



Race Equity in Child Welfare

Reducing Racial Biases in the System

Executive Summary

The Family Voices United campaign surveyed birth parents, kinship caregivers, foster/resource and adoptive parents, and young people with experience in the child welfare system across the country to compile their lived expertise on prevention services for families prior to interaction with the child welfare system.

Four priorities were identified across all lived experience roles as essential steps in order to best address prevention with families:

1

The Federal Administration for Children & Families Chief Equity Officer needs **clear measurable deliverables** to implement diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

"Every aspect and every division of CW diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility needs to be implemented with measurable goals."

-Birth Parent, CT

2

Lived experience should be incorporated in the Federal Administration for Children and Families approach to policies and practices implementation.

"Valuable input comes straight from the 'trenches.' This is where families and youth live out their frustrations and struggles as well as their celebrations. It's the best place to find out what works, and what creates barriers rather than solutions."

-Resources Parent, MD



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Four priorities were identified across all lived experience roles as essential steps in order to best address prevention with families:

3

The Federal Administration for Children & Families needs to **implement improved training** around diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

"Training and professional development is also something that is extremely beneficial when working with youth and trying to understand their needs, but also how to communicate and teach them while being sensitive and empathetic."

-Youth in/from care, NY

4

Families deserve the support and resources needed to **prevent youth from entering the system**, and provide needed help for families.

"Train ACS to talk to parents better and to not remove children just ask the parents what they need and what they can support them with services"

-Birth Parent, NY

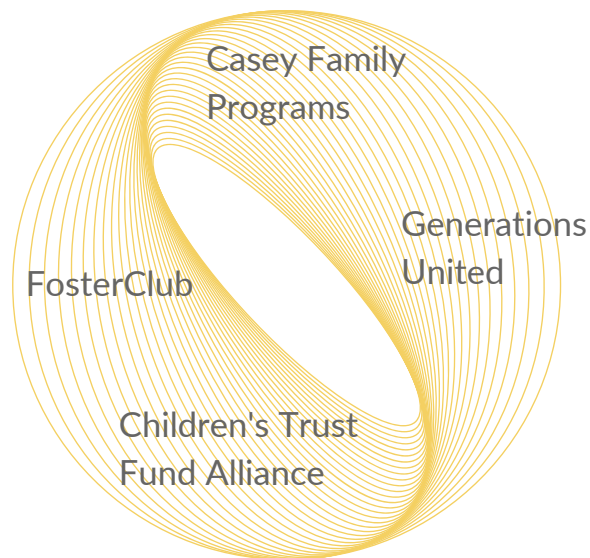


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Framing

Family Voices United is a collaborative project with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Generations United, FosterClub, and Casey Family Programs.



Together, we work to elevate the voice and perspective of **young people, birth parents, and kinship/relative caregivers** (known collectively as **constituents**), to stakeholders, partners and organizations who make decisions about the child welfare system.

In order to make informed decisions that benefit children, young people, and families, lived experience voices and expertise must be not only heard, but must be centered in decision making.

Share Your Perspective Campaign

Family Voices United launches regular "Share Your Perspective" questions on timely topics relating to child welfare. Currently, the campaign centers these questions around 5 rotating central themes:



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Older Youth & Congregate Care



Supporting Relatives Caring for Children



Expectant and Parenting Youth



Prevention: Strengthening Families & Averting Crises



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December 2022 "Share Your Perspective" Question:

The federal Administration for Children & Families (ACF) is hiring their first ever Chief Equity Officer.

"How would you advise them to implement diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, specifically with regards to children, youth, and families involved with the child welfare system?"



Identified Priorities from Lived Experience Leaders

On Prevention Supports for Families

#1

The Federal Administration for Children & Families Chief Equity Officer needs **clear, measurable deliverables** to implement diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

#2

Lived experience should be incorporated in the Federal Administration for Children and Families approach to policies and practices implementation.

#3

The Federal Administration for Children & Families needs to **implement improved training** around diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

#4

Families deserve the support and resources needed to **prevent youth from entering the system**, and provide needed help for families.



The Federal Administration for Children & Families Chief Equity Officer needs clear, measurable deliverables to implement diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

Listening to lived experience voices

- Workers should be able to create and consider alternatives to successfully support children, youth and families in the system.
- Clear measurable goals need to be implemented to address diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.
- Chief Equity Officer should consider implementation of new procedures .
- The implementation of any plan which addresses diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility cannot be fully effective unless input from those directly affected are canvassed.

Clear, Measurable Deliverables

Quotes from lived experience voices



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Effective solutions to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, can't only use a systemic-level approach, but must also consider a strategy to approach the issue on an individual level. Workers should be able to create and consider alternatives to successfully support children, youth and families in the system

-Young person in/ from care, Puerto Rico

I would advise the new CEO implement new measures to instate new procedures with enforcement with respect to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility specific to the child welfare system.

