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**County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

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September 13, 2021

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Bobby D. Cagle
Director

UPDATED RESPONSE TO THE JULY 13, 2021 BOARD MOTION (AGENDA ITEM NO. 29) – TOWARD A COLOR-BLIND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: PILOT PROGRAM FOR SAFEGUARDING AGAINST RACIAL BIAS

On July 13, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion, authored by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, directing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in consultation with the Executive Director of Los Angeles County’s Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI) and in partnership with the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families, to:

1. Pilot blind removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training, and support from experts versed in racial bias and blind removals and commence within 120 days;
2. Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one; and
3. Report back in writing every 90 days after implementation of the pilot, for the next year, on the status of the pilot and conclude with an academic report on the findings of the pilot, as well as recommendations for future implementation, and policy and practice reform.

In addition to the aforementioned, on July 13, 2021, the Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to:

1. Identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training, and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

This serves as the first 60-day report back to the Board, detailing DCFS' pilot implementation plan and the components enumerated in directive one above.

Overview of Blind Removal Process

Data indicates that not enough progress has been made nationally to reduce the disproportionate number of children of color in the foster care system. Despite the years of research on disproportionality and racial bias, and implementing strategies and services focused on meeting the needs of families of color, Black/African American children represent almost one-quarter of the children in foster care in the United States. DCFS has worked to implement strong strategies to reduce disproportionality in Los Angeles County's foster care system. DCFS implemented and monitored an intentional focus on reducing the number of Black/African American children entering care in eight of its Regional Offices using the Four Disciplines of Execution (4DX). The overreaching Wildly Important Goal (WIG) is to safely reduce the number of disproportionately represented African American/Black children entering out of home care by 10%. DCFS is taking deliberate steps toward engaging in courageous conversations Department-wide and seeking advanced training opportunities, recognizing its own emotional and psychological wounds, shedding its organizational biases, and espousing new paradigms, so that the agency may continue evolving and enhancing its practices for the benefit of the children and families it serves. Targeted strategies have been employed to ensure we are intentionally focused on reducing the number of disproportionately represented children in foster care. Strategies advanced to ensure intentionality are:

- Engaging the Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity (ERDD) review teams for an extra assessment to intentionally ensure Black children are not entering care due to risk or complicating factors.
- Each week, Assistant Regional Administrators ensure case conferencing and staffing practices address culturally responsive needs for referrals on Black children.
- Provide training to community and staff monthly on topics such as Safety vs. Risk, Proper Referrals (community and Continuing Services staff) and appropriate service linkage that will lead to practice change and less entry into care for Black children.
- Ensure staff include all appropriate family members (including parternal), community and faith partners, Parents in Partnership (PIP) and prevention and aftercare partners in each Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM).

In the last year, DCFS has made progress in the area of equity with the establishment of the Office of Equity (OOE) and its ongoing efforts to infuse such considerations throughout all aspects of practice. The OOE has helped DCFS develop strategies to reduce the number of children of color entering the child welfare system, and helping DCFS advance Departmental accountability. DCFS is heeding the call from communities of color for social justice and seeking to reconcile anything that does not align with its organizational values of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Black/African American children ages 0-18 makeup about seven percent (7%) of LA County's population, but makeup 26 percent (26%) of the children in Los Angeles County's foster care system, making them disproportionately represented. A careful analysis of DCFS data further reveals that, in some regional offices, Black/African American children are placed in out-of-home care at a rate that is five times greater than others. This is the enigma that DCFS seek to understand, and are examining the root causes of disproportionality among certain communities and developing strategies to safely correct course. The implementation of blind removals is another strategy DCFS will employ to reduce the disproportionality of African American children and youth

Removing all demographic data from case records and only presenting allegations allows a non-biased committee to make decisions based solely on facts and identified safety risk(s). When safety and risk levels are low, children and families can be referred to appropriate community-based resources to assist with meeting their needs.

Pilot Office Selection

The following are the recommendations and options for the regional office selection for the pilot. DCFS recommends the selection of the West Los Angeles (West LA) regional office. The Department is in current discussions with the board officers on the pilot office selection.

The Compton-Carson, Hawthorne, Vermont Corridor, and Wateridge Regional Offices implemented the Four Disciplines of Execution (4DX) in January of 2021 with a focus on safely reducing entries for Black/African American children by 10%. As of August 2021, there has been an overall reduction of 47% across all four offices. Currently, 91 fewer Black/African American children entered out-of-home care compared to the same time last year. The core of the 4DX work is rooted in authentically seeing and addressing families through a cultural lens. This leads to addressing implicit biases in policy and practice, thus moving DCFS staff toward embracing a culture of safety, equity, and community. Incorporating, or shifting, to a methodology that negates authentically seeing and addressing families through a cultural lens is contradictory to helping staff make the adaptive change toward leaning into a family's natural strengths, focusing on natural supports and activating community partners as resources to mitigate Black/African American children from entering care. To maintain the integrity and fidelity of the 4DX model in the four offices listed above, the West LA Regional Office has been chosen as the pilot site for blind removals. Black/African American children makeup 6%

of West LA child population (aged 0-18) and makeup 29% of all entries into care for the office. Black/African American children are 4.7 times more likely to enter foster care compared to their representation in the service area. Compared to their white counterparts, Black/African-American children are 10.7 times more likely to enter foster care. The West LA regional office catchment area consists of 35 zip codes representing over 144,000 children. Of that, 18 zip codes are in Supervisorial District 2, and 17 of these 18 zip codes account for 92% of all foster care entries for children residing in the West LA service area.

There are pros/cons to piloting the model in an office where 4DX is not present. In general, the challenges with piloting blind removal in an office engaging in 4DX come down to data contamination and staffing capacity.

If we can pilot blind removal in an office without 4DX, the following pros are noted:

- Staff can focus on the model without having two competing programs in the same office
- Staff may be less overwhelmed if they only have to focus on one model within the same office
- Staff training is not convoluted with 4DX
- Supervision becomes streamlined - ie. Supervisors are not supervising implementation of two models
- Data collection and results are not contaminated by another protocol

Notably, we cannot apply both 4DX and blind removal to a single case—so that could help with the contamination issues, but could become confusing in terms of the staff supervision and training because the workers would also have to be different. Additionally, to the extent that staff have already been trained on 4DX, it may be challenging for them to shift to another model.

Overlapping Supervisorial District 2 Zip Codes in West LA:

90019 – Mid City	90056 – Ladera Heights
90025 – Sawtelle	90064 – Cheviot Hills/ Rancho Park
90034 – Palms (LA)	90066 – Mar Vista
90035 – West Fairfax	90094 – Playa Vista
90036 – Park La Brea	90211 – Beverly Hills
90045 – Westchester	90230 – Culver City
90048 – West Beverly	90232 – Culver City
90291 – Venice	90293 – Playa Del Rey*
90292 – Marina Del Rey	90405 – Santa Monica

West LA serves an economically and racially diverse population. Diversity in population allows for a more insightful examination.

West LA has recently identified ERDD Champions to support equity work with staff.

West LA does not have an established ERDD framework present as other offices and will likely require intensive coaching, mentoring, and training to build equity review-related capacity among staff and leadership.

West LA disproportionality and disparity numbers are some of the highest in the Department, though overall entries of Black children are low compared to similar-sized offices.

Disproportionality/Data:

West LA Populations	General Population	% of Population	Removal Count	% of Total	Disproportionality Index	Disparity Index
Hispanic/Latino	34,254	24%	92	39%	1.7	3.8
African/American/Black	9,023	6%	68	29%	4.7	10.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	18,347	13%	15	6%	0.5	1.2
American Indian/Alaskan Native	174	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
White	82,511	57%	58	25%	0.4	1.0
Total	144,309	100%	233	100%		

Communication/Feedback loop with ARDI and UCLA Pritzker Center

The blind removal board motion requires DCFS to report back in writing every 90 days after implementation of the pilot, for the next year, on the status of the pilot and conclude with an academic report on the findings of the pilot, as well as recommendations for future implementation, and policy and practice reform. In addition to the 90-day report back to the Board the Office of Equity will schedule monthly cadence of accountability calls with ARDI and UCLA staff to monitor and track the progress of implementation.

Blind Removal Model for LA County

The primary intervention during the Blind Removal process is the case presentation to the Blind Removal team. This presentation must be a safety-focused, family-centered, and collaboratively-based process for decision-making. All good assessments in child welfare must take a balanced approach to each family’s circumstances. This avoids what is often referred to as naive practice (relying too heavily on family strengths without taking into consideration serious safety threats thereby jeopardizing child safety), or problem saturated practice (relying too heavily on the presenting problems without looking at possible protective factors that support child safety and mitigate

removal). This balanced and thorough approach will include all the pertinent parts of each family's story including its history of strengths, previous protective actions, other protective factors, current safety threats, future risk, and complicating factors, while at the same time blinding any information that could lead to conclusions by the team about the race or ethnicity of the family. To do this effectively during case presentations, there must be a neutral facilitator who facilitates and supports the social worker and supervisor before each presentation, to ensure that the decision-making process is thorough, collaborative, and holds true to the intended model.

It is expected that each presentation will take up to 45 minutes and will require at least 1.5 hours of prep time by the facilitator. The facilitator will then hand over the notes from the presentation to the social worker and supervisor for documentation into the Child Welfare System/Case Management Services (CWS/CMS), as well as to the evaluators on the Blind Removal pilot. The team may consist of local contracted providers, community cultural brokers, or faith-based leaders, in addition to seasoned DCFS staff outside of the chaincommand of the social worker and supervisor assigned to each case. Additional participants may include County Counsel, LADL, and CLC. Blind Removal team participants will be part of the 90-day report back.

Referral Selection for Blind Removal Process

Referral Type: DCFS has three priority response types for referrals generated by the Child Protection Hotline (CPH): (1) Expedited Response Referrals; (2) Immediate Response Referrals; and (3) Five-Day Response Referrals. For this pilot, Immediate Response Referrals and Five-day Response Referrals will go through the Blind Removal process.

Immediate Response (IR) Referrals: IRs require an in-person response to be initiated as soon as possible, and no later than the end of the shift in which the CSW received the referral. A referral will be assigned as "immediate" under the following circumstances:

- Imminent danger to a child is likely, such as physical pain, injury, disability, severe emotional harm, or death;
- Law enforcement personnel reporting the referral to the CPH states the child(ren) is/are at immediate risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation;
- It is determined by the CPH CSW that the child(ren) referred by a law enforcement agency is/are at immediate risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Five-Day Referrals: A "Five-Day" date specified referral requires an in-person response to be initiated within five business days of the referral being generated by the CPH, or by a specified date. A referral will be assigned as a "Five-Day" under the following circumstances:

- The CPH CSW has determined that an in-person immediate response is not appropriate;

- Law enforcement reporting the referral to the CPH does not state the child(ren) is/are at immediate risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation and the CPH CSW determines that an in-person immediate investigation is not appropriate.
- A referral will be assigned as a "Five-Day by specified date" when a threat of specific harm is not immediate but is expected to occur before the fifth business day.

Exemptions: Referrals that are exempt from the Blind Removal process include any expedited referrals. These referrals include circumstances such as law enforcement involvement or when immediate removal is needed to protect the safety of a child(ren). Additional exemptions include referrals where photos of the child(ren) are required to document physical injuries such as marks or bruises.

Forming the West LA Regional Office Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity (ERDD) Review Committee

Currently, West LA does not have an ERDD review team. Creating an ERDD review team will help us identify a family's strengths and natural supports as options to keep a child(ren) safely at home. This process will also help DCFS identify themes and patterns in practice that contribute to the overrepresentation of Black/African American children in DCFS care. Removing demographic data for review is just the start to reducing the number of Black/African American children from coming into care disproportionality. The deep-dive review that will be conducted by the ERDD review team will help West LA deepen its learning of how to serve families through community-based supports. This work creates spaces for partnered thinking. West LA Regional Office staff will have the support of their in-house ERDD review team to help them think through the cultural nuances and safety aspects of referrals after a decision has been made. The ERDD review team will help DCFS/OOE tease out the practices that move us toward keeping families with low safety and risk levels safe at home. Engaging community providers will be the key to successfully implementing Blind Removals. DCFS needs community providers to assist in serving children and families after referral outcomes have been determined based on the allegations presented to the Blind Removal review team.

Union Consultation

DCFS, the union, and labor partners may have to be engaged if the Blind Removal process will result in a significant impact on workload/caseload. DCFS will need to determine, based on a comprehensive assessment, the time and effort needed to prepare cases for review and presentation before the Blind Removal team to render a decision(s). An assessment of this type will help DCFS/OOE better understand how this process could potentially impact CSW and Supervisor's daily tasks and affect workload demands. Said evaluation will be completed before the November 1, 2021 implementation start date. However, if the implementation of blind removals requires

formal consultation with the union, this may impact implementation timelines. The findings of this evaluation/assessment will be outlined in future reports to the Board.

Training

The UCLA Pritzker Center will be responsible for training and preparing DCFS staff for the Blind Removal work. UCLA Pritzker and DCFS will work together to develop training materials for staff.

Evaluation and Cadence – Development of an Evaluation Plan (Dr. Franke), Meeting with UCLA Pritzker Center

DCFS will partner with the UCLA Pritzker Center to develop an evaluation plan and build a cadence of accountability to ensure the integrity of the Blind Removal process. The evaluation plan will include a summary report of findings upon the pilot's completion. Evaluation tools and strategies to ensure accountability will be outlined in future Board report backs.

Directive Regarding Funding for Training and Evaluation

In accordance with the Board's July 13, 2021 directive, DCFS/OOE will follow up with the CEO on its efforts to identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training, and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the children and youth from all marginalized communities who are in care, and especially the overrepresentation of Black/African American children and youth under DCFS custody. If you have any questions or need additional information, you may contact me or your staff may contact Aldo Marin, Board Liaison, at (213) 351-5530.

BDC:GP
MJ:kjh:je



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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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Fifth District

May 2, 2022

To: Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Brandon Nichols
Interim Director

SECOND PROGRESS REPORT: TOWARD A COLOR-BLIND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: PILOT PROGRAM FOR SAFEGUARDING AGAINST RACIAL BIAS (ITEM NO. 29, AGENDA OF JULY 13, 2021)

On July 13, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion, authored by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, directing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in consultation with the Executive Director of Los Angeles County's Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI), and in partnership with the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families, to:

1. Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training, and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days;
2. Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one; and
3. Report back in writing every 90 days after implementation of the pilot, for the next year, on the status of the pilot and conclude with an academic report on the findings of the pilot, as well as recommendations for future implementation, and policy and practice reform.

In addition to the aforementioned, on July 13, 2021, the Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to:

1. Identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training, and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Background

As stated in the July 13, 2021 Board Motion, though numerous efforts have been directed towards reducing disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system, inequities persist amongst Black and Latino families within the County. Data trends indicate that not enough progress has been made to reduce the disproportionate number of children of color in the foster care system. In particular, Black/African American children continue to be disproportionately represented at most, if not all, key decision points of the child welfare system. Black/African American children ages 0-17 represent 7.6 percent of the County's child population, yet they make up 27.1 percent of the children in care. To this end, DCFS has continued to develop and implement targeted strategies that intentionally focus on reducing the disproportionate number of Black/African American children in foster care.

In addition to countless years of collaborative, intentional and transparent work with sister County departments, community and faith-based partners and other stakeholders by way of the well-established Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity workgroup, as well as standing up the Office of Equity (OOE) in 2020, DCFS is also taking deliberate steps to engage its staff and partners in courageous conversations around equity, diversity and inclusion. And, in doing so, the Department recognizes and addresses both institutional and internal biases by seeking advanced cultural training opportunities, enhancing practice using an equity lens and espousing new anti-racism initiatives that will ultimately lead to a reimaged and transformed organizational culture for both our workforce and the children and families we serve.

DCFS is currently in the process of implementing the Blind Removals Pilot study, which is a relatively new strategy in child welfare that has been implemented in Nassau County, New York child welfare system. Given the successful research findings from New York's study, as stated in the Board's Motion, which revealed a significant reduction in disparities among Black children in foster care specifically around entries as well as positive practice implications around the increased awareness of institutionalized racism and the presence of implicit bias in one's practice, DCFS is excited about piloting Blind Removals in hopes of achieving similar outcomes that will lead to the reduction of disproportionate representation and disparities among Black/African American children and youth in our foster care system. The Blind Removals process involves the removal of all demographic data from case records and only presenting concerns about child safety, allowing for an impartial committee to make informed decisions that are based solely on facts and identified safety risk(s). When safety and risk levels are low, children and families can be referred to appropriate community-based resources to assist with meeting their needs.

Current Efforts

In response to the Board's Motion, DCFS engaged the Executive Director of ARDI, the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families (UCLA Pritzker Center) and other key expert staff and partners, as appropriate, to brainstorm and develop an implementation plan for executing the Blind Removals Pilot for identified DCFS regional office(s). In addition, DCFS also consulted with its Union and Labor Relations partners given the potential

workload/caseload impact around this effort and continues to have frequent conversations in support of moving this initiative forward.

This report serves as the second report back to the Board and summarizes the collaborative efforts and current progress underway on implementing the above-mentioned directives regarding the Blind Removals Pilot as detailed below.

Directive 1: Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training, and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days.

As previously mentioned in the September 13, 2021 report, through the Department's establishment of the OOE and as part of OOE's overarching work around addressing racial disproportionality and disparity, DCFS has adopted and employed the Four Disciplines of Execution (4DX), which is a framework utilized by organizations to increase strategic execution of their most important priorities. The primary *Wildly Important Goal* that has been identified under the 4DX framework is to safely reduce the number of disproportionately represented Black/African American children entering out-of-home care by 10 percent. It is important to mention that an analysis of DCFS' data on disproportionality and disparity around entries into care revealed that some regional offices had higher disproportionate rates of entries into care for Black/African American children compared to other ethnicities. As such, in an effort to initiate the Department's pilot for Blind Removals, and as previously reported, the West Los Angeles (West LA) regional office, and subsequently the Compton-Carson regional office, were selected for the pilot to ensure a sufficient sample size during the initial pilot phase.

West LA Office Overview

The West LA regional office catchment area consists of 35 zip codes representing approximately 144,000 children. Black/African American children comprise six (6) percent of the child population ages 0-17, yet make up 32 percent of all entries into foster care for the office. In addition, Black/African American children are 5.3 times more likely than White children to enter foster care in this service area.

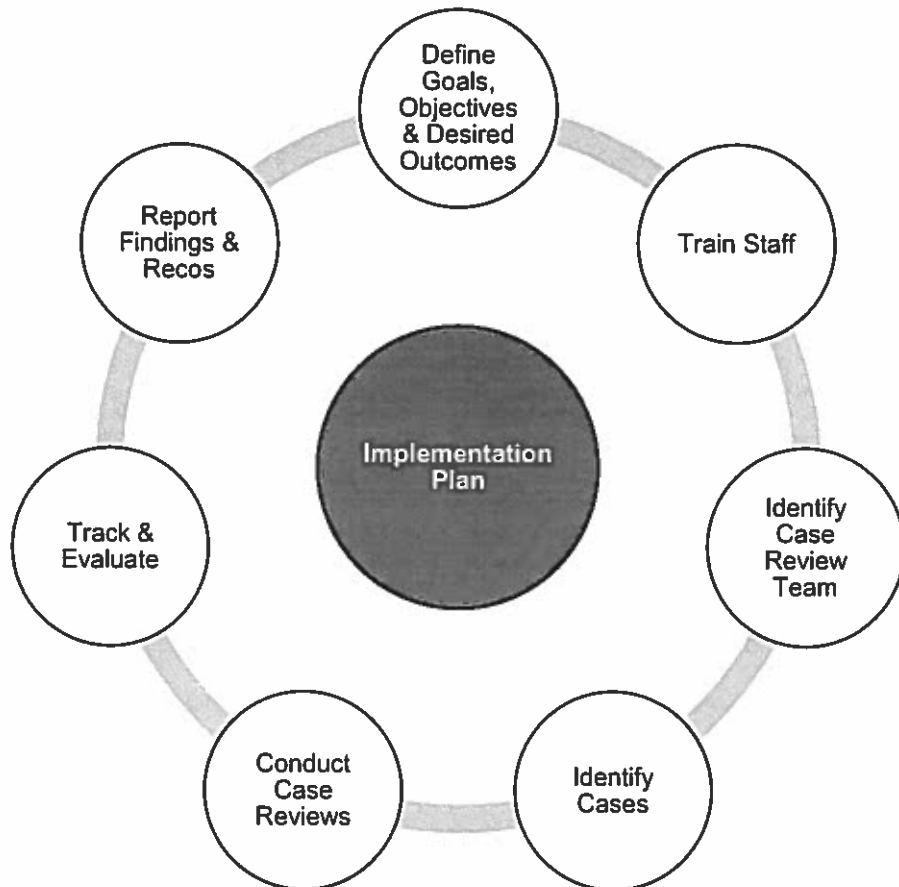
Compton-Carson Office Overview

The Compton-Carson regional office catchment area consists of seven (7) zip codes representing approximately 94,000 children. Black/African American children comprise 18 percent of the child population ages 0-17, yet make up 35 percent of all entries into foster care for the office. In addition, Black/African American children are 1.94 times more likely than White children to enter foster care in this service area.

Directive 2: Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one.

On September 7, 2021, DCFS established a Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team comprised of subject matter experts from the participating pilot offices, the UCLA Pritzker Center and other key departmental staff and stakeholders. The designated team is responsible for developing the implementation plan and has provided an overview outlining the following core components accordingly (see Figure 1 below):

Figure 1. *Blind Removal Implementation Plan Overview*



For the full version of the Blind Removals Implementation Plan, see Attachment I.

The Board also directed the CEO to address the following:

Identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training, and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

The Department, in concert with the CEO, is collaborating with the Office of Child Protection (OCP) and the UCLA Pritzker Center on the efforts detailed below to address the various aspects of this directive (e.g., evaluation, training, etc.).

Identification of Funding to Support the Evaluation

DCFS is happy to confirm that the OCP will be financing the Blind Removals Pilot evaluation component in the amount of \$150,000, which is being provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center.

Training Plan

On March 1, 2022, DCFS received the amended budget requested from the UCLA Pritzker Center and is actively working with them on the logistics for the provision of technical assistance related to the Blind Removals project. In addition, DCFS has secured a vendor for the development of the training curriculum and delivery of training to staff. The training is a 2-part virtual series that will be offered to a maximum of 50 DCFS staff for which signups have commenced. The training consists of: learning how to gather, organize and analyze information using the Consultation Information Sharing Framework (CISF) tool; learning how to facilitate and engage participation in the CISF process; and conducting a balanced assessment as guided by the CISF tool, DCFS Coaching Guide and the Safety Skills Learning Lab strategies. Further, training sessions have been identified and will take place during the first two (2) weeks of June 2022.

Evaluation Plan and Cadence of Accountability

DCFS will collaborate with the UCLA Pritzker Center on developing an evaluation plan, including the development of evaluation tools and strategies, as well as building a cadence of accountability to ensure the integrity of the Blind Removals process. The evaluation plan will include a summary report of findings upon the pilot's completion. Currently, the Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team has standing bi-monthly cadence meetings to discuss pre-implementation activities.

Next Steps

On January 13, 2022, DCFS convened an initial meet and consult with its Union and Labor Relations partners to discuss the possible workload impact of implementing the Blind Removals process. At that time, it was determined that more information was needed about the process of preparing and presenting cases, the number of cases that would go through the Blind Removals process each month, and the frequency of convening with our Union and Labor Relations partners to keep them informed of the Department's progress with the pilot. As such, DCFS is actively working on scheduling a follow up meeting to continue

Each Supervisor
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discussions around implementation of the pilot and its potential impacts on workloads/caseloads. Union and Labor Relations partners have indicated that they will be available for a follow up meeting once they have resolved unrelated work matters.

DCFS is also actively continuing to finalize the Blind Removals model, prepare the training materials, and identify data metrics for the tracking of outcomes. Additionally, the Department will continue to engage and work with the Executive Director of Los Angeles County's ARDI to ensure the above mentioned efforts also align with the ARDI initiative.

Lastly, upon completion of training, DCFS anticipates launching the pilot in the two (2) identified regional offices. The West LA regional office will start in July 2022, and the Compton-Carson regional office will start in September 2022.

Conclusion

We thank your Board for its continued support and bold commitment to ensuring equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the County of Los Angeles and especially amongst the vulnerable populations that we serve who are marginalized and disproportionately represented in our child welfare system. We look forward to updating you on our efforts during the next report back on August 1, 2022.

If you have any questions or need additional information, you may call me, or your staff may contact Aldo Marin, Board Liaison, at (213) 351-5530.

BN:DY:CMM:AJ:JE
KL:AT:CR:jc

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Office of Child Protection
UCLA Pritzker Center

Attachment

ATTACHMENT 1

Blind Removals Pilot | LA County DCFS

Implementation Plan

Goals, Objectives & Desired Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine if the process of Blind Removals decrease the disproportionate number of removal decisions for Black/African American children being removed from their homes. • Maintain Black/African American children safely in their homes when possible.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train participants on Blind Removal process. • Train Blind Removal Facilitators on the case consultation framework and identified tracking tool(s). • Provide coaching to staff on implicit bias.
Blind Removals Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral facilitator • Emergency Response Children Social Workers • Emergency Response Supervising Children Social Workers • Coach Developers • Emergency Response Assistant Regional Administrator • Others TBD
Case Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate Response and 5-Day Response referrals are eligible for case presentation granted that an appropriate assessment has been made to determine that the child can be safely left in the home. • Referrals that are exempt from the Blind Removals process include expedited referrals. These referrals include circumstances such as exigency and approved expedited removal warrants as well as law enforcement involvement where immediate removal is needed to protect the safety of a child(ren). Additional exemptions include referrals where photos of the child(ren) are required to document physical injuries such as marks or bruises or others where there is an immediate safety threat where a safety plan cannot mitigate the danger.
Case Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A safety-focused, family-centered, and collaboratively based forum to make an informed decision about the case. • A 45-minute presentation that will include all pertinent parts of each family's story including its history of strengths, previous protective actions, other protective factors, current safety threats, future risk(s) and complicating factors.
Cadence & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication/feedback loop with ARDI, OCP and UCLA Pritzker Center • Cadence of Accountability calls with ARDI, OCP and UCLA to monitor and track progress as well as discuss any challenges, barriers and successes. • Analysis of longitudinal administrative data (2018-2022) from the Child Protection Hotline and participating regional offices. • Qualitative interviews with regional staff and Blind Removals Team.
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present evaluation findings, recommendations and next steps.



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August 1, 2022

To: Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, Chair
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Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Brandon T. Nichols
Director

THIRD PROGRESS REPORT: TOWARD A COLOR-BLIND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: PILOT PROGRAM FOR SAFEGUARDING AGAINST RACIAL BIAS (ITEM NO. 29, AGENDA OF JULY 13, 2021)

On July 13, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion, authored by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, directing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in consultation with the Executive Director of Los Angeles County's Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI) and in partnership with the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families, to:

1. Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days;
2. Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one; and
3. Report in writing every 90 days after implementation of the pilot, for the next year, on the status of the pilot and conclude with an academic report on the findings of the pilot as well as recommendations for future implementation and policy and practice reform.

In addition to the aforementioned, on July 13, 2021, the Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to:

1. Identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Background

As stated in the July 13, 2021 Board Motion, though numerous efforts have been directed toward reducing disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system, inequities persist for Black and Latino families within the County. Data trends indicate that not enough progress has been made to reduce the disproportionate number of children of color in the foster care system. In particular, Black/African American children continue to be disproportionately represented at most, if not all, key decision points of the child welfare system. Black/African American children ages 0-17 represent 7.6 percent of the County's child population, yet they make up 27.1 percent of the children in care. To this end, DCFS has continued to develop and implement targeted strategies that intentionally focus on reducing the disproportionate number of Black/African American children in foster care.

In addition to several years of collaborative, intentional and transparent work with sister County departments, community, faith-based partners and other stakeholders by way of the well-established Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity workgroup and the newly established Office of Equity (OOE) in 2020, DCFS is also taking deliberate steps to engage its staff and partners in courageous conversations around equity, diversity and inclusion. In doing so, the Department recognizes and seeks to address both institutional and internal biases by seeking advanced cultural training opportunities, enhancing practice using an equity lens and exploring and collaborating with new initiatives that will lead to a reimagined and transformed organizational culture for both our workforce and the children and families we serve.

DCFS is currently in the process of implementing the Blind Removals Pilot Study, which focuses on a relatively new strategy in child welfare that has been implemented in the child welfare system of Nassau County, New York. Given the successful research findings from New York's study, specifically around increased awareness of institutionalized racism and the presence of implicit bias in practice, DCFS is excited about piloting Blind Removals in the hopes of achieving similar outcomes that will lead to a reduction in the disproportionate representation of Black/African American children and youth in our foster care system. The Blind Removals process involves a case conference where all demographic data from the case record is removed and only concerns about child safety are discussed. This allows an impartial committee to make informed decisions based solely on facts and identified safety risk(s). When safety and risk levels are low, children and families can be referred to appropriate community-based resources to assist with meeting their needs.

Current Efforts

In response to the Board's Motion, DCFS engaged the Executive Director of ARDI, the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families (UCLA Pritzker Center) and other key expert staff and partners, as appropriate, to brainstorm and develop an implementation plan for executing the Blind Removals Pilot for identified DCFS regional office(s). Given the potential workload/caseload impacts around this effort, DCFS also consulted with its Union and Labor Relations partners and continues to solicit conversations with these partners in support of moving the initiative forward.

This report serves as the third report back to the Board and summarizes the collaborative efforts and current progress on implementing the above-mentioned directives regarding the Blind Removals Pilot.

