




# Racial Disparities and Disproportionality in Child Welfare



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Advancement Program

University of Washington, School of Social Work

# Our Agenda

9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Getting Acquainted

Definitions, Statistics, and Practice "oh my"

Whew!: 10 minutes

Who Me?

Vittles Break: 1 hour

Just Do It

Whew II: 15 minutes

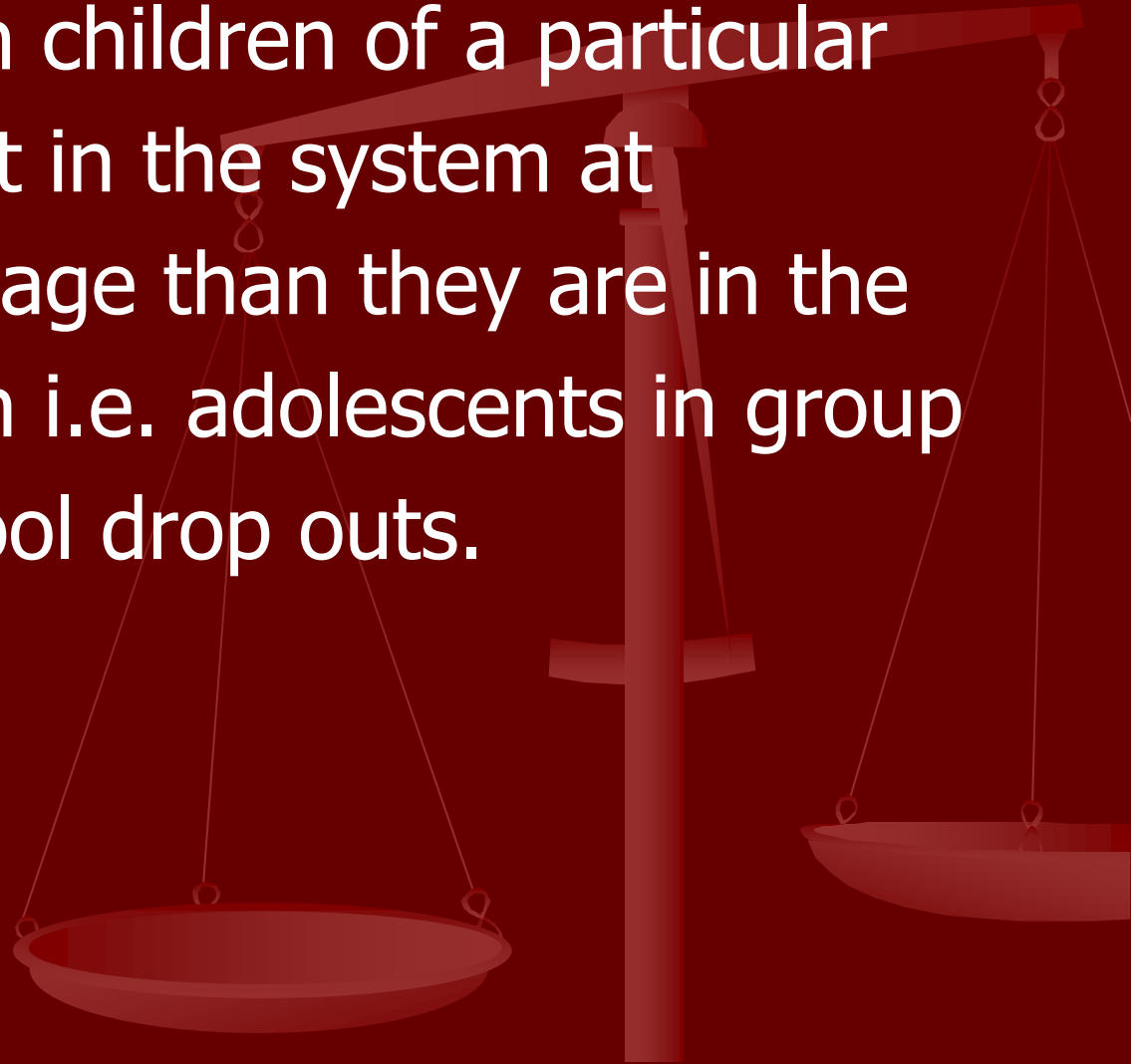
"Not me !"

"So What?"



# Overrepresentation

Situation in which children of a particular group are present in the system at a greater percentage than they are in the overall population i.e. adolescents in group Care or high school drop outs.





# Disproportionality

Refers to a situation in which a particular *racial/ethnic* group of children are represented in the Child Welfare/foster care system at a higher or lower percentage than their representation in the general population.

