



Latino Disproportionality in the Child Welfare System

An Overview

Getting To The Root Of It conference
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Jorge Cabrera,
Senior Director,
San Diego Field Office,
Casey Family Programs

Demographics

- Latinos are the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in the nation.
- Latinos represented 49% of the nation's growth from 2004-05.
- 44 million Latinos lived in the U.S. in 2006 (14.8% of the population)
- This is an undercount if considering undocumented immigrants.
- Young Latino children under 5 represented 70% of growth.

Child Welfare Demographics

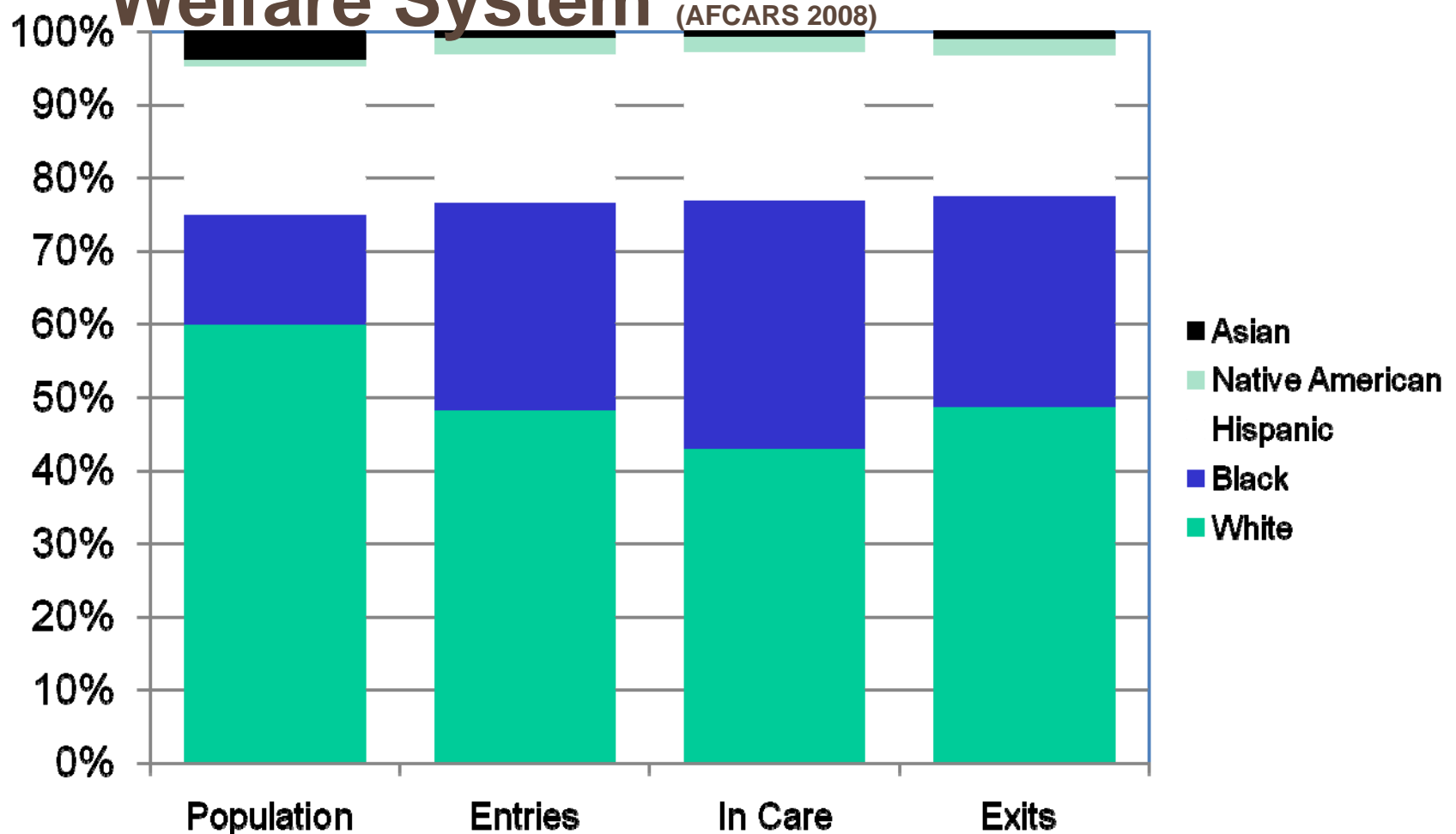
- The number of Latino children in the child welfare system, almost doubled from 8% of the general foster care population in 1990 to 15% as of September 2002.
- In 2004 (AFCARS) , 18% (93,759) of foster children are Latino, which is roughly about the same as the general representation in the U.S. children population.

