original Disproportionality BSC participants as mentors in the work in order to keep them engaged in both national and local efforts. Continue to expose child welfare agencies, their staff, and their community partners to the Undoing Racism training.

Casey's Implementation and Evaluation of the BSC Methodology

While participants report great satisfaction with the BSC and BSC staff, opportunities remain for Casey to maximize the potential of the methodology for establishing and spreading evidence-based practice. If this is of interest, the following steps could be considered:

- Lengthen the timeframe of each BSC.⁴ Longer time periods should mean that teams progress farther along the theory of change continuum. If teams are able to implement and spread more practice changes, this should improve the potential for observing changes in child welfare outcomes. In order to be able to capture this change, BSC teams need guidance and support for collecting and reporting administrative data at the target site level.
- Capitalize on the identification of successful change strategies through repeat BSCs. Take advantage of prescriptive change packages to more rigorously promote and evaluate promising change strategies.
- Employ evaluation methods that will allow us to better understand the characteristics and pathways that lead to innovation and improvement. This requires an investment of a greater level of evaluation resources.
- Include a longitudinal follow-up component to the evaluation design for each BSC.

According to the findings from this study, as well as from the experience Casey has gained from more than seven years of implementing this methodology in the child welfare field, the BSC is an excellent resource for child welfare agencies and an effective way to engage them in improvement efforts that promote innovation and change.

4. Since the Disproportionality BSC ended, BSC staff already has initiated longer BSC timelines (18–24 months instead of 12 months) and incorporated four learning sessions instead of three.

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Appendix A

Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Reducing Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare System

The Framework for Change

April 13, 2005

“... there are few things in the world as dangerous as sleepwalkers.”

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, p. 5

Preface

The statistics paint a disturbing picture. At every point along the child welfare continuum, children and families of color are represented in numbers that far exceed their relative proportion of the population. Rates of substantiated maltreatment, entry into out-of-home care, and length of stay are all higher for children of color than for their white counterparts; while family reunification and exit rates are lower.

Yet this comparison belies the fact that outcomes for white children and families in the child welfare system are also less than desirable. The hope in this BSC is that by improving the system for children and families of color—those who are most disadvantaged by the current system—the system will ultimately be improved for all children and families.

This phenomenon is not a secret, nor is it confined to child welfare. Disparate outcomes and disproportional

representation of children and families of color are also an issue in juvenile justice, education, health care, and other systems. It is an uncomfortable and emotion laden issue but child welfare leaders cannot continue to “sleepwalk” around it for it is an endangerment to children and families.

Concerned child welfare administrators, scholars, researchers and workers have puzzled over the problem for more than 30 years. Yet because it stems from a complex network of social and political disadvantages at the individual and institutional level, many leaders assume it is simply the norm and believe that there is little they can do to change it. In the meantime, disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color in the child welfare system continue to increase.

We can no longer afford to step softly around this problem; we must be willing to wake up and awaken others to confront institutional and individual issues that perpetuate disproportionality. Child welfare leaders in several jurisdictions around the country have stepped up to the challenge and initiated strategies targeting institutional and practice biases that impact outcomes for children of color and their families; they are beginning to see promising results. It will require bold action and innovative leadership to make a lasting difference.

- This Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) will leverage the wisdom, experience, and knowledge of national experts to create a practice framework. This framework will be used by public child welfare teams representing states, counties, and tribes to test ideas addressing disproportionality and disparate outcomes through the development

of small scale strategies and interventions that can be implemented, tested, and measured in rapid cycles. Successful practices will be spread as teams test strategies that can help reverse the trend.

- Our vision for this Breakthrough Series Collaborative is that participating jurisdictions will contribute to the development of child welfare systems that are free of structural racism and benefit all children, families, and communities by:
- Engaging with a group of other jurisdictions in critical change activities;
- Creating environments in which strategies can be developed and tested;
- Developing a cadre of leaders across the country who are working toward solutions;
- Creating and sustaining partnerships to advance the work, and;
- Disseminating lessons learned.