This analysis goes further than overrepresentation to look across racial/ethnic groups at relative ratios of children at various points in the child welfare system compared to their numbers in the general population and in relation to other racial/ethnic groups (typically in comparison to white children).

# Disparity

Disparity means unequal treatment when comparing a racial or ethnic Minority to a non-minority, i.e. comparing the rate of drug related incarceration between Black males and White males or the high school suspension rate for males

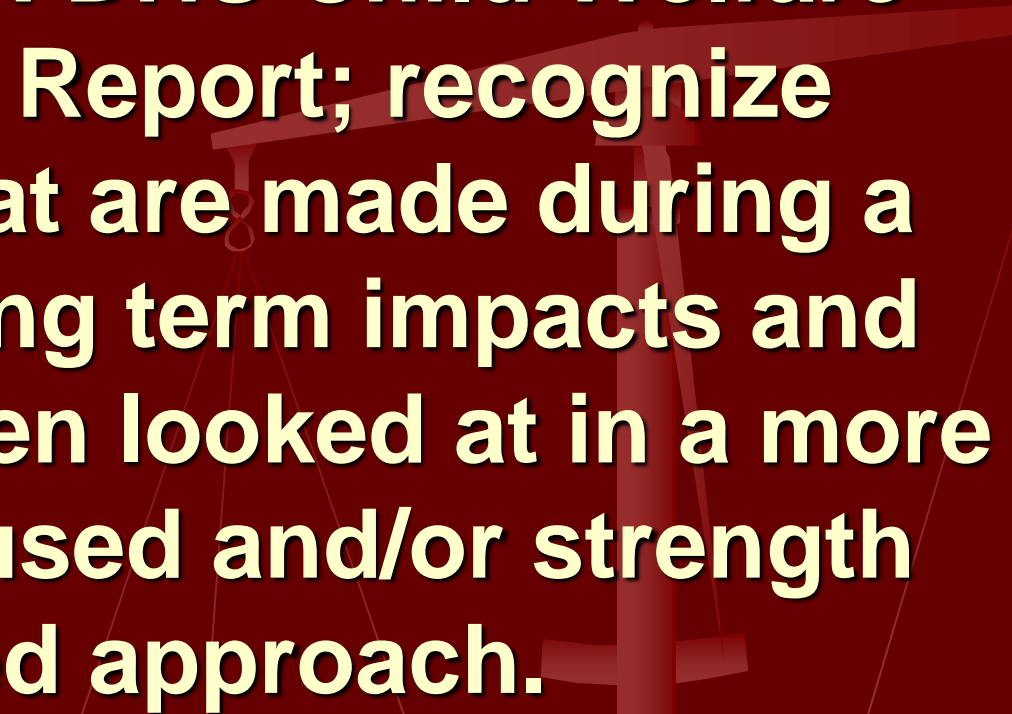


**Black**

**White**

This explains the *impact* of disproportionality.

**Feb. 2010 MN DHS Child Welfare  
Disparities Report; recognize  
decisions that are made during a  
case have long term impacts and  
could have been looked at in a more  
solution focused and/or strength  
based approach.**