Directive 1: Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days.

As previously mentioned in the September 13, 2021 report, through the Department's establishment of the OOE and as part of the OOE's overarching work to address racial disproportionality and disparity, DCFS adopted and employed the Four Disciplines of Execution (4DX) framework to increase strategic execution of its important priorities. The primary *Wildly Important Goal* identified under the 4DX framework is to safely reduce the number of disproportionately represented Black/African American children entering out-of-home care by 10 percent over the period of a year. This strategy is currently being employed in seven regional offices.

It is important to note that, in order to maintain the validity of the Blind Removals Pilot, this strategy will not be piloted in the offices that are currently engaged in 4DX work. As such, the West Los Angeles (West LA) and Compton-Carson regional offices were selected for the Blind Removals Pilot. These offices have the additional benefit of serving a large enough population of Black/African American children to allow for sufficient sample sizes during the pilot phase.

West LA Office Overview

The West LA regional office catchment area consists of 35 zip codes representing approximately 144,000 children. Black/African American children comprise 6 percent of the child population ages 0-17 in this region yet make up 32 percent of all entries into foster care for the office.

Compton-Carson Office Overview

The Compton-Carson regional office catchment area consists of seven zip codes representing approximately 94,000 children. Black/African American children comprise 18 percent of the child population ages 0-17 yet make up 35 percent of all entries into foster care for the office.

Directive 2: Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one.

On September 7, 2021, DCFS established a Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team comprised of subject matter experts from the participating pilot offices, the UCLA Pritzker Center and other key departmental staff and stakeholders. The designated team is responsible for developing the implementation plan, which was initially provided in our May 2, 2022, report back (see Attachment I).

The information below provides a comprehensive status update on the implementation plan, including an outline of the evaluation, training and support components.

Goals/Objectives/Desired Outcomes

The primary goal of the Blind Removals Pilot is to evaluate the impact of the removal of sociodemographic information from DCFS referrals where children are at risk for entry into foster care. The identified referrals will be reviewed by an oversight team, and a determination will be made on whether or not to proceed with an investigation. The overarching desired outcome is to see if there will be a reduction in the number of Black/African American children and youth entering the foster care system as well as demonstrate an enhanced use of our Shared Core Practice Model in addressing disproportionate outcomes for our marginalized populations.

Training

DCFS has worked closely with the UCLA Pritzker Center to design and launch the following training series to support the Blind Removals Pilot:

1. **Introduction to Blind Removals:** This one-hour webinar served as an introduction to the Blind Removals process and addressed its basic principles and steps, with a TED Talk by Dr. Jessica Pryce on the implementation of this strategy in Nassau County, New York. The webinar also covered the logistics of the Blind Removals process in each participating office, including scheduling meetings, completing the consultation framework and meeting with Coach Developers. It is important to note that this webinar was made available to all staff in the respective

pilot offices to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the Blind Removals process.

The West LA regional office launched this training in early July 2022. The Compton-Carson regional office is scheduled to launch this training in early August 2022.

- 2. Blind Removals Facilitator Training:** The Blind Removals Facilitator Training was provided by Candice Kimball on June 2 and 7, 2022, and was intended for participating facilitators, coaches and scribes. While the training covered the logistics of the Blind Removals process, it also served as a Shared Core Practice Model refresher, emphasizing the importance of keeping conversations about children and families balanced between safety, worries, protective factors and natural and/or community supports. In this training, participants practiced the Blind Removals process with a case vignette and learned how to establish the family's team and address safety, worries, history and protective factors in a balanced fashion.
- 3. Blind Removals Debrief:** Dr. Tyrone Howard from the UCLA Pritzker Center will facilitate a Blind Removals debrief session, which is designed to provide DCFS staff with an opportunity to unpack the process and provide feedback, including reflection and learning opportunities from the Blind Removals process by discussing it with their colleagues and other experts. This session will follow a "coaching" structure, with Dr. Howard addressing implicit bias as it arises in conversations and reflections on recent practice.

Blind Removals Process/Supporting Materials

Following a rigorous process of expert consultation, stakeholder engagement and planning, DCFS has developed a thorough and testable Blind Removals Pilot process, which is comprised of the following steps:

- 1. Pre-Consultation Phase:** During the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS' Children's Social Workers (CSWs), Supervising CSWs (SCSWs) and Assistant Regional Administrators (ARAs) will discuss new referrals, identified safety threats, and protective factors as well as address the potential for detention, including the use of exigency, to ensure child safety, as appropriate.

It is also important to note that, during this phase, it is impossible for the case-carrying CSW, SCSW and/or ARA to remain completely "blind" to the child and family's sociodemographic background since the investigation process itself involves engaging with the child(ren), family and collaterals and exploring the family's history and natural networks. During the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS

staff must also determine the exigency of potential harm to children and, in doing so, determine if it is necessary to pursue appropriate legal documentation (i.e., warrants).

In situations where the case-carrying CSW, SCSW and ARA have determined it is probable, but not exigent, that they detain a child in order to keep them safe, the Blind Removals process will be initiated. If it is determined that a child is at immediate risk of harm, the child and family will not be eligible to participate in the Blind Removals process as immediate action may be required. At this point, the CSW will contact the Blind Removals scheduler and begin preparing for a Blind Removals presentation.

To support staff in preparing for a Blind Removals presentation, the DCFS OOE, in consultation with practice experts, will provide coaching support from trained coach developers who will help staff develop concrete worry statements, as well as thoroughly consider and be able to describe a family's protective factors, natural networks and community supports. During this preparation phase, coach developers will also assist DCFS staff in removing all sociodemographic information from their description of the family.

- 2. Blind Removals Presentation in West LA Office:** Subsequent to the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff will present a qualifying referral to the Review Team, which consists of staff from the DCFS' Continuous Quality Improvement and Risk Management Divisions, a countywide Coach and County Counsel. These individuals will review the decision made by the case-carrying CSW regarding whether or not to detain the child(ren) in the referral under review. The final decision will be made by the CSW, in consultation with the SCSW and ARA.

DCFS staff will present a referral to the Review Team without any mention of the child and family's sociodemographic information and with an intentional effort to balance the conversation between clearly articulated concerns about child safety, protective factors and supports. This focus will allow the impartial committee to make informed recommendations based solely on the facts presented.

- 3. Regional Administrator (RA) Consultation (Optional):** In situations where the Blind Removals team is unable to agree or make a recommendation or where the CSW, SCSW and ARA disagree with the Blind Removals Committee, the RA will make the final decision. Consistent with the Blind Removals presentation approach as detailed in step two above, this consultation should rely as much as possible on an unbiased consideration of safety, worries, protective factors and supports.

To support movement through the various phases of the Blind Removals process, DCFS has developed a number of supporting materials, including:

1. Blind Removals Process Map
2. Blind Removals Presentation Group Agreements (in review)
3. Blind Removals Presentation Agenda
4. Blind Removals Presentation Consultation Framework

In addition to the two aforementioned directives, the Board also instructed the CEO to identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

As noted in the May 2, 2022 report, the Office of Child Protection (OCP) will finance the Blind Removals Pilot evaluation, which will be paid to the UCLA Pritzker Center. At this time, the contract has been drafted and is pending final approval by the UCLA Pritzker Center.

Evaluation Plan and Cadence of Accountability

To ensure that the OCP, ARDI executives and our evaluation partners from the UCLA Pritzker Center remain informed of the pilot progress and are able to provide input, regular monthly steering committee meetings were initiated in May 2022 and have been ongoing since that time.

DCFS has also collaborated with the UCLA Pritzker Center on the development of an evaluation plan, including the development of evaluation tools and strategies as well as a cadence of accountability to ensure the integrity of the Blind Removals process. The final evaluation plan will include a summary report of findings upon the pilot's completion. The Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team also has a standing bimonthly cadence meeting to discuss pre-evaluation activities.

In addition, DCFS has gathered baseline data for the UCLA Pritzker Center to help them prepare for sample selection. DCFS is also working to create a special project code in its Child Welfare Services/Case Management System that will enable us and UCLA to track data measures and explore outcomes longitudinally for referrals that undergo the Blind Removals process.

Stakeholder Engagement

As stated in our May 2, 2022 report, on January 13, 2022, the Department had its initial meet and consult with its Union and Labor Relations partners to discuss the possible workload impact of implementing the Blind Removals Process and will continue to engage

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its Union and Labor Relations partners, as deemed necessary, in support of moving the initiative forward.

Throughout the implementation process, DCFS has engaged with ARDI's Executive Director to ensure the above-mentioned efforts align with ARDI's initiatives. In addition, ARDI representatives are core invitees to the monthly steering committee meetings initiated in May 2022. As the pilot moves forward, we will continue to discuss ways to connect the Blind Removals Pilot process to additional diversity, equity and inclusion efforts that are occurring countywide.

Additionally, the California Tribal Family Coalition has expressed interest in learning more about the Blind Removals process to better understand how it might affect tribal interests. The Coalition's representatives have been invited to participate in the steering committee meetings as well.

Next Steps & Conclusion

A simulation of the Blind Removals process at the West LA office occurred on July 27, 2022. The mock presentation allowed the office to test their process as well as make the necessary adjustments before the official launch of the pilot. A simulation of Compton-Carson's Blind Removals process is being scheduled, with a tentative date in September 2022 and the official launch to follow upon a successful mock presentation.

We thank the Board for its continued support and bold commitment to ensuring equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the County of Los Angeles and especially amongst the vulnerable populations that we serve. We look forward to updating you on our efforts in the next progress report on November 1, 2022.

If you have any questions or need additional information, you may call me, or your staff may contact Aldo Marin, Board Liaison, at (213) 371-6052.

BTN:CMM:AJ:JE
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c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Office of Child Protection
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County of Los Angeles
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Fifth District

November 2, 2022

To: Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Brandon T. Nichols
Director

FOURTH PROGRESS REPORT: TOWARD A COLOR-BLIND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: PILOT PROGRAM FOR SAFEGUARDING AGAINST RACIAL BIAS (ITEM NO. 29, AGENDA OF JULY 13, 2021)

On July 13, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion, authored by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, directing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in consultation with the Executive Director of Los Angeles County's Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI) and in partnership with the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families, to:

1. Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days;
2. Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one; and
3. Report in writing every 90 days after implementation of the pilot, for the next year, on the status of the pilot and conclude with an academic report on the findings of the pilot, as well as recommendations for future implementation and policy and practice reform.

In addition to the aforementioned, on July 13, 2021, the Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to:

1. Identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Background

As stated in the July 13, 2021 Board Motion, though numerous efforts have been directed toward reducing disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system, inequities persist for Black and Latino families within the County. Data trends indicate that not enough progress has been made to reduce the disproportionate number of children of color in the foster care system. In particular, Black/African American children continue to be disproportionately represented at most, if not all, key decision points of the child welfare system. Black/African American children ages 0-17 represent 7.6 percent of the County's child population, yet they make up 27 percent of the children in care. To this end, DCFS has continued to develop and implement targeted strategies that intentionally focus on reducing the disproportionate number of Black/African American children in foster care.

In addition to many years of collaborative, intentional and transparent work with sister County departments, community, faith-based partners, and other stakeholders by way of the well-established Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity workgroup and the newly established Office of Equity (OOE) in 2020, DCFS is also taking deliberate steps to engage its staff and partners in courageous conversations around equity, diversity and inclusion. In doing so, the Department recognizes and aims to address both institutional and internal biases by seeking advanced cultural training opportunities, enhancing practice using an equity lens, and exploring and collaborating with new initiatives that will lead to a reimagined and transformed organizational culture for both our workforce and the children and families we serve.

DCFS is currently in the process of piloting the Blind Removals Pilot Study, which is a relatively new strategy in child welfare that has been implemented in the child welfare system of Nassau County, New York. Given the successful research findings from New York's study, specifically around increased awareness of institutionalized racism and the presence of implicit bias in practice, DCFS is excited about piloting Blind Removals in the hopes of achieving similar outcomes that will lead to a reduction in the disproportionate representation of Black/African American children and youth in our foster care system. The Blind Removals process involves a case conference where all demographic data from the case record is removed and only concerns about child safety are discussed. This process allows an impartial team to make informed decisions based solely on facts and identified safety risk(s). When safety and risk levels are low, children and families can be referred to appropriate community-based resources to assist with meeting their needs.

Current Efforts

In response to the Board's Motion, DCFS engaged the Executive Director of ARDI, the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families (UCLA Pritzker Center), and other key expert staff and partners, as appropriate, to brainstorm and develop an implementation plan for executing the Blind Removals Pilot for the two identified DCFS regional offices. In addition, DCFS also consulted with its Union and Labor Relations partners, given the potential workload/caseload impacts around this effort. We continue to solicit conversations with these partners in support of moving the initiative forward.

This report serves as the fourth report back to the Board and summarizes the collaborative efforts and current progress underway in implementing the above-mentioned directives regarding the Blind Removals Pilot.

Directive 1: Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days.

West LA Office Overview

The West LA regional office catchment area consists of 35 zip codes representing approximately 171,000 children. Black/African American children comprise six percent of the child population ages 0-17 in this region yet make up 32 percent of all entries into foster care for the office.

Compton-Carson Office Overview

The Compton-Carson regional office catchment area consists of seven zip codes representing approximately 109,000 children. Black/African American children comprise 17 percent of the child population ages 0-17 yet make up 35 percent of all entries into foster care for the office.

At the writing of this report, both the West LA and Compton-Carson regional offices have fully implemented the Blind Removals Pilot for current investigations of families prior to the removal of children utilizing the clearly delineated steps and procedures, which are described in detail below under Directive 2.

Directive 2: Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one.

On September 7, 2021, DCFS established a Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team consisting of subject matter experts from the participating pilot offices, the UCLA Pritzker Center and other key departmental staff and stakeholders. The designated team is

responsible for developing and executing the implementation plan, which was initially provided in our May 2, 2022, report back.

The following information provides a comprehensive status update on the implementation plan including an outline of the evaluation, training and support components.

Goals/Objectives/Desired Outcomes

The primary goal of the Blind Removals Pilot is to evaluate the impact of a DCFS practice change where sociodemographic information is removed from DCFS referrals where children are at risk for entry into foster care, and where an oversight team reviews the factors leading to removal, ultimately providing a recommendation on whether or not to proceed with detention. The overarching desired outcome is to see if there will be a reduction in the entries of Black/African American children and youth into the foster care system as well as demonstrate an enhanced use of our Shared Core Practice Model in addressing disproportionate outcomes for our marginalized populations.

Training

DCFS has worked closely with the UCLA Pritzker Center to design and launch the following training series to support the Blind Removals Pilot:

1. **Introduction to Blind Removals:** This one-hour webinar, which served as an introduction to the Blind Removals process and addressed its basic principles and steps, included a TED Talk by Dr. Jessica Pryce on the implementation of the Blind Removals strategy in Nassau County, New York. The webinar also covered the logistics of the Blind Removals process in each participating office, including scheduling meetings, completing the consultation framework and meeting with Coach Developers. It is important to note that this webinar was made available to all staff in their respective pilot offices to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the Blind Removals process.

The West LA regional office staff completed this training in early July 2022, and the Compton-Carson office staff completed the training in August 2022.

2. **Blind Removals Facilitator Training:** The Blind Removals Facilitator Training provided by Candice Kimball on June 2 and 7, 2022 was intended for participating facilitators, coaches and scribes. While the training covered the logistics of the Blind Removals process, it also served as a Shared Core Practice Model refresher, emphasizing the importance of keeping conversations about children and families balanced between safety, worries, protective factors and natural and/or community supports. In this training, participants practiced the Blind Removals process with

a case vignette and learned how to establish the family's team and address safety, worries, history and protective factors in a balanced fashion.

3. **ARDI Collaborative Meeting:** The DCFS Blind Removals Pilot occurs within the context of broader racial equity efforts throughout Los Angeles County. To ensure that the pilot is consistent, supportive and informed by broader efforts, ARDI executives continue to receive updates and provide input via regular monthly steering committee meetings. In addition, on October 6, 2022, ARDI executives provided a training to the Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team on Los Angeles County's history of racism, the impact of this history on child welfare, as well as updates about future reform efforts such as the County Office of Prevention and Promotion.
4. **Blind Removals Debrief:** Dr. Tyrone Howard from the UCLA Pritzker Center will facilitate Blind Removals debrief sessions, which are designed to provide DCFS staff with an opportunity to unpack the process and provide feedback, reflection and learning opportunities from the Blind Removals process by discussing it with their colleagues and other experts. These session(s) will follow a coaching structure, with Dr. Howard addressing implicit bias as it arises in conversations and reflections on recent practice. Dr. Howard's debrief sessions are scheduled to take place in November 2022, and we will report on the progress of the sessions in our next Board report.

Blind Removals Process/Supporting Materials

Following a rigorous process of expert consultation, stakeholder engagement and planning, DCFS has developed a thorough and testable Blind Removals Pilot process that consists of the following steps:

1. **Pre-Consultation Phase:** During the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS' Children's Social Workers (CSWs) and Supervising CSWs (SCSWs) will discuss new referrals, identify safety threats and protective factors and address the potential for detention, including the use of exigency to ensure child safety, as appropriate.

It is important to note that, during this phase, it is impossible for the case-carrying CSW, SCSW and/or Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA) to remain "blind" to the child and family's sociodemographic background since the investigation process itself involves engaging with the child, family and collaterals and exploring the family's history and natural networks. At the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff must also determine the exigency of potential harm to children, pursuing appropriate legal documentation (i.e., warrants) should they be necessary.

In situations where the case-carrying CSW, SCSW and ARA have determined it is probable, but not exigent, that they detain a child in order to keep them safe, the Blind Removals process will be initiated. If it is determined that a child is at immediate risk of harm, the child and family will not be eligible to participate in the Blind Removals process, as immediate action may be required.

2. **Blind Removals Presentation in the West LA Office:** Subsequent to the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff in the West LA Office will present a qualifying referral to the Review Team, which consists of staff from DCFS' Continuous Quality Improvement and Risk Management divisions, a countywide Coach, and County Counsel. These individuals will review the decision by the case-carrying CSW regarding whether or not to detain the child(ren) in the referral under review. The final decision will be made by the CSW in consultation with the SCSW and ARA.

The referral will be presented to the Review Team without any mention of the child and family's sociodemographic information and with an intentional effort to balance the conversation between clearly articulated concerns about child safety, protective factors and supports. This focus will allow the impartial committee to make informed recommendations based solely on the facts presented.

3. **Blind Removals Consultation in the Compton-Carson Office:** Subsequent to the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff in the Compton-Carson office will present referrals at risk of removal to ARAs not assigned to the referral for a Blind Removal Consultation. These consultations will be informed by the Blind Removals Consultation Framework and include a discussion of family history, strengths, protective factors and safety threats, as well as risks and complicating factors. The ARAs will not have knowledge of the child and family's sociodemographic information. During the consultation, ARAs will review the CSW's assessment of the case and provide a recommendation to remove or not remove.
4. **RA Consultation (Optional):** In situations where the Blind Removals process results in disagreement or no decision, the RA for the office will make the final decision regarding the removal of the child(ren). As with the Blind Removals presentation, this consultation should rely as much as possible on an unbiased consideration of safety, worries, protective factors and supports.

To support movement through the various phases of the Blind Removals Process, DCFS has developed a number of supporting materials, including:

1. Blind Removals Process Map
2. Blind Removals Presentation Group Agreements
3. Blind Removals Presentation Agenda

4. Blind Removals Presentation Consultation Framework

In addition to the two aforementioned directives, the Board also instructed the CEO to identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

We are pleased to report that the Office of Child Protection (OCP) has financed the Blind Removals Pilot evaluation, which is being provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center.

Evaluation Plan and Cadence of Accountability

To ensure that the OCP, ARDI executives and our evaluation partners from the UCLA Pritzker Center remain informed of the pilot progress as well as allow for input from these key stakeholders, regular steering committee meetings were initiated in May 2022 and continue on a monthly basis. The Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team also has a standing bi-monthly cadence meeting to discuss pre-evaluation activities.

DCFS has collaborated with the UCLA Pritzker Center on the development of an evaluation plan, which will include a summary report of findings upon the pilot's completion and the development of evaluation tools and strategies as well as a cadence of accountability to ensure the integrity of the Blind Removals process. The UCLA Pritzker Center will provide details of the evaluation plan in the next report back.

In addition, DCFS gathered and provided baseline data to the UCLA Pritzker Center to help them prepare for sample selection. DCFS also established a "special project code" in its Child Welfare Services/Case Management System that will enable us and UCLA to track data measures and explore outcomes longitudinally for referrals that undergo the Blind Removals process.

DCFS is also currently collecting applicable data metrics on families referred to the consultation or presentation models and are sharing that information with the UCLA Pritzker Center to help inform the evaluation of the pilot.

Stakeholder Engagement

Since the Department's initial meet and consult with its Union and Labor Relations partners to discuss the possible workload impact of implementing the Blind Removals Process, DCFS continues to engage its Union and Labor Relations partners in support of moving the initiative forward.

Throughout the implementation process, DCFS has engaged with the Executive Director of ARDI to ensure the above-mentioned efforts align with ARDI initiatives. In addition, ARDI representatives are core invitees to the regular monthly steering committee

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Page 8

meetings that were initiated in May 2022. As the pilot continues to move forward, we will continue to discuss ways to connect the Blind Removals Pilot process to additional diversity, equity and inclusion efforts that are occurring countywide.

Other Efforts

On September 22, 2022, California Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed Assembly Bill 2665, which would have required the California Department of Social Services to establish a three-year pilot program for the purpose of addressing racial disparities in the child welfare system in up to five voluntary counties. The reasons for the veto included both fiscal implications and consideration of how this bill would affect compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

As mentioned in our August 1, 2022 report back, the California Tribal Family Coalition has expressed interest in learning more about the Blind Removals process to better understand how it might affect tribal interests. The coalition's representatives have been invited to participate in the steering committee meetings as well. DCFS will continue to engage Tribal partners around the Blind Removals process to ensure an exchange of learning opportunities.

Conclusion

We thank the Board for its continued support and bold commitment to ensuring equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the County of Los Angeles and especially amongst the vulnerable populations that we serve. We look forward to updating you on our continued efforts, including preliminary data tracking metrics and evaluation status, during the next report back on May 1, 2023.

If you have any questions or need additional information, you may call me, or your staff may contact Aldo Marin, Board Liaison, at (213) 371-6052.

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Fifth District

May 1, 2023

To: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Brandon T. Nichols
Director

FIFTH PROGRESS REPORT: TOWARD A COLOR-BLIND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: PILOT PROGRAM FOR SAFEGUARDING AGAINST RACIAL BIAS (ITEM NO. 29, AGENDA OF JULY 13, 2021)

On July 13, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion, authored by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, directing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in consultation with the Executive Director of Los Angeles County's Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI) and in partnership with the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families, to:

1. Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days;
2. Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one; and
3. Report in writing every 90 days after implementation of the pilot, for the next year, on the status of the pilot and conclude with an academic report on the findings of the pilot, as well as recommendations for future implementation and policy and practice reform.

In addition to the aforementioned, on July 13, 2021, the Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to:

1. Identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Background

As stated in the July 13, 2021 Board Motion, though numerous efforts have been directed toward reducing disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system, inequities persist for Black and Latino families within the County. Data trends indicate that not enough progress has been made to reduce the disproportionate number of children of color in the foster care system. In particular, Black/African American children continue to be disproportionately represented at most, if not all, key decision points of the child welfare system. Black/African American children ages 0-17 represent 7.6 percent of the County's child population, yet they make up 27 percent of the children in care. To this end, DCFS has continued to develop and implement targeted strategies that intentionally focus on reducing the disproportionate number of Black/African American children in foster care.

In addition to many years of collaborative, intentional and transparent work with sister County departments, community, faith-based partners, and other stakeholders by way of the well-established Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity workgroup and the newly established Office of Equity (OOE) in 2020, DCFS is also taking deliberate steps to engage its staff and partners in courageous conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion. In doing so, the Department recognizes and aims to address both institutional and internal biases by seeking advanced cultural training opportunities, enhancing practice using an equity lens and exploring and collaborating with new initiatives that will lead to a reimagined and transformed organizational culture for both our workforce and the children and families we serve.

DCFS continues to implement the Blind Removals Pilot, which is a relatively new strategy in child welfare that was previously implemented by New York's Nassau County Child Protective Services. The Blind Removals process involves a case consultation to discuss the family's protective factors, concerns about child safety and risk factors without any demographic information identified. This process allows an impartial team or manager to make informed decisions based solely on facts and identified safety risk(s). With low risk levels and the absence of safety concern, children and families can be referred to appropriate community-based resources to assist with meeting their needs.

This report serves as the fifth report back to the Board and summarizes DCFS's collaborative efforts in implementing the above-mentioned directives regarding the Blind Removals Pilot.

Directive 1: Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days.

West LA Office Overview

The West LA regional office catchment area consists of 35 zip codes representing approximately 171,000 children. Black/African American children comprise 6 percent of the child population ages 0-17 in this region yet make up 32 percent of all entries into foster care for the office.

Compton-Carson Office Overview

The Compton-Carson regional office catchment area consists of seven zip codes representing approximately 109,000 children. Black/African American children comprise 17 percent of the child population ages 0-17 yet make up 35 percent of all entries into foster care for the office.

As of the writing of this report, both the West LA and Compton-Carson regional offices have fully implemented the Blind Removals Pilot utilizing the clearly delineated steps and procedures described in detail under Directive 2.

Directive 2: Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one.

On September 7, 2021, DCFS established a Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team consisting of subject matter experts from the participating pilot offices, the UCLA Pritzker Center and other key departmental staff and stakeholders. The designated team is responsible for developing and executing the implementation plan, which was initially provided in our May 2, 2022 progress report.

The following information provides a comprehensive status update on the implementation plan, including an outline of the evaluation, training and support components.

Goals/Objectives/Desired Outcomes

The primary goal of the Blind Removals Pilot is to evaluate the impact of a DCFS practice change where, in the absence of sociodemographic information, an oversight team reviews safety factors contributing to the potential removal of children at risk for entry into foster care. In these cases, the oversight team will review the safety, worries and protective factors associated with the referral, ultimately providing a recommendation on whether or not removal is necessary. The evaluation will determine if there is a reduction in the entries of Black/African American children and youth into the foster care system. It

will also distinguish whether an enhanced use of the Shared Core Practice Model addresses disproportionate outcomes for marginalized populations.

Training

DCFS has worked closely with the UCLA Pritzker Center to design and launch the following training series to support the Blind Removals Pilot:

1. **Introduction to Blind Removals:** This one-hour webinar, which served as an introduction to the Blind Removals process and addressed its basic principles and steps, included a TED Talk by Dr. Jessica Pryce on the implementation of the Blind Removals strategy in Nassau County, New York. The webinar also covered the logistics of the Blind Removals process in each participating office, including scheduling meetings, completing the consultation framework and meeting with Coach Developers. It is important to note that this webinar was made available to all staff in their respective pilot offices to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the Blind Removals process.

The West LA regional office staff completed this training in early July 2022, and the Compton-Carson office staff completed the training in August 2022.

2. **Blind Removals Facilitator Training:** The Blind Removals Facilitator Training provided by Candice Kimball on June 2 and 7, 2022, was intended for participating facilitators, coaches and scribes. While the training covered the logistics of the Blind Removals process, it also served as a Shared Core Practice Model refresher, emphasizing the importance of keeping conversations about children and families balanced between safety worries, protective factors and natural and/or community supports. In this training, participants practiced the Blind Removals process with a case vignette and learned how to establish the family's team and address safety worries, history and protective factors in a balanced fashion.
3. **ARDI Collaborative Meeting:** The DCFS Blind Removals Pilot occurs within the context of broader racial equity efforts throughout Los Angeles County. To ensure that the pilot is consistent, supportive and informed by broader efforts, ARDI executives continue to receive updates and provide input via regular monthly steering committee meetings. In addition, on October 6, 2022, ARDI executives provided a training to the Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team on Los Angeles County's history of racism and the impact of this history on child welfare, as well as updates about future reform efforts such as the County Office of Prevention and Promotion.
4. **Blind Removals Debrief:** As we get closer to the completion of the pilot, Dr. Tyrone Howard from the UCLA Pritzker Center will facilitate Blind Removals debrief sessions. These sessions will provide DCFS staff with an opportunity to

unpack the process and provide feedback, reflection and learning opportunities from the Blind Removals process by discussing it with their colleagues and other experts. These sessions will also follow a coaching structure, with Dr. Howard addressing implicit bias as it arises in conversations and reflections on recent practice.

Blind Removals Process/Supporting Materials

Following a rigorous process of expert consultation, stakeholder engagement and planning, DCFS developed a thorough and testable Blind Removals Pilot process that consists of the following steps:

1. **Pre-Consultation Phase:** During the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS' Children's Social Workers (CSWs) and Supervising CSWs (SCSWs) will discuss new families, identify safety threats and protective factors, and address the potential for detention, including the use of exigency to ensure child safety, as appropriate.

It is important to note that, during this phase, it is impossible for the case-carrying CSW, SCSW and/or Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA) to remain "blind" to the child and family's sociodemographic background since the investigation process itself involves engaging with the child, family, and collaterals and exploring the family's history and natural networks. At the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff must also determine the exigency of potential harm to children, pursuing appropriate legal interventions (i.e., warrants) should they be necessary.

If a child is at imminent risk of harm, the case is determined not eligible for the Blind Removals process, as immediate action may be required. In situations where the case-carrying CSW, SCSW and ARA have determined that it is probable, but not exigent, that removal of a child is necessary in order to keep them safe, the Blind Removals process is initiated.

