The Institutional Analysis: A Qualitative Methodology for Examining Racial Disproportionality and Disparity

Center for the Study of Social Policy
Gayle Samuels and Kristen Weber

March 2010
Outline of Presentation

- Brief overview of national data and work on racial disproportionality and disparity
- Institutional Analysis/Methodology
- Michigan Experience/Findings
Disparities

Children of color are overrepresented at all decision points of the child welfare system: reporting, investigation, substantiation, placement, and exit from care.

They experience:
- higher occurrence of placement changes
- longer stays in protective custody
- lower rates of legal permanency
What produces racial disproportionality and disparity?

- Individual worker bias?
- Poverty?
- Heighten scrutiny of a particular community?
- Lack of meaningful community-based resources?
- Institutional polices and practices?
- System and worker fear of lawsuits, media coverage, etc...?
- Something else?
What are States doing?

Eleven states -- California, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Texas, and Washington—have addressed racial disparities and disproportionality through public policy activities.

- Legislation, Policy Change, Finance Reform
- Youth, Parent and Community Partnership and Development
- Human Service Workforce Development
- Practice Change
- Research, Evaluation and Data-Based Decision-making
Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings in order to make sense of or interpret phenomena.

Use and collection of variety of empirical materials:

* Case Studies;
* Personal Experiences;
* Introspections;
* Life Stories;
* Interviews;
* Observations – that describe the routine and problematic moments of the visible world.
What is an Institutional Analysis?

An analysis is a qualitative methodology that uncovers how a particular outcome is produced. The analysis looks at the GAP between what a child, youth, or their families need in order to be safe and what the institution is set up to do...
Institutional Analysis

CHILD WELFARE

Housing

Criminal Justice System

Health Care

Mental Health

Lived Experience
PRESUME...

every worker is coordinated and organized to think about and act on cases in institutionally authorized or acceptable ways
Standard Case Processing Structures
Michigan Institutional Analysis

Advocacy Community → MI Legislature → Task Force → Equity Report → Institutional Analysis
Analysis Elements

- Preparation
  - Quantitative Data Collected
  - Groundwork with Jurisdiction Conducted
  - Review Question Narrowed:
    - *How does it come about that, after substantiation of neglect, African American children are more likely to be removed from their homes?*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Michigan Children’s Services Data Analysis</th>
<th>Total #/% of Children by Race as Defined by Investigation Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Children involved in CPS Investigations</em></td>
<td><strong>Alaskan Native or Native Am.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Children w/ Substantiated Investigations</em></td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Children w/ Opened CPS Case–No Removal</em></td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Children Removed from home: Substantiated Investigation</em></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children involved in Child Protective Services Investigations and Disposition by Race: Calendar Year 2005
Source: Michigan Department of Human Resources
## Summary of On-Site Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Interview</th>
<th>Saginaw</th>
<th>Wayne County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case-based Interview</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>Birth parents, youth, and foster parents</td>
<td>Birth parents, youth, foster parents, AAGs, protective services specialists, protective services supervisors, and TDM meeting facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Hotline, investigations, TDM meetings, family court</td>
<td>Hotline, investigations, TDM meetings, family court, juvenile detention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Case Files</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis Elements (cont.)

- Synthesizing Data
- Write Report – Findings and Recommendations
- Ongoing Work with jurisdiction
FINDINGS

- Lack of preventive services and inadequate access to services
- Intrusive interventions
- Problematic case processing
- Poor advocacy
- Courts not acting as a “check and balance”
- Placement away from family
Lessons Learned

- Constantly emphasize the need to identify and address institutional racism
- Anticipate turnover within system and advocacy community
- Advocacy community must continually pressure systems to make necessary changes
- Fold recommendations and agenda for change into larger reform efforts
For more information:

www.cssp.org

Gayle Samuels
gayle.samuels@cssp.org

Kristen Weber
kristen.weber@cssp.org