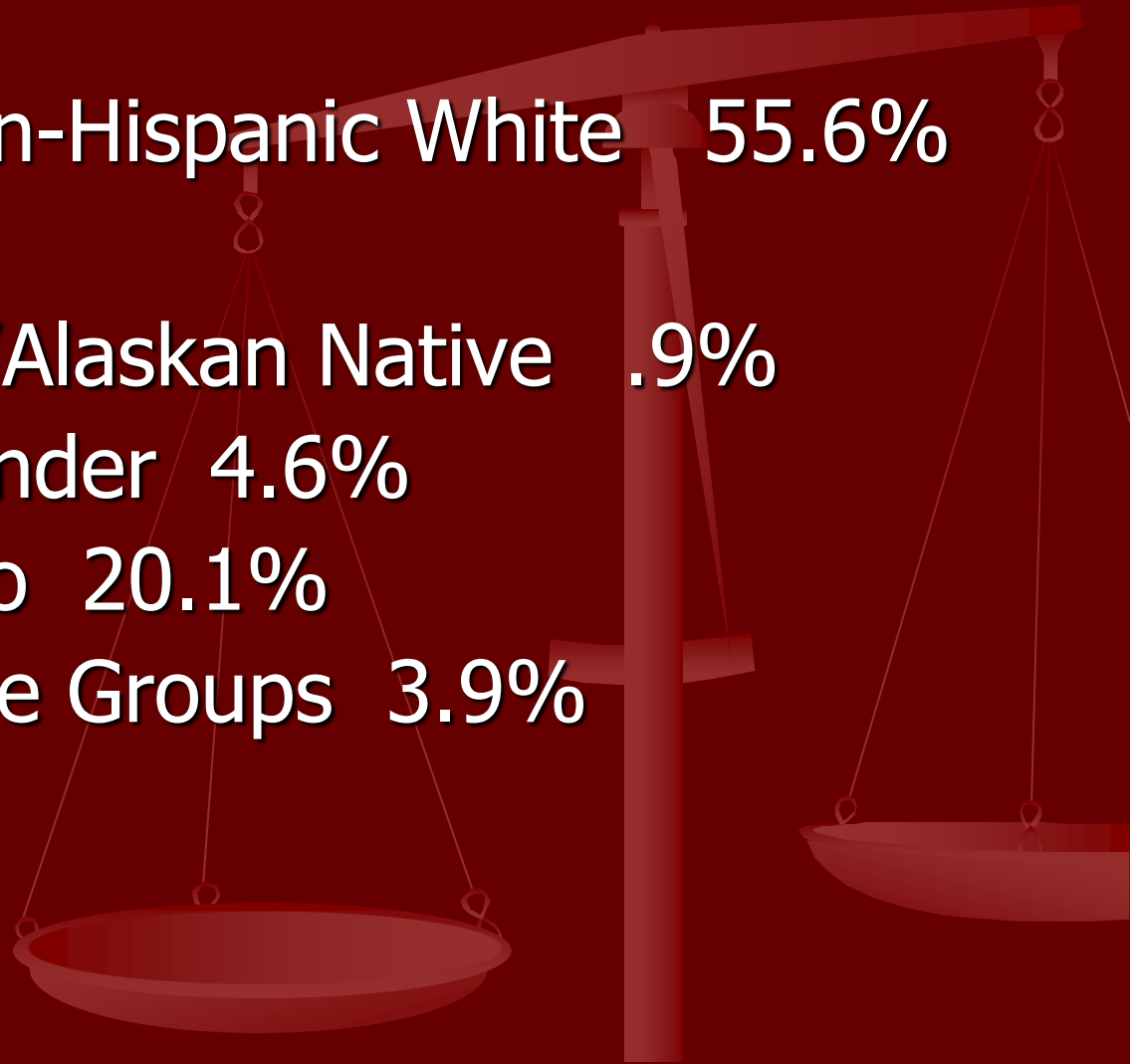


# Our Children



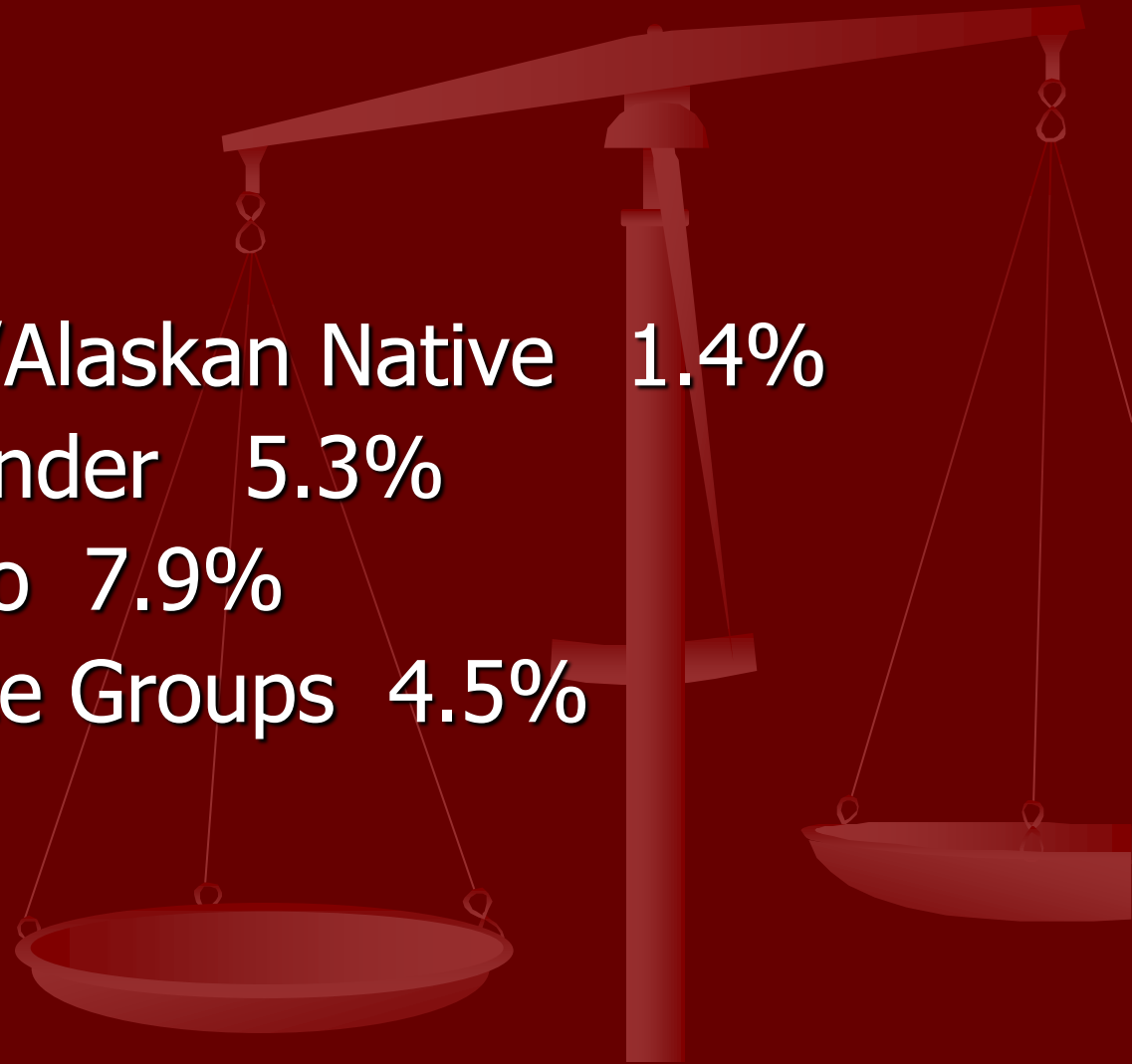
# US Population, by Race: Percent: 2009

- ❖ United States Non-Hispanic White 55.6%
- ❖ Black 14.5%