2. **Blind Removals Presentation in the West LA Office:** Subsequent to the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff in the West LA Office will present a qualifying family to the Review Team, which consists of staff from DCFS' Continuous Quality Improvement and Risk Management divisions, a countywide Coach, and County Counsel. These individuals will review the decision by the case-carrying CSW regarding whether or not to detain the child(ren) in the referral under review and provide a recommendation. The CSW, in consultation with the SCSW and ARA, makes the final decision.

The family will be presented to the Review Team without any mention of the child and family's sociodemographic information, and with an intentional effort to balance the conversation between clearly articulated concerns about child safety,

protective factors and supports. This focus will allow the impartial committee to make informed recommendations based solely on the facts presented.

3. **Blind Removals Consultation in the Compton-Carson Office:** Subsequent to the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff in the Compton-Carson office present families with children at risk of removal to an ARA that do not have direct oversight of the investigation for a Blind Removals Consultation. These consultations, informed by the Blind Removals Consultation Framework, include a discussion of family history, family strengths, protective factors and safety threats as well as risks and complicating factors. The ARA does not have knowledge of the child and family's sociodemographic information. During the consultation, the ARA reviews the CSW's assessment of the family and provides a recommendation on whether the mitigation of safety concerns is possible, while keeping the family intact or if removal is necessary.
4. **RA Consultation (Optional):** In situations where there is no consensus following the Blind Removals process, the RA for the office will make the final decision on whether the removal of the children is necessary. As with the Blind Removals presentation, the consultation should be an unbiased consideration of safety, worries, protective factors and supports.

To support movement through the various phases of the Blind Removals Process, DCFS has developed a number of supportive materials, including:

1. Blind Removals Process Map
2. Blind Removals Presentation Group Agreements
3. Blind Removals Presentation Agenda
4. Blind Removals Presentation Consultation Framework

In addition to the two aforementioned directives, the Board also instructed the CEO to identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

We are pleased to report that the Office of Child Protection (OCP) has financed the Blind Removals Pilot evaluation, which is being provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center.

Evaluation Plan and Cadence of Accountability

To ensure that the OCP, ARDI executives and our evaluation partners from the UCLA Pritzker Center remain informed of the pilot progress, as well as, allow for input from these key stakeholders, regular steering committee meetings were initiated in May 2022 and continue on a monthly basis. The Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team also has a standing bi-monthly cadence meeting to discuss evaluation activities with UCLA.

Throughout the pilot period, DCFS has continued to collaborate with the UCLA Pritzker Center on gathering data, inclusive of convening focus groups. The UCLA Pritzker Center held 18 focus groups between August and September 2022, with 89 staff from both pilot offices participating. The purpose of the focus groups was to contextualize how the Blind Removals strategy aligns with the broader aspect of the Department's ongoing efforts around addressing and eliminating racial disproportionality and disparity. The focus groups reinforced that existing racial equity strategies within the Department — such as continued training, coaching, and opportunities for deeper conversations regarding race, bias and disproportionality — be incorporated into an organizational action plan to support and align our equity work.

The following overarching recommendations were derived from the focus groups:

- Connect implicit bias training content to Departmental practice, address racial bias in decision making and reduce racial disproportionality.
- Talk about race, racial bias and disproportionality regularly. Create and use simple mechanisms (e.g., prompts or questions) in individual and group supervision, unit meetings, and General Staff Meetings.
- Identify champions for anti-racist practice to support talking about race, racial bias and disproportionality across Department settings.
- In terms of practice, convene conversations about how to reconcile child and family safety with efforts to address racial bias and reduce disproportionality.
- Assess current strategies to address racial bias and disproportionality across DCFS to identify gaps and develop an integrated and anti-racist organizational action plan.

During the upcoming months, Dr. Howard is scheduled to meet with each pilot office to deepen the equity work. The Department continues to remain on track with the pilot. We anticipate initial data and findings from the evaluation will become available in the months following the conclusion of the pilot.

Stakeholder Engagement

Each Supervisor
May 1, 2023
Page 8

Since the Department's initial meet and consult with its Union and Labor Relations partners to discuss the possible workload impact of implementing the Blind Removals Process, DCFS continues to engage its Union and Labor Relations partners to move the initiative forward.

Throughout the implementation process, DCFS has engaged with the Executive Director of ARDI to ensure the above-mentioned efforts align with ARDI initiatives. In addition, ARDI representatives are core invitees to the regular monthly steering committee meetings initiated in May 2022.

Other Efforts

On September 22, 2022, California Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed Assembly Bill 2665, which would have required the California Department of Social Services to establish a three-year Blind Removal pilot program for addressing racial disparities in the child welfare system in up to five voluntary counties. The reasons for the veto included both fiscal implications and consideration of how this bill would affect county compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

As mentioned in our August 1, 2022 report, the California Tribal Family Coalition has expressed interest in learning more about the Blind Removals process to understand how it might affect tribal interests. The coalition's representatives have been invited to participate in the steering committee meetings as well. DCFS will continue to engage Tribal partners around the Blind Removals process to ensure an exchange of learning opportunities.

Conclusion

We thank the Board for its continued support and bold commitment to ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the County of Los Angeles, and especially amongst the vulnerable populations that we serve. We look forward to providing the Board with our final report in November 2023.

If you have any questions or need additional information, you may call me, or your staff may contact Aldo Marin, Board Liaison, at (213) 371-6052.

BTN:CMM:AJ:JF:JE
KL:AT:CR:jc

c: Chief Executive Officer
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March 5, 2024

To: Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From:  Brandon T. Nichols
Director

FINAL REPORT: TOWARD A COLOR-BLIND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: PILOT PROGRAM FOR SAFEGUARDING AGAINST RACIAL BIAS (ITEM NO. 29, AGENDA OF JULY 13, 2021)

On July 13, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion, authored by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, directing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in consultation with the Executive Director of Los Angeles County's Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI) and in partnership with the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families, to:

1. Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training, and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days;
2. Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one; and
3. Report in writing every 90 days after implementation of the pilot, for the next year, on the status of the pilot and conclude with an academic report on the findings of the pilot, as well as recommendations for future implementation and policy and practice reform.

In addition to the aforementioned, on July 13, 2021, the Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to:

1. Identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.

This serves as the final report and represents the Department's closing update on the implementation of the directives mentioned above. It offers a reflection on what the Department learned from the pilot and strategies that can be integrated into practice. This is also an opportunity to share the context of comprehensive initiatives and collaborations, with the CEO ARDI and the Office of Child Protection (OCP), as well as outlines the associated events of our partnership with the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families in the implementation and evaluation of the pilot.

Additionally, this report encompasses DCFS' response and next steps as it relates to the evaluation report findings entitled "*Beyond Blind Removal, Color Consciousness and Anti-Racism in Los Angeles County Child Welfare,*" including highlights of policy and practice reform recommendations for reducing and eliminating systemic racism in the Los Angeles (LA) County child welfare system.

Background

As stated in the July 13, 2021 Board Motion, though numerous efforts have been directed toward reducing disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system, inequities persist for Black/African American and Latino families within the County. Data trends indicate that significant progress remains to reduce the disproportionate number of children of color in the foster care system. In particular, Black/African American children continue to be disproportionately represented at most, if not all, key decision points of the child welfare system. Black/African American children ages 0-17 represent 7.6 percent of the County's child population, yet they make up 27 percent of the children in care. To this end, DCFS continues to explore and implement targeted strategies that intentionally focus on reducing the disproportionate number of Black/African American children in foster care.

In addition to a commitment to collaborative, intentional and transparent work with sister County departments, community, faith-based partners, and other stakeholders by way of the established Eliminating Racial Disproportionality and Disparity (ERDD) Community Advisory Taskforce and the newly established Office of Equity (OOE) in 2020, DCFS continues to take deliberate and meaningful steps in engaging with its staff and partners in courageous conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion. In doing so, the Department recognizes and aims to address both institutional and internal biases by seeking advanced cultural training opportunities, enhancing practice using an equity lens, and exploring and collaborating with new initiatives that will lead to a reimagined and transformed organizational culture for both our workforce and the children and families we serve.

Over the past several months, DCFS has been working extensively and collaboratively with the aforementioned partners on the implementation and evaluation of the Blind

Removal Pilot, which is a relatively new strategy in child welfare that was previously implemented by New York's Nassau County Child Protective Services. The Blind Removals process involves a case consultation to discuss the family's protective factors, concerns about child safety and risk factors without any demographic information identified. This process allows an impartial team or manager to make informed decisions based solely on facts and identified safety risk(s). With low risk levels and the absence of safety concern, children and families can be referred to appropriate community-based resources to assist with meeting their needs.

DCFS' efforts in implementing the motion's directives are detailed and summarized below:

Directive 1: Pilot Blind Removals in at least one regional DCFS office. The pilot shall include evaluation, proper training and support from experts versed in racial bias and Blind Removals and commence within 120 days.

As mentioned in our May 1, 2023 progress report, both the West LA and Compton-Carson regional offices successfully implemented the Blind Removals Pilot utilizing the clearly delineated steps and procedures described in detail under Directive 2.

West LA Office

The West LA regional office catchment area consists of 35 zip codes representing approximately 171,000 children. Black/African American children comprise 6 percent of the child population ages 0-17 in this region yet make up 32 percent of all entries into foster care for the office. The West LA office was selected as an implementation site as it had not yet adopted any of the ERDD strategies employed by other offices to safely reduce disproportionality.

Compton-Carson Office

The Compton-Carson regional office catchment area consists of seven zip codes representing approximately 109,000 children. Black/African American children comprise 17 percent of the child population ages 0-17 yet make up 35 percent of all entries into foster care for the office. The Compton-Carson regional office was selected for Blind Removal implementation as it serves a larger number of Black/African American children and families and had the office readiness to adopt the Blind Removal model.

Directive 2: Report back in writing within 60 days with a pilot implementation plan which includes the aforementioned components identified in directive one.

On September 7, 2021, DCFS established a Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team consisting of subject matter experts from the participating pilot offices, the UCLA Pritzker Center and other key departmental staff and stakeholders. The designated team was responsible for developing and executing the implementation plan, which was previously provided in the Department's May 2, 2022 progress report.

The following information provides a comprehensive overview on the implementation plan, including an outline of the evaluation, training and support components.

Goals/Objectives/Desired Outcomes

The primary goal of the Blind Removals Pilot was to evaluate and assess the impact of a DCFS practice change where, in the absence of sociodemographic information, an oversight team reviews safety factors contributing to the potential removal of children at risk for entry into foster care. In these cases, the oversight team reviewed the safety, worries and protective factors associated with the family, ultimately providing a recommendation on whether or not removal was necessary. In addition, the evaluation was to determine the following: a) if there was a reduction in the entries of Black/African American children and youth into the foster care system; and b) distinguish whether an enhanced use of the Shared Core Practice Model addresses disproportionate outcomes for marginalized populations.

Training

DCFS worked closely with the UCLA Pritzker Center to design and launch the following training series to support the Blind Removals Pilot:

1. **Introduction to Blind Removals:** This one-hour webinar, served as an introduction to the Blind Removals process and addressed its basic principles and steps, and included a TED Talk by Dr. Jessica Pryce on the implementation of the Blind Removals strategy in Nassau County, New York. The webinar also covered the logistics of the Blind Removals process in each participating office, including scheduling meetings, completing the consultation worksheet and meeting with Coach Developers. It is important to note that this webinar was made available to all staff in their respective pilot offices to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the Blind Removals process.

The West LA regional office staff completed this training in early July 2022, and the Compton-Carson office staff completed the training in August 2022.

2. **Blind Removals Facilitator Training:** The Blind Removals Facilitator Training provided by Candice Kimball on June 2 and 7, 2022, was **held** for participating

facilitators, coaches and scribes. While the training covered the logistics of the Blind Removals process, it also served as a Shared Core Practice Model refresher, emphasizing the importance of keeping conversations about children and families balanced between safety worries, protective factors and natural and/or community supports. In this training, participants practiced the Blind Removals process with a case vignette and learned how to establish the family's team and address safety worries, history and protective factors in a balanced fashion.

3. **ARDI Collaborative Meeting:** The DCFS Blind Removals Pilot occurred within the context of broader racial equity efforts throughout Los Angeles County. To ensure that the pilot was consistent, supportive and informed by broader efforts, ARDI executives continued to receive updates and provided input via regular monthly steering committee meetings. In addition, on October 6, 2022, ARDI executives provided a training to the Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team on Los Angeles County's history of racism and the impact of this history on child welfare, as well as updates about future reform efforts such as the County Office of Prevention and Promotion.
4. **Blind Removals Debrief:** As we got closer to the completion of the pilot, it was intended for Dr. Tyrone Howard from the UCLA Pritzker Center to facilitate Blind Removals debrief sessions. These sessions were to provide DCFS staff with an opportunity to unpack the process and provide feedback, reflection and learning opportunities from the Blind Removals process by discussing it with their colleagues and other experts. These sessions were to follow a coaching structure, with Dr. Howard addressing implicit bias as it arose in conversations and reflections on recent practice. There were ultimately challenges with scheduling and alignment with the pilot timing that prevented the debrief sessions with Dr. Howard from occurring. DCFS staff feedback and reflections were however captured by UCLA Pritzker through surveys and interviews and incorporated into the evaluation.

Blind Removals Process/Supporting Materials

Following a rigorous process of expert consultation, stakeholder engagement and planning, DCFS developed a thorough and testable Blind Removals Pilot process that consisted of the following steps:

1. **Pre-Consultation Phase:** During the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS' Children's Social Workers (CSWs) and Supervising CSWs (SCSWs) discussed new families, identified safety threats and protective factors, and addressed the potential for detention, including the use of exigency to ensure child safety, as appropriate.

It is important to note that, during this phase, it is impossible for the case-carrying CSW, SCSW and/or Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA) to remain “blind” to the child and family’s sociodemographic background since the investigation process itself involves engaging with the child, family, collateral contacts and exploring the family’s history and natural networks. At the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff determined the exigency of potential harm to child(ren) pursuing appropriate legal interventions (i.e., warrants) as necessary.

If a child was at imminent risk of harm, the case was determined not eligible for the Blind Removals process, as immediate action may have been required. In situations where the case-carrying CSW, SCSW and ARA determined that it was probable, but not exigent, that removal of a child was necessary in order to keep them safe, the Blind Removals process was initiated.

2. **Blind Removals Presentation in the West LA Office:** Subsequent to the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff in the West LA Office presented a qualifying family to the Review Team, which consisted of staff from DCFS’ Continuous Quality Improvement and Risk Management divisions, a countywide Coach, and County Counsel. These individuals reviewed the decision by the case-carrying CSW regarding whether or not to detain the child(ren) in the referral under review and provided a recommendation. The CSW, in consultation with the SCSW and ARA, made the final decision.

The family was then presented to the Review Team without any mention of the child and family’s sociodemographic information and with an intentional effort to balance the conversation between clearly articulated concerns about child safety, protective factors and supports. This focus allowed the impartial committee to make informed recommendations based solely on the facts presented.

3. **Blind Removals Consultation in the Compton-Carson Office:** Subsequent to the Pre-Consultation Phase, DCFS staff in the Compton-Carson office presented families with children at risk of removal to an ARA that did not have direct oversight of the investigation for a Blind Removals Consultation. These consultations, informed by the Blind Removals Consultation Framework, included a discussion of family history, family strengths, protective factors and safety threats as well as risks and complicating factors. The ARA did not have knowledge of the child and family’s sociodemographic information. During the consultation, the ARA reviewed the CSW’s assessment of the family and provided a recommendation on whether the mitigation of safety concerns was possible while keeping the family intact or if removal was necessary.

4. **RA Consultation (Optional):** In situations where there was no consensus following the Blind Removals process, the Regional Administrator (RA) for the office made the final decision on whether the removal of the child(ren) was necessary. As with the Blind Removals presentation, the consultation was an unbiased consideration of safety, worries, protective factors and supports.

To support movement through the various phases of the Blind Removals Process, DCFS developed a number of supportive materials, including:

1. Blind Removals Process Map
2. Blind Removals Presentation Group Agreements
3. Blind Removals Presentation Agenda
4. Blind Removals Presentation Consultation Framework

Directive 3: Report in writing every 90 days after implementation of the pilot, for the next year, on the status of the pilot and conclude with an academic report on the findings of the pilot, as well as recommendations for future implementation and policy and practice reform.

Evaluation Plan and Cadence of Accountability

Since the inception of the Board's directive on July 13, 2021, the Department has worked extensively and collaboratively, with the OCP, ARDI executives and our evaluation partners from the UCLA Pritzker Center, as well as reported to the Board on the implementation progress of the Blind Removals Pilot. Additionally, DCFS ensured that input from these key stakeholders was obtained as part of the progress report backs to the Board. The Department also participated in regular steering committee meetings, which were initiated in May 2022, and continued monthly throughout the pilot period. The Blind Removals Pilot Implementation Team also held standing bi-monthly cadence meetings to discuss evaluation activities with UCLA.

Throughout the pilot period, DCFS has continued to collaborate with the UCLA Pritzker Center on gathering data, inclusive of convening focus groups. The UCLA Pritzker Center held 18 focus groups between August and September 2022, with 89 staff from both pilot offices participating. The purpose of the focus groups was to contextualize how the Blind Removals strategy aligned with the broader aspect of the Department's ongoing efforts around addressing and eliminating racial disproportionality and disparity. The focus groups reinforced that existing and ongoing racial equity strategies within the Department — such as continued training, coaching, and opportunities for deeper conversations regarding race, bias and disproportionality — be incorporated into an organizational action plan to support and align the Department's equity work.

The following overarching recommendations were derived from the focus groups:

- Connect implicit bias training content to Departmental practice, address racial bias in decision making and reduce racial disproportionality.
- Talk about race, racial bias and disproportionality regularly. Create and use simple mechanisms (e.g., prompts or questions) in individual and group supervision, unit meetings, and General Staff Meetings.
- Identify champions for anti-racist practice to support talking about race, racial bias and disproportionality across Department settings.
- In terms of practice, convene conversations about how to reconcile child and family safety with efforts to address racial bias and reduce disproportionality.
- Assess current strategies to address racial bias and disproportionality across DCFS to identify gaps and develop an integrated and anti-racist organizational action plan.

In addition, focus group meetings were held by UCLA Pritzker with the pilot offices to deepen the equity work.

Stakeholder Engagement

Since the Department's initial meet and consult with its Union and Labor Relations partners to discuss the possible workload impact of implementing the Blind Removals Process, DCFS continued to engage its Union and Labor Relations partners to move the initiative forward.

Throughout the implementation process, DCFS engaged with the Executive Director of ARDI to ensure the above-mentioned efforts aligned with ARDI initiatives. In addition, ARDI representatives were core invitees and participants at the regular monthly steering committee meetings initiated in May 2022.

Pilot Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

The attached report, "Beyond Blind Removal, Color Consciousness and Anti-Racism in Los Angeles County Child Welfare" by the UCLA Pritzker Center, identified some overarching benefits and lessons learned from the Blind Removal Pilot that are highlighted below:

- Overarching Benefits: 1) *Shaping perspectives on race in decision making*: Recognizing the role of racial bias in investigations and safety assessments; and 2) *Catalyzing practice improvements*: Improving practice by seeking alternative viewpoints; and pursuing fairness and equity in decision making.
- Challenges, Limitations and Lessons Learned: 1) *Challenges common to both West LA and Compton-Carson offices*: a) Blind Removal disrupted practices valued by interviewees; b) Increased workload for administrative staff; c) Learning to talk about families without reference to race; d) Data not available to assess Blind Removal impact on racial disproportionality; and 2) *Challenges Unique to the West LA Office*: a) Time constraints before pilot implementation; b) No clear guidelines for referring cases for Blind Removal review; c) Referral dispositions exceeded the 30-day Federal mandate; and d) Perceived power imbalances among case reviewers.

Additionally, the report stated that the “future utility of blind removal in Los Angeles County may be limited unless significant efforts are made to provide appropriate staffing and time to scale the strategy, coupled with consistent and enhanced data management. However, for other jurisdictions considering blind removal, it may be a worthwhile effort given the possibilities it holds when implemented with proper support and the insights it can afford concerning race and racism within the agency.”

To address the above-mentioned challenges, the UCLA Pritzker Center included the following six recommendations organized into two major themes:

- I. Blind Removal Implementation Recommendations***
 - a. Provide Advance Notice Before Implementing the Blind Removal Pilot
 - b. Standardize the Blind Removal Process and Data Collection
 - c. Implement a Diverse Blind Removal Panel and Promote Panel Discussions
- II. Policy and Practice: Recommendations for Reducing and Eliminating Racism in Child Welfare***
 - a. Promote Upstream Enhancements Targeting the Root Cause
 - b. Dedicate Resources to Cultural Transformation
 - i. Racial equity for families demands a cultural transformation across every level of DCFS
 - ii. Normalize discussions about race
 - c. Implement Widespread Evaluation of Existing and Prospective Racial Equity Efforts
 - i. Deeper analysis of these efforts is recommended

- ii. External support for the ongoing development and evaluation of the Office of Equity's impact is advised
- iii. Engage members from impacted communities

The Department concurs with the report's overall findings. While there were some limitations in LA's pilot implementation, the Department remains committed to taking into consideration the lessons learned as efforts continue in addressing disproportionality in the child welfare system.

The Department is also in general agreement with the policy and practice recommendations outlined under Section II above in the report. The following section provides a comprehensive summary of the Department's response to the pilot recommendations related to *Policy and Practice: Recommendations for Reducing and Eliminating Racism in Child Welfare*, in addition to other equity efforts that have been successfully implemented by the Department, including the partnership and alignment with the CEO ARDI to further the Department's work in achieving the desired equity outcomes for our children, families, communities and workforce.

a. Promote Upstream Enhancements Targeting the Root Cause

*Stakeholders and commentators alike have addressed the reforms needed to bring about racial equity in child welfare. Among the reforms needed, **the upstream nature of change is emphasized**. Indeed, the existing child welfare system acts in response to systemic racism and significant breakdowns in social safety nets across healthcare, mental health, public health, childcare, education, and the economy. LA County may consider where ongoing enhancements and connections to the safety net are required across its many departments serving children and families, such as the Departments of Public Health, Health Services, Mental Health, and Social Services.*

DCFS Response: DCFS acknowledges there is systemic racism and significant breakdowns in social safety nets across healthcare, mental health, public health, childcare, education and the economy that continue to negatively impact the desired outcomes for our children and families. However, and more importantly, DCFS agrees there are tremendous benefits and opportunities for Los Angeles County to strengthen/enhance its connections in the aforementioned systems in order to begin to counterbalance the racial inequity in child welfare. We are pleased to share that the Department is an active partner in supporting the Mandated Supporting Initiative and Family First Prevention Services (FFPS) work, which are upstream supports for all families. Further, the Department continues to work with external agencies and the CEO ARDI as well as collaborate with other

County departments (e.g., Department of Mental Health, Department of Health Services, Probation, Department of Public Social Services, Internal Services Department, OCP, etc.), community partners and other stakeholders as part of its ongoing efforts to explore opportunities for addressing systemic inequities in the child welfare system.

It is also equally important to mention that the Department continues to participate in countywide initiatives (e.g., ARDI) to foster engagement and identify sustainable solutions to address the inequities within DCFS and across Los Angeles County.

b. Dedicate Resources to Cultural Transformation

*Participants demonstrated a strong preference for additional instruction on the following topics: cultural competency, implicit bias, and safety versus risk training, which can promote an open and collaborative environment among staff members. While some of these issues may be addressed in training, **racial equity for families demands a cultural transformation across every level of DCFS.** Union representatives are similarly encouraged to consider their role and relationship to advancing and eliminating barriers to racial justice.*

DCFS Response: DCFS acknowledges there is an opportunity for it to realign the culture to its vision, mission and core values to promote racial equity for families. Expansion of available equity trainings for staff in this area is an immediate next step. While there remains opportunity to deepen the work, the Department has made gains in providing coaching, mentoring and training opportunities for its staff in the areas of Implicit Bias and Cultural Competency, Safety versus Risk, Cultural Humility in Practice, County Policy of Equity, Cultural Responsive Practice Behavior Assessment and Development, RISE and the Intersection of Haircare, Self-esteem and Trauma for Black Foster Youth. Nonetheless, the Department acknowledges there are more opportunities to explore additional strategies that advance equity. Further, in addition to the aforementioned efforts, the Department continues to partner with the CEO ARDI, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and other countywide training resources to ensure that staff have the foundational knowledge and safe space necessary to understand systemic racism and their role in championing equity to improve practice as it relates to culture, gender and bias in practice.

DCFS is appreciative and embraces the suggestion of the Board to bring in a racial equity consultant to co-create more targeted approaches to continue to strengthen and promote its cultural transformation efforts across the organization.

*These efforts and others must **normalize discussions about race**. Participants expressed interest in having more office discussions about race and racism. Encouraging these meaningful conversations can help staff members identify biases, understand their impact on decision making, and take action to confront these biases. Well-equipped facilitators should be able to manage conflict in group dialogue, resulting in valuable learning experiences that support professional development toward culture change.*

DCFS Response: DCFS acknowledges it can benefit from having more office discussions about race and racism, as well as be more intentional about encouraging these meaningful, candid conversations to support staff in identifying biases, understanding their impact on decision-making, and taking action to confront these biases. Additionally, the Department agrees that having well-equipped facilitators will support staff in managing discomfort or conflict that might surface in group dialogue, resulting in valuable learning experiences that support professional development toward culture change. Currently, through the DCFS University Training Section, and in collaboration with the Core Practice Model Section and the Office of Equity/ERDD, the Department provides training and coaching opportunities as described above. Additionally, as opportunities arise at the countywide and regional levels, DCFS will continue to actively participate in meaningful conversations about race, individual and systemic biases, and their impact on child welfare decision-making. A subset of these conversations is described below.

1. ERDD Community Advisory Taskforce
 - a. The taskforce convenes approximately 200 key stakeholders from various sectors across Los Angeles County on a monthly basis to implement strategies designed to eliminate racial disproportionality and disparity in the child welfare system. The advisory taskforce is community-led and includes representatives of community-based organizations, faith-based partners, advocates and individuals with systems-lived experience, philanthropy, academia, other County departments and judiciary partners.
2. Offices regularly use General Staff and Regional Community Alliance meetings for conversations about race, systemic bias and the impact of child welfare practices on families of color.
3. Regional Office ERDD meetings:
 - a. Many regional offices in DCFS hold monthly ERDD meetings and trainings to talk about race, systemic biases and affirming practices.
4. ERDD Roundtables:

- a. ERDD Roundtables are now being held countywide. These meetings include community members and intentionally ensure the family's culture is recognized and decisions are free from bias.
5. Monthly Data STAT:
 - a. Each month, the Office of Outcomes and Analytics holds a Data STAT meeting where key child welfare performance indicators are reviewed. Disparities across race/ethnicity are routinely reviewed and discussed.
6. Monthly & Quarterly Learning into the Data:
 - a. Regional offices participating in the Safe Reductions effort meet monthly to review their local outcome and implementation data. This data is used to develop coaching strategies for the offices as well as to identify needed resources or services to support families.
7. Practice Collaborative:
 - a. OOE, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Division, and Risk Management have monthly subcommittee meetings where they plan how to implement broader and deeper conversations about racial equity throughout DCFS.
8. CQI Division:
 - a. In all of their studies of child welfare practice, the CQI Division includes a review of race/ethnicity as a key variable.
 - b. Regional offices are focusing on permanency within 12 months to explore how new practices designed around racial equity (described above) can also support shorter timelines to reunification.

It is also noteworthy to mention that, through the OOE and in partnership with the regional office leadership, management, staff, champions and community partners, the Department continues to work towards creating supportive spaces where conversations are normalized to discuss race, as well as talk about the things that could have been done differently to change the trajectory of a child(ren)'s outcome. Within the next few months, the Department, in partnership and alignment with the CEO ARDI, is looking to expand its communication and messaging on the importance of equity, and to have intentional conversations around race, racial bias, diversity, disproportionality, and equity.

c. *Implement Widespread Evaluation of Existing and Prospective Racial Equity Efforts*

DCFS has implemented various efforts (ERDD, 4DX) to address racial injustices in child welfare. We know little about these efforts and why they do or do not work. Moreover, removals are not the only measure of racial equity, particularly where disproportionality persists and where disparities continue to plague Black children

*and youth in foster care. For the most part, these efforts have not been evaluated beyond their direct impact on removals. **Deeper analysis of these efforts is recommended, especially where other reforms around mandatory reporting and child safety are concerned.***

DCFS Response: DCFS acknowledges it can benefit from having a deeper analysis of its existing racial equity work. However, further discussion is necessary to determine what evaluation activities would best serve the continued efforts toward a culturally responsive child welfare system. In addition to the efforts mentioned in the evaluation report for this recommendation, it is equally important to mention that the evaluation of any single intervention in child welfare is challenging. As indicated in the Blind Removal report, it is very difficult to evaluate just one intervention, given that there often are several different interventions happening at the same time. In addition, evaluation could require a pause or other types of disruptions that can hurt the efforts to achieve desired outcomes. While we do believe that further evaluation activities are important, we need to determine the return on investment to families. For example, we are seeing reductions in entries to care for all races/ethnicities as part of the Department's implementation of the S.A.F.E. Reductions strategy (formerly 4DX). Further, we know that there will be evaluations in other areas, such as the Community Cultural Broker Program, for potential inclusion under FFPS Evidenced-Based Practices. Therefore, further discussion is needed to determine what evaluation activities would best serve the continued efforts toward a culturally responsive child welfare system.