Background and Overview

- Child welfare systems cannot be improved without addressing disproportionality and disparate outcomes. Disproportionality refers both to the presence of children of color in the child welfare system in percentages that dramatically exceed their presence in the general population as well as poor outcomes for these children. Consider the following facts:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2002). The AFCARS Report. Retrieved September 25, 2002 from: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/afcars/report7.html>: The Annie E. Casey and The Population Reference Bureau (2001). The Child Population: First Data from the 2000 Census. Washington, DC.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families. AFCARS, Report #8. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2003. The report is available online at <http://www.act.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/afcars/report8.html>.
3. 2000 AFCARS and Census Data, analysis by Dr. Robert Hill.
4. U.S. DHHS, Administration for Children and Families (1980–1996). National Incidence Study I, II and III. Washington, DC.

- In 2000, 64 percent of the children in foster care were children of color although they comprised only 36 percent of the U.S. child population under 18 years of age¹. During this same year African American children accounted for approximately 38 percent of the total number of children placed in foster care while comprising only 15 percent of the total U.S. child population under 18 years of age.
- American Indian children represented 3 percent of children in out-of-home care while comprising 1 percent of the child population². In states where there are large numbers of American Indian children they may represent between 15 to 65 percent of children in the child welfare system. These percentage rates may be underestimates, as they do not include the number of children in tribal child welfare systems.
- Data that are aggregated on a national level often mask the overrepresentation of Hispanic/Latino children who have been found to be over-represented in foster care in states and cities with large Hispanic populations³.

What causes disproportionality? Disproportionality of children of color is the result of multiple disadvantages that are social, political, economic, and attitudinal in nature. Specific factors leading to disproportionality in the child welfare system include poverty, classism, racism, organizational culture, service strategy, and resources. Of these factors, poverty is often singled out as a major contributor, since foster children of color come primarily from

families living in poverty. However, no significant racial differences in the incidence of maltreatment were found in the National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS) for NIS-2 or NIS-3⁴ suggesting that race influences the institutional response to maltreatment resulting in higher substantiation and placement rates for children of color.

These factors shape organizational structures and practice in a way that limits positive outcomes. Disproportional entry into care, long stays and poor results have a negative impact on children's well being and influence their physical and mental health, academic achievement, spirituality, cultural connections, and connectedness to family and community. Removal of children from their families and communities also leaves the family members feeling vulnerable, disenfranchised, disempowered, and unable to act on the behalf of themselves or their children.

Promising Practices. The challenge of disproportionality and disparate outcomes requires agencies to be assertive in assessing their own policies, programs, practices, and beliefs and to work actively to modify and develop innovative responses that improve the experience and results for children and families of color. Many jurisdictions across the country such as Ramsey County, Minnesota; King County, Washington; and Fulton County, Georgia have begun work that targets disproportionality. Many of their efforts are showing promising early results.

Framework

This document offers a framework that describes the key components that child welfare systems must address to reduce and ultimately eliminate these disparities. This framework is not prescriptive but instead identifies eight principles to guide action and seven key component areas that if addressed in policy, programming, practice, and training are likely to lead to positive outcomes.

Key Principles

The public child welfare system is responsible for assuring safety, permanence, and well being for all children served. In order to meet this obligation for children and families at risk of experiencing disproportionality and disparate outcomes, there are eight basic principles that must guide all policies, programs, practices, services, and supports. The order of the principles listed here does not suggest any priority; each principle is critical and should be reflected in all aspects of public/tribal child welfare agency (the agency) operations.

1. The goal of the agency is to secure safety, permanency, and maximum developmental outcomes for each child served irrespective of race, ethnicity, tribal status, class, location, or family structure so that these attributes are not predictors of negative outcomes.
2. The agency understands and respects the varying beliefs, values, and family practices of different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. Culturally relevant services and supports are family-centered, family-driven, and strengths-based. These services comprise the least intrusive intervention possible and are need-driven; they should be available in the communities, neighborhoods, and tribal communities where families live.
3. Parents, children, youth, kin, communities, and tribes have strengths, resiliency, and their own natural supports, which are used in reducing risk factors. The public agency recognizes and honors the fact that children are inextricably connected to their families and communities (cultural and geographic).
4. Improved outcomes for children and families of color are advanced by the open discussion of personal, organizational, and institutional racism and the development of strategies to remedy its impact on families and children.