-Adopt & Resource, IL

Every aspect and every division of CW diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility needs to be implemented with measurable goals. This needs to be done in partnership with those who have the greatest impact.

-Parent, CT

I develop a mission, and vision based on the outcomes. I would develop an action plan to execute the priorities.

-Community Partner, WV

Having strategies in place for including lived experience representation in discussions and internal decision-making processes can help lived experience provide information that can consider the entity's resources and goals.

-Young person in/from care, Puerto Rico



Lived experience should be incorporated in the Federal Administration for Children and Families approach to policies and practices implementation.

Listening to lived experience voices

-It is imperative to have people with lived experience and those with work experience in the same room

- Those with lived experience need to have the opportunity to attend meetings involving policy makers, key stakeholders and child welfare workers.

-Valuable input comes straight from the children and families most effected by the policies, procedures and practices put in place

- Policy, procedure and practice reform should always be consulted by the people it affects the most.

Lived Experience Should be Incorporated

Quotes from lived experience voices



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Their lived experiences, sentiments, point of view, opinions and emotions are invaluable. It is crucial to hear from all concerned. Not just the parents, but the children and youth, when possible, should not only be invited to the table, but given a microphone.

-Resource Parent, MD

There's always work to be done and communities to listen to.

-Relative/Kinship Caregiver, MI

Give people with lived experience incentive and opportunity to work in the system, provide input about developing new core practices. Implement grievance policies.

-Birth Parent, CA

Valuable input comes straight from the "trenches." This is where families and youth live out their frustrations and struggles as well as their celebrations. It's the best place to find out what works, and what creates barriers rather than solutions.

-Resource Parent, MD

I would suggest that they listen to the family voice, the parents with lived experience and be open-minded to the idea that those voices matter and can help better inform them of the barriers and misconceptions that have been stigmatized to better do their job

-Birth Parent, NE



The Federal Administration for Children & Families needs to implement improved training around diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

Listening to lived experience voices

-Training and professional development is something that is extremely beneficial when working with youth

- The Chief Equity Officer at ACF should implement educational opportunities.

- ACF staff should be trained in Family First Prevention Services implementation to best support families.

-Implement trainings for all staff in regards to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

Implement Improved Trainings

Quotes from lived experience voices



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Training and professional development is also something that is extremely beneficial when working with you and trying to understand their need but also how to communicate and teach them while being sensitive and empathetic.

-Youth in/from care, NY

It would be nice if some of this information was available via training or a written material that was shared!

-Foster/Resource Parent, CA

I would ask questions around implicit biases the community has been facing and work to build partnerships with the community to deal with equity issues from every social determinant of health

-Birth Parent, GA

Maybe have child lead advocacy groups. Also, as much as possible provide as training on diversity and have foster families required to attend.

-Kinship Caregiver, ID

Children need mentorship, nurturing, reliability and compassion. Being from foster care myself I feel the system is lacking so bad. And that's why the children suffer the most in a system designed to help them

-Birth Parent, NY



Families deserve the support and resources needed to prevent youth from entering the system, and provide needed help for families.

Listening to lived experience voices

-Preventative measures are better than having to enforce too many policies.

- Provide parents with the support needed to prevent the removal of the child from the home.

- Parents should be informed of their rights based on policies implemented to provide prevention support to families.



Quotes from lived experience voices

My parents were immigrants from Mexico and never were fully aware of cultural issues and never reunified. At that time there were no cultural brokers. Same goes with asian families. Preventative measures are better than having to enforce too many policies.

-Youth in/from Care, CA

If we prevent parents from caring together (even in separate households) and remove children from neglected villages, then it is a systemic issue not a parent responsibility issue. Children need to be raised in and by their village - community and culture - vital to long term wellbeing and self identity.

-Birth Parent, WA

Just because we did not get our granddaughters from child welfare we were cut off from all the benefits available to caregivers who got the call from child welfare services and accepted.

-Relative/Kinship Caregiver, NV

I would advise them to implement equity through consistency. A lot of people who were involved in my family situation were not consistently involved and so the lack of presence put a strain on the attempt at any family reunification.

-Youth in/from Care, SC

How to Use this Report

Share with your Networks

The themes and priorities from this report can help others gain further insight into the child welfare system from the perspective of those who have lived experience. It may also help those in your networks to better support constituents in their work.

Elevate to Policymakers

The people making laws and decisions must hear from those who have experience with the systems they impact with their actions. Nothing about us without us.

Highlight to Lived Experience Leaders

Creating community amongst lived experience leaders starts by sharing stories and identifying common experiences. Please share this report with constituents you work with or others in your networks with lived experience.

THANK YOU TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE, BIRTH PARENTS & KINSHIP CAREGIVERS, AND CHILD WELFARE COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR ANSWERING OUR "SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE" QUESTION, AND FOR PROVIDING YOUR LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERTISE TO THE FIELD OF CHILD WELFARE.

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