*Furthermore, in 2019, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a [motion](#) authored by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, resulting in the formation of the DCFS Office of Equity. Given the scope of issues concerning racial equity, **external support for the ongoing development and evaluation of the Office of Equity's impact is advised.***

DCFS Response: DCFS acknowledges that it can benefit from having external support for the ongoing development and evaluation of OOE's impact. It is also noteworthy to mention that, as part of DCFS' final report back dated August 31, 2022, on the *Equity for Los Angeles County Families and Children in Foster Care (Board Motion May 21, 2019)*, the Department reported on its efforts in exploring opportunities to identify an external consultant for the above-mentioned efforts. Additionally, through and in partnership with OOE, DCFS continues to engage external Subject Matter Experts who provide high-level guidance and evaluation of improvement relative to the ongoing development around DCFS' equity work.

More recently, OOE, in consultation with the Executive Director of CEO ARDI, has been engaged in the process of exploring potential consultants to assist with the development of a holistic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategic framework that will focus on equity through the lens of race, culture, sexual orientation, and gender identity and ultimately embed this work throughout DCFS.

The Department anticipates identifying a consultant by early Spring 2024 to serve as external support for the ongoing development and evaluation of the OOE.

*Going forward, evaluation of the foregoing efforts should **engage members from impacted communities** in defining outcomes and developing meaningful measures of change. For example, community engaged research, in partnership with a university, may involve a research council, which fosters bidirectional understanding of the issues, while also enhancing public trust in findings. Another example of community-engaged research involves collaborative efforts to democratize research and engage diverse voices to make sense of data. Any evaluation of this nature must yield significant insight toward the practice tools necessary to activate change with and for Black families.*

DCFS Response: DCFS acknowledges it can benefit from strengthening and enhancing its existing engagement efforts with members from impacted communities. The OOE continues to engage and collaborate with youth and young people with lived experience as well as with community-based organizations to listen, co-conspire, plan, and implement services and programs to support the needs of clients, children, young people, and families throughout Los Angeles County. Additionally, the Department has taken deliberate steps to engage external stakeholders, including members from impacted communities, to support its efforts in defining outcomes and developing meaningful measures of change for the Los Angeles County child welfare system, and will continue to do so more broadly going forward. In addition, the Department has become more intentional in its efforts to participate in and have authentic partnerships, collaborations and engagements, both internally and externally, to advance equity related to improving its social work practices. More recently, DCFS' leadership has taken an even broader position to engage in more meaningful conversations around its equity practices with members from impacted communities. For example, DCFS' Director is an active participant in the Board's community collaborations (e.g., Racial Justice Learning Exchange (Second District) and Los Angeles County Youth Commission) on key practices and continues to actively engage and collaborate with community partners, agencies and external stakeholders on identified efforts that promote equity.

Additional Findings, Observations and Responses to the Blind Removal Evaluation Report

“In summary, various limitations presented challenges throughout the course of this study. Nevertheless, disproportionality remains a prominent feature of the Los Angeles County child welfare system. This reality is exacerbated by the countless disproportionate harms impacting Black individuals, families and communities across this country due to systemic racism and intersectional harms. By implementing the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors’ directive to pilot blind removal, DCFS took novel and bold steps to document its internal processes and chart a new course for Black families involved with the child welfare system. These efforts build on past and present efforts, such as ERDD and SAFE Reductions (4DX), in addition to mandatory supporting and the Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative in LA County.

There is more work to be done. It demands color consciousness and the collective willingness to operate an anti-racist child welfare system that is culturally transformed through colossal shifts in practice and in policy. In closing, the work requires that we collect the lessons learned herein and continue to make changes that go well beyond blind removal.”

DCFS Response: DCFS agrees with the above-mentioned findings regarding the reality of structural and systemic racism’s impact on Black/African American families. The Department will continue to work with external partners to incorporate the lessons learned and further strategize on ways to attain those aforementioned colossal shifts in practice and in policy. Further, to address promoting upstream enhancements targeting the root cause and dedicating resources to cultural transformation, the Department will continue the work necessary to pursue bold, measurable, targeted and incremental strategies.

It is important to set the context and to mention that, prior to and throughout the Blind Removals Pilot, DCFS regional offices were engaged in practice enhancements to reduce the overrepresentation of Black/African American children in foster care. Below is a high-level summary of the Department’s multiple racial equity strategies that were launched and/or are currently in place to further its equity efforts, supports, and community relationships in addressing the disproportionality and disparities for Black/African American children entering care:

1. **ERDD Roundtables:** The roundtable is a structured collaborative forum that brings together DCFS staff, community members, and service providers to support balanced assessments and connect Black/African American children and families to culturally relevant services and supports. Teaming between DCFS staff, community members, and service providers is at the center of the roundtable approach so that decisions are not made in isolation and are less prone to implicit and explicit bias. Teams are aligned around the identification of clear, concrete

safety worries and assessment of the six protective factors, which guide balanced safety assessments and interventions. The roundtables have been integrated into practice countywide.

2. **FranklinCovey's 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX):** This business model was implemented in 2021 with eight regional offices (South County, Compton-Carson, Metro North, Vermont Corridor, Lancaster, Palmdale, Hawthorne, and Wateridge) to increase the strategic execution of safely reducing the disproportionate number of Black/African American children entering care. In 2023, the S.A.F.E Reduction of Entries practice was implemented at the termination of the 4DX contract.
 - a. **Compared to the baseline period (October 2019 – September 2020), the number of Black/African American children entering foster care decreased by 40% in the first two years of 4DX implementation.** Over two years of implementation, these offices employed the aforementioned strategies (e.g., ERDD roundtables and 4DX) while using local data throughout the implementation periods to track progress and identify areas where additional support and technical assistance may have been needed.
 - b. **Following the sunseting of 4DX, entries to foster care for Black/African American children continued to safely decline in offices utilizing the same strategies (described above) that propelled success in the initial years.** Ongoing year-by-year reductions continue to exceed stated goals and range between 10% - 15%.
3. **S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries:** A practice focused on reducing entries into care for Black/African American children.
 - a. **While foster care entries were on the decline throughout the 4DX/S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries implementation period, Los Angeles County saw no increase in the rate of recurrence of maltreatment.** In fact, the overall recurrence rate for Los Angeles County (7.0%) has been and remains lower than statewide performance (8.4%) as well as national performance (9.7%). The most recent recurrence rate for Black/African American children in Los Angeles County (8.4%) is also lower than the baseline period (October 2019 – September 2020, 9.3%) and the statewide rate for Black/African American children (8.6%).
 - b. The Blind Removal Pilot and S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries have the following **similarities** whereby both strategies:
 - Seek similar outcomes that will lead to a reduction in the disproportionate representation of Black/African American children and youth in the foster care system.

- Include an ARA consultation and the use of the Consultation Worksheet.
 - Focus on safety and not risk or complicating factors when making a decision to remove.
- c. The Blind Removal Pilot and S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries have one main **difference**:
- In Blind Removals, the term “blind” refers to the fact that *race/ethnicity is not discussed*. The case consultation consists of providing the facts of the case while omitting any information related to the race/ethnicity of the family or any factor that may lead to implicit bias. However, the S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries practice maintains an intentional focus on *all referrals for Black/African American children*. A core component of the S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries is authentically seeing and addressing families *through a cultural lens*.
4. **The Consultation Worksheet:** A tool to support CSWs, SCSWs and managers in ways to organize balanced safety assessments and engagement efforts throughout the life of a referral/case. Utilization of the Consultation Worksheet provides a standardized approach to help staff critically think through safety decisions and assess the protective capacities of families through the use of the Protective Factors framework, minimizing any bias.
5. **Coaching and Mentoring:** The countywide Core Practice Model Team, Community Cultural Brokers, office leadership and champions engage in continuous, hands-on and intentional support focused on understanding the impact of historical trauma, systemic and institutional racism and ways to promote authentic engagement with families, which lead to greater understanding of their perspective through their own cultural lens. This understanding is used to facilitate conversations about safety, risk and strategies, which can keep children safe and help families heal.
- a. **The racial equity work in DCFS has focused on leaning into the Shared Core Practice Model and community engagement, which is appropriate and best practice for all children and families.**
6. **Trainings:** DCFS co-created community-led and internal trainings for regional staff and leadership. These trainings focused on understanding the impact of historical trauma, systemic and institutional racism, bias, and how to promote authentic engagement with Black/African American children and families. These trainings included:

- a. Implicit Bias Training
- b. Father Engagement and Involvement Training
- c. Equity and Social Work Practice Coaching Sessions (Equity Skills Lab)
- d. Intersection of Haircare, Self-esteem and Trauma for Black Foster Youth
- e. Risk Management Skills Lab
- f. Community Cultural Broker Summit(s)
- g. Courageous Conversations on Black Hair Care

DCFS will continue to work closely on the evaluation and assessment of existing training resources and identify gaps to ensure staff have the foundational knowledge necessary to understand their role in championing equity. Additionally, DCFS will continue to collaborate with the CEO ARDI, DHR and other countywide training resources on this work.

7. **Equitable engagement of all parents:** Focuses on intentional efforts to locate and engage fathers and paternal relatives to support safety planning.
8. **Building lasting, mutual partnerships with local communities:** Focuses on co-designing high-impact strategies to improve engagement and reduce over-reliance on out-of-home care, as well as ongoing collaboration to respond to the unmet needs of families and children at their most vulnerable times.
9. **Qualitative reviews have shown that staff feel empowered to think creatively to co-design safety plans with families and community providers.** Additional data suggest that staff appreciate differential assessments of safety vs. risk vs. complicating factors (i.e., homelessness, poverty); that they feel empowered to have and model courageous conversations; that they have started supporting one another in asking additional questions to better understand how to keep children and families safe; and that they want to “slow down” in order to conduct the best, most thorough assessments possible.

Overall Reflections of the Evaluation Report

DCFS appreciates the UCLA Pritzker Center evaluation and the lessons learned as a result of this Pilot.

While integrating the lessons learned, it is important that ongoing efforts also continue. The Department continues to see consistent, positive outcomes achieved by the existing S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries for children and families, including increased referrals to Community Prevention Linkages (CPL) and reduced entries into care, without an increase in recurrence rates

The S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries practice, implemented through ERDD Roundtables, intentionally integrates a cultural perspective into the assessment of child abuse allegations with the goal of authentically understanding and serving children and families of color. It acknowledges the role of cultural nuances in the overrepresentation of Black/African American children in the child welfare system.

According to scholars on implementation science (Fixsen et al., 2005), full implementation of evidence-based practice can take multiple years and progresses through the following stages: Exploration/Adoption, Program Installation, Initial Implementation, Full Operation, Innovation and Sustainability. In the first two years of S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries, the focus was on Program Installation and Initial Implementation, which involved installing core components in the regional offices that would support new practices and engage pilot sites. This included establishing the pilot sites, obtaining leadership support, data tracking, and developing implementation tools. A major milestone of the Program Installation phase was the development and adoption of the Consultation Worksheet, which created consistency in the conversations and consultations about families. Following this stage, the pilot sites were engaged in the new practice, including data tracking and feedback.

DCFS is currently between initial implementation and full operation of practice changes intended to reduce entries to foster care and to minimize the overall experience of Black/African American families with DCFS. Motivated by the positive transformations witnessed in pilot sites, several other offices have initiated roundtable meetings. Current efforts are focused on existing offices and monitoring the fidelity to the ERDD Roundtable process as well as ensure that core elements are commonly being met and there is consistency across offices. To achieve this, the Department has initiated data tracking initiatives, which will serve as the foundation for training, coaching and supporting offices to enhance the roundtable processes. Simultaneously, the Department is working to support the implementation of ERDD Roundtables and the Consultation Worksheet in additional offices throughout the County.

In addition to the three aforementioned directives, the Board also instructed the CEO to *identify \$150,000 in funding to support the evaluation, training and support provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families.*

As noted in our May 2, 2022 report, funding for the Blind Removals Pilot evaluation provided by the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families was successfully secured and financed by the OCP.

Each Supervisor
March 5, 2024
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Closing

While DCFS has made significant strides in reducing the entries of Black/African American children into care, it also recognizes that disproportionality and, in particular, disparate treatment after children enter care and the resulting outcomes, need to continue to be of considerable and intentional focus.

Lastly, while the Department acknowledges that removals were the primary focus of recent initiatives aimed at promoting racial equity (and thus an ideal metric for evaluating the effectiveness of these efforts), it is not the sole measure of racial equity.

While the Blind Removal pilot has come to an end, the Department will continue to enhance its focus on S.A.F.E. Reduction of Entries for children and families and will continue to remain intentional with its internal and external partnerships and will focus on incremental efforts towards *color consciousness and the collective willingness to operate an anti-racist child welfare system that is culturally transformed through colossal shifts in practice and in policy.*

The Department thanks the Board for its continued support and bold commitment to ensuring equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the County of Los Angeles and especially amongst the vulnerable populations that it serves. The Department looks to continuing its ongoing efforts to address the disproportionate and disparate outcomes of overrepresented and marginalized populations within the Los Angeles County child welfare system. We also thank the UCLA Pritzker Center for their partnership with DCFS, CEO ARDI, OCP and the Board on this collaborative effort.

If you have any questions or need additional information, you may call me, or your staff may contact Aldo Marin, Board Liaison, at (213) 371-6052.

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Attachment

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Office of Child Protection
UCLA Pritzker Center

UCLA

Pritzker Center

For Strengthening Children and Families

BEYOND BLIND REMOVAL

Color Consciousness and Anti-Racism in
Los Angeles County Child Welfare





ABOUT THE UCLA PRITZKER CENTER

The UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families unites a multidisciplinary network across campus and throughout LA County to identify prevention strategies that safely reduce the need for foster care, while supporting equitable reform across child and family serving systems.

Collaboration is at the heart of the UCLA Pritzker Center. Our work comes to life through research, education, and partnership. As a bridge from UCLA and into neighborhoods across the region, we team with researchers and community leaders to boldly challenge and resolve the systemic issues that result in family separation and foster care, which have made Los Angeles County's child welfare system the largest in the nation.

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MARCH 2024

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TERMINOLOGY

DCFS TERMINOLOGY

LA County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

County child welfare organization comprised of 20 regional offices, including the Compton-Carson and West Los Angeles (WLA) offices.

Emergency Response (ER) Unit

Unit responsible for investigating referrals of alleged child abuse or neglect received from the Child Protection Hotline.

Children's Social Worker (CSW)

The representative who works with the family being investigated by, or receiving services from DCFS.

Supervising Children's Social Worker (SCSW)

The person who oversees and guides casework services provided by CSWs.

Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA)

Supervisor of SCSWs. Responsible for multiple units, such as the Emergency Response units.

Regional Administrator (RA)

Supervises all department units within a DCFS regional office.

TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS REPORT

Black Families, Children, and Communities

The terms Black families, Black children, and Black communities are used throughout this report for purposes of consistency. The exception is when interview participants are directly quoted and use the term African American. Black communities may comprise people from across the African Diaspora, such as Black Africans, Black Americans or African Americans, Black Caribbeans, Black Latin or South Americans, as examples.

Town Hall Participants

Individuals who attended the blind removal townhall hosted by DCFS and UCLA Pritzker Center on March 2, 2022.

Study Participants

Interview participants and survey respondents.

Interview Participants/Interviewees

DCFS employees from the West LA and Compton-Carson offices who were interviewed about the blind removal pilot for this study.

Case Reviewers

Interviewees without access to information about race and ethnicity and responsible for discussing the results of investigations during the blind removal reviews. In West LA, this included representatives from County Counsel, Continuous Quality Improvement, Core Practice Model, and Risk Management. In Compton-Carson, this included the ER ARAs.

Administrators

Interviewees with access to race information and responsible for designing and implementing the blind removal pilot in each office.

Survey Respondents

ER CSWs and SCSWs from West LA and Compton-Carson who were responsible for conducting and supervising investigations during the blind removal pilot, had at least one case reviewed through blind removal, and participated in the post-pilot surveys.

A NOTE TO THE READER



“ WE HAVE TO DO WHAT WE’VE NEVER DONE BEFORE TO ACHIEVE RESULTS WE’VE NEVER EXPERIENCED. ”

— Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell

On July 13, 2021, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion authored by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell to pilot blind removal. Supervisor Mitchell stated, “This pilot and this whole conversation may be uncomfortable for some. However, from my perspective, the data compels us to seek out every practice that will help us guard against bias and, ultimately, the overrepresentation of children of color in our child welfare system. In achieving fundamental change, we have to do what we’ve never done before to achieve results we’ve never experienced.”

As readers digest the report that follows, the content may cause significant discomfort stemming from painful, lived personal experiences and perspectives shaped by social constructs made implicit through centuries of white supremacy and structural oppression. Readers are invited to practice self-care while navigating this content and to consider reading the findings with a group to engage in collective reflection.

Readers are also invited to consider the history, context, and intersectionality of the child welfare system and its impact on communities and families of color. This system and its professionals are often acting in response to the persistent consequences of racial injustice and structural inequality. These factors provide important background on how we arrived at the current state of child welfare and require us to acknowledge the unconscious bias informing our responses toward families in need.

Contrasted with the enduring impact of institutional racism, readers are further invited to consider the novelty of blind removal in Los Angeles County. Though other efforts concerning racial equity have been and continue to be made by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), no other publicly available evaluation has assessed those efforts within the Los Angeles County child welfare system. This report puts forward an analysis of some issues stakeholders are likely to encounter on the long path toward healing a racialized system. Thus, while we examine blind removal, we aim to move beyond it through the lessons learned. Doing so will advance the march toward a color-conscious child welfare system where Black families thrive.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Racism in the United States is historically tied to colonialism and the institution of slavery. This history is critical for understanding the context in which today's child welfare systems operate and respond to allegations of child abuse and neglect and the institution's racial socialization. In the United States, there is a long history of separating Black children from their families. Child removal dates back to the extensive period of slavery, from 1619 to 1865. Many Black families continue to feel the threat of separation today vis-a-vis the child welfare system. This threat and the reforms necessary to eliminate or reduce it were magnified by the 2020 murder of George Floyd and the subsequent uprisings against racial injustice.

**BLIND REMOVAL
AIMS TO REDUCE RACIAL
DISPROPORTIONALITY BY
REMOVING RACIAL
DEMOGRAPHICS FROM THE
REMOVAL DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS AFTER AN
INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED
CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT.**

In the summer of 2020, the UCLA Pritzker Center hosted a three-part series with Dr. Jessica Pryce to explore solutions to reduce and eliminate racial bias in child welfare systems, which included a discussion of a concept called blind removal. On July 13, 2021, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion authored by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell to pilot blind removal. Blind removal is one intervention among many leveraged by DCFS to address racial disproportionality. In October 2021, DCFS began meetings with the UCLA Pritzker Center to plan the blind removal pilot and evaluation. In August 2022, West LA began the pilot and ended it in July 2023. Compton-Carson began the pilot in September 2022 and ended in August 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The blind removal pilot has been subject to several criticisms and concerns. Supervisor Mitchell spoke to several of these concerns in her July 13, 2021, remarks at the LA County Board of Supervisors meeting. First and most importantly, the concept of color blindness perpetuates existing racial inequities. Colorblind approaches are widely considered harmful to Black people and people of color because they seek to negate race and all the experiences that come with being a racial minority in this country. However, in practice, although the strategy itself involved a color-blind protocol, the day-to-day experience of blind removal involved significant and insightful discussion about the role of race in child removal. Second, many town hall participants suggested that blind removal was unnecessary, given LA County's diverse workforce. However, racial representation among social workers does not dismiss the data that continues to demonstrate disproportionality and disparities among Black children and families involved with LA County's child welfare system. Third, child safety was repeatedly mentioned as a concern for stakeholders at the town hall meeting and, thus, as a reason to forego blind removal. However, significant steps were taken to uphold and address this concern by ensuring that children experiencing immediate safety risks did not have their cases routed for blind removal review. Risk of harm was held out as the highest priority in this study and, to some extent, limited its reach. Fourth, advocates for tribal families expressed concern that in the absence of collecting certain demographics, social workers risked violating the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). This concern was also cited in Governor Newsom's veto of the California Assembly Bill 2665 (proposing funding for a state blind removal pilot) in September 2022. Notably, no tribal families were involved in the blind removal pilot. Finally, some interview participants were concerned that the existing ERDD work would be compromised by blind removal.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to better understand the blind removal pilot implementation in each DCFS office. Three administrative datasets provided by DCFS were also used to evaluate the pilot. There are several limitations to this evaluation study. First, DCFS previously implemented ERDD and SAFE Reductions (4DX) in several offices to address racial disproportionality. Therefore, blind removal was implemented adjacent to these existing practices, thus confounding the attribution of any recent changes in racial disproportionality or the number of children removed from their families to any one intervention. Second, DCFS could not provide case IDs to match data across the three datasets. Third, the blind removal reviews were not conducted for all cases deemed appropriate for the intervention, limiting the scope of analysis.

Study findings describe blind removal implementation in two DCFS regional offices, West Los Angeles (West LA) and Compton-Carson. The blind removal intervention was implemented differently in each office. West LA convened a panel of diverse staff and County Counsel to serve as blind removal case reviewers. Compton-Carson relied on their usual case consultation process but drew on an administrator outside the supervisory line of the staff presenting cases for blind removal review. The benefits of each approach highlight the merits of automatic blind removal review of all cases potentially necessitating child removal, the efficiency of timely case review with a single reviewer, and the diverse panel supporting varied views on safety versus risk assessment. The drawbacks suggest administrative staff experienced increased workloads upon blind removal implementation, bias may be introduced when staff with access to race information may selectively refer cases for blind removal review, and convening a panel to conduct blind removal reviews may not be feasible.

Descriptive analyses of administrative data document that Child Protection Hotline referrals to both offices declined over a five-year three-month period but racial disproportionality persisted, particularly for Black children and their families. This means that Emergency Response units charged with investigating hotline referrals inherited racial disproportionality from the hotline. Parallel analyses showed that fewer children were removed from their families by each office over the same period, yet racial disproportionality persisted with Black children overrepresented in removals in both offices and Latinx children overrepresented in the West LA office during most quarters. Given the limitations previously delineated, this evaluation could not link the ongoing problem of racial disproportionality with either the disproportionality inherited from the hotline or bias in the investigative process. However, these quantitative findings suggest the importance of learning more about how child welfare staff perceive the role of race in decision making.

Findings from the qualitative interviews delineated how the structure and contained practice of blind removal amplified consciousness of the role of race in decision making for case reviewers, in particular. Engaging in safety versus risk assessment without access to information about the race or ethnicity of the family whose case was under review forced case reviewers to think and reflect differently about their usual ways of working. Heightened awareness of how race influenced their decision making before the blind removal pilot served as a catalyst for changes in practice. Interviewees changed the questions they asked about families, used different sources of information, and evaluated safety versus risk differently.

The motion directing DCFS to complete a blind removal pilot called for an academic report on the pilot's findings, recommendations for future

implementation, and policy and practice reform. At the outset, future utility of blind removal in Los Angeles County may be limited unless significant efforts are made to provide appropriate staffing and time to scale the strategy, coupled with consistent and enhanced data management. However, for other jurisdictions considering blind removal, it may be a worthwhile effort given the possibilities it holds when implemented with proper support and the insights it can afford concerning race and racism within the agency. Recommendations concerning future implementation involve providing advance notice before implementing the pilot, standardizing the blind removal process and data collection, and implementing a diverse consultation panel.

As to policy and practice recommendations, upstream enhancements and assessments targeting the root cause of disproportionality are advised. Specifically, mandatory supporting offers excellent opportunities for reform. Pairing this new strategy with ongoing evaluation is advised. Concurrently, DCFS must invest in the necessary resources for cultural transformation, from leadership to the line. The shift required is systemic and scalable, and while it may be achieved office-to-office, it must be uniformly applied and accounted for across all regional offices. Efforts must go beyond simply informing staff about racial injustice and bias. Cultural transformation must facilitate opportunities for staff at every level to gain a deeper understanding of systemic racism and personal biases, and then apply what staff members learn to practice. Likewise, instructive recommendations for reform contained in the [2021 Path to Racial Equity report](#) authored by Alliance for Children's Rights are again offered for reconsideration.

DCFS has implemented various efforts (ERDD, 4DX) to address racial injustices in child welfare.

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We know little about these efforts and why they do or do not work. Deeper analysis of these efforts is recommended, especially where other reforms around mandatory reporting and child safety are concerned. Given the scope of issues concerning racial equity, external support for the ongoing development and evaluation of the Office of Equity's impact is advised. Evaluation of the foregoing efforts should engage members from impacted communities in defining outcomes and developing meaningful measures of change.

In summary, various limitations presented challenges throughout the course of this study. Nevertheless, disproportionality remains a prominent feature of the Los Angeles County child welfare system. This reality is exacerbated by the countless disproportionate harms impacting Black individuals, families, and communities across this country due to systemic racism and intersectional harms. By implementing the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' directive to pilot blind removal, DCFS took novel and bold steps to document its internal processes and chart a new course for Black families involved with the child welfare system. These efforts build on past and present efforts, such as ERDD and SAFE Reductions (4DX), in addition to mandatory supporting and the Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative in LA County. For these reasons, the following report articulates a vision that thoroughly documents the pilot, but necessarily urges readers and stakeholders to imagine a color-conscious future for Black families that goes well beyond blind removal.





INTRODUCTION

Racism in the United States is historically tied to colonialism and the institution of slavery. Various laws perpetuated racial hierarchies, and both reinforced and strengthened harmful narratives about Black individuals, families, and communities. Lies supposedly based on science proclaimed biological differences among races, thus falsely justifying slavery and discrimination. These inaccurate claims gave rise to redlining and other forms of segregation, causing lasting trauma, economic inequity, and disparities in areas such as education, housing, criminal justice, employment, healthcare, and, specifically, the child welfare system. This history is critical for understanding the context in which today's child welfare systems operate and respond to allegations of child abuse and neglect and the institution's racial socialization.

In the United States, there is a long history of separating Black children from their families. Child removal dates back to the extensive period of slavery, from 1619 to 1865. Black families developed strong bonds to survive such horrific circumstances, but children and their parents remained under constant threat of being sold at auction and separated. Black family members notoriously posted "last seen" ads, searching for information about their siblings, children, or parents long separated from one another by white slaveholders. Many Black families continue to feel the threat of separation today vis-a-vis the child welfare system. This threat and the reforms necessary to eliminate or reduce it were magnified by the 2020 murder of George Floyd and the subsequent uprisings against racial injustice. In the days that followed, child welfare systems and their stakeholders began having deeper and more honest conversations about addressing the longstanding connections between racism and the child welfare system.

In the summer of 2020, the UCLA Pritzker Center hosted a three-part series with Dr. Jessica Pryce to explore solutions to reduce and

eliminate racial bias in child welfare systems, which included a discussion of a concept called blind removal, which aims to reduce racial disproportionality by removing racial demographics from the decision-making process. In the following months, DCFS took steps to implement various strategies of blind removal to address racial disproportionality. This report details the events that followed, including the report on the findings of the pilot, as well as recommendations for future implementation and policy and practice reform.

Timeline and Related Events

In September 2020, then DCFS Director Bobby Cagle expressed interest in additional training from Dr. Pryce about the blind removal process. After a series of discussions with DCFS leadership, steps toward developing a pilot and evaluation were taken by DCFS and the UCLA Pritzker Center. Around the same time, Casey Family Programs staff notified the UCLA Pritzker Center that DCFS also wanted to implement the Four Disciplines of Execution, also known as "4DX," to reduce racial disproportionality by 10%. The leadership and goal setting concept of 4DX is based on the principles of focus, leverage, engagement, and accountability. In February 2021, the UCLA Pritzker Center had conversations with DCFS and Casey Family Programs staff, warning against the challenges of doing 4DX and blind removals simultaneously and in the same offices. The reason for this concern was that any findings around removals would be difficult to identify the source of change, given the implementation of two different programs. Concurrently, in February 2021, on behalf of the UCLA Pritzker Center, DCFS submitted a letter to the Doris Duke Foundation in support of a grant for the UCLA Pritzker Center to evaluate blind removal. In March 2021, DCFS withdrew its initial plan to pilot blind removal. Meanwhile, 4DX moved forward and was implemented in regional offices throughout Los Angeles County. In July 2021, the

UCLA Pritzker Center met with DCFS to discuss an evaluation of 4DX, but DCFS made no subsequent plans with the UCLA Pritzker Center. Concurrently, in July 2021, the LA County Board of Supervisors passed Supervisor Holly Mitchell's motion to pilot blind removal and selected the UCLA Pritzker Center as the evaluator, with an expected start date of December 2021. In October 2021, DCFS began meetings with the UCLA Pritzker Center to plan the blind removal pilot and evaluation. By then, several offices were trained and had implemented 4DX. Two offices were chosen for the pilot, both in the second supervisorial district that Supervisor Mitchell oversees. Compton-Carson had previously implemented 4DX and Eliminating Racial Disparities and Disproportionality (ERDD), whereas West LA had not implemented either practice. In March 2022, a virtual town hall open to the public was co-hosted by DCFS and the UCLA Pritzker Center. In July 2022, Brandon Nichols was named DCFS Director. In August 2022, West LA began the pilot and ended it in July 2023. Compton-Carson began the pilot in September 2022 and ended in August 2023.

DCFS used 4DX leadership and goal setting to apply a business model to complex DCFS service delivery. DCFS named this Strong Assessments from Engagement (SAFE) Reductions. SAFE Reductions leverages multiple strategies – ERDD roundtables, cultural brokers, and father engagement – to safely reduce the number of Black children removed from their families. ERDD and cultural brokers identify and engage members of and organizations within the Black community in partnership with DCFS in the service of several goals: increasing cultural competency around Black families, parenting, and historical contexts among DCFS Emergency Response (ER) unit staff as they assess safety versus risk for children in the context of their current family dynamics during investigations, problem-solving

collectively to identify community-based supports and resources that may serve children and their families mitigating risk factors, and offering direct support to Black families from members of their communities increasing protective factors. Further, father engagement aims to ensure that children's fathers and paternal relatives are located, engaged, and considered as potential resources, thus increasing the support available to their children, and diverting children in many families from removal and placement in the foster system. Drawing from data collected before the blind removal pilot, focus group participants from the Compton-Carson office where ERDD was well-established shared that ERDD helped staff to reframe the meaning they assigned to patterns of communication or behavior within Black families, increased community engagement and resources for Black families, and reduced child removals from Black families.

