

Erie County Permanency for Children Collaborative Disproportionate Minority Representation Subcommittee (ECPCC)

CO-CHAIRS: Hon. Lisa Bloch-Rodwin and Roshelle Lewis

MISSION STATEMENT:

To reduce the over-representation or disproportionate representation of minority children in foster care in Erie County. This subcommittee will assess, identify, and examine with the goal of, working towards eliminating factors that contribute to the disproportionate representation of minority children in the child welfare system and any disparities in the services they receive. Asking and answering questions about the role of child welfare and family court in decision points, the intake process, and service provision which affect the safety and well-being of children, will require research, collaboration with stakeholders and additional community resources.

SUMMARY:

The ECPCC DMR project is a collaborative effort between Erie County Family Court, Erie County Department of Social Services and Office of Children and Family Services as well as many other community stakeholders working towards identifying a Systems Response to the chronic disproportionate representation of minorities interfacing with the Child Welfare System. The collaborative strives to identify those factors which may be perpetuating the problem as well as steps necessary to significantly reduce disparate treatment.

Through education and advocacy the committee hopes to achieve a reduction of racial disparities and disproportionate numbers of minority children placed in the Child Welfare System. In the past three years the numbers of minority children who have entered foster care as well as their length of stay has risen dramatically and far beyond the average for children who are not considered under racial minority representation. In order to assess and recommend steps to affect change, the primary focus will be directed towards decision making points that specifically impact whether or not minority children enter or remain in foster care. The subcommittee will periodically revisit an action plan that will continuously and effectively address the issue while recognizing that this is an on-going process with many layers based on the historical practices. The action plan will remain a live and working document in order to appropriately and successfully maintain the integrity of the committee's response to this matter.

Our primary intention is to cultivate a community-wide response which will continuously work towards the amelioration of racial disparities and disproportionate minority representation of children in the Child Welfare System. Stakeholders are invited to align with the mission through the formation of workgroups incorporating members from all the professional disciplines and local community initiatives involved with the issue of structural racism and racial inequities. The committee is focused on the development of education and awareness trainings as well as the identification of research supported strategies that will form the basis for an effective community-wide response that will produce improved outcomes in the near term and for future generations.