5. Continuous assessment of policies and practices is necessary to assure that they do not further disadvantage children and families who experience social and economic vulnerability or physical and mental disabilities.
6. Advocacy is required for a better alignment of resources, policies, and practices with the needs of families to assure access to prevention, early intervention, diversion, and permanency/reunification services.
7. Shared leadership and collaborative efforts among courts, schools, and other agencies are necessary to improve the way in which the needs of children and families are met.
8. Partnerships with the diverse communities and tribes are essential to reduce potential risks to children.

Key Components

The eight key principles described above can be translated into practice through seven component areas of a child welfare agency's work. The work in each component should reflect the core values defined by the key principles. In order to eliminate disproportionality and disparities in outcomes, child welfare agencies should address all seven of these components. Improvements in the overall system of working with and supporting children and families who are involved with the child welfare system will only occur when improvements in each of these seven individual components are achieved.

1. Design agency mission, vision, values, policies, and protocols that support anti-racist practice.
 - a. Agency leadership is developed and supported to actively and affirmatively ensure that policies, practices, programs, and services are supportive of children and families of color through an articulated agency vision.
2. Develop cross-system leadership to address issues related to disproportionality and disparity in outcomes for children and families of color in the child welfare system.
 - a. Agency leaders assume responsibility for educating their colleagues in other child serving agencies on issues related to structural and institutional racism.

- b. Agency leadership identifies, continually assesses, and changes policies and practices that contribute to and support structural racism and impacts poor outcomes for families of color in the child welfare system.
- c. Organizational structure and funding allocations support culturally relevant strategies at each critical decision point across the continuum of families' involvement in the child welfare system, including addressing the structural racism that leads to the over-use of placement.
- d. Agency leadership creates an environment that promotes ongoing discussions of race and disproportionality and addresses these issues in an authentic manner that assists staff and stakeholders to integrate anti-racist principles into their work.
- e. Staffing composition reflects the cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious/spiritual backgrounds of the population being served.
- f. Consumers inform decisions regarding policy and procedures and are represented on decision-making bodies such as advisory boards, consultant teams, and volunteer committees.
- g. Agency leadership provides staff with appropriate and adequate support to partner with parents, children, youth, communities, and tribes.

- b. A multi-agency team comprised of leaders in the child welfare agency, court, CASA, school, media, policy making agencies, families, community leaders, and youth is used to identify and address cross-system issues about the well-being of families and children of color who are in or come to the attention of the child welfare system.
 - c. Policies and procedures in the agency reflect an understanding of issues related to structural and institutional racism within the child welfare agency and with key stakeholders representing family and child serving agencies (court, schools, health care, mental health).
3. Collaborate with key stakeholders to support families in the context of their communities and tribes so as to safely divert them away from the child welfare system, whenever possible.
- a. Deliberate efforts are made to safely divert families away from the child welfare system and into community and tribal based supports that include home based services whenever possible.
 - b. The family's informal networks of support are actively identified and engaged to care for and protect children in their communities.
 - c. Culturally relevant services, supports, and opportunities are need-driven, individualized, and made available and accessible in the community and tribe including access to partner agencies who offer housing, substance abuse, subsistence benefits, education, employment, transportation, and physical/mental healthcare.
 - d. Funding for culturally competent front-end and post-permanency services assumes priority.
4. Agency partners with the community about child maltreatment, disproportionality, racism, and culture to focus on how communities can develop strategies to build the protective capacity of neighborhoods, tribes, and families.
- a. The agency identifies, engages, and raises awareness of the issue of disproportionality and disparity of outcomes with community service providers, partners, leaders, and emerging leaders.
 - b. The agency uses proactive strategies to build public will and to develop community-based alternatives to the child welfare system that include upfront collaboration with mandatory reporters, community leaders, hotline workers, and the media.
 - c. The agency acts as a catalyst to improve the capacity of communities and tribes to prevent child abuse and neglect.
 - d. Mandatory reporters are educated regarding cultural and racial differences in child rearing and how this is related to child maltreatment laws and their reporting responsibilities.
 - e. Agency services and workers are co-located in communities where families live.
5. Train and educate the agency staff and stakeholders about institutional and structural racism and its impact on decision-making, policy, and practice.
- a. The agency develops a process that creates a common language, analysis, and understanding of racism—individual, structural, and institutional.
 - b. Staff understand their own racial and cultural identities and the impact of assimilation and internalized racial oppression on their work with families.