Critique and Concern

The blind removal pilot has been subject to several criticisms and concerns. Supervisor Mitchell spoke to several of these concerns in her July 13, 2021, remarks at the LA County Board of Supervisors meeting. To further address concerns, DCFS and the UCLA Pritzker Center hosted a public town hall concerning blind removal in March 2022. The criticisms and concerns that follow were articulated and addressed as outlined next.

First and most importantly, the concept of color blindness perpetuates existing racial inequities. Colorblind approaches are widely considered harmful to Black people and people of color because they seek to negate race and all the experiences that come with being a racial minority in this country. Stakeholders widely questioned why, at a time of the racial uprising, blind removal would be offered as a solution to racial bias. In response, blind removal was offered as a single tool in a much larger effort to

INTRODUCTION

learn about the role of racism in child welfare. Blind removal was never posited as a panacea. However, in the absence of other evaluations critically assessing the role of race in child welfare decision making, the blind removal pilot was viewed as an opportunity to assess the attitudes and perspectives of DCFS staff and social workers toward race, racism, and racial bias. Thus, whereas the strategy itself involved a color-blind protocol, the day-to-day experience of blind removal involved significant and insightful discussion about the role of race in child removal. These findings are articulated below.

Second, many town hall participants suggested that blind removal was unnecessary, given LA County's diverse workforce. Stakeholders posited that unlike Nassau County, where Dr. Pryce conducted her research on blind removal, LA County's social workers are largely from minoritized backgrounds themselves and that racial bias in removal decisions was, therefore, implausible. However, racial representation among social workers does not dismiss the data that continues to demonstrate disproportionality and disparities among Black children and families involved with LA County's child welfare system. It should also be stated explicitly that people of color can and do hold negative attitudes and beliefs towards other people of color and that such beliefs can inform stereotypes that contribute to racial bias in child welfare. Some town hall participants echoed this understanding, stating that the data demonstrates a problem and that novel attempts toward resolving it are necessary. Town hall participants also offered that accountability can be heightened by claiming there is an issue because research can lend itself to additional solutions. Further analysis of this issue is below.

Third, child safety was repeatedly mentioned as a concern for stakeholders at the town hall meeting and, thus, as a reason to forego blind removal. Stakeholders suggested that child fatalities could occur because the blind removal process could delay safety decision-making. However, significant

delay safety decision-making. However, significant steps were taken to uphold and address this concern by ensuring that children experiencing immediate safety risks did not have their cases routed for blind removal review. Specifically, cases involving exigency were excluded. Risk of harm was held out as the highest priority in this study and, to some extent, limited its reach.

Fourth, advocates for tribal families expressed concern that in the absence of collecting certain demographics, social workers risked violating the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). This is because the inquiry into the family's Indian status and ICWA eligibility may not be conducted under state and federal law, thus delaying essential tribal collaboration. This concern was also cited in Governor Newsom's veto of the California Assembly Bill 2665 (proposing funding for a state blind removal pilot) in September 2022. Tribal stakeholders reached out to DCFS and recommended modifications to the pilot to ensure ICWA compliance. However, after further review, DCFS determined that modifications were unnecessary given the small number of tribal families potentially affected and that the blind removal consultation would not prohibit ICWA inquiry. Notably, no tribal families were involved in the blind removal pilot.

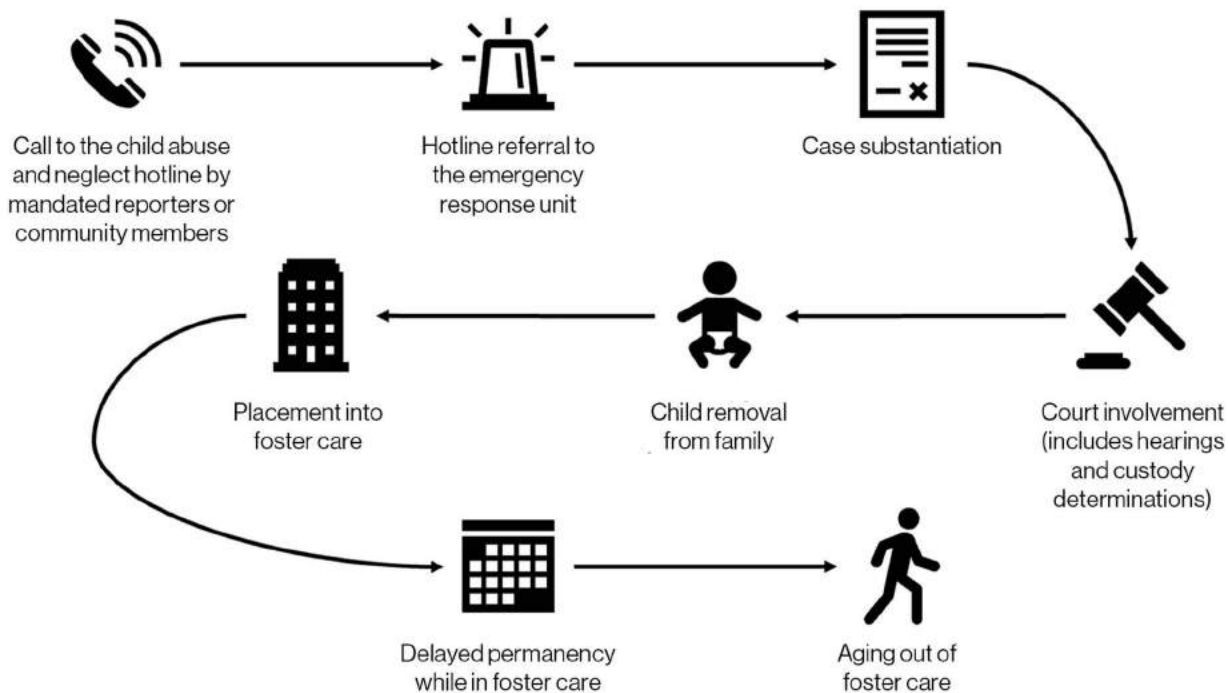
Finally, some interview participants were concerned that the existing ERDD work would be compromised by blind removal. Indeed, town hall participants and study interviewees alike questioned why DCFS would abandon ERDD in favor of a novel approach. These concerns were warranted. Once implemented, blind removal interrupted the ERDD referral process in Compton-Carson because administrators consulting on cases no longer knew a family's race. Referrals to ERDD were mobilized once race became available – after Black children had been removed. Thus, problem-solving and resource identification focused on safely returning children to their parents or other family members rather than preventing removals during the pilot period.



BACKGROUND ON RACIAL DISPROPORTIONALITY AND DISPARITIES IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Racial disproportionality is the over- or under-representation of a specific racial or ethnic group compared to that group's proportion in the population. In contrast, racial disparity compares the outcomes of one racial or ethnic group to another (Dettlaff, 2021). Both racial disproportionality and disparities are common in child welfare systems throughout the United States (Dettlaff, 2021; Garcia et al., 2016; Howard et al., 2021; Legislative Analyst's Office California, 2022; Miller et al., 2014). Racial inequities (disproportionality and disparities) exist throughout various intercepts along the continuum of contact with the child welfare system (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Stages in the Child Welfare Process



Note: Figure 1 was developed by the UCLA Pritzker Center to identify decision-making points. This figure is simplified. It does not convey the complexity of each stage for families or DCFS.

Racial disproportionality, which compares the proportion of Black children in one stage of the child welfare system to their proportion within the general population (comparison within race), can be seen in California as Black children are involved with the child welfare system at nearly four times their rate in the state population. (Legislative Analyst's Office California, 2022). On the other hand, racial disparities, which encompass disparate outcomes between children of one race and children of another race, can be seen as Black children experience higher rates of abuse or neglect allegations,

investigations, and substantiations compared to Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and white children (Dettlaff et al., 2011; Legislative Analyst's Office California, 2022). Moreover, in terms of racial disparities, Black children enter the foster system at a higher rate (11%) compared to their Latinx (4%), white (2%), Native American (2%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (1%) counterparts (Howard et al., 2021). Black children also spend more time in the system than other children from diverse backgrounds (Miller et al., 2014) and experience greater placement instability than white and Latino youth (Garcia et al., 2016). Black

youth are overrepresented in the foster system, with 29.4% aging out of care (as of October 1st, 2023; Webster et al., 2023), a figure significantly higher than their proportion in the general population (Howard et al., 2021). Additionally, compared to Hispanic and white children, Black children have a lower likelihood of permanency, meaning reunification with a parent or caregiver or adoption (Miller et al., 2014).

Racial disproportionality within the child welfare system is linked to systemic inequality and racial bias in society. Higher poverty rates within predominantly Black communities contribute to the overrepresentation of Black children in the child welfare system (Kim & Drake, 2018; Feely, 2021). Furthermore, government and corporate disinvestment in key resources, such as schools, medical centers, grocery stores, and parks in Black neighborhoods, has contributed to greater poverty in these communities (Eisenberg, 2017; Gomez, 2013; Loughran, 2017; Mayorga et al., 2022; Orfield, 2013; Zenk et al., 2005). Disinvestment reduces opportunities within neighborhoods where many Black families live, thereby perpetuating poverty and its related harms. Moreover, families experiencing higher rates of poverty are more likely to interact with multiple child- and family-serving public systems and inherent surveillance (Baughman et al., 2021; Fong, 2020).

The racial disproportionality observed in the child welfare system can also be explained by racial bias in broader society, among mandated reporters across multiple child- and family-serving systems, and among child welfare caseworkers.

Even before children become involved in the child welfare system, Black parents face increased surveillance (Fong, 2020). Black parents are more frequently reported for suspected abuse or neglect than their white counterparts (Krase, 2013; Luken et al., 2021). In addition, Black children and families are roughly two times more likely to be investigated for child maltreatment than white children and their families (Baron et al., 2022). However, these referral rates do not demonstrate that Black parents actually abuse or neglect their children at higher rates than white parents (Thomas et al., 2023). There is no inherent relationship between race and child maltreatment. Although Black children make up 7.6% of the population, they make up 19.3%¹ of allegations made to the Child Protection Hotline in LA County (CCWIP, 2022). Additionally, racial biases of caseworkers influence their decision making, and these biases are magnified by job-related stress, safety concerns, and a lack of community-based resources (Dettlaff et al., 2011; Copeland, 2021). Systemic inequality and racial bias are intertwined and cyclical, inevitably leaving Black children more vulnerable before, during, and after they enter the child welfare system.

Blind removal was piloted to mitigate racial bias in child removal decisions. In the context of blind removal, the child welfare investigation proceeds as usual²; however, in cases where evidence suggests that a child's safety is compromised and removal from a parent/caregiver may be necessary, the case undergoes removal of all demographic information about a family and an additional review by a panel of child welfare professionals (henceforth, case reviewers).

¹ CCWIP data for October 2020 to September 2021 shows that of the total 74,979 children reported (excluding the 13,397 cases with missing race/ethnicity data) to the child protection hotline for allegations of child maltreatment, 14,524 of the children were Black (14524/74979 = 19.37%).

² Child welfare investigations are preceded by an allegation of abuse or neglect made by a mandated reporter or community member and proceed with a caseworker who investigates the allegations made against a parent/caregiver, a supervisor who guides the investigation, and an administrator who, with input from the caseworker and supervisor, approves the outcome of the investigation, i.e., close the case as unfounded, open a voluntary case based on the family's request, or petition the court for removal order after determining a child's safety is at risk.



Blind removal entails redacting any details that might disclose the family's race or ethnicity, including race/ethnicity, names, zip codes, income, school district, and the names of relevant public safety departments. Information such as the child's sex, age, and prior interactions with child welfare services remains unredacted (Baron et al., 2022). The timing of the blind removal meeting depends on the assessed level of risk to the child, with cases requiring immediate action calling for an emergency blind removal meeting. During the blind removal meeting, case reviewers and the initial investigator, supervisor, and administrator deliberate on the safety concerns of the child and explore potential programs to avert family separation or facilitate swift reunification. Following the discussion, a consensus is reached among the blind removal case reviewers and investigative team about providing services in the community or filing a court petition for removal. It is hypothesized that racial disproportionality will be reduced because the investigative team's implicit biases will be mitigated by the case reviewers' input on the case's merits for removal (Baron et al., 2022). The blind removal process enables staff to assess each case based on its unique circumstances, preventing bias from coming into play during decision-making (Pryce et al., 2019).

To date, three studies of blind removal have been published. In Nassau County, New York, Child Protective Services instituted a blind removal process in 2010, along with other efforts to reduce racial bias and disproportionality. Following the implementation of blind removal, removals of Black children from their families decreased from 55% to 29% over five years, however; due to the study design, this drop cannot be causally linked to the blind removal intervention (Loudenback, 2021; Pryce et al., 2021). In Michigan, a quantitative study found that the removal rates for children from both Black and white families decreased similarly following a period of blind removal intervention (Baron et al., 2022). Again, due to this study's design, a causal relationship could not be established between the intervention and the reduction in children removed from their homes (Baron et al., 2022). Finally, Pryce and colleagues (2019) conducted a focus group study with county child welfare staff (e.g., caseworkers to commissioners) in two New York State counties, one implementing blind removal. Findings revealed that staff felt the blind removal process mitigated racial biases in the removal decisions and increased staff awareness of racism and implicit bias. One participant shared that even a family's address could trigger a certain gut reaction about a family's neighborhood and, ultimately, the family's race. In addition to the blind removal process, this county promoted a racially and culturally diverse

Race-Blind Practices in Criminal Legal Systems

In addition to blind removal, race-blind initiatives have been implemented in other settings to reduce the influence of racial bias on decision making, while teaching decision makers about racial bias. In Yolo County, California, the District Attorney's Office implemented the Race-Blind Charging program in May 2021 to eliminate racial bias from charging decisions (Yolo County District Attorney, 2022; Tribune News Service, 2021).

In May 2022, California Assembly Bill 2778 was passed, largely modeled after the Race-Blind Charging program in Yolo County. As codified in § 741 of the California Penal Code, effective January 1, 2024, the California Department of Justice was required to create a 'Race-Blind Charging' system that all prosecutors must then implement by January 2025 (Yolo County District Attorney, 2022). Under the Race-Blind Charging system, the initial case review will be based on information that has been redacted for any facts that could allow the prosecutor to identify the race of the suspect, victim, or witness(es) from the police report. By way of analogy, these examples are illustrative of novel strategies to address racial bias within systems that traditionally impact Black individuals disproportionately.



METHODS

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to better understand the blind removal pilot implementation in each of the two DCFS regional offices: West Los Angeles (henceforth, West LA) and Compton-Carson. Administrative data provided by DCFS was also used to evaluate the pilot. The North Campus Institutional Review Board at UCLA reviewed and approved the research design and protocols.

Interview and Survey Data

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with direct experience of the blind removal pilot for the post-pilot interviews and surveys (Patton 2002; 2015). All study participants were DCFS employees and functioned as administrators, case reviewers, Children's Social Workers (CSWs), or Supervising CSWs (SCSWs) in each office where the blind removal pilot was implemented. The research team invited administrators to interview and all three (100%) participated. Administrators from each DCFS pilot office invited case reviewers to sign up for interviews. Seven of 11 (64%) case reviewers from West LA and three (100%) case reviewers from Compton-Carson were interviewed. Thirteen people total were interviewed. A West LA administrator invited CSWs and SCSWs who were involved with the blind removal pilot to complete a survey. A Compton-Carson administrator invited SCSWs involved in the pilot to complete a survey and asked SCSWs to invite CSWs who had at least one case reviewed through the pilot to complete a survey. In the West LA office, 7 of 12 (58%) invited CSWs and 6 of 7 (86%) invited SCSWs completed the survey. The response rate for Compton-Carson CSWs is unavailable because the administrator did not know how many CSWs were invited, but 12 CSWs completed the survey, and all 10 (100%) of the SCSWs from Compton-Carson participated. In total, 35 surveys were completed.

Administrative Data

Following the blind removal pilot, DCFS provided three de-identified administrative datasets each for the Compton-Carson and West LA regional offices for analysis. The first dataset documented children referred to each office, excluding evaluated out referrals. The referrals dataset included demographic information and allegations made to the Child Protection Hotline. The second dataset documented the children for whom court petitions were filed in exigent and non-exigent circumstances. The petitions dataset contained demographic information, detention, petition filing, hearing dates, and if the child was placed with their other parent or removed and placed in the foster system. This dataset is described in this report as the removal dataset. The referral and removal datasets spanned five years and three months from April 1, 2018, through June 30, 2023. The third dataset recorded all cases (family and child counts) reviewed through the blind removal pilot. The blind removal dataset included demographic information, allegations made and substantiated, blind removal review date, whether the case reviewer(s) agreed with the decision to remove, and the referral decision outcome. The blind removal datasets encompassed one year from August 1, 2022, through July 31, 2023, for West LA and September 1, 2022, through August 31, 2023, for Compton-Carson.

Data Analyses

Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were conducted. To generate descriptive statistics for quantitative data, including information about hotline referrals, child removals, and survey responses, Excel and STATA were used. In addition, racial and ethnic disproportionality indices for each quarter (21 quarters total) were calculated for referrals and removals for both offices.

Interview data were analyzed using a rapid qualitative data analysis approach (Beebe, 1995; 2014). Domains were identified based on interview topics, data matrices were created for case reviewers and administrators, and matrices were populated with data summaries and quotes. Data within and between domains were analyzed, focusing on similarities and differences within and between case reviewers and administrators in each office. Also, findings were compared between participant groups and offices.

A vital aspect of the analysis involved triangulating data from different sources, including qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, and administrative data (Beebe, 1995; 2014). Triangulation enhanced the rigor and confirmability of the findings (Patton, 1999) and allowed for the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings.

Study Limitations

There are several limitations to this evaluation study. First, DCFS previously implemented ERDD and SAFE Reductions (4DX) in several offices to address racial disproportionality. Therefore, blind removal was implemented adjacent to these existing practices. This confounded the attribution of any recent changes in the number of children removed from their families or racial disproportionality to any one intervention – a legitimate challenge in any applied research setting. Second, DCFS could not provide case IDs to match data across the three datasets, therefore analyses could not be conducted following children's cases from referral through the blind removal review to an outcome (i.e., referral closed, child remained with parent/caregiver with voluntary or mandated services, child was placed with their other parent, or child was removed from parent and placed in the foster system). Finally, attempting to implement any intervention faithfully presents challenges. Thus, the third limitation: the blind removal reviews were not conducted for all cases deemed appropriate for the intervention (with fidelity to inclusion/exclusion criteria) in the West LA office, thereby limiting the scope of analysis. With these limitations identified, the findings are presented.





FINDINGS



This section presents the key findings of the blind removal pilot conducted in two DCFS regional offices, West LA and Compton-Carson. An overview of the implementation process in each office provides insight into the contexts that influenced the pilot's execution. Second, descriptive results of administrative data analyses for referrals to and child removals from each office, including racial disproportionality indices and trends, provide further contextual considerations. Third, the perspectives of interview participants (N=13; henceforth, interviewees), who played pivotal roles in the pilot's implementation, explored the identified benefits and limitations of blind removal, offering valuable insights for future implementation consideration. Interviewees were comprised of two groups: first, administrators (N=3) who were charged with developing and carrying out the blind removal pilot in each office and had access to race and ethnicity throughout case discussions, and second, blind removal case reviewers (N=10) who did not have access to the race or ethnicity of the family members in the cases they reviewed during the pilot. Survey findings from line staff (N=19) and supervisors (N=16) who conducted investigations reviewed through blind removal augment the interview findings. The findings aim to provide an understanding of the blind removal pilot's contributions and the lessons it affords for ongoing efforts to reduce racial disproportionality within the child welfare system.

Description of the Blind Removal Pilot Implementation

The West LA and Compton-Carson offices were chosen based on their locations serving constituents in the second supervisory district. Each office adapted the intervention's implementation pursuant to factors such as previous work to reduce racial disproportionality, office size, staffing, the volume of referrals received from the Child Protection Hotline, and administrators' preferences. For example, the West LA office underwent repeated leadership changes from 2015 through 2022. Turnover and promotions disrupted practices centering collaboration with families and the community established by stable leadership before 2015 (Point of Engagement; Marts et al., 2008). As noted in this report's introduction, SAFE Reductions (4DX) and ERDD had not been implemented in West LA before the blind removal pilot began; however, staff had participated in implicit bias and cultural humility training. In contrast, leadership in the Compton-Carson office was and continues to be stable. Trusted members of the office supported a leadership transition in 2019, maintaining and strengthening long-established community engagement practices and core values around racial equity and reducing disproportionality. Since 2016, ERDD roundtables routinely involved an array of community leaders, which was bolstered by SAFE Reduction (4DX; 06/01/21-05/30/22) and implicit bias training. These differences between the offices and their differences in size (the Compton-Carson office is three times the size by staffing and case volume than the West LA office) and service area populations (U.S. Census data documents the Compton-Carson service area population as primarily Latinx (81%) and Black (17%) and the West LA service area as primarily white (58%), Latinx (23%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (13%)) undergird how administrators decided to implement blind removal.

Despite variations in how blind removal was implemented, both offices employed a case consultation framework (Appendix B) to guide their investigations of referrals during the pilot. This framework ensured a uniform approach to organizing the findings from each investigation. Additionally, according to administrators in both offices, administrative personnel were tasked with completing the case consultation forms to avoid increasing the workload or altering the contractual duties of unionized frontline staff — thus addressing potential union concerns.



This section describes the blind removal implementation plan in each office. Implementation approaches in each office highlight aspects of the blind removal intervention that proved effective and demonstrated implementation challenges.

Blind Removal Implementation in the West Los Angeles Office

West Los Angeles Implementation Plan

Administrators in the West LA office designed the blind removal implementation with key steps envisioned as follows.

Preparatory steps:

1. Assemble a diverse panel for blind removal reviews. Administrators in West LA prioritized a broad range of viewpoints and selected members outside the routine operations of the Emergency Response (ER) unit. This strategy was intended to create a panel of case reviewers who could assess and, if necessary, challenge the team's decisions regarding child removals. Case reviewers were drawn from County Counsel, the Core Practice Model, Continuous Quality Improvement, and Risk Management and were individuals familiar with but not involved in investigating referrals.
2. Assign the meeting facilitator role to Coach Developers.
3. Provide orientation on the case consultation framework and form to Children's Social Workers (CSWs) and their supervisors (SCSWs), who conducted referral investigations. This orientation would equip them for cases referred to the blind removal panel for review. The Coach Developer would provide orientation.

Usual practice to conduct investigations:

4. Per usual practice, CSWs would conduct investigations into referrals with guidance from the SCSWs and in consultation with the Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA), aiming to preserve family unity safely.

Referral to blind removal panel for case review:

5. When administrators assess that all viable options were exhausted and significant concerns for the child's safety persisted, they would decide to remove the child from the family. Subsequently, these cases would be forwarded to the Coach Developer to organize a blind removal panel review. Thus, cases meeting the criteria for blind removal review included all non-exigent cases with investigations resulting in the decision to remove a child from their family.
6. The Coach Developer would then email the blind removal case reviewers about the review meeting. Initially, meetings were pre-scheduled once weekly at 9 a.m.

The blind removal panel meeting:

7. Before the meeting, the Coach Developer was to prepare the written case consultation form by discussing the investigation with the CSW and SCSW and removing all information that could signal race or ethnicity.
8. During the meeting, the Coach Developer was to present the case to the blind removal case reviewers with the CSW and SCSW present. Case reviewers would ask the Coach Developer questions and discuss the case further. The ARAs would not attend the blind removal meetings and have access to race-related case information throughout the case.
9. After the case discussion concluded and before leaving the meeting, the case reviewers would publicly vote to communicate their agreement or disagreement with the decision to remove. As non-DCFS employees, County Counsel would not vote.
10. After the meeting, the Coach Developer was to enter the data about the blind removal review into a special projects section of the DCFS electronic data system.

West Los Angeles Implementation in Practice

The actual practice of blind removal deviated from the plan as follows.

First, few non-exigent cases identified for child removal were reviewed using blind removal (step 5). The WLA office filed petitions with the court pertaining to 79 children during the blind removal pilot. Among these, 33 children (33/79 or 42%) were placed with their other parent and not reviewed through blind removal. The remaining petitions (46/79 or 58%) were for child removal from their family and foster placement. A blind removal review was conducted for less than half of the children removed (21/46 or 46%). The reasons for excluding the remaining 25 children's cases (25/46 or 54%) from the blind removal review were not documented. This discrepancy was noted by several case reviewers, with one commenting, "My understanding was that it's assumed that every case goes through [blind removal]. If you are going to remove children, every case goes through, didn't matter what your ethnicity, background, whatever was. But we didn't see that many [cases]." Excluding over half the cases involving child removal from blind removal intervention and without documented reasons hindered the evaluation of the pilot.

Second, case reviewers held assumptions about the demographic makeup of these cases (step 5). One reviewer assumed that the cases selected for blind removal were primarily those of Black families, sharing, "I guess, in the West LA [office], [...] you don't bring a case to blind removal unless they're African American. So, I guess it kind of beats the purpose." This perception was substantiated by the administrative data analysis for cases reviewed using blind removal and all removals during the pilot period (08/01/22-07/31/23). Blind removal

review of Black children's cases was nearly double their proportion of all children removed (52% versus 27%). Representation of Latinx children was the same in both datasets (43% versus 43%), while white children reviewed through blind removal comprised one-fifth of their proportion of all children removed (5% versus 25%). This approach to referring cases for blind removal review deviated from the implementation plan.

Third, the initial schedule for blind removal meetings set for once and then twice weekly at 9 a.m. did not work, according to West LA case reviewers (step 6). They noted the need for reviews later in the day and on an as-needed basis to accommodate timely decision making. Additionally, preset meetings were canceled frequently, as one case reviewer observed, "... [the flow of cases] was not consistent, and there were long gaps where we actually thought maybe the pilot wasn't happening anymore." No documentation was kept about the reasons for the cancellations or irregularity of blind removal meetings; however, fluctuations in the number of cases requiring removal each week or challenges in convening panel members may have contributed.

Finally, the blind removal panel agreed with the decision to remove children from their families for nearly all cases reviewed using blind removal (i.e., 19/21 or 90%³; step 9). Per DCFS, the two children who were not removed (from two different families) had their referrals closed due to their "situations stabilizing"; however, they had siblings who were removed. Blind removal reviewers expressed an interest in reviewing more cases that were not a sure removal. One reviewer noted, "It would have been nice to get different types of families that were presented

³ For two children in two families with multiple children named in the referral, the family situation stabilized and referrals for the two children were closed. No documentation exists about the blind removal case reviewers' role in these outcomes.

[...] that were a little more on the fence.” Case reviewers felt the blind removal intervention aimed to do more than confirm removal decisions. However, West LA administrators designed blind removal to be confirmatory.

In general, the West LA staff strongly believed that the slightest concern about safety trumped involvement in the pilot. Though well-intentioned, these safety concerns may be informed by bias and thus impede the widespread application of blind removal to families in the West LA office. Across child welfare systems, safety concerns are often prioritized over diverting families from system involvement. This issue is illustrative of the concerns and critiques above and of an area needing further study.

Blind Removal Implementation in the Compton-Carson Office

Compton-Carson Implementation Plan

To streamline pilot implementation, Compton-Carson administrators designed the intervention using the usual decision-making process. Per usual practice, consultations among CSWs, SCSWs, and an ARA involved discussing safety versus risk and weighing the evidence for each, incorporating an assessment of family strengths, resources, and needs. During the blind removal pilot, CSWs and SCSWs would have information about race and ethnicity throughout the case, while ARAs (henceforth, case reviewers) would not have information about race and ethnicity and would provide the blind removal reviews. The case reviewers would not be the direct supervisors of the SCSWs but rather outside the supervisory line of the CSWs and SCSWs. Decisions would be made to remove or not during these blind removal consultations. Feasibility was the primary consideration for blind removal reviews in the Compton-Carson office. During or after the blind removal consultation meetings, the case reviewers would complete the case consultation forms and enter the data into a special projects database.

Compton-Carson Implementation in Practice

Blind removal implementation in Compton-Carson proceeded as planned with fidelity. Blind removal was used to review more children's cases (195 children's cases) than the number of children for whom court petitions were filed (146 children). Among the latter group, 65 children were placed with their other parent (65/146 or 45%), and 81 children experienced removal from a parent and then foster system placement (81/146 or 55%). The blind removal dataset documented the outcomes of the 195 cases reviewed through blind removal as follows: 171 children (171/195 or 88%) were referred for family reunification services, two (2/195 or 1%) had removal warrants issued, 20 children (20/195 or 10%) remained with their parent (13 were referred for either mandated or voluntary family maintenance services and 7 had their referrals closed), and two (2/195 or 1%) were missing outcomes. The 171 children referred for family reunification services may include children placed with their other parent and/or children moved into foster placement. This information was unavailable in the blind removal dataset, and the datasets could not be linked – a notable study limitation.