- ❖ American Indian/Alaskan Native .9%
- ❖ Asian/Pacific Islander 4.6%
- ❖ Hispanic or Latino 20.1%
- ❖ Two or More Race Groups 3.9%



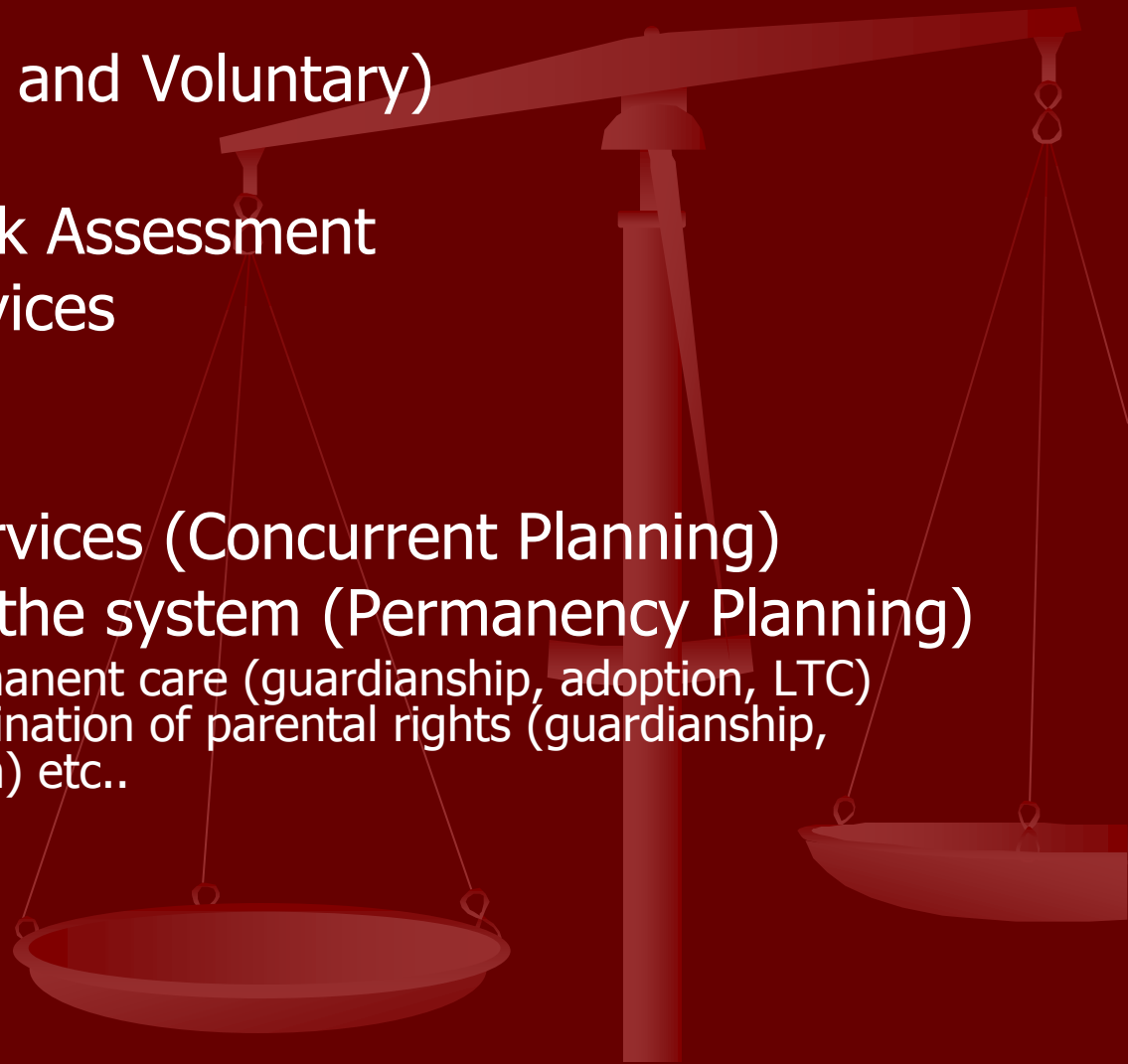
# Minnesota Population, by Race: Percent: 2009