- c. Staff understand and their practice reflects the need for continued family connections and the impact of placing children and young people in situations where their language and cultural heritage is not understood.
 - d. Staff receive ongoing support, training, and preparation for working with parents, children, youth, communities, and tribes using child welfare core competencies including culturally appropriate interviewing, the use of genograms, ecomaps, family group decision making, and other culturally respectful and inclusive planning and decision making tools and practices.
 - e. Ongoing case consultation is available to staff on cross-racial and cross-cultural issues.
 - f. The agency performance appraisal process includes an assessment of staff's ability to work with families of different cultural backgrounds.
 - g. The agency assures that contract providers demonstrate culturally competent practice.
6. Use cultural values, beliefs, and practices of families, communities, and tribes to shape family assessment, case planning, case service design, and the case decision making process.
- a. Parents, youth, children, kin¹, tribes, and others who are significant in the life of the child and family are engaged as partners who shape case planning and decision-making in ways that build upon cultural strengths and acknowledge the impact of structural racism² on family outcomes at all decision points, including but not limited to:
 - Intake/initial screening
 - Assessment
 - Service planning and delivery
 - b. Placement
 - Reunification and other permanency options
 - Case closure
 - Post permanency supports
 - b. Family team building processes include building the capacity of parents/kin and youth to participate in every decision related to their situation and to advocate on their own behalf to sustain the safety and well-being of their children and families.
 - c. Staff fully share information with the family about:
 - An agency's assessment of child safety and family capacity;
 - An availability of agency and community-based supports and services;
 - An agency's commitment to continuity in family, community, and tribal relationships; and
 - Consequences of the agency's intervention.
 - d. Staff fully share information about the rights, responsibilities, and expectations of parents, children, youth, the agency, and the court.
 - e. Placement and reunification strategies work to maintain, honor, and support relationships and connections between parents, siblings, children, kin, and significant others. The agency gives priority to kinship placements when placement is necessary.
 - f. At every decision point in the child welfare service continuum culturally appropriate assessments, decision-making practices and anti-racist tools are used to capitalize on the strengths and needs of parents, children, youth, and families.

7. Develop and use data in partnership with families, communities, universities, staff, courts, and other stakeholders to assess agency success at key decision points in addressing disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children of color in the child welfare system.
 - a. Development of measurement strategies, definition of data elements, and the collection and interpretation of data encompasses a participatory approach that includes parents, youth, and children.
 - b. Staff recognize and address the lack of trust by communities of color and tribes often related to the use of data due to the misuse, misrepresentation, and misinterpretation of the data.
 - c. Data on process and outcomes are categorized by ethnicity/race, are tracked at key decision points, used to improve agency and staff performance, and are reviewed regularly, and consistently at all levels of the agency.
 - d. Data are shared with the community to facilitate partnerships to address disproportionality.
 - e. Data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of contract services required to meet the needs of families in a culturally competent manner.
 - f. Data regarding customer satisfaction are obtained and used to assess agency performance.

1. Kin is defined by the family and may include a range of individuals such as the maternal and paternal relatives, adult siblings, and community defined traditions such as God parents, tribal networks, and individuals not biologically or legally related.
2. Structural racism is the complex ways in which historical oppression, culture, ideology, political economy, public policy, and institutional practices interact to produce forms of racial sorting that reproduce and reinforce a hierarchy of color that privileges whiteness and marginalizes blackness (The Aspen Institute. Retrieved online at <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/Programt3.asp?/=83&bid=1246>).