Table 1.
Blind Removal Implementation Process for Each Office

Components of the Blind Removal Process	West Los Angeles Implementation	Compton-Carson Implementation	Benefits	Drawbacks
Criteria for blind removal review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-exigent⁴ cases • A team of CSW, SCSW, and an administrator decided to remove. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-exigent cases • Removal may be necessary based on CSW and SCSW assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-exigent cases can be reviewed in a timely manner using blind removal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team members with access to race information may make biased decisions about which cases to bring for blind removal panel review.
Staff who referred cases for blind removal review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A: All non-exigent caess with a potential removal were reviewed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic blind removal review of all cases with potential child removal is best practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relying on administrators to refer cases for blind removal review allows for discretion, which may introduce bias.
Blind removal case reviewer(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives from County Counsel, Core Practice Model, Continuing Quality Improvement, and Risk Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARA (outside the supervisory line of the CSWs and SCSWs bringing the case for blind removal review) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A diverse group of case reviewers may allow for varied views on safety versus risk assessment. • A single case reviewer may ensure more cases are reviewed and the feasibility of blind removal review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The feasibility of consistently convening a larger panel of case reviewers is less likely. • A single reviewer would not have the benefit of the group discussion during the blind removal review.
Case consultation form completed by and timing of form completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Coach Developers completed the form in conversation with CSW and SCSW before the blind removal meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARAs completed the form during and after the blind removal meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing the form in advance often allowed for efficiency during the blind removal panel discussion. • Completing the form during and after meetings reduced prep time and facilitating hosting the meetings more quickly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different facilitators within one office may lead to variation in meeting preparation. • Increased workload for Coach Developers before the blind removal review and for ARAs after the review.
Blind removal meeting facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Developer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Developers used experiences completing the form and facilitating the meeting to enhance the coaching of CSWs and SCSWs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased workload for meeting facilitator detracts from other position-specific responsibilities.
Timing of case reviewer(s) sharing blind removal decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent by email to an administrator after the blind removal meeting, then shared by the administrator with the panelists, CSW, SCSW, and the other administrator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made in conversation with the CSW and SCSW during the blind removal consultation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emailing the decision adds anonymity to the decision-making process and may reduce bias or undue influence of any reviewer on others. • Decision making with a single reviewer is efficient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emailing the decision adds another step to the time-sensitive decision-making process • A single reviewer must be in a decision-making role.

⁴ "Exigent circumstances exist where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury (which includes sexual abuse)" (Los Angeles County DCFS Policy Institute, 2020). In exigent cases a child can be removed from their family without a court order. In contrast, non-exigent circumstances exist when imminent danger of serious bodily injury is not present.

Note: The acronym CSWs refers to Children's Social Workers, SCSWs to Supervising Children's Social Workers, and ARAs to Assistant Regional Administrators.



**RESULTS OF DCFS
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA ANALYSES:
REFERRALS, REMOVALS, AND RACIAL
DISPROPORTIONALITY IN THE WEST
LOS ANGELES AND COMPTON-CARSON
REGIONAL OFFICES**

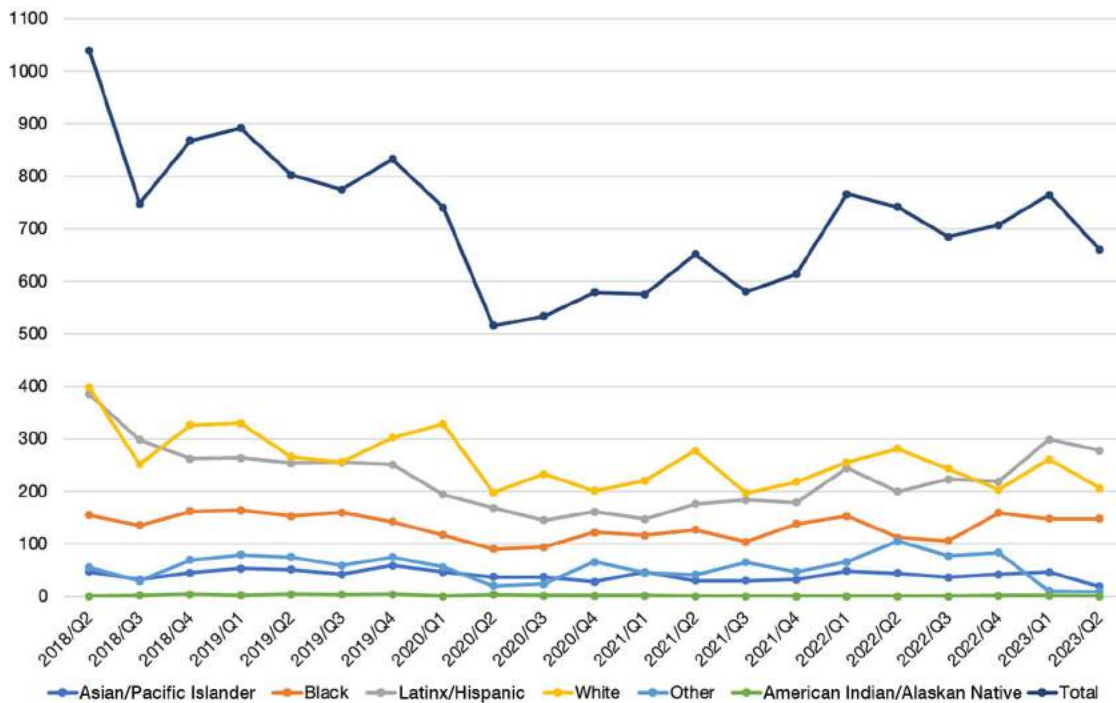
Two DCFS administrative datasets, hotline referrals to and child removals from each office were analyzed pooling data for each quarter. First, the number of children referred by the Child Protection Hotline to each office by race and ethnicity and the racial disproportionality index⁵ (DI) were determined. This information is important because the number of hotline referrals and the level of racial over- or underrepresentation for each group directly affects the racial makeup of the cases that each DCFS regional office must consider for investigation in their Emergency Response units. Next, the number of children of each race and ethnicity who were removed from their families by each office and the racial DI of children removed, along with the DI trends, were established. The results are organized by office, with West LA followed by Compton-Carson.

West Los Angeles Regional Office Results

Referrals from the Child Protection Hotline to the West Los Angeles Office

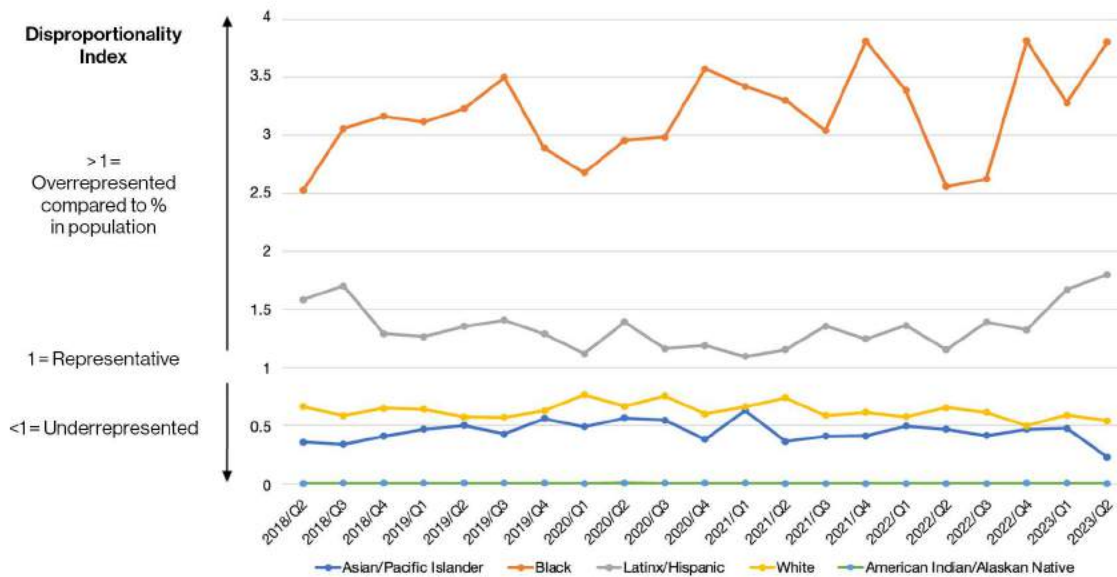
The total number of referrals from the Child Protection Hotline to the West Los Angeles office trended downward overall (Figure 2, dark blue line at the top). The fewest referrals were made during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when stay-at-home orders were in place (2020/Q2). Referrals for American Indian/Alaskan Native (green line) and Asian/Pacific Islander (medium blue line) children were relatively flat and represented the fewest children referred. The number of Black children (orange line) referred dropped slightly over time. Latinx child (gray line) referrals trended downward from the beginning of the data period to the midpoint (2021/Q1) and upward from the mid- to endpoint. Finally, the referral of white children trended downward over the data period.

Figure 2. West Los Angeles: Number of Children Referred for Investigation Quarterly by Race/Ethnicity



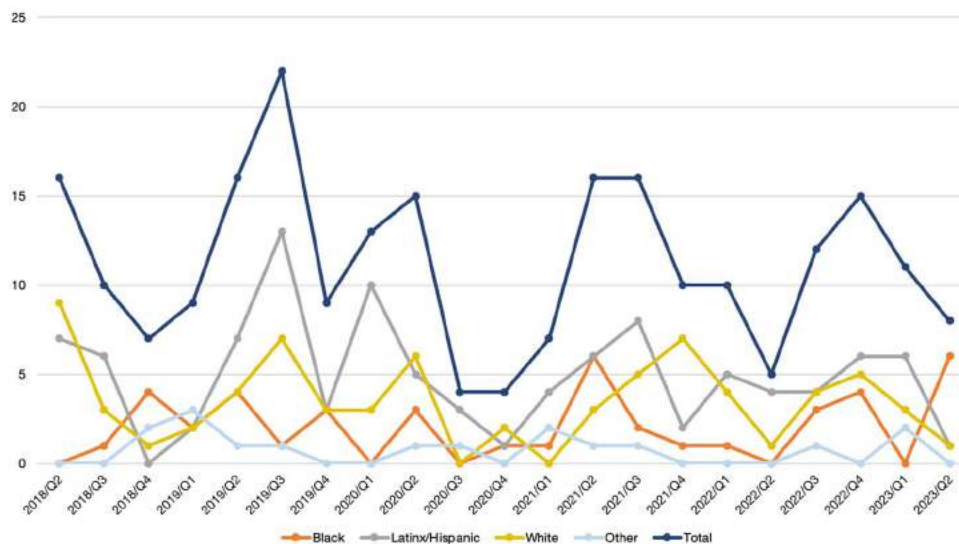
⁵ The disproportionality index (DI) was calculated by determining the percentage of children in each race and ethnicity who were referred (or removed) quarterly divided by that group's percentage of the under age 18 service area population for each office.

Figure 3.
West Los Angeles: Disproportionality Index (DI) in Quarterly Child Referrals



The number of children of each race and ethnicity referred by the Child Protection Hotline to each DCFS regional office plays a role in racial disproportionality. Figure 3. depicts the racial disproportionality index (DI) for children referred each quarter to the West LA office. The racial DI depicts racial overrepresentation when greater than 1, equal representation at 1, and underrepresentation when less than 1. Racial disproportionality is highest for Black children, such that they were referred at a rate two and a half times their proportion in the West LA service area population (DI 2.53) at the beginning of the data period, with referrals trending upward to 3.80 times their rate in the service area population at the end of the data period. While Latinx children were also overrepresented in hotline referrals (DI over 1), their rate of overrepresentation was lower than for Black children, and the Latinx DI trend was consistent over time. In contrast, white, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native children were underrepresented in hotline referrals to the West LA office (DI under 1), with slight downward DI trends for white and Asian/Pacific Islander children.

Figure 4.
West Los Angeles: Number of Children Removed Quarterly by Race/Ethnicity



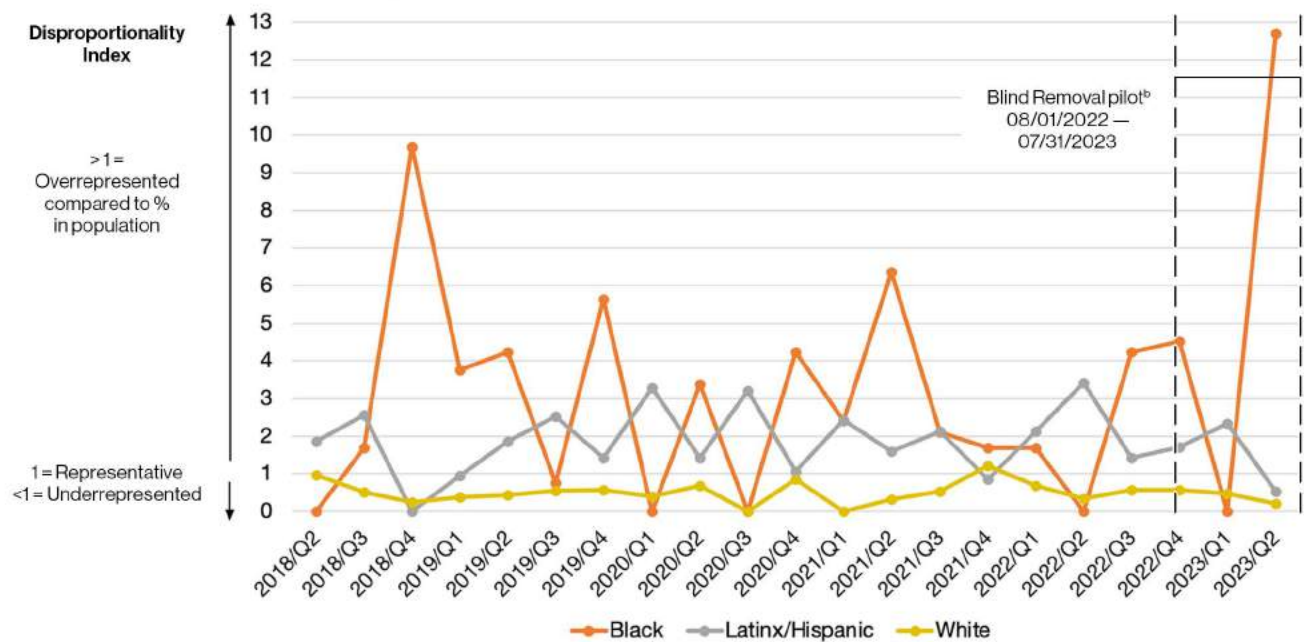
Note: Other includes AIAN, API, other, missing

Child Removals by the West Los Angeles Office

Overall, the number of child removals fluctuated (Figure 4, dark blue line). Despite the fluctuations, total removals trended downward. Child removals by race and ethnicity also fluctuated, especially for Latinx, white, and Black children. The downward trend in total child removals was driven primarily by the decrease in removals of Latinx children, followed by white and other race children. In contrast, the number of Black children removed from their parents trended slightly upward over time. Very few American Indian/Alaskan Native children and Asian/Pacific Islander children were removed from their families by the West LA office during this data period. Their numbers were combined with the other race category to protect their identities. This prohibits tracking their removals.

Figure 5.

West Los Angeles: Racial Disproportionality Index (DI)^a in Quarterly Child Removals



Notes:

^a DI calculation: (Child removals by race/ethnicity quarterly divided by Total children removed quarterly)% divided by under 18 Census population by race/ethnicity% in the WLA service area.

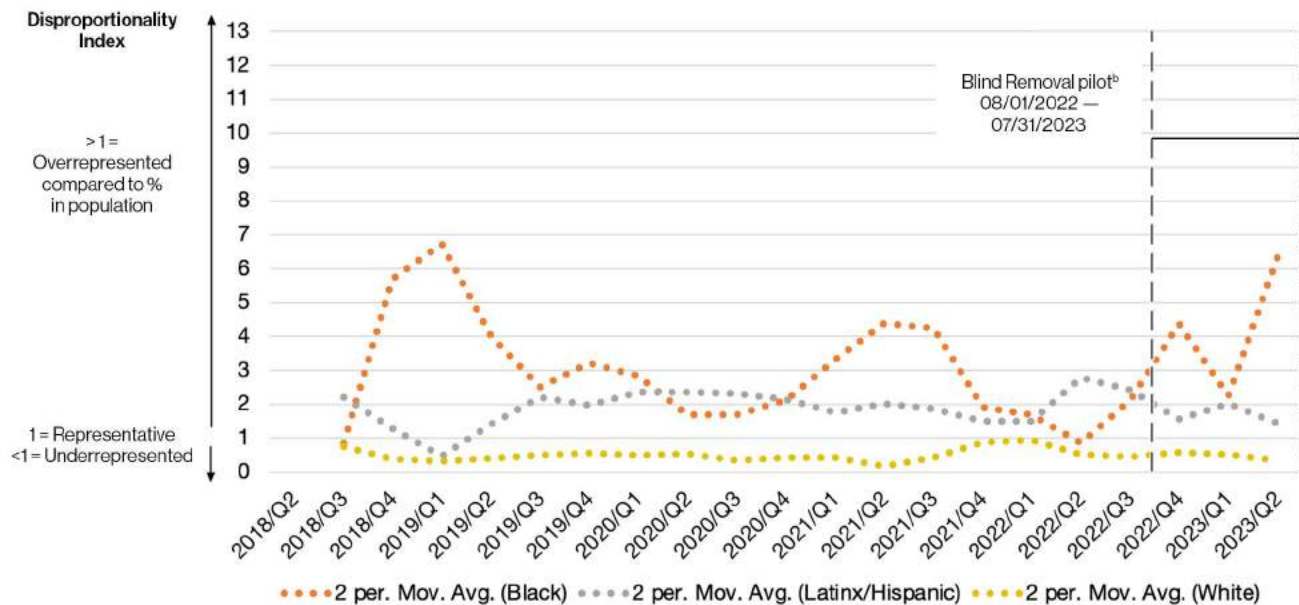
^b The West LA blind removal pilot began on 08/01/22, the second month of 2022/Q3 and concluded on 07/31/2023, the first month of 2023/Q3. July 2023 data was excluded from this graph.

The racial disproportionality index (DI) for children removed from their families by the West LA office each quarter (Figure 5) shows the highest overrepresentation among Black children (orange line) followed by Latinx children (gray line). The large fluctuations in the DI for Black children were due to the proportion of Black children removed each quarter and their small proportion of the under age 18 child population in the West LA service area (5.9%), whereas the larger proportion of Latinx children under age 18 in the service area reduced the DI fluctuations for this group. The DI for white children removed was 1 or less for all but one quarter (2021/Q4). The DI for American Indian/Alaskan Native children and Asian/Pacific Islander children removed from their families was not shown here to protect their identities given their very small portion of children removed quarterly and of the under age 18 population (0.1% and 12.7%, respectively) in the West LA service area. This hinders assessment of racial disproportionality for both American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian/Pacific Islander children. Other race children were omitted from this analysis because this category is not included in the U.S. Census data.

Figure 6 used data from Figure 5 to depict a two-quarter moving average in the racial DI for children removed from their families each quarter⁶. Figure 6 shows DI trends across the quarters with disproportionality among Black (orange line) children trending slightly upward, while among Latinx (gray line) and white (yellow line) children, disproportionality was nearly flat over time.

Figure 6.

West Los Angeles: Racial Disproportionality Index (DI)^a Trends in Quarterly Child Removals



Notes:

^a DI trends are based on the 2-quarter (period) moving average, thus there is no moving average for the first quarter (2018/Q2) of the data period.

^b The West LA blind removal pilot began on 08/01/22, the second month of 2022/Q3 and concluded on 07/31/2023, the first month of 2023/Q3. 2023/Q3 data was omitted because data was available for July 2023 only.

Summary of DCFS Administrative Data Analyses Results for West Los Angeles

In summary, overall Child Protection Hotline referrals to and child removals by the West LA office trended downward over the data period. Importantly, reducing the number of families experiencing separation spares children from disrupted attachment to parents/caregivers and potential exposure to further trauma from removal and experiences in the foster system even when stays are brief. Emergency Response (ER) unit staff in the West LA office inherited substantial and increasing overrepresentation of Black children from the hotline referral process over the past five plus years. The responsibility for reducing racial disproportionality for Black children and families from hotline referrals then fell to ER unit staff. Racial disproportionality carried over to removals in most quarters for both Black and Latinx children. This highlights the need for ongoing investment and development of evidence-based interventions to mitigate racial bias and differential decision making targeted to child welfare investigations of alleged abuse and neglect. Blind removal is one strategy that purports to do this, yet implementation and evaluation prove challenging as documented in the above section (i.e., West Los Angeles Implementation in Practice) and in the remainder of this report.

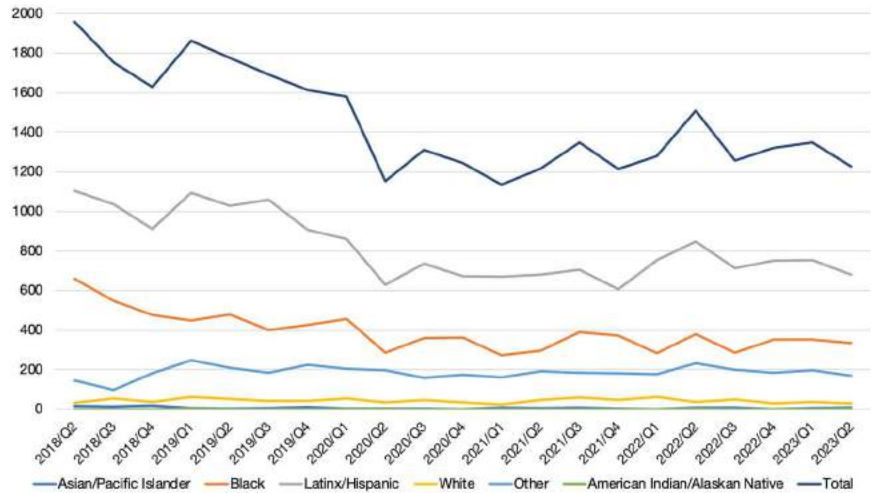
⁶ The goal of providing the two-month running average is to smooth the lines in the figure, thereby making the figure easier to read.

Compton-Carson Regional Office Results

Referrals from the Child Protection Hotline to the Compton-Carson Office

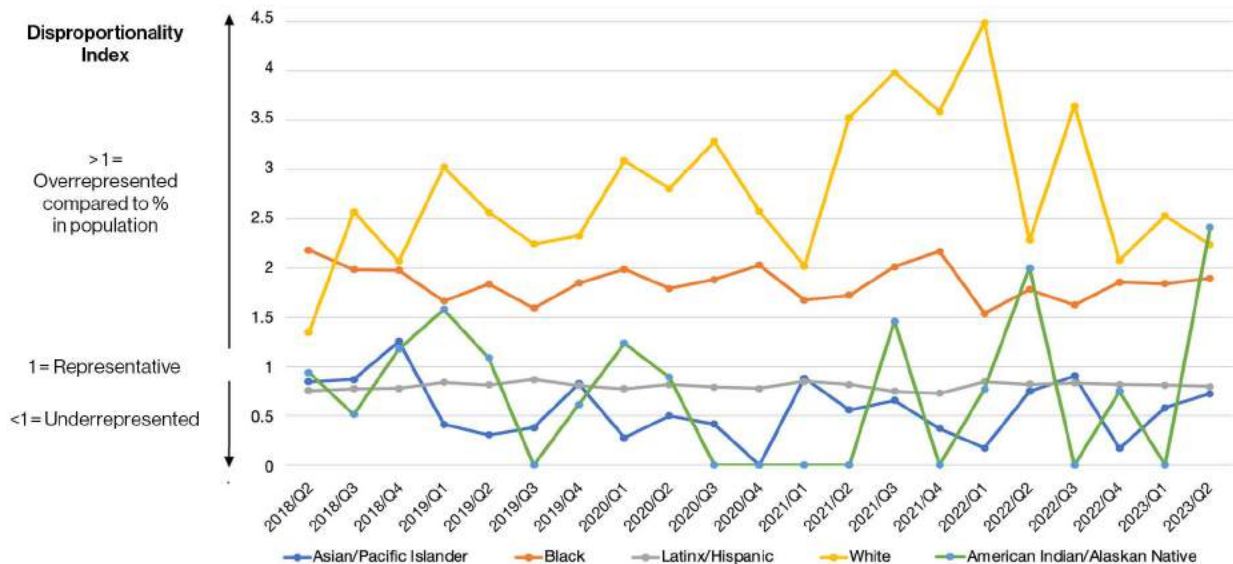
The Compton-Carson regional office also experienced decreases in Child Protection Hotline referrals across the five-year three-month data period (Figure 7, dark blue line at the top). Further, referrals of Latinx (gray line), Black (orange line), and Asian/Pacific Islander (medium blue line) children declined over this period, while referrals for other races (light blue line), white (yellow line), and American Indian/ Alaskan Native (green line) children remained relatively consistent over time.

Figure 7.
Compton-Carson: Number of Children Referred for Investigation Quarterly by Race/Ethnicity



Next, this data, along with population data for children under age 18 in the Compton-Carson service area were used to calculate the racial disproportionality index (DI; Figure 8) for children referred to the Compton-Carson regional office. Calculating the DI for referrals was important because racial disproportionality in hotline referrals means regional office staff inherits the over- or underrepresentation of families in different racial and ethnic groups whom staff must consider for investigation. White (yellow line) and Black (orange line) children were overrepresented in referrals to the Compton-Carson office (DIs over 1), while Latinx (gray line) and Asian/Pacific Islander (blue line; except for one quarter, 2018/Q4) children were underrepresented (DIs under 1). American Indian/Alaskan Native children (green line) were underrepresented in referrals in two-thirds and overrepresented in one-third of the quarters.

Figure 8.
Compton-Carson: Racial Disproportionality Index (DI) for Quarterly Child Referrals

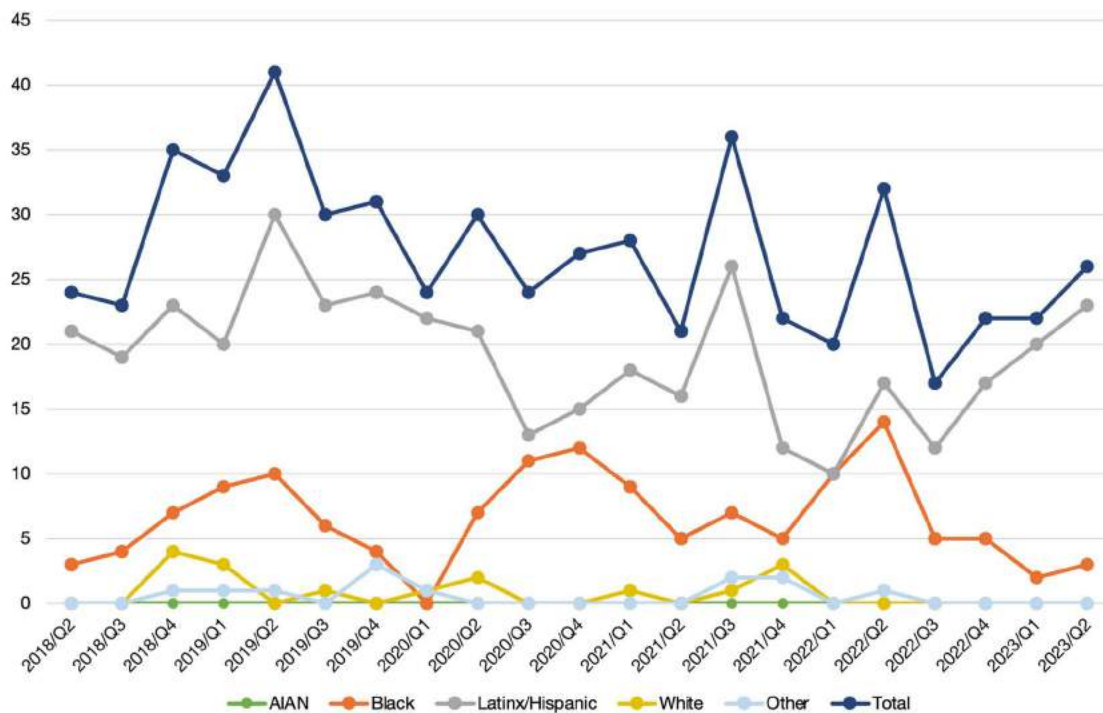


Child Removals by the Compton-Carson Office

The overall number of children removed from their families declined over the data period (Figure 9; dark blue line at the top) in the Compton-Carson office. The most children (41) were removed in 2019/Q2 and the fewest (17) were removed in 2022/Q3. The largest decline in removals was among Latinx children (gray line), the largest group of children under age 18 (80.9%) in the Compton-Carson service area population, which drove the overall decline in child removals. Removals declined slightly for white children (yellow line) and remained steady for Black children (orange line) over the data period. Very few Asian/Pacific Islander children were removed from their families during this period, so their numbers were added to the other (light blue line) category to protect their identities. Further, the Compton-Carson office did not remove any American Indian/Alaskan Native children from their families into foster system placement during this data period.

Figure 9.