- White 73.4%
- Black 7.4%
- American Indian/Alaskan Native 1.4%
- Asian/Pacific Islander 5.3%
- Hispanic or Latino 7.9%
- Two or More Race Groups 4.5%



# Decision Points in the Child Welfare System

- Reporting (Mandated and Voluntary)
- Intake
- Investigation and Risk Assessment
- Pre-Dependency Services
- Placement
- Dependency
- Post-Dependency Services (Concurrent Planning)
- Pathways for exiting the system (Permanency Planning)  
Return Home, Relative permanent care (guardianship, adoption, LTC)  
Guardianship non-kin, Termination of parental rights (guardianship, adoption, LTF, emancipation) etc..





# Decision Points Where Disproportionality Can Be Addressed “In Your Role”

Activity # 1

Get into groups by position:  
Report back to full group



# Rates of African American Children Disproportionality in Foster Care

## Moderate Disproportion

Louisiana (1.3-2.0)  
South Carolina (1.3-2.0)  
Alabama (1.3-2.0)  
Georgia (1.3-2.0)  
Arkansas (1.3-2.0)  
Tennessee (1.3-2.0)  
North Carolina (1.3-2.0)  
Florida (1.3-2.0)  
Mississippi (1.1-1.2)

Virginia (1.3-2.0)  
Maine (1.1-1.2)  
Kentucky (1.3-2.0)  
Alaska (1.1-1.2)  
Oregon (1.1-1.2)  
Vermont (1.1-1.2)  
South Dakota (1.3-2.0)  
West Virginia (1.3-2.0)  
Hawaii (N/A)

# High Disproportionality African American Children



Texas (2.1-3.0)	Oklahoma (2.1-3.0)
Delaware (2.1-3.0)	Maryland (2.1-3.0)
Missouri (2.1-3.0)	Washington (2.1-3.0)
Nebraska (2.1-3.0)	Arizona (2.1-3.0)
<b>Minnesota (2.1-3.0)</b>	Montana (2.1-3.0)
North Dakota (2.1-3.0)	Indiana (2.1-3.0)
Ohio (2.1-3.0)	New Mexico (2.1-3.0)
Connecticut (2.1-3.0)	Idaho (2.1-3.0)
Rhode Island (2.1-3.0)	New Hampshire (2.1-3.0)
Michigan (2.1-3.0)	
Massachusetts (2.1-3.0)	

# Extreme Disproportionality

## African American Children

New Jersey (3.1-4.0)

Iowa (3.1-4.0)

Pennsylvania (3.1-4.0)

Kansas (3.1-4.0)

Nevada (3.1-4.0)

Colorado (3.1-4.0)

Illinois (3.1-4.0)

