

Reflecting on Racial Equity and Prevention-Focused Systems Discussion Guide



Capacity Building
CENTER FOR STATES

Changing child welfare practice and agency culture to advance racial equity begins by talking openly about where your agency is now. Listening to diverse experiences and ideas and using appreciative inquiry can help teams generate solutions for removing barriers to equity for families, children, and communities. As you consider the reflection questions individually, with teams, and across your agency, acknowledge that engaging in conversations about race and racism may bring up uncomfortable feelings like frustration, anger, grief, guilt, or sadness.

Begin by spending time exploring your own feelings and openness to change. Ask others to do the same before they join the conversation. Before engaging with others, consider:

- ▶ How might my own implicit biases affect coworkers and the children, youth, and families our agency serves?
- ▶ How can I pay attention to the intent of other's words and the impact of my own words on others?
- ▶ What can I do to stay engaged when I feel challenged or uncomfortable?
- ▶ What can help me stay curious, engaged, and open to learning when I experience discomfort?
- ▶ What is my role in disrupting inequities?

People may be reluctant to participate in these conversations if they fear being misunderstood or judged. What will make everyone feel safe and respected in sharing their thoughts and opinions? As the facilitator of difficult conversations, you can create an environment that supports psychological safety by:

- ▶ Explaining the purpose for the conversations and that they must be ongoing
- ▶ Setting up conversational agreements with the group spelling out the rules and parameters first
- ▶ Modeling the vulnerability and transparency that you hope to see from others

Start by examining your organization's core principles, values, and priorities. For initial conversations, choose a few reflection questions to begin making the connection between workforce development and racial equity. End conversations by considering action steps to take towards creating meaningful change.

Reflection Questions

1	How could our agency become more aware of the ways that multiple factors like structural racism, poverty, health inequities, and a lack of access to concrete needs affect the families we serve?
2	How could our work with families better reflect maintaining connections to culture and heritage as essential to protect a young person's sense of belonging and identity?
3	How could our agency work in collaboration with partners to ensure that all families have what they need to thrive before child welfare steps in?
4	What would it take to shift away from standardized approaches and toward individualized, culturally responsive approaches that meet families' unique needs? What are the barriers to changing our approach?
5	How does our agency contribute to the disparate outcomes that children, youth, and families of color experience?

6	Think of some examples of how our agency's prevention approaches reinforce racism. What are some examples of how our agency's prevention approaches dismantle racism? Are there additional steps we could take to ensure our prevention approaches are not harming children and families of color?
7	What would our system look like if all families had access to the concrete supports they need to thrive (e.g., healthy food, safe and stable housing, financial resources, health care)?
8	What resources are available to support families and communities? What is our agency willing to do to bridge the gap between what is available and what is needed?
9	What would it take to embed racial equity throughout all of our prevention efforts? What can we do to stay the course when we feel challenged or uncomfortable?
10	How will we hold ourselves accountable for taking action toward meaningful change?

Resources to Help You Take Action

- ▶ [Prevention Planning Into Action](#)
Use this collection of resources to support your agency's prevention planning efforts.
- ▶ [Visioning for Prevention: Protecting Children Through Strengthening Families](#)
Browse a collection of publications and digital resources for the information and tools you need to move toward a more prevention-focused system.
- ▶ [A Look Inside Sharing Power in Child Welfare: A Podcast](#)
Listen to this podcast series by and about people with lived experience in child welfare and about their partnerships with leaders within child welfare agencies.
- ▶ [Becoming a Family-Focused System](#)
Use this collection of resources to help enhance agency culture and climate, identify areas that need attention, and implement improvements.
- ▶ [Prevention Planning Roundtable: Engaging Youth, Families, Communities, and Tribes in Prevention Planning](#)
Listen in to hear progress and lessons learned in states' efforts to center and prioritize youth, families, communities, and Tribes throughout their prevention planning process.
- ▶ [Strengthening Families Through Prevention and Collaboration: Child Welfare Virtual Expo \(CWVE\) 2020](#)
Explore collaborative approaches to advance prevention presented by people with lived and professional child welfare expertise.
- ▶ [Understanding the Past to Build a New Future: Advancing Racial Equity for Children, Youth, and Families](#)
Learn how and why racial and ethnic disparities exist in child welfare systems and in outcomes for children, youth, and families.
- ▶ [From Understanding to Action: Shifting Power Dynamics to Advance Race Equity](#)
Hear about strategies for authentically partnering with youth, young adults, Tribes, families, and communities of color to inform and improve child welfare research, practice, and policy.

Visit the Center's website for the most recent [Prevention-Focused Systems](#) and [Racial Equity](#) resources.

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