Appendix B

Thank you for participating in this Concept Mapping process. Please complete the organizational characteristics and rating forms below, and fax them to **Kristin Ward at 202.467.4499**. You may also mail them to:

Kristin Ward
Casey Family Programs
1808 Eye Street, NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 202.728.2003

Participant Characteristics

The following questions will help us interpret your information, so please take a moment to answer these questions about yourself and the role that you will play in this BSC. Please choose the appropriate option for each of the following background questions. Thank you.

1. What state or county are you from? (Choose One)

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alaska | <input type="checkbox"/> Arizona | <input type="checkbox"/> Connecticut |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guilford County, NC | <input type="checkbox"/> Iowa | <input type="checkbox"/> Kentucky |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Massachusetts | <input type="checkbox"/> Michigan | <input type="checkbox"/> Ramsey County, MN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> San Francisco Co., CA | <input type="checkbox"/> Texas | <input type="checkbox"/> Wake County, NC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Washington | | |

2. What role do you play in this BSC? (Choose One)

- Member of the Senior Leader Team (including Executive Sponsor)
- Day-to-Day Manager
- Member of the Core Team (not the Day-to-Day Manager)
- Member of the Extended Community Team

3. Which of the following is the best description of the system or group that you are representing in your role in this BSC? (Choose One)

- Birth Parent
- Young Adult or Foster Care Alumni
- Child Welfare System
- Court/Judicial System
- Juvenile Justice System
- Law Enforcement
- Probation
- Schools/Educational System
- Health Care System
- Mental Health System
- Housing
- Other

4. Which of the following best describes your racial/ethnic background? (Choose One)

- African American or Black
- Asian
- Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino
- Middle Eastern
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Polynesian or Pacific Islander
- Mixed/More Than One Race/Ethnicity
- Other

5. What is your sex? (Choose One)

Female

Male

Rating Recording Sheet

Each statement below describes an action step that child welfare agencies can take in order to reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color in the child welfare system. Please rate each statement on a 1 to 5 scale according to the extent to which it is currently practiced within the target site at your child welfare agency. Use the following scale:

1 = Never happens

2 = Rarely happens

3 = Sometimes happens

4 = Frequently happens

5 = Always happens

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. The child welfare agency collects customer satisfaction data from children and families of color in order to assess agency performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The child welfare agency uses placement strategies that support relationships/connections among parents, children, siblings, kin, and significant others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The child welfare agency involves families and significant others as partners in decision making during intake and assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The child welfare agency creates a common language, analysis, and understanding of individual racism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The child welfare agency creates a common language, analysis, and understanding of institutional and structural racism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The child welfare agency ensures that services and supports are accessible to children and families of color in the community and tribe (including access to partner agencies who offer housing, substance abuse, subsistence benefits, education, employment, transportation, and physical/mental health care).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
7. The child welfare agency ensures that policies are supportive of children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The child welfare agency categorizes all applicable data by race/ethnicity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The child welfare agency involves families and significant others as partners in decision making during service planning and delivery.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The child welfare agency fully shares with every family of color information about the rights, responsibilities, and expectations of parents, children, and youth in the agency's care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The child welfare agency prioritizes funding for culturally competent post-permanency services for children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The child welfare agency provides staff with appropriate support to partner with parents, children, youth, communities, and tribes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. The child welfare agency prepares, trains, and supports staff to use culturally appropriate interviewing in their interactions with children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. The child welfare agency articulates a vision that affirms support to children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. The child welfare agency fully shares with every family information about the rights, responsibilities, and expectations of the court.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. The child welfare agency engages community partners (e.g., community service providers, community leaders, and emerging leaders) to raise awareness of the issue of disproportionality and disparity of outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. The child welfare agency shares data on race/ethnicity with the community in order to facilitate partnerships that address disproportionality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. The child welfare agency makes deliberate efforts to safely divert families of color away from the child welfare system and into home-based services whenever possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. The child welfare agency assesses and changes policies and practices that contribute to and support structural racism and impact poor outcomes for families of color in the child welfare system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
20. The child welfare agency fully shares information with every family of color about the agency's assessment of child safety and family capacity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. The child welfare agency collaborates with community leaders, mandatory reporters, and the media to develop community-based alternatives to the child welfare system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. The child welfare agency creates a multi-agency team to identify and address cross-system issues about the well-being of families and children of color who come to the attention of the child welfare system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. The child welfare agency fully shares information with every family of color about the agency's commitment to continuity of family, community, and tribal relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. The child welfare agency reviews data on race/ethnicity regularly at all levels of the agency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. The child welfare agency hires staff who reflect the cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious/spiritual backgrounds of the population being served.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. The child welfare agency prepares, trains, and supports staff to use culturally respectful and inclusive planning and decision making tools that may include such things as genograms, ecomaps, and family group conferencing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. The child welfare agency ensures that youth and families of color are represented on decision-making bodies such as advisory boards, consultant teams, and volunteer committees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. The child welfare agency involves families and significant others as partners in decision making regarding reunification and other permanency options.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
29. The child welfare agency uses data to evaluate the effectiveness and cultural competency of contract services in meeting the needs of children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. The child welfare agency develops and employs proactive strategies that build public support around the need for community-based alternatives to the child welfare system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. The child welfare agency places children/youth of color in kinship placements whenever possible if placement is necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. The child welfare agency ensures that practices, programs, and services are supportive of children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. The child welfare agency assures that contract providers demonstrate culturally competent practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. The child welfare agency improves the capacity of communities and/or tribes to prevent child abuse and neglect.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. The child welfare agency supports staff in developing an understanding of her/his own racial and cultural identity and how this impacts her/his individual work with families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. The child welfare agency, through cross-systems collaboration, helps to create policies and procedures that reflect an understanding of issues related to structural and institutional racism that exist in other child-serving agencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. The child welfare agency tracks data on race/ethnicity at all key decision points.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
38. The child welfare agency allocates funding to support culturally relevant strategies at each critical decision point across the continuum of families' involvement in the child welfare system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. The child welfare agency ensures that services and supports to children and families of color are individualized and needs-driven.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. The child welfare agency helps to build the capacity of family members to advocate on their own behalf in every decision related to their situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. The child welfare agency educates staff about the impact of putting children and young people of color in placements where their language and cultural heritage is not understood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. The child welfare agency fully shares information with every family of color about the consequences of the agency's intervention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. The child welfare agency identifies and engages families' informal networks of support to care for and protect children of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. The child welfare agency creates an environment that promotes ongoing discussions of race and disproportionality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45. The child welfare agency approaches data, measurement, and evaluation in a participatory manner that involves parents, youth, and children of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46. The child welfare agency assesses staff on to their ability to work with families of different cultural backgrounds as part of the agency's performance appraisal process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
47. The child welfare agency ensures that services and supports to children and families of color are culturally relevant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
48. The child welfare agency co-locates or out-stations agency workers in communities where children and families of color live.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49. The child welfare agency develops and supports leaders to enable them to support children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50. The child welfare agency educates mandatory reporters about cultural and racial differences in child rearing and how they relate to child maltreatment laws and reporting responsibilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51. The child welfare agency recognizes that past misinterpretation and misuse of data often contributes to the lack of trust that communities of color and tribes have of the child welfare system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
52. The child welfare agency fully shares information with every family of color about the availability of agency and community-based supports and services.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
53. The child welfare agency requires staff to make every effort to pursue, maintain, and nurture family connections for children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
54. The child welfare agency fully shares with every family of color information about the rights, responsibilities, and expectations of the agency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
55. The child welfare agency makes deliberate efforts to safely divert families of color away from the child welfare system and into community- and tribal-based supports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
56. The child welfare agency ensures that services are located and provided in communities where children and families of color live.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
57. The child welfare agency makes a sincere effort to assist staff and stakeholders to integrate anti-racist principles into their work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
58. The child welfare agency involves families and significant others as partners in decision making regarding case closure and/or post permanency supports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
59. The child welfare agency prioritizes funding for culturally competent front-end services for children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
60. The child welfare agency uses reunification strategies that support relationships/connections among parents, children, siblings, kin, and significant others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
61. The child welfare agency uses data on race/ethnicity to improve agency and staff performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
62. The child welfare agency involves families and significant others as partners in decision making during/regarding placement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
63. The child welfare agency assigns leaders the responsibility of educating their colleagues in other child servicing agencies about issues related to structural and institutional racism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
64. The child welfare agency makes ongoing case consultation on cross-racial and cross-cultural issues available to staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
65. The child welfare agency capitalizes on the strengths of families of color at every decision point in the child welfare service continuum through the use of culturally appropriate tools.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank you for your time and your input!