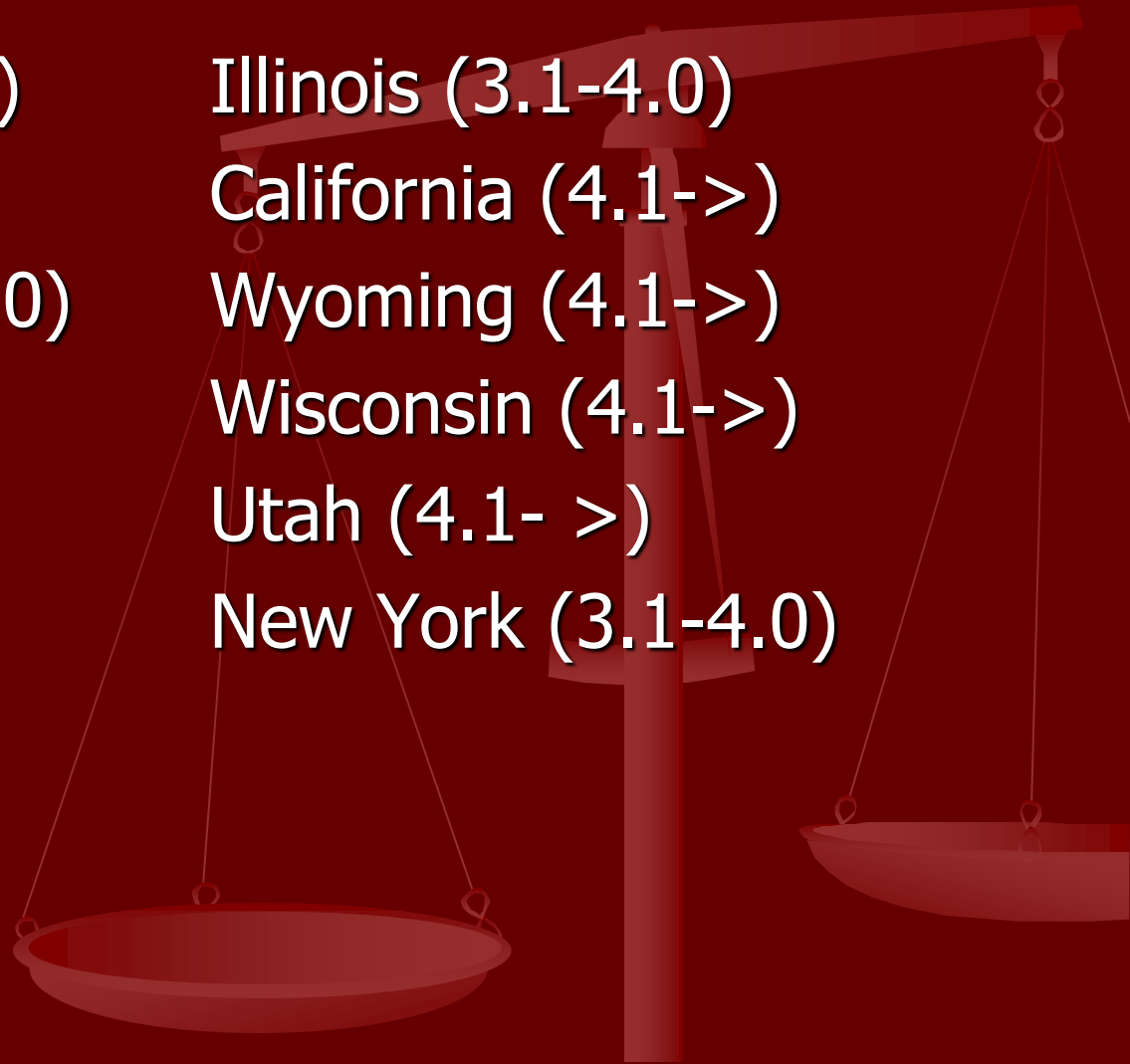
California (4.1->)

Wyoming (4.1->)

Wisconsin (4.1->)

Utah (4.1- >)

New York (3.1-4.0)



# Disproportionality Index of Children in Foster Care by Race and State for 2004 and 2009

No Disproportion (N/A)

Native American Children

Louisiana  
South Carolina  
Alabama  
Georgia  
Arkansas  
Tennessee  
North Carolina  
Mississippi  
Massachusetts  
Colorado  
New York  
Ohio  
Connecticut  
Arizona

Virginia  
Kentucky  
Illinois  
Oregon  
Vermont  
West Virginia  
Hawaii  
Wyoming  
Texas  
Delaware  
Missouri  
Oklahoma  
Maryland  
New Mexico

Indiana

New Jersey



# Low to Moderate Disproportion Native American Children



Nebraska (1.1-2.0)  
North Dakota (2.1-3.0)  
Rhode Island (1.3-2.0)  
Maine (1.3-2.0)  
New Hampshire (1.3-2.0)  
Florida (1.3-2.0)  
Michigan (1.3-2.0)  
California (1.3-2.0)  
Kansas (1.1-1.2)  
Pennsylvania (1.3-2.0)