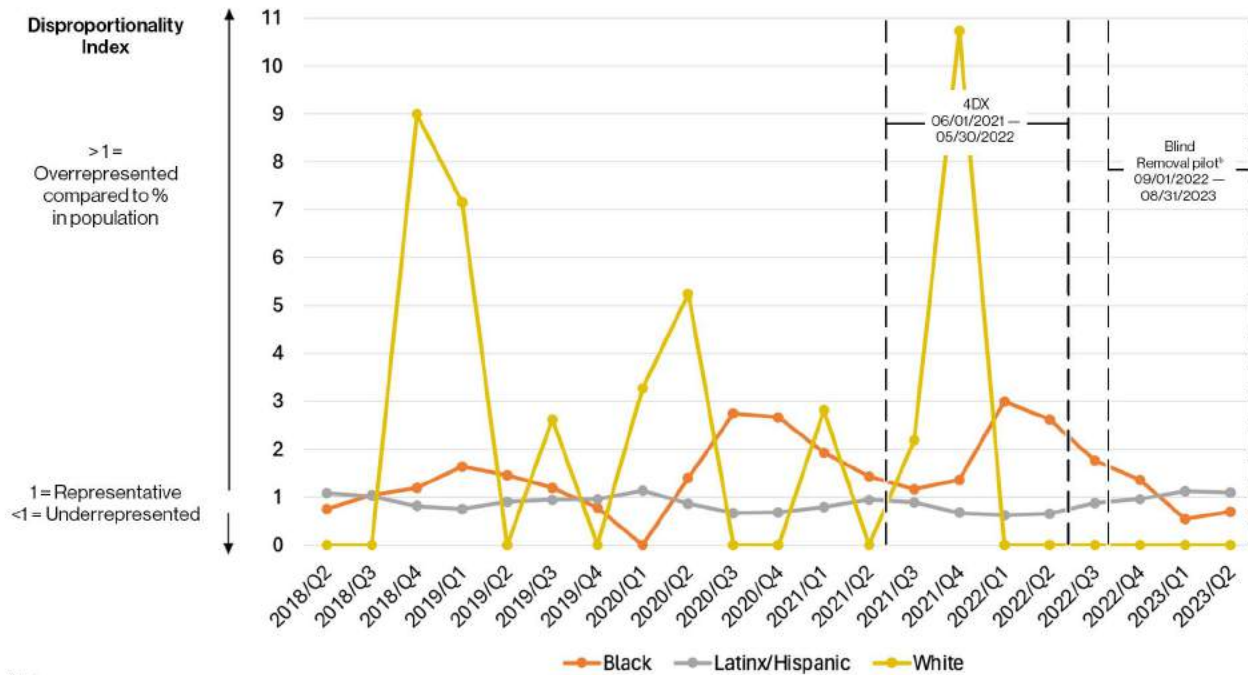
Compton-Carson: Number of Children Removed Quarterly by Race/Ethnicity



The quarterly racial disproportionality index (DI) for children removed from their families by the Compton-Carson office (Figure 10) shows sharp DI variations for white children (yellow line) due to their proportion removed quarterly and small proportion of the under age 18 child population in the Compton-Carson service area (1.3%).⁷ The DI for Black children (orange line) who were removed indicated overrepresentation (DI over 1) in all but five quarters. DI peaked in the middle of the 4DX intervention (2022/Q1). The DI 3.0 means Black children were removed at 3 times their population percentage in the Compton-Carson service area. Then DI decreased for the next four quarters (through 2023/Q1), part way through the blind removal pilot, when Black children were underrepresented in child removals by nearly half (DI 0.55) their percentage of the service area population. Finally, the proportion of Latinx children (gray line) removed from their families was relatively consistent over the data period.

⁷ For example, in 2018/Q4, 12.7% (9/71) of all children removed were white, resulting in a DI of 9.8.

Figure 10.
Compton-Carson: Racial Disproportionality Index (DI)^a in Quarterly Child Removals

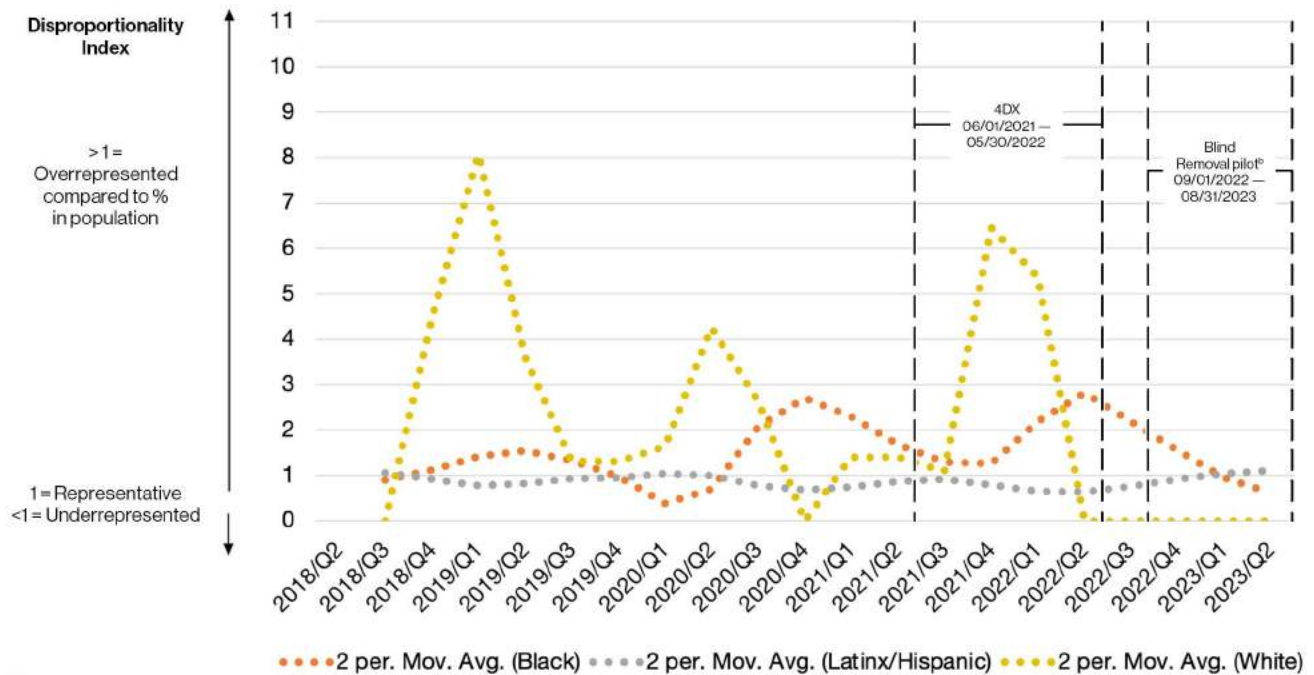


Notes:

^a DI calculation: (Child removals by race/ethnicity quarterly divided by Total children removed quarterly)% divided by under 18 Census population by race/ethnicity% in the CC Service Area.

^b The Compton-Carson blind removal pilot began on 09/01/22, the final month of 2022/Q3 and concluded on 08/31/2023, the second month of 2023/Q3. 2023/Q3 data was omitted because data was available for July and August 2023.

Figure 11.
Compton-Carson: Racial Disproportionality Index Trends^a in Quarterly Child Removals



Notes:

^a DI trends are based on the 2-quarter (period) moving average, thus there is no moving average for the first quarter (2018/Q2) of the data period.

^b The Compton-Carson blind removal pilot began on 09/01/22, the final month of 2022/Q3 and concluded on 08/31/2023, the second month of 2023/Q3. 2023/Q3 data was omitted because data was available for July and August 2023 only.

DI trends are depicted in Figure 11 (see previous page) using data from Figure 10 to calculate the two-quarter moving average in the racial DI for children removed from their families each quarter. This figure shows the trends in DI across the quarters with disproportionality among Black children (orange line) trending slightly upward over time, while DI trended downward among white children (yellow line) and remained steady for Latinx children (gray line) over time.

Summary of DCFS Administrative Data Analyses Results for Compton-Carson

The descriptive administrative data analyses for the Compton-Carson office show that overall, Child Protection Hotline referrals to and child removals by this office trended downward, like they did in the West LA analyses. The declines in overall referrals and removals were driven primarily by declines in Latinx children referred and removed, though fewer Black children were also referred over time. The importance of fewer families facing allegations of abuse or neglect and being referred for investigation and fewer families experiencing separation after investigation cannot be overstated, especially when no documented increase in harm to children exists. However, the problem of racial disproportionality remains.





Despite the decrease in hotline referrals, the DI findings document the consistent overrepresentation of Black children referred to the Compton-Carson office for investigation of alleged abuse and neglect. This leaves the Emergency Response unit staff in Compton-Carson, like their colleagues in West LA, faced with conducting their investigations with a disproportionate number of Black children and families and the increased challenge of addressing overrepresentation that compounds at each stage of the child welfare system. Further, while overall child removals decreased in the Compton-Carson office, Black children were disproportionately represented in removals by the office during most quarters for which data were analyzed with a very slight upward trend collectively. From the peak of DI for Black children during the 4DX intervention, a steady decrease in DI is visible at the end of 4DX through the first two quarters of the blind removal pilot period. The decline cannot be attributed to 4DX because the intervention was not evaluated, nor can it be attributed to blind removal because this intervention was confounded by 4DX and other interventions meant to serve Black families more effectively, such as the Eliminating Racial Disparities and Disproportionality (ERDD) roundtables, and interventions designed to improve assessment of safety versus risk. These confounders point to the challenges of developing the evidence for potentially promising practices in real-world child welfare settings where acting now to reduce racial disproportionality for Black families supersedes more rigorous evaluation of any one intervention. Despite the confounders, the findings and recommendations in the remainder of this report offer guidance on moving forward.



FINDINGS

THE BENEFITS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE BLIND REMOVAL PILOT

In this section, findings from survey respondents and the insights gained from interview participants, all involved in the blind removal pilot conducted in the West LA and Compton-Carson offices, are explored. The goal is to elucidate the pros and cons of blind removal, shedding light on its potential benefits and drawbacks when considering future implementation. The section starts with exploring the benefits of implementing the blind removal pilot, particularly in shaping interviewees' perceptions of race within decision-making processes and contributing to improvements in practice. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the limitations, challenges, and lessons learned from blind removal as described by interview participants, shedding light on the intricacies of this intervention's execution.

Table 2.

Qualitative Findings from the Interviews with the Case Reviewers and Administrators

Qualitative Findings

The Benefits and Prospects of Blind Removal

- Shaping Perspectives on Race in Decision Making
 - Catalyzing Practice Improvements
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Limitations, Challenges, and Lessons Learned from Blind Removal Implementation

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The Benefits and Prospects of Blind Removal

The implementation of the blind removal pilot revealed that race and ethnicity remained salient to study participants both enhancing how they understood race in decision making and catalyzing practice changes.

Shaping Perspectives on Race in Decision Making

Survey findings confirmed that CSW and SCSW respondents from both offices, who continued their work throughout the pilot with access to race-related information, continued to talk about race and ethnicity and received support for doing so in their work. Survey respondents largely perceived no change in (a) how much they talked about race and ethnicity in their work or (b) the amount of support they received from colleagues, supervisors, and administrators for (c) talking about race and ethnicity and (d) managing their racial and ethnic biases in their work (see surveys in Appendix A3). Some respondents perceived more support in each area, while few perceived less support. Interview findings offer depth into how the blind removal pilot shaped some interviewees' perspectives on race and catalyzed practice changes.

Recognizing the Role of Racial Bias in Investigations and Safety Assessments. Some interviewees came to understand that racial biases and stereotypes might unconsciously affect how decisions are made in the child welfare system. The pilot highlighted human judgment and discretion related to their own decision making. For instance, a West LA case reviewer observed, “Even when we made an attempt to remove race, I believe that there are still some decision points that still fell along the lines of race, even when the intent was to solely focus on the safety aspects.” Despite their best efforts to remove race, another reviewer noted that “you could sometimes infer [race] based on... the way things are written in a report.” Consequently, case reviewers shared that “bias toward Black parents” became evident during the pilot.

This shift in mindset represented a movement toward a more race-aware approach to their roles as decision makers. For example, a Compton-Carson reviewer reflected on how blind removal “told me something about me and my thought process and [...] checking myself and trying to create [...] an

equal framework [...] for analysis irrespective of what your nationality was.” Awareness of racial bias in their practice also increased openness among some interviewees toward continued growth, as represented by a case reviewer from the Compton-Carson office. This reviewer felt more comfortable being called out by colleagues and supervisees if they believed the reviewer displayed bias when making decisions and shared, “I want to have that conversation. [...] Inviting that dialogue, you’re modeling that for your staff.” These interviewees saw opportunities to discuss perceived bias and encourage inter-group dialogue among staff members. Change expanded beyond awareness toward improving practice.

Catalyzing Practice Improvements

CSW survey respondents mostly perceived no changes in how they conducted their daily work, and the same was true for SCSWs in how they supported CSWs in carrying out their work. However, 20% of both groups in West LA perceived greater engagement and support across key aspects of their work as defined in the Core Practice Model (for example, engaging with families, helping families build support networks, assessing families’ strengths and needs, etc.; see Appendix A3 surveys for complete list). Even more, Compton-Carson survey respondents endorsed the perceived change. Nearly 40% of CSWs perceived increased engagement in Core Practice Model areas during the pilot, and half of SCSWs perceived providing more support to CSWs in their daily work responsibilities. Further, about one-third of all respondents perceived having more control in conducting investigations during the pilot, with two-fifths of CSWs from both offices perceiving more control in removal decisions. Fewer SCSWs perceived having more control over removal decisions, less than one-fifth in West LA and one-third in Compton-Carson. Almost no one perceived having less control over removal decisions. Findings from interviewees suggest ways the pilot contributed to improved practice.

Improving Practice by Seeking Alternative Viewpoints.

The blind removal pilot brought about a notable shift in how decision making was approached. Some case reviewers reported an increased willingness to explore alternative viewpoints in child safety and risk assessment during the pilot. This willingness was facilitated, in part, because case

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“WE’VE MADE GREAT STRIDES, BUT WE STILL HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO.”
— Case Reviewer

reviewers entered blind removal reviews without race-related information, which required them to ask different questions and seek different sources of information. The thoroughness of the blind removal reviews was highlighted, with another reviewer observing “there was no stone left unturned.” A few case reviewers also reflected on how the new questions asked during blind removal reviews may have made reviews harder for CSWs and SCSWs “because they had to justify to all of us on different terms. [...] They had to really dig deep and go to issues that didn’t have to do with [...] gang affiliation, neighborhood, schools, etc. [...] They had to explain it [...] without all of those assumptions.” Blind removal required new approaches to case consultation, revealing how assumptions based on race influenced consultations before the pilot. Through the blind removal intervention, case reviewers learned how consultations could support child safety and risk assessment without or with fewer assumptions about race.

Pursuing Fairness and Equity in Decision Making.

Heightened awareness of how race influenced decision making catalyzed a stronger commitment to fair and equitable decision making. Some interviewees felt a profound responsibility to ensure equity, as described by this administrator: “I felt a responsibility, both morally and professionally, to look at the ethnicity, and to ensure that there was equity [...] occurring across the board for those families, as has often not been the case.” Commitment to equity was driven by recognizing historical disproportionality and disparities that persist today. Additionally, some reviewers acknowledged the role of institutions, including DCFS, in perpetuating the racial disproportionality of Black families in child welfare. As one reviewer stated, “There’s a disproportionate number of [...] African American children coming into care, and we [DCFS] are part of the problem because we are the institution that has done that.” This shift towards a more equitable and conscientious approach to decision making was spurred for some study participants by their roles in the blind removal pilot.

Changes in perspective in tandem with tools specific to each office seemed to instigate practice change during the blind removal pilot, facilitating more comprehensive and deliberate approaches to investigations and safety assessments. Several West LA interviewees shared how the

case consultation framework facilitated consistency across investigations, the organization of information gathered during investigations, and the focus of panel discussions about removals. A West LA administrator noted, “the most influential thing that came about with the blind removal process for me [...] was the process of slowing down the team.” The case consultation framework inherently slowed the pace and increased the thoroughness of safety assessments. West LA case reviewers also noticed the shift in pace, as one reviewer described how staff in this office are “really being thoughtful and intentional about how we do business. And even just being able to like look at [...] the way that we practice, and [...] making sure the policies align with equity.” West LA interviewees valued the slower pace, allowing the team to engage in comprehensive discussions and ensuring that families received the needed support and interventions.

In contrast, Compton-Carson interviewees noted how the blind removal pilot reinforced the need to distinguish safety from risk, as one case reviewer emphasized, “now, the focus is really child safety and risk and what are the issues that are implicated in this referral. And how to best address it [...] without really focusing on [race].” Administrators prioritized safety versus risk assessment over several years. Staff in the Emergency Response unit were trained and focused on honing their skills to differentiate current threats to children’s safety from perceived future risks to children’s safety, the latter being subject to more bias. The blind removal pilot supported this ongoing work.

These findings suggest the benefits of the blind removal intervention, yet findings also revealed challenges and lessons learned.

Challenges, Limitations, and Lessons Learned from Blind Removal Implementation

This section delves into the challenges of blind removal implementation in both the West LA and Compton-Carson DCFS offices and the lessons learned. Four challenges common to both offices were: first, the pilot disrupted practices interviewees considered important. Second, blind removal imposed an increased workload on administrative staff. Third, blind removal required interviewees to learn how to discuss families without referencing race. Fourth, there was an absence of comprehensive before-and-after data that hindered the assessment of blind removal’s impact on reducing racial disproportionality. Some challenges were unique to the West LA office: first, insufficient time to educate line staff about blind removal; second, an absence of clear guidelines for referring cases for blind removal review. Third, reaching referral dispositions initially exceeded the 30 days mandated in Federal law, and last,

perceived power imbalances arose among case reviewers, requiring procedural adjustments. The lessons learned from these challenges provided insights that may inform future blind removal or similar endeavors within the child welfare system.

Challenges Common to Both Offices: West Los Angeles and Compton-Carson

Blind Removal Disrupted Practices Valued by Interviewees. Blind removal posed challenges to existing practices that interviewees in the West LA and Compton-Carson offices considered important. The blind removal pilot was perceived as contradicting concerted efforts to address racial disproportionality in child removals by explicitly talking about race and increasingly building bridges with individuals and organizations in Black communities to support Black families more comprehensively and competently through cultural brokers and Eliminating Racial Disparities and Disproportionality (ERDD) roundtables.

“WHAT WE LOST WITH BLIND REMOVALS; I WANT BACK. SO, THAT WAS REALLY THE ERDD ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS [...] IT'S BEEN HARD.”
— Case Reviewer

The blind removal pilot generated concern and skepticism among interviewees. Some case reviewers grappled with the timing of blind removal's introduction, which coincided with different efforts to address racial bias and promote cultural humility. One West LA case reviewer noted that this timing created a perceived disconnect between approaches: "So we're talking about bias and cultural humility. And then, there's [the blind removal pilot] that comes that almost sounds the opposite of that, right? Because we're removing that [race] as a factor. So, I don't think that it was necessarily the messaging. I think it was the timing." The contrasting approaches, some of which centered on race and blind removal, which explicitly excluded it, created a sense of discord among some interviewees in both offices. An administrator from Compton-Carson expressed concerns, citing, "There was some backlash from [blind removal] just because of 4DX work, and [ERDD] roundtable work that we had been doing." This concern was rooted in a strong sense of responsibility to ensure equity for all families, particularly Black families, given historical disparities, as previously noted.

Additionally, some Compton-Carson interviewees observed a pattern during the blind removal pilot where fewer cases involving Black families were referred to ERDD roundtables for race-specific conferencing and problem-solving with community partners at the table before a child removal occurred. Instead, they had to turn to ERDD after a removal, limiting the proactive use of resources from the roundtable to prevent removals, as noted by a case reviewer who said, "We couldn't really refer to ERDD because [...] it was blind. [...] So the way we were trying to utilize it is after the fact [...] to try to put in place services so they can [...] go back home. Because at that point [...] it wasn't blind anymore. [...] That was like the biggest challenge for me." Compton-Carson interviewees expressed frustration with the disruption to ERDD roundtables, which had been well integrated into practice in the Emergency Response unit.

Increased Workload for Administrative Staff. Blind removal introduced additional administrative tasks, such as filling out new forms and entering data into a special projects database. This shift in procedures added to some interviewees' workload and required adjustments to their routines. Several West LA case reviewers described the

process of removing race-related case data and presenting cases to the blind removal panel as “onerous” and “time intensive” for the Coach Developers. As one reviewer noted, “I am sure they [Coach Developers] were working nights and weekends to get these [cases] ready.” In Compton-Carson, case reviewers also identified “...the workload impact [...] for the managers.” One reviewer clarified that the impact was “... not necessarily on [...] the supervisors or the workers ‘cause it didn’t entail any additional steps on their end. But for us, it did.” This increased workload was a source of frustration.

Learning to Talk about Families without Reference to Race. Some participants shared how, initially, the Emergency Response staff in both offices expressed apprehension about discussing cases in blind removal reviews due to worries about inadvertently revealing a family’s race or ethnicity. For example, one reviewer shared, “I felt [the] staff was [...] not relaxed in presenting. [...] They were really more concerned about not revealing the identity.” The blind removal process underscored the difficulty of redacting race and any information that could signal race during the blind removal reviews.

Data Not Available to Assess Blind Removal Impact on Racial Disproportionality. Another barrier for both offices, though identified by some Compton-Carson office interviewees, was that before the blind removal pilot began, there was no data collection plan in place that would allow for assessing the impact of blind removal on reducing racial disproportionality. A Compton-Carson administrator noted, “You need to have a baseline and capture the data. So, you can’t just say, ‘Yeah, we’re doing it,’ without showing proof that it’s working or not working.” Compton-Carson interviewees mentioned that from the onset, there was no clear way to match cases they reviewed through blind removal to hotline referrals or the cases their units were investigating. The inability to match cases across

the three datasets (i.e., hotline referrals, cases involving child removals, and the cases reviewed for the blind removal pilot) proved a significant limitation of this study.

Challenges Unique to the West Los Angeles Office

Time Constraints before Pilot Implementation. In the West LA office, some participants mentioned there was not enough time to ensure that staff in the Emergency Response (ER) unit understood the objectives of the pilot program. Many interviewees observed that ER staff viewed blind removal as “...a task to get done because they didn’t really understand the process” given that “they weren’t a part of building the process out.” In the West LA office, administrators reported reaffirming to ER staff that the pilot “was not an audit” to ease concerns and gain their buy-in over time. Specifically, administrators suggested at least 30-45 days for preparing staff for a blind removal pilot. Without the lead time, one administrator shared that “...no matter how much I share what this was about, I wouldn’t doubt that the staff still doesn’t fully comprehend what this was.” West LA administrators emphasized how critical preparatory time and inclusion of line staff in planning are to projects like blind removal.

No Clear Guidelines for Referring Cases for Blind Removal Review. A second implementation challenge specific to the West LA office, identified by several case reviewers, was the absence of clear guidelines for referring or excluding cases from blind removal review. Despite administrators’ stated intention to use blind removal to review all non-exigent cases where a decision to remove a child from their family was made, in practice, this did not happen. Some case reviewers felt that choosing cases to review was “...a little too lax. [...] It felt like it was too frequent that cases could opt out of the process.” They indicated a need for greater specificity from DCFS about which cases must undergo blind removal review.

Referral Dispositions Exceeded the 30-day Federal Mandate. During the initial months of the blind removal pilot, cases exceeded the 30-day timeframe stipulated in Federal law to reach a disposition on cases referred for investigation. Staying within this mandate while implementing new procedures for case reviews was challenging. Consequently, some interviewees found themselves at a crossroads, with one administrator asking, "Do we meet the Federal mandates? Or do we just slow down the practice and, you know, really do the work, have the time to do the work?" West LA administrators opted for the latter, and ultimately, CSWs and SCSWs adjusted their practices and met the 30-day mandate.

Perceived Power Imbalances among Case Reviewers. Finally, all case reviewers, except County Counsel, initially voted on whether they agreed with the removal decision during blind removal meetings. However, some reviewers expressed discomfort in voicing their opinions, citing a "power imbalance" between County Counsel attorneys and other case reviewers. The procedure was modified where case reviewers (excluding County Counsel) privately emailed their vote to an administrator after the meeting. This administrator then compiled and communicated the collective decision to the panel, Coach Developer, CSW, SCSW, and the other administrator. Then, removals proceeded.

In the next section of the report, recommendations on how to approach these challenges to implement the blind removal intervention and recommendations for addressing racial biases are discussed.



RECOMMENDATIONS



The motion directing DCFS to complete a blind removal pilot called for an academic report on the pilot's findings, recommendations for future implementation, and policy and practice reform.

In considering these recommendations, readers are reminded that the challenges faced by the child welfare system are systemic and intersectional and relate to centuries of white supremacy in the United States. Understanding this, any actions or recommendations to address race and racism within the child welfare system must also be systemic and intersectional, with the added lens of being trauma informed. This work is uncomfortable; it often brings up significant emotion at a personal and organizational level. Yet, without it, change will not transpire for the Black families who need it the most.

Blind Removal Implementation Recommendations

At the outset, future utility of blind removal in Los Angeles County may be limited unless significant efforts are made to provide appropriate staffing and time to scale the strategy, coupled with consistent and enhanced data management. However, for other jurisdictions considering blind removal, it may be a worthwhile effort given the possibilities it holds when implemented with proper support and the insights it can afford concerning race and racism within the agency.

The following recommendations concern areas of improvement where blind removal is contemplated for future use.

Provide Advance Notice Before Implementing the Blind Removal Pilot

A recurring theme among some participants in the West LA office was the need for preparation. The interviewees felt they needed more time to prepare for the pilot. The limited planning time meant that front line staff could not be effectively engaged in developing how the pilot would be implemented, ultimately limiting their understanding of the pilot's purpose. Administrators from this office recommended 30-45 days to include and prepare front line staff for implementation of blind removal.

Standardize the Blind Removal Process and Data Collection

Clear, specific, and feasible processes are required for successful implementation. To ensure the blind removal pilot's deliverables are met, all staff members participating in the pilot must understand the purpose of the pilot and receive clear objectives to gain staff buy-in. Additionally, processes for including children subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act in blind removal must be developed, even if tribal children are unlikely to be involved. Tribal communities and stakeholders should be consulted and included in the development of this process. Finally, drawing from the lessons of this blind removal pilot, recommendations for data collection are offered. A common case ID must be available across anonymized administrative datasets to ensure data can be linked. Then, cases may be tracked from hotline referral through blind removal review to court petition, including specification of children removed from parents/caregivers and placed in the foster system. The blind removal dataset must include at minimum a case ID, date of review, race and ethnicity of all children, if the blind removal review changed the removal decision, and, if yes, what decision was made instead of removal.

Implement a Diverse Blind Removal Panel and Promote Panel Discussions

Inviting a broader group of experts, such as supervisors, office leadership, cultural brokers, tribal leaders, union representatives, public health nurses, and community-based organizations to participate in the blind removal panel is essential. Though this array of professionals may raise concerns about confidentiality, the panel's diversity ensures a holistic consideration of family interests and access to resources. Panel members with the same professional background may result in unintended bias; thus, rotating panel members can promote different perspectives when reviewing a case.

AMONG THE REFORMS NEEDED, THE UPSTREAM NATURE OF CHANGE IS EMPHASIZED.

RACIAL EQUITY FOR FAMILIES DEMANDS A CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ACROSS EVERY LEVEL OF DCFS.

Policy and Practice: Recommendations for Reducing and Eliminating Racism in Child Welfare

Additional recommendations are considered in accordance with the progression of a referral within the child welfare system.

Promote Upstream Enhancements Targeting the Root Cause

Stakeholders and commentators alike have addressed the reforms needed to bring about racial equity in child welfare. Among the reforms needed, the upstream nature of change is emphasized. Indeed, the existing child welfare system acts in response to systemic racism and significant breakdowns in social safety nets across healthcare, mental health, public health, childcare, education, and the economy. LA County may consider where ongoing enhancements and connections to the safety net are required across its many departments serving children and families, such as the Departments of Public Health, Health Services, Mental Health, and Social Services.

Mandatory supporting presents significant opportunities for reform. Evaluation of the effort across Los Angeles County and throughout California is therefore recommended, specifically as to whether the strategy can reduce or eliminate disproportionality and change harmful narratives.

The results of this pilot raise many questions. Specifically, stakeholders may consider whether disproportionality persists because of the disproportionate number of referrals involving Black families. Stakeholders may also consider whether the bias involved in the subsequent investigation upholds or compounds disproportionality. Future evaluation should further **assess the root cause of disproportionality**. Moreover, assessment of these issues would be enhanced by improved data collection, organization, and utilization within DCFS.

Dedicate Resources to Cultural Transformation

Participants demonstrated a strong preference for additional instruction on the following topics: cultural competency, implicit bias, and safety versus risk training, which can promote an open and collaborative environment among staff members. While some of these issues may be addressed in training, racial equity for families demands a cultural transformation across every level of DCFS. Union representatives are similarly encouraged to consider their role and relationship to advancing and eliminating barriers to racial justice.

The shift required is systemic and scalable, and while it may be achieved office-to-office, it must be uniformly applied and accounted for across all regional offices. This type of training must go beyond simply informing staff about racial injustice and bias; it must facilitate opportunities for staff at every level, from leadership to the line, to gain a deeper understanding of systemic racism and personal biases, and then apply what staff members learn to practice. The application of knowledge to practice requires trauma-informed coaching to support ongoing reflexive practice and a climate of mutual accountability for change. Combining the aforementioned components should bring about cultural change. Some examples of this type of training include immersive experiences offered by the [Groundwater Institute](#) or [Social Justice Partners LA](#). By analogy, other examples of similar efforts include those made by the [National League of Cities](#) or the [Metropolitan Mayors Caucus](#).

These efforts and others must **normalize discussions about race**. Participants expressed interest in having more office discussions about race and racism. Encouraging these meaningful conversations can help staff members identify biases, understand their impact on decision making, and take action to confront these biases. Well-equipped facilitators should be able to manage conflict in group dialogue, resulting in valuable learning experiences that support professional development toward culture change.

We reiterate many of the recommended and overdue reforms outlined in the [2021 Path to Racial Equity report](#) authored by Alliance for Children's Rights. We also emphasize the findings in the [2023 State of Black Los Angeles County report](#) and thus support the goals of the [Los Angeles County Racial Equity Strategic Plan](#).