Appendix C

CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS DISPROPORTIONALITY BSC

Final Evaluation

To help us understand how you experienced this BSC and how we can best support future BSC teams, we need your feedback. In the spirit of sharing and collaboration, we would appreciate it if you could take a few moments to reflect on your experiences with the Disproportionality BSC over the past 12 months and to share your opinions and ideas with us. Thank you!

1. Background Information

What team are you from?

What roles(s) have you played in the Disproportionality BSC? (Please check all that apply.)

- Birth parent representative
- Core team member
- Senior leadership group
- Other (explain):
- Youth representative
- Day-to-day manager
- Executive sponsor

How many learning sessions have you attended? (Please check one.)

- One
- Two
- Three

2. BSC Resources

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Learning sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All collaborative calls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior leader calls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faculty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extranet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monthly reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BSC call notes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
One-on-one calls with BSC staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cluster calls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child welfare data by decision point	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any comments on the resources provided or suggestions for other resources that the BSC staff could provide to teams and participants that would be useful? Please describe—feel free to use the back page of this survey if necessary.

3. BSC Effectiveness and Results

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling one number for each statement. If not applicable, circle N/A.

	Strongly agree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly disagree	N/A
1. My awareness of the problem of disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color has improved since I joined the BSC.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I have a better understanding of the issues and complexities related to racial disproportionality and disparities in child welfare since participating in the BSC.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Participation in the BSC has provided me with a better understanding of the role that structural and institutional racism play in contributing to racial disparities in the child welfare system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Through the BSC, I have learned concrete ways to improve my practice with children and families of color in the child welfare system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Our child welfare system has identified strategies to improve its response to children and families of color as a result of the BSC.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Effective practice improvements have been implemented in our BSC target site.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Effective practice changes have been spread throughout our agency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Through participation in this BSC, I believe our agency has experienced positive system change that will ultimately reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly agree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly disagree	N/A
9. Effective policy improvements have been implemented in our BSC target site as a result of our participation in this BSC.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I think that the BSC work in our target site will help spread practice improvement into the wider system and/or community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. As a result of our BSC work, I have noticed positive culture change within our child welfare agency regarding how we work with children and families of color.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. My BSC team successfully partnered with the community to address disproportionality and disparate outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. From my experience, more child welfare agency resources will be needed if BSC improvements are to continue to grow and be sustained.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I have confidence in my ability to help plan future practice improvements to reduce racial disproportionality and disparity as a result of my participation in the BSC.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. After the conclusion of this BSC, our agency will continue to improve its efforts to reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color in the child welfare system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Assessment of the BSC and PDSA Methodology

Please check the box that best reflects your opinion. If the question is not applicable, check N/A.

	Strongly agree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly disagree	N/A
1. The PDSA methodology was easy to understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The PDSA methodology was useful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The Disproportionality BSC provided information and materials that are relevant to my work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The BSC methodology is an effective tool for child welfare agencies to use in order to implement practice change.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The BSC methodology is an effective way for child welfare agency staff to learn more about a particular topic or content area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly agree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly disagree	N/A
6. The collaborative nature of the BSC allowed me to make important contacts with colleagues from other jurisdictions that will continue to help me in my work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The BSC was a worthwhile way for my agency to spend its time and staff resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. All participants from my team were actively involved in the BSC process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The BSC methodology effectively facilitated collaboration across teams.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Assessment of Your Team’s Work During the BSC

Below are two columns that list several areas of work along the continuum of child welfare involvement with families. Under the first column, please circle the decision point(s) where you believe your team expended the greatest amount of effort during the BSC. Under the second column, please circle the decision point(s) where you believe your team made the most improvement or saw the greatest amount of change as a result of participating in the BSC.