Child Welfare Demographics

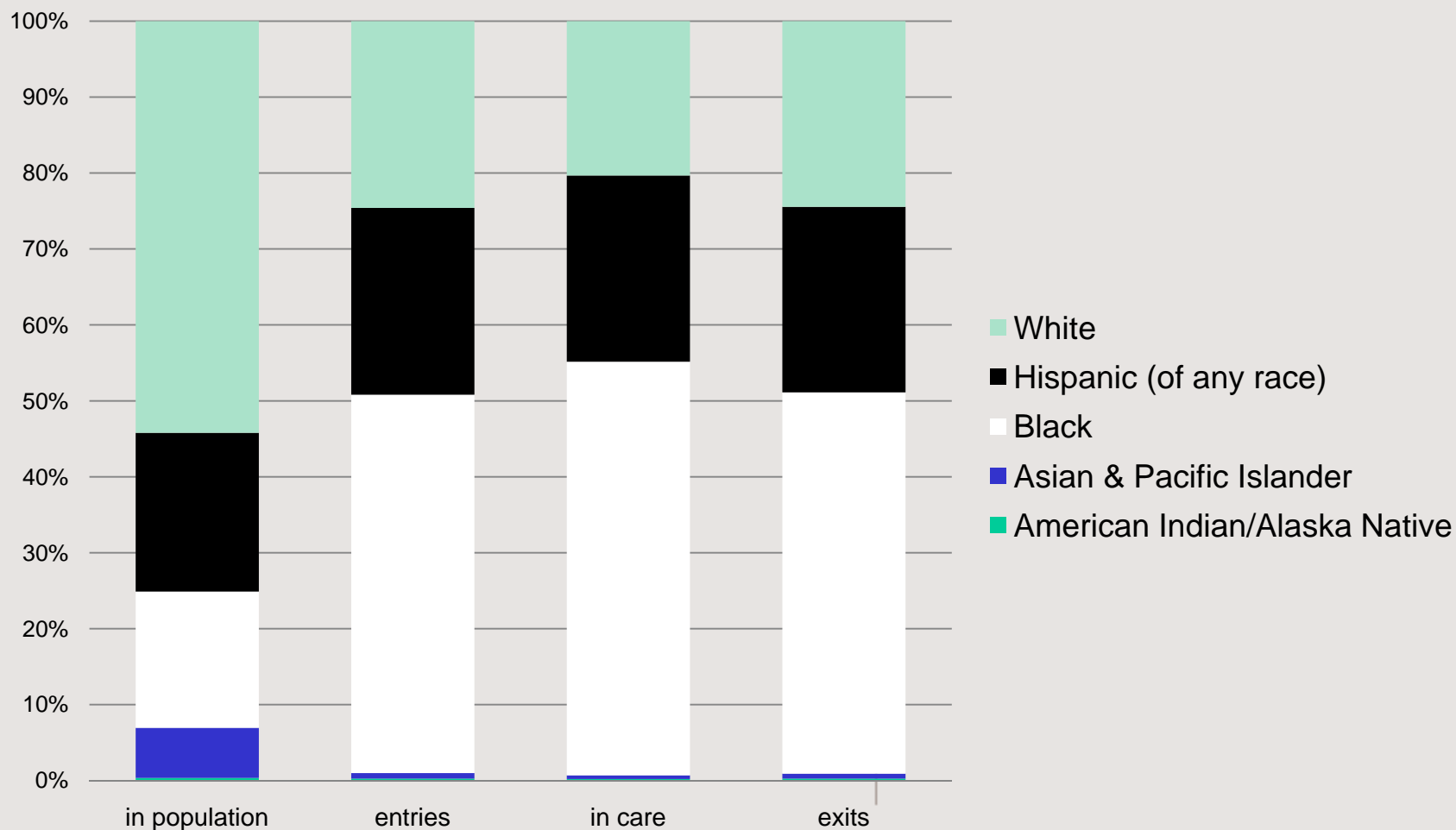
- 62% of Latino children served by child welfare services are placed in out-of home care compared to 25% in 1977.
- In some States such as California and Texas the number of Latino children in child welfare has grown significantly.
- In California, out of approximately 83.000 youth in foster care, 40% are Latino.