**ENCOURAGING
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RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement Widespread Evaluation of Existing and Prospective Racial Equity Efforts

DCFS has implemented various efforts (ERDD, 4DX) to address racial injustices in child welfare. We know little about these efforts and why they do or do not work. Moreover, removals are not the only measure of racial equity, particularly where disproportionality persists and where disparities continue to plague Black children and youth in foster care. For the most part, these efforts have not been evaluated beyond their direct impact on removals. **Deeper analysis of these efforts is recommended**, especially where other reforms around mandatory reporting and child safety are concerned.

Furthermore, in 2019, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a [motion](#) authored by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, resulting in the formation of the DCFS Office of Equity. Given the scope of issues concerning racial equity, **external support for the ongoing development and evaluation of the Office of Equity's impact is advised.**

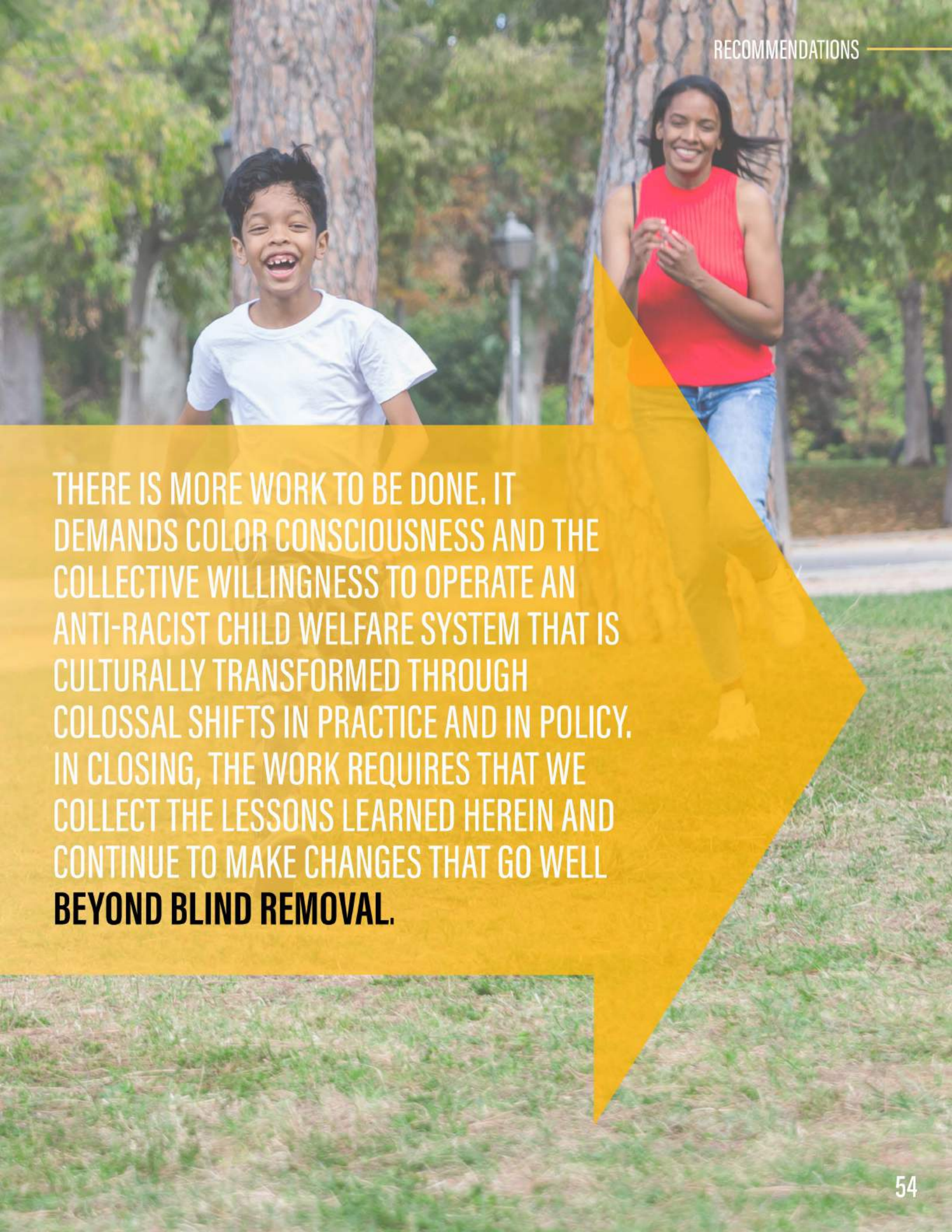
Going forward, evaluation of the foregoing efforts should engage members from impacted communities in defining outcomes and developing meaningful measures of change. For example, community engaged research, in partnership with a university, may involve a research council, which fosters bidirectional understanding of the issues, while also enhancing public trust in findings. Another example of community engaged research involves collaborative efforts to democratize research and engage diverse voices to make sense of data. Any evaluation of this nature must yield significant insight toward the practice tools necessary to activate change with and for Black families.

In summary, various limitations presented challenges throughout the course of this study. Nevertheless, disproportionality remains a prominent feature of the Los Angeles County child welfare system. This reality is exacerbated by the countless disproportionate harms impacting Black individuals, families and communities across this country due to systemic

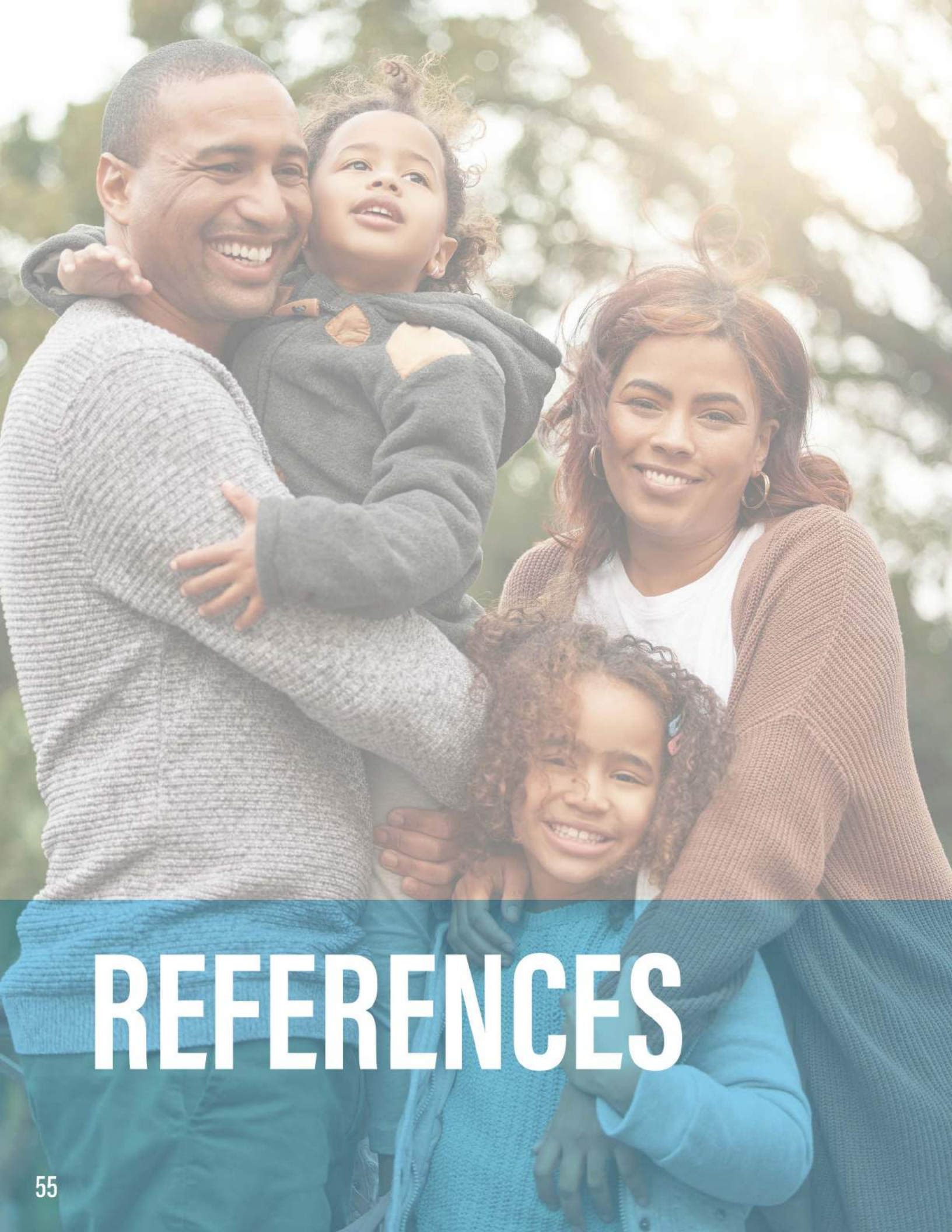


racism and intersectional harms. By implementing the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' directive to pilot blind removal, DCFS took novel and bold steps to document its internal processes and chart a new course for Black families involved with the child welfare system.

These efforts build on past and present efforts, such as ERDD and SAFE Reductions (4DX), in addition to mandatory supporting and the Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) Initiative in LA County.



THERE IS MORE WORK TO BE DONE. IT DEMANDS COLOR CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COLLECTIVE WILLINGNESS TO OPERATE AN ANTI-RACIST CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM THAT IS CULTURALLY TRANSFORMED THROUGH COLOSSAL SHIFTS IN PRACTICE AND IN POLICY. IN CLOSING, THE WORK REQUIRES THAT WE COLLECT THE LESSONS LEARNED HEREIN AND CONTINUE TO MAKE CHANGES THAT GO WELL **BEYOND BLIND REMOVAL.**



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APPENDICES

Appendix A1: Study Methods

The UCLA Pritzker Center was responsible for evaluating the blind removal pilot by the Los Angeles (LA) County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), per the LA County Board of Supervisors motion. Concurrent mixed methods were used with quantitative and qualitative data collected simultaneously to understand the blind removal pilot in each DCFS office from different points of view (Creswell et al., 2003). The evaluation also drew from administrative data provided by DCFS.

Site Selection

Two DCFS regional offices were selected to pilot the blind removal intervention: Compton-Carson and West Los Angeles (henceforth, West LA). The two offices were chosen based on their locations serving constituents in the second supervisorial district. Each office adapted the intervention's implementation pursuant to factors such as previous work to reduce racial disproportionality, office size, staffing, the volume of referrals received from the Child Protection Hotline, and administrators' preferences. The West LA office had not implemented interventions to address racial and ethnic disparities before or during the blind removal pilot; however, staff had received implicit bias and cultural humility training. In contrast and as noted previously, Compton-Carson staff had received these trainings and implemented 4DX (from 06/01/21 through 05/30/22) and Eliminating Racial Disparities and Disproportionality (ERDD; ongoing) to address the disproportionate number of Black children removed from their families by the office.

Participant Selection

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants for the post-pilot interviews and surveys (Patton 2002; 2015). All study participants were DCFS employees and functioned as case reviewers, administrators, Children's Social Workers (CSWs), or Supervising CSWs (SCSWs) in each office where the blind removal pilot was implemented. Administrators from each DCFS pilot office invited case reviewers to sign up for interviews and participated in interviews themselves. Seven of 11 (64%) case reviewers from West LA and all three (100%) case reviewers from Compton-Carson were interviewed.

A West LA administrator invited CSWs and SCSWs involved with the blind removal pilot to complete a survey. A Compton-Carson administrator invited SCSWs involved in the pilot to complete a survey and asked SCSWs to invite CSWs who had at least one case reviewed by the pilot to complete a survey. In the West LA office, 7 of 12 (58%) invited CSWs, and 6 of 7 (86%) invited SCSWs completed the survey. The response rate for Compton-Carson CSWs is unavailable because the administrator did not know how many CSWs were invited, but 12 CSWs completed the survey, and all 10 (100%) of the SCSWs from Compton-Carson participated.⁸

Data Obtained and Collected

Following the blind removal pilot, DCFS provided three de-identified administrative datasets for the Compton-Carson and West LA regional offices to be analyzed. Qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys were conducted in each office and data were analyzed. The UCLA North Campus Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the research protocol.

Administrative Data. DCFS provided de-identified administrative data for the Compton-Carson and West Los Angeles offices. The first of the three datasets documented children referred to each office, excluding evaluated out referrals. The referral data was retrieved from the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System

⁸ Per email communication with DCFS staff from the West Los Angeles (T. Chandler on 11/30/23) and Compton-Carson (L. Corbett on 12/14/23) offices.

(CWS/CMS) on 08/20/23 for the West Los Angeles office covering five years and three months (04/01/18 through 07/31/23) and on 09/13/23 for the Compton-Carson office covering five years and four months (04/01/18 through 08/31/23).⁹ The West Los Angeles data was received on 08/24/23, and Compton-Carson on 10/17/23. The referrals dataset includes demographic information (race, age, gender) and allegations made to the Child Protection Hotline.

The second dataset documented exigent (emergency)¹⁰ and non-exigent (non-emergency) referrals and the children for whom court petitions were filed. Two types of petitions distinguish children placed with their other parent from children removed from a parent and then placed in the foster system. Throughout this report, this dataset is referred to as the removal dataset. This dataset was not from an automated source and included some data from court/warrant manual counts.¹¹ The data periods, dates compiled, and received are the same as noted above. The removals dataset contains demographic information (race, age, gender) and detention, petition filing, and hearing dates.

The third dataset recorded all cases (family and child counts) reviewed through the blind removal pilot. Designated DCFS staff from each office (Coach Developers from West Los Angeles and Assistant Regional Administrators from Compton-Carson) entered case information into a special projects database during the blind removal pilot. DCFS Business Information Services staff ran these reports. The blind removal datasets were received on the dates noted above. The blind removal datasets include demographic information (race, age, gender), allegations made and substantiated, blind removal review date if the case reviewer(s) agreed with the decision to remove, and the referral decision outcome (family reunification, family maintenance, voluntary family maintenance, etc.).

Interview Data. Individual interviews with the blind removal case reviewers and office administrators from the Compton-Carson and West Los Angeles DCFS offices were conducted. Separate semi-structured interview protocols were used for the two groups (Appendix A2). Topics for both groups included learning through blind removal, changes in thinking about race through blind removal, changes in practice through blind removal, implementation challenges and strategies to work through them, observations of staff engagement in and in response to blind removal, and recommendations for changes to blind removal and to address racial bias beyond bias training. Administrators were also asked about changes in perceptions about blind removal and useful practices from the pilot that will continue. Finally, interviewees were asked to describe the blind removal process in their office. Participants also completed a brief (1-2 minutes) demographic survey. Interviews were completed using Zoom, ranging from 20 to 60 minutes for the case reviewers and 55 to 75 minutes for the administrators. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

Survey Data. Simultaneous with conducting the interviews, two surveys were launched: one for CSWs and a second for SCSWs (Appendix A3). Surveys took between 5 and 10 minutes to complete. Surveys for both groups asked participants to consider the blind removal pilot and the degree of change in (a) talking about race and ethnicity at work, (b) doing their daily work, (c) the support they received at work, and (d) decisions made in their work, plus their feelings about the blind removal process. Additionally, surveys asked SCSWs to

⁹ Per documentation cited in each DCFS data spreadsheet.

¹⁰ Exigent circumstances are defined in LA County DCFS policy as "A CSW may only detain without a court order if the information he or she possesses at the time of the detention provides reasonable cause to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury and the intrusion is reasonably necessary to avert the injury" (CITE)."

¹¹ Per email communication with DCFS staff (V. Portillo, CSA II on 10/05/23).

consider blind removal and the degree of change in support they offered to CSWs in various aspects of their work. Participants also provided demographic information.

Data Analysis

The research team used Excel and STATA to analyze quantitative data. Researchers generated descriptive statistics for the administrative data about hotline referrals, child removals from their families, and survey responses from CSWs and SCSWs. Quarterly racial/ethnic disproportionality indices were calculated for each office using DCFS administrative data about child removals and U.S. Census data from the Compton-Carson and West Los Angeles service areas.¹²

The research team used a rapid qualitative data analysis approach with the interview data (Beebe, 1995; 2014). As a team, we identified domains based on the interview topics, like those listed previously, and created two data matrices, one for case reviewers and another for administrators. Research team members populated the domains in each matrix with data summaries and relevant quotes for each participant. Then, team members analyzed data across domains from case reviewers within offices and administrators within offices using structured memos. A second round of memoing focused on similarities and differences in each domain between case reviewers and administrators in each office. To complete the qualitative data analysis, team members compared and contrasted domains between the two offices to develop findings about the blind Removal pilot. Team members also drew from interview data to understand how the blind removal intervention was implemented and how this may have varied from the implementation processes developed before the pilot started in each office.

Triangulating data is a key component of the rapid data analysis method (Beebe, 1995; 2014). Qualitative interview findings were triangulated (i.e., compared and contrasted) across participant groups and offices. The qualitative findings were then triangulated through comparison and contrast with the descriptive statistics from each office's CSW and SCSW surveys. Triangulating data across different sources improves the rigor and confirmability of the findings (Patton, 1999). Through this process, the research team integrated the qualitative interview and quantitative survey findings.

Study Limitations

There were several limitations to this evaluation study. First, the blind removal pilot was not implemented in isolation from other interventions designed to address racial disproportionality (i.e., training in preparation for Eliminating Racial Disparities and Disproportionality (ERDD) in the West LA office and 4DX and ERDD roundtables in the Compton-Carson office). This confounds the attribution of any changes in racial disproportionality, or the number of children removed from their families to any one intervention. Second, the three administrative datasets were not designed or able to be linked, therefore, analyses could not be conducted following children's cases from referral through the blind removal review to an outcome (i.e., referral closed, the child remained with parent/caregiver with voluntary or mandated services or child removed from family). Attempting to implement any intervention faithfully presents challenges; thus, the third limitation: the blind removal intervention was not implemented as planned in the West LA office, thereby limiting the scope of analysis.

¹² The disproportionality indices (DI) for each racial and ethnic group were calculated using the following two equations. First, the count of Black children removed during each quarter was divided by the total number of children removed for each quarter and the result was multiplied by 100 to get the percentage of Black children removed during each quarter. Second, the percentage of Black children removed during each quarter was divided by the percentage of Black children under age 18 in the DCFS office's services area. The result was the DI for Black children removed from their families during each quarter in either the Compton-Carson or West Los Angeles service area. This process was repeated using data for children in five racial/ethnic groups: Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, White, and American Indian/Alaska Native.

Appendix A2: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Blind Removal Case Reviewers

1. What is your position at DCFS?
 - a. How did you become involved in blind removal reviews and what is your role in the reviews?
2. How did the blind removal pilot facilitate learning about race within DCFS?
 - a. How does your experience with blind removal change or influence your thinking about the role of race or ethnicity in DCFS?
 - b. How about during investigations?
 - c. How about when making decisions about removing children from their families?
3. In addition to what you just shared, what did you learn from the blind removal pilot?
4. Who decides which cases to bring for blind removal?
 - a. What criteria were used to decide to refer a family's case for BR review?
5. Do you do anything differently because of the blind removal pilot? If yes, please describe.
6. Is there anything else you wish you could do related to blind removal? If yes, please describe a) what that is, b) any obstacles you may face, and c) what you would need.
7. What challenges did you observe as blind removal was implemented?
 - a. How did you or others work through or around these challenges?
8. Over time, what did you observe about how your colleagues engaged in and responded to the blind removal reviews?
 - a. Please describe both positive aspects and areas for improvement.
9. What recommendations do you have for future blind removal implementation within LA County DCFS, in CA, or elsewhere?
10. Thinking beyond racial bias training, what other practices would be helpful for recognizing and addressing racial bias in child welfare investigations?
11. Based on our conversation today and your experiences during the blind removal pilot, what else would you like to add?

Interview Questions for Administrators

1. How long have you been in your current role in the [West LA or Compton-Carson] office?
 - a. What positions did you hold previously? In which office(s)?
2. How did the blind removal pilot facilitate learning about race within DCFS?
 - a. How does your experience with blind removal change or influence your thinking about the role of race or ethnicity in DCFS?
 - i. How about during investigations?
 - ii. How about when making decisions about removing children from their families?
 - b. What changes, if any, have you observed about how your staff think and speak about race and ethnicity?
3. In addition to what you just shared, what did you learn from the blind removal pilot?
 - a. How does this inform your current work within DCFS?

Interview Questions for Administrators (continued)

4. How did staff decide to bring cases for blind removal review?
5. Do you do anything differently because of the blind removal pilot? If yes, please describe.
6. Is there anything else you wish you could do related to blind removal? If yes, please describe a) what that is, b) any obstacles you may face, and c) what you would need.
7. What learning took place for you as blind removal was implemented in your office and Compton-Carson?
8. What challenges did you observe as blind removal was implemented?
 - a. How did you or others work through or around these challenges?
9. What policies or legislative barriers interfered with blind removal implementation?
 - a. How did you work through or around these barriers?
10. Over the blind removal pilot year, what did you observe about how your staff engaged in and responded to the blind removal reviews?
 - a. Please describe both positive aspects and areas where you would have liked to see improvement.
11. What have you noticed about your staff's perceptions of blind removal from the pilot's launch until the end?
 - a. Please describe both positive aspects and areas where you would have liked to see improvement.
 - b. How have your perceptions of blind removal changed from the beginning to the end of this pilot?
12. Going forward, what will you continue to use from the blind removal pilot? And why?
 - a. How do you see yourself continuing these practices?
13. What recommendations do you have for future blind removal implementation within LA County DCFS, in CA, or elsewhere?
14. Thinking beyond racial bias training, what other practices would be helpful for recognizing and addressing racial bias in child welfare investigations?
15. Based on our conversation today and your experiences during the blind removal pilot, what else would you like to add?

Appendix A3: Surveys

Children's Social Workers (CSW) Survey

Blind Removal and Talking about Race and Ethnicity

Instructions: In each row, please indicate how the blind removal pilot has changed how much you talk about race and ethnicity with each person, or in each situation, identified below.

	A lot less	A little less	No change	A little more	A lot more
with my colleagues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my supervisor?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in unit meetings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Assistant Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in General Staff Meetings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with families during investigations?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
when determining which services to recommend to families?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
while assessing whether to detain children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in required DCFS trainings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Children's Social Workers (CSW) Survey (continued)

Blind Removal and Your Daily Work

Instructions: In each row, please indicate to what degree the blind removal pilot has changed how you do different aspects of your daily work.

To what degree has the Blind Removal pilot changed how I...					
	A lot less	A little less	No change	A little more	A lot more
engage with families?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
gather information from families?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
help families build support networks?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
gather information from families' support networks?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
develop overall safety assessments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
assess families' strengths?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
assess families' skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
assess families' motivation for change?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
assess families' needs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
create individualized service plans?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
adapt service plans as needed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Children's Social Workers (CSW) Survey (continued)

Blind Removal and Support at Work - Part A

Instructions: In each row, please indicate how the blind removal pilot has changed the amount of support, from various people, that you receive for talking about race and ethnicity in your work.

How has the Blind Removal pilot *changed the amount of support I receive for talking about race and ethnicity in my work* from each of the following people?

	A lot less	A little less	No change	A little more	A lot more
with my colleagues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my coach developer?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Blind Removal consultant?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my SCSW?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my unit supervisor?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Assistant Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Children's Social Workers (CSW) Survey (continued)

Blind Removal and Support at Work - Part B

Instructions: In each row, please indicate how the blind removal pilot has changed the amount of support, from various people, that you receive for managing your own bias related to race and ethnicity in your work.

How has the Blind Removal pilot *changed the amount of support I receive in managing my own biases related to race and ethnicity* from each of the following people?

	A lot less	A little less	No change	A little more	A lot more
with my colleagues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my coach developer?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Blind Removal consultant?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my SCSW?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my unit supervisor?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Assistant Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Children's Social Workers (CSW) Survey (continued)

Blind Removal and Decisions

Instructions: In each row, please indicate to what degree the blind removal pilot has changed the control you have in conducting investigations and making decisions.

To what degree has the Blind Removal pilot *changed the control I have in* each of the following?

	A lot less	A little less	No change	A little more	A lot more
how I conduct my investigations?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
making decisions about detaining children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Children's Social Workers (CSW) Survey (continued)

Feelings about Blind Removal

Instructions: In each section below, please read the two phrases and **check the box next to the phrase that most closely describes how you feel about the blind removal process.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Disservice to families
<input type="checkbox"/> Service to families
<hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Insensitive to families' race/ethnicity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive to families' race/ethnicity
<hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Overlooks important safety information
<input type="checkbox"/> Includes important safety information
<hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Disempowers CSWs
<input type="checkbox"/> Empowers CSWs
<hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Discourages CSWs
<input type="checkbox"/> Supports CSWs
<hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Minimizes implicit bias
<input type="checkbox"/> Amplifies implicit bias
<hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Minimizes explicit bias
<input type="checkbox"/> Amplifies explicit bias
<hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective at addressing racial disproportionality
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective at addressing racial disproportionality
<hr/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Blind removal should not continue
<input type="checkbox"/> Blind removal should continue

End of CSW survey.

Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSW) Survey

Blind Removal and Talking about Race and Ethnicity

Instructions: In each row, please indicate how the blind removal pilot has changed how much you talk about race and ethnicity with each person, or in each situation, identified below.

How has the Blind Removal pilot *changed how much I talk about race and ethnicity* with each person, or in each situation, below?

	A lot less	A little less	No change	A little more	A lot more
with my supervisees?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in unit meetings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with SCSW colleagues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with Blind Removal Consultants (West LA ONLY)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with Coach Developers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with other colleagues (e.g., CPMs, RMDs, CQI, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with County Counsel?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Assistant Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in General Staff Meetings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with families I may have contact with during investigations?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSW) Survey (continued)

Blind Removal and Your Daily Work

Instructions: In each row, please indicate to what degree the blind removal pilot has changed how you support CSWs with doing different aspects of their daily work.

To what degree has the Blind Removal pilot *changed how I support CSWs with...*

	A lot less	A little less	No change	A little more	A lot more
engaging with families?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
gathering information from families?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
helping families build support networks?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
gathering information from families' support networks?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
developing overall safety assessments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
assessing families' strengths?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
assessing families' skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
assessing families' motivation for change?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
assessing families' needs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
creating individualized service plans?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
adapting service plans as needed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSW) Survey (continued)

Blind Removal and Support at Work - Part A

Instructions: In each row, please indicate how the blind removal pilot has changed *the amount of support you provide to CSWs for talking about race and ethnicity in their work* **and** that *you receive from various people for talking about race and ethnicity in your work*.

How has the Blind Removal pilot *changed the amount of support I provide to the CSWs I supervise for talking about race and ethnicity in their work?*

	A lot less	A little less	No change	A little more	A lot more
Since the Blind Removal pilot, I support CSWs with talking about race and ethnicity in their work:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How has the Blind Removal pilot *changed the amount of support I receive for talking about race and ethnicity in my work* from each of the following people?

	A lot less	A little less	No change	A little more	A lot more
SCSW colleagues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blind Removal Consultants (West LA ONLY)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coach Developers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
other colleagues (e.g., CPMs, RMDs, CQI, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
County Counsel?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my Assistant Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSW) Survey (continued)

Blind Removal and Support at Work - Part B

Instructions: In each row, please indicate how the blind removal pilot has changed *the amount of support you provide to CSWs for managing their own biases related to race and ethnicity in their work* **and** that *you receive from various people for managing your own biases related to race and ethnicity in your work*.

How has the Blind Removal pilot *changed the amount of support I provide to CSWs for managing their own biases related to race and ethnicity in their work?*

A lot less A little less No change A little more A lot more

Since the Blind Removal pilot, I support CSWs with managing their own biases related to race and ethnicity in their work:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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How has the Blind Removal pilot *changed the amount of support I receive in managing my own biases related to race and ethnicity in my work from each of the following people?*

A lot less A little less No change A little more A lot more

SCSW colleagues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blind Removal consultants? (West LA ONLY)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coach Developers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
other colleagues (e.g., CPMs, RMDs, CQI, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
County Counsel?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Assistant Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with my Regional Administrator?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSW) Survey (continued)***Blind Removal and Decisions**

Instructions: In each row, please indicate to what degree the blind removal pilot has changed the control you have in supervising how your CSWs conduct investigations and how you make decisions.

To what degree has the Blind Removal pilot *changed the control I have in* each of the following?

A lot less A little less No change A little more A lot more

supervising
CSWs as they
conduct their
investigations?

making
decisions about
removing
children from
their families?

Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSW) Survey (continued)

Feelings about Blind Removal

Instructions: In each section below, please read the two phrases and **check the box next to the phrase that most closely describes how you feel about the blind removal process.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Disservice to families
<input type="checkbox"/> Service to families
<input type="checkbox"/> Insensitive to families' race/ethnicity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive to families' race/ethnicity
<input type="checkbox"/> Overlooks important safety information
<input type="checkbox"/> Includes important safety information
<input type="checkbox"/> Disempowers CSWs
<input type="checkbox"/> Empowers CSWs
<input type="checkbox"/> Discourages CSWs
<input type="checkbox"/> Supports CSWs
<input type="checkbox"/> Minimizes implicit bias
<input type="checkbox"/> Amplifies implicit bias
<input type="checkbox"/> Minimizes explicit bias
<input type="checkbox"/> Amplifies explicit bias
<input type="checkbox"/> Ineffective at addressing racial disproportionality
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective at addressing racial disproportionality
<input type="checkbox"/> Blind removal should not continue
<input type="checkbox"/> Blind removal should continue

End of SCSW survey.



An aerial photograph of the UCLA campus, showing various buildings, green spaces, and trees. A semi-circular graphic overlay is positioned in the center of the image, containing the text "STRENGTHENING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES".

STRENGTHENING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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