Greatest Amount of Effort	Saw The Most Improvement
Prevention/Diversion	Prevention/Diversion
Initial Contact with Family	Initial Contact with Family
Ongoing Services	Ongoing Services
Permanency Efforts	Permanency Efforts

6. BSC Staff

Please check the box that best reflects your opinion. If not applicable, circle N/A.

	Strongly agree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly disagree	N/A
1. The BSC staff was accessible throughout the BSC.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The BSC staff was responsive to my needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The BSC staff was well-prepared and professional.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The BSC staff encouraged collaboration among teams.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The BSC staff created an environment of openness and respect for all people, experiences, and ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Overall Feedback

1. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 representing “far below” and 5 representing “far exceeded,” how well did the Disproportionality BSC measure up to what you expected to get out of your participation in this process?

Below expectations

Exceeded expectations

1

2

3

4

5

Please provide a reason for your rating, using specific examples. _____

2. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 representing “not at all successful” and 5 representing “extremely successful,” how would you rate the success of your BSC team in improving agency response and worker practice in an effort to reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color?

Not at all successful

Extremely successful

1

2

3

4

5

Please provide a reason for your rating, using specific examples. _____

3. Please provide any other comments or suggestions here (use the back page if needed). _____

Thank you!

Appendix D

1. What has the opportunity to participate in the Disproportionality BSC meant to you personally and what are your perceptions of what it has meant to your agency (for alumni and parent representative: your perceptions of how participation has or hasn't influenced positive change for families that come in contact with the child welfare agency).
 - In terms of what you have learned about this issue and/or your agency's response to the issue ...
 - In terms of whether you feel you have changed in some way and that this has improved your practice ...
 - In terms of whether participation has impacted the culture within your agency to a meaningful degree ...
 - In terms of whether participation has impacted practice change or improvement in your agency in a meaningful way ...
 - Describe why participation in the BSC has been personally meaningful ...
 - Explain whether you think that participation in the BSC has been an important use of your agency's resources ...
2. Discuss one thing that you are most proud of or that you feel likely would not have happened if your agency had not participated in the Disproportionality BSC. Please provide a specific story that might illustrate, for example, how one family's experience with the child welfare agency was improved or how a specific practice improvement was spread statewide.
 - Is there anything you were disappointed with or frustrated about relating to this experience?
3. In your opinion, what is it about this process itself (participating in the BSC initiative) that was most meaningful or helpful to you and/or to your agency?
 - What is the power of the BSC process for those who participate?
4. After participating in this process for the past 18 months or more, what are your hopes or concerns about the potential for eliminating racial disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system in this country?
 - How is this different from your views 18 months ago?
 - If your views have changed over time, please explain what you feel made the difference.
5. Please explain what you see as the challenges of doing this work successfully in public child welfare agencies.
 - Describe what you think child welfare agencies need if they are successfully going to confront disproportionality and disparate outcomes of children and families of color in the child welfare system.

Casey Family Programs' mission is to provide and improve—and ultimately to prevent the need for—foster care. Established by UPS founder Jim Casey in 1966, the foundation provides direct services and promotes advances in child welfare practice and policy.

Casey collaborates with foster, kinship, and adoptive parents to provide safe, loving homes for youth in its direct care. The foundation also collaborates with counties, states, and American Indian and Alaska Native tribes to improve services and outcomes for the more than 500,000 young people in out-of-home care across the United States.

Drawing on four decades of front-line work with families and alumni of foster care, Casey Family Programs develops tools, practices, and policies to nurture all youth in care and to help parents strengthen families at risk of needing foster care.

For more information, contact Casey Family Programs at info@casey.org or 1300 Dexter Avenue North, Floor 3, Seattle, WA 98109.

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