

Title: Racial Disparities Case Record Reading Study

The State of Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), in collaboration with the African American Disparities Advisory Committee (Committee), has undertaken a study of racial disparities in Minnesota's child welfare service system, with specific reference to overrepresentation of African American children in foster care. For the year 2000, DHS reported that African American children as compared to Caucasian children are: six times more likely to be assessed for maltreatment, nearly eight times more likely to be determined as victims of maltreatment, seven times more likely to be referred for ongoing child protection services, and over sixteen times more likely to be in out-of-home care during a child protection assessment. The committee recommended the conduct of a four county case record review to examine the "level, type and delivery of services" to African American families. Following the case record review, the committee requested analysis of the data gathered from the review and comparison

The goals of the study are to: develop a better understanding of the needs of African American families that are in the child welfare system; describe the factors that are associated with the selection and delivery of services received by African American families while in the child welfare system; and ascertain any possible differences in services delivery that may be associated with race. The research questions are: What (case, child, and family) factors are associated with the selection and delivery of child welfare services to families? Do they differ by race (white v. African American), when controlling for other factors that impact service and placement decisions? What factors, including race, are most influential in determining the placement of a child in out-of-home care?

The African American Disparities Advisory Committee determined that the longitudinal approach with matched samples was the most desirable approach for better understanding "front-end" decisions with respect to assessment and service delivery. The methods used are detailed below.

- The sample consisted of African American and white children substantiated as maltreated in 2001, matched for: type of neglect, age group (0-5 and 6-11), and gender
- A total of 206 cases were read in summer 2003 from four counties, 103 matched pairs.
- A structured case record review form was used to record case record notes through the service delivery up to six months in placement. That is cases were followed until closure or until the 6-month placement review (if the child was placed some time after case opening and the case was still open).