Ethnicity in the National Child Welfare System (AFCARS 2008)



State of New York: Race/Ethnicity of Children Involved in Out-of-Home Care, FY2008

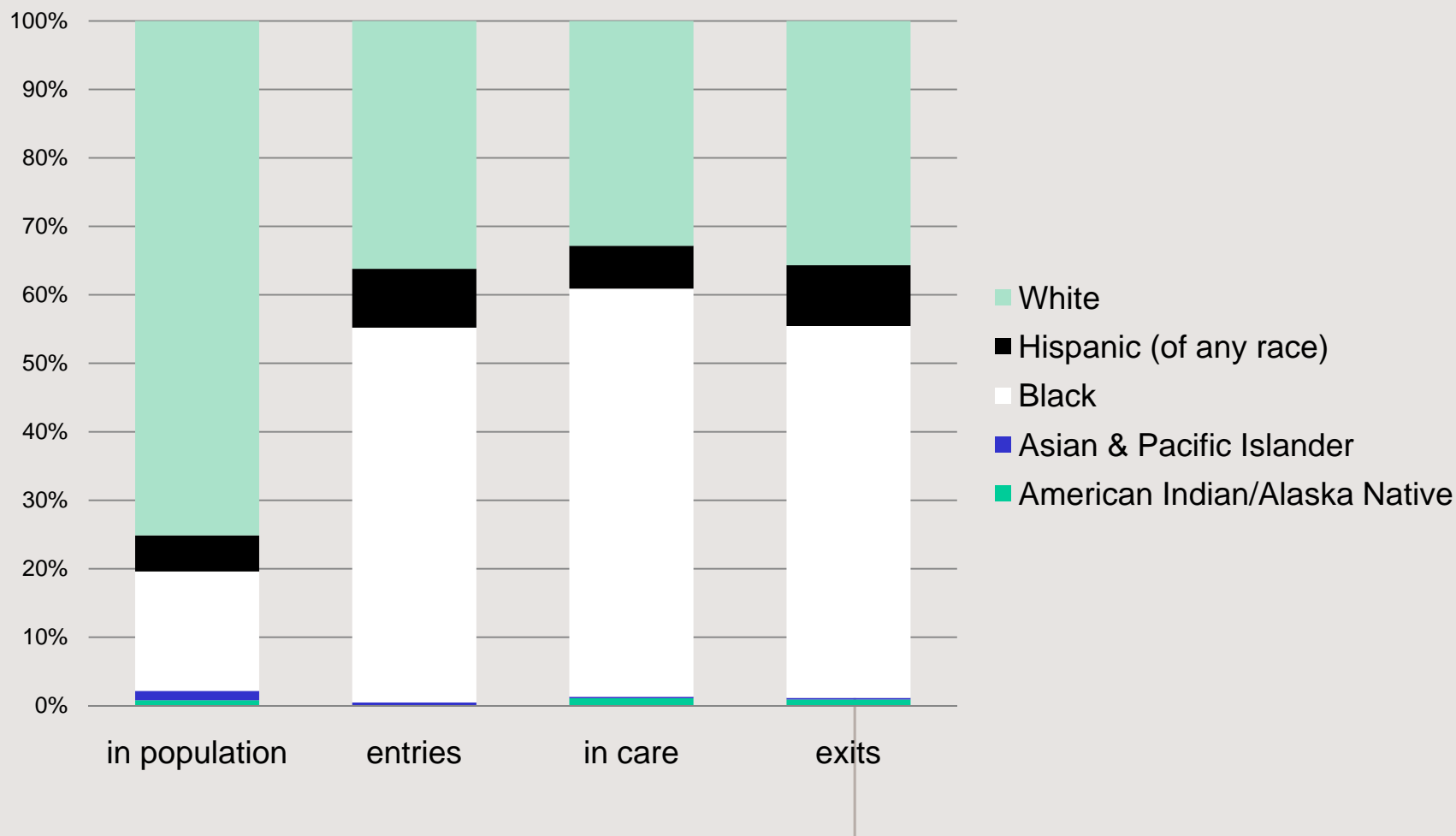




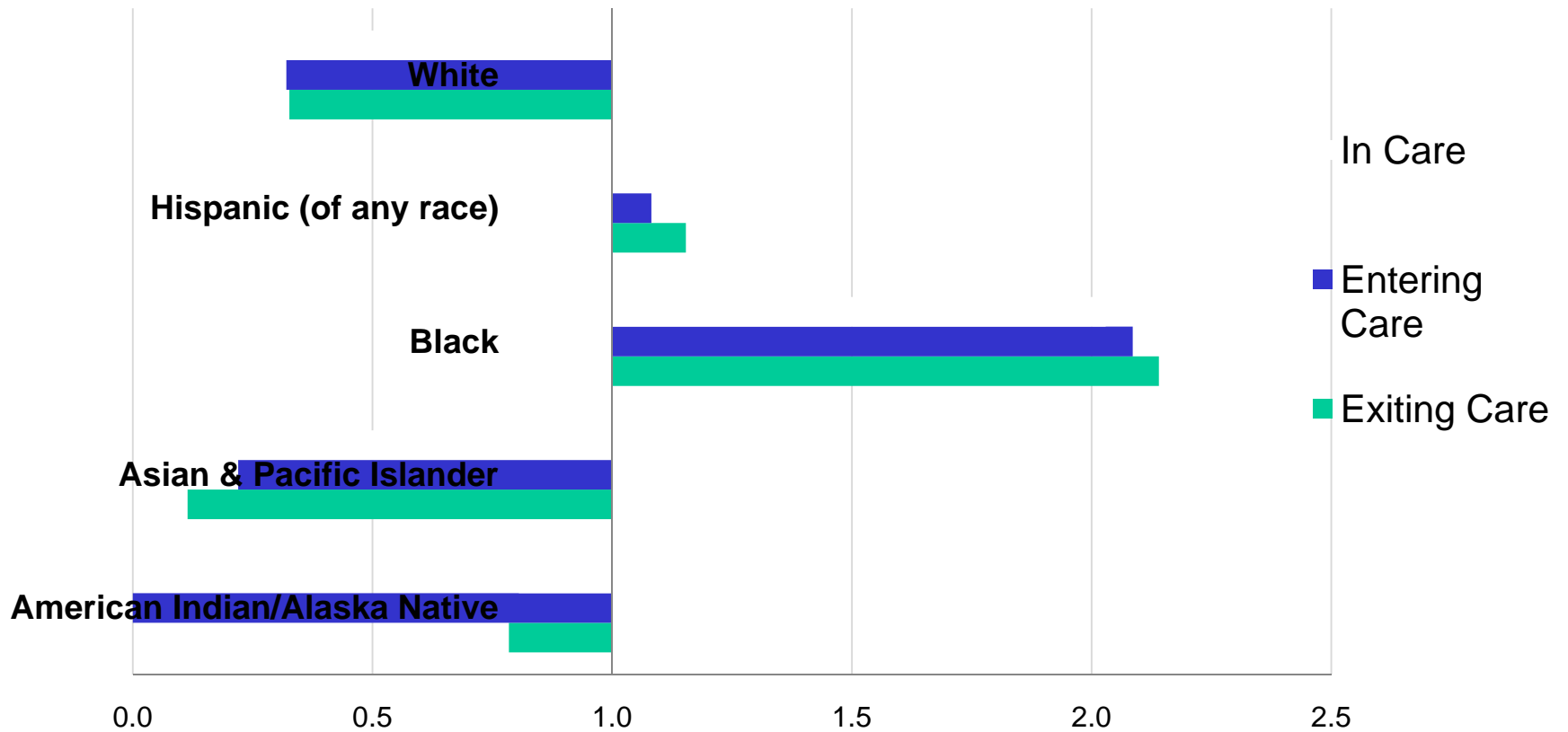
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Erie County, New York: Race/Ethnicity of Children Involved in Out-of-Home Care, FY2008



**Erie County, New York:
Racial Disproportionality Index, FY2008**
(group compared to population)



Immigration Issues

- The population of immigrants in the U.S. increased substantially in the last 25 years – from about 14 million in 1980 to about 38 million in 2007.
- By 2005, children of immigrants were almost half of all children in California, and over 40 percent in New York City.
- From 1980 to 2005, Texas witnessed a 178 percent increase in the number of immigrant children – most of whom immigrated from Latin America, and Mexico in particular.