# Extreme Disproportion Native American Children

Washington (4.1>)

Idaho (4.1>)

Nebraska (4.1>)

**Minnesota (4.1>)**

Iowa (4.1>)

Alaska (3.1-4.0)

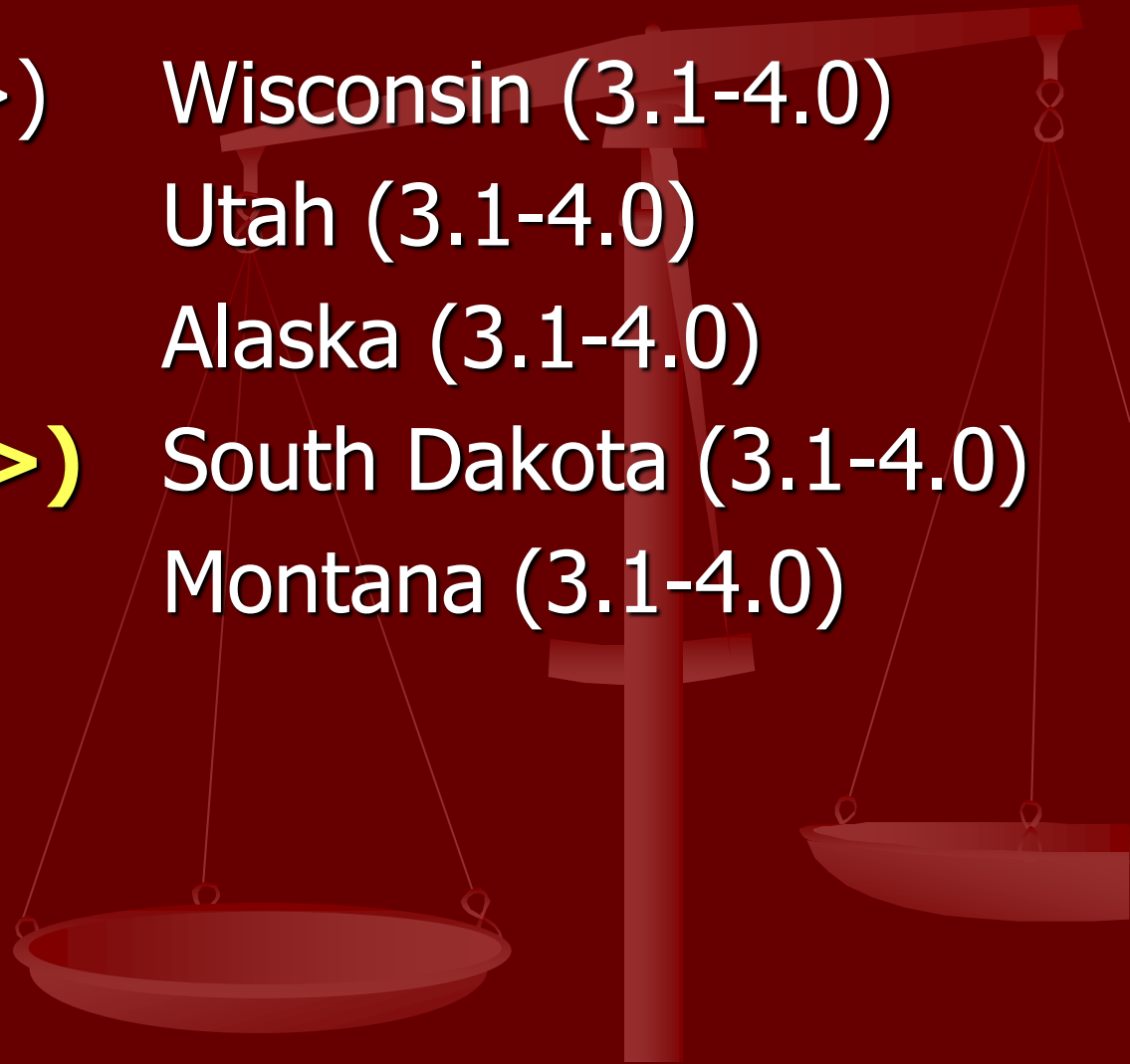
Wisconsin (3.1-4.0)

Utah (3.1-4.0)

Alaska (3.1-4.0)

South Dakota (3.1-4.0)

Montana (3.1-4.0)



# Race-Ethnicity of children in Total Population vs. in Foster Care

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Total Child Protection Population	Percentage of Children in Foster Care
African American	14%	31%
American Indian	1%	2%
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>
Hispanic	22%	20%
White Non-Hispanic	56%	40%

# ***Disparities at Critical Decision Points***

## ■ ***Reporting issues.***

Children of color are more likely to be removed from their mothers as infants than are white children, because hospital staff report their mothers more than they report white mothers for substance abuse during pregnancy.