Immigration issues

- Immigrants from Latin American countries accounted for over one half of all immigrant populations in the U.S. with Mexico accounting for 31% of those families.
- The number of undocumented residents in the U.S. has grown substantially. 11 million undocumented residents as of March 2005, of which approximately 1.8 million are children under 18.

Immigration Issues

- Many Jurisdictions are experiencing a growing presence of children and families where immigration issues are present. These cases present unique complexities of a cultural legal, linguistic, trans-national nature requiring special knowledge, practice considerations and protocols.
- Some of these cases occurring as a result of ICE raids present major challenges that can seriously compromise the well-being and permanent connection for children and youth in these families.

Latino disproportionality and disparity issues

2006 AFCARS data reveals that Latinos are overrepresented in foster care in 16 States. The highest rates being:

- South Dakota 2.5
- North Dakota 2.3
- Massachussets 2.1
- New Hamphsire 2.1
- Connecticut 2.1
- Maine 2.0

Disparity and Disproportionality Issues.

- According to the Urban Institute (2002), more than two thirds of uninsured children in fair and poor health were Latinos, yet Latinos accounted for less than one-fifth of all children in the U.S.
- Latino children entering foster care are more likely to have health concerns due to lack of adequate health care insurance prior to entering foster care.

Disparity and over-representation issues

- Cases reported for abuse and neglect are relatively proportionate between Latino and White non-Latino children. Yet, substantiated cases are more likely to occur with Latino children.
- Latino children are more likely to be placed in out-of home care more quickly and for longer periods of time than their White non-Latino counterparts.

Disparity and disproportionality issues

- Issues of access to culturally and linguistically relevant services.
- Issues of insufficient recruitment of Latino foster and adoptive families, resulting in greater numbers of Latino children placed in homes of different cultural and linguistic background.

Mental Health

- Some Latino groups have been found to be at risk for mental health disorders: however they seem to be infrequent consumers of mental health services.
- Latinos are more likely to drop out prematurely from treatment.
- Studies have shown that systems respond more slowly to crisis with culturally diverse families, Latino children receive less comprehensive service plans and parents of color have been viewed as less able to profit from what the system has to offer.

Mental Health

- There exists inadequate representation of members of ethnic/racial groups including Latinos in studies of evidence based treatments.
- WALIS (Workgroup on Adaptation of Latino Services) . Part of the National Center for Traumatic Stress Network. Focused on creating guidelines for adaptation of evidence-based practices to a Latino cultural framework.

Kinship Care

- Many Latinos have a cultural value of strong family ties.
- The foster care system has a higher reliance on relatives among Latino families.
- More than one third (37.4%) of Latino children in family foster care live in relative placements.

Cultural disconnects

From Creating a Latino Child Welfare Agenda (Committee for Hispanic Children & Families)

- “the child welfare system, as a whole, lacks personalismo or an attention to personal relationships, which are highly valued and critical in establishing successful social service practices with Latinos”.
- “while Latinos value familial and cultural connections, the trend in child welfare is child-centered and “culture-free” as though child development and child-rearing do not occur in cultural and familial contexts”
- “as part of the Latino collectivist worldview, the cultural connection is seen as critical to the identity development of children, and the survival of Latinos as a people”

Values

- Privileging and appreciating the voices & the knowledge of family & community.
- Shared accountability to the achievement of “different” reality.
- Ownership of the implications of “border crossing”

Considerations

- Culture as a healing and empowering resource. **“La Cultura Cura”**
- The context of social problems is critical to their resolution.
- “the extraordinary impact that our homes, our upbringing and our experiences have on shaping our understanding of the world and the meaning we accord events in our lives. It is the persistence of identity and its power to explain and create meaning for people, that suggests it would be very wise to respect and honor it” (Charles Waldegrave)

Strategies and Interventions

Assuming system capacity for linguistic and cultural competence and “cultural accountability”, the following yield promise for improving positive outcomes and reducing disparity for Latino youth and families;

- Annie E. Casey - Family to Family
- Family Group Conferencing
- Differential Response – Family Engagement models
- Cultural broker- cultural mediator models
- Supporting and enhancing kinship care.
- Permanency and teamwork based foster parent training models.
- Advocacy based parent/caregiver training models

Considerations

- “We work from the belief that every person and every community has skills and knowledges, strengths and assets which when mobilized can contribute to the creation of healthy communities. Harnessing these, we believe, is the secret to transforming communities”

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