## ■ **Foster care entrance.**

Children of color enter foster care at higher rates, even when they and their families have the same characteristics as comparable white children and families.

## ■ **Length of stay.**

Children of color remain in foster care for longer periods of time than White children (a median stay of 17 months for African American children versus 9 months for white children).



# *Disparities at Critical Decision Points*

- **Limited services.**

Families of color, when compared with white families, receive fewer services and have less contact with child welfare staff members.

- **Family reunification.**

Children of color experience reunification at lower rates than white children.

- **Adoption processes.**

Children of color who are legally available for adoption wait longer for an adoptive placement when compared with white children, and they are less likely to be placed at all.

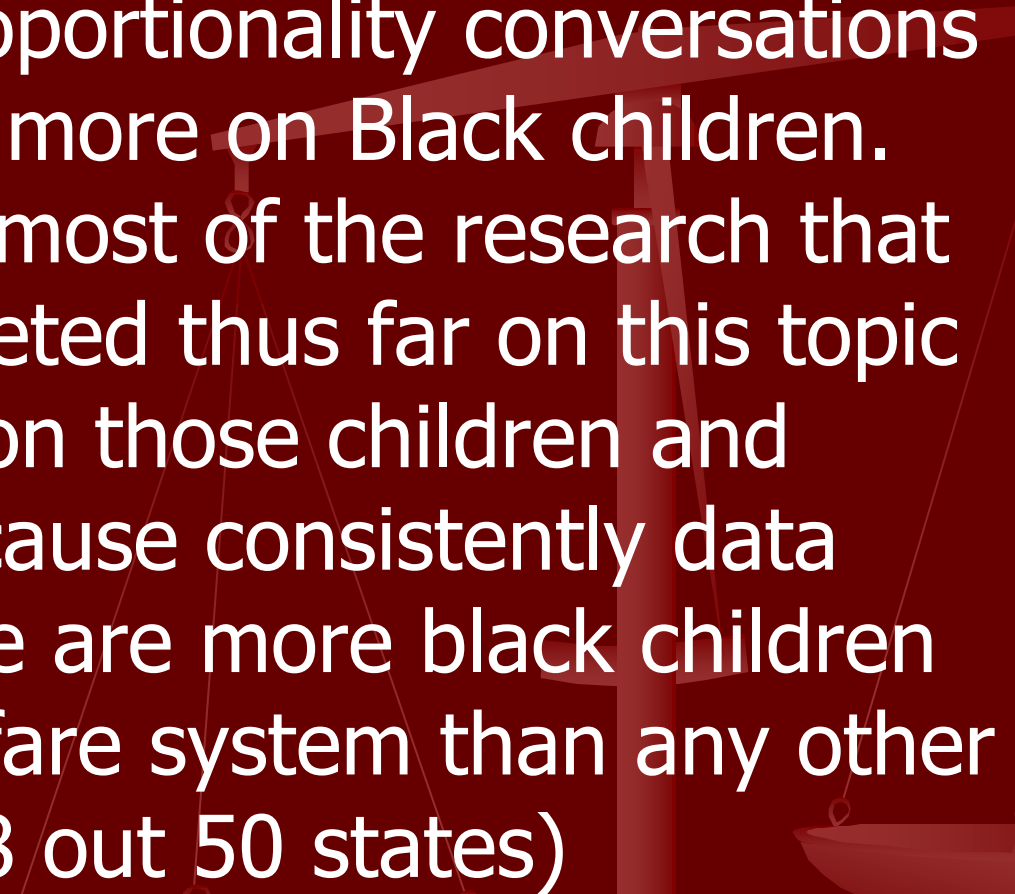
# What Would You Do?

## Fishbowl Examples

- Your Social Worker comes in for supervision and requests guidance on a case that he/she describes in a sarcastic tone as “you know, one of those typical ones for them”.
- You are in a supervisors’ meeting and a colleague asks “well how are *we* suppose to with these numbers, it’s (disproportionality) is all over the country, they must need the system?”

# Black Children

Often times disproportionality conversations appear to focus more on Black children. This is because most of the research that has been completed thus far on this topic has been done on those children and families and because consistently data shows that there are more black children in the Child welfare system than any other racial group. (48 out 50 states)



# Disproportionality ratios for African American children increase as children and families move through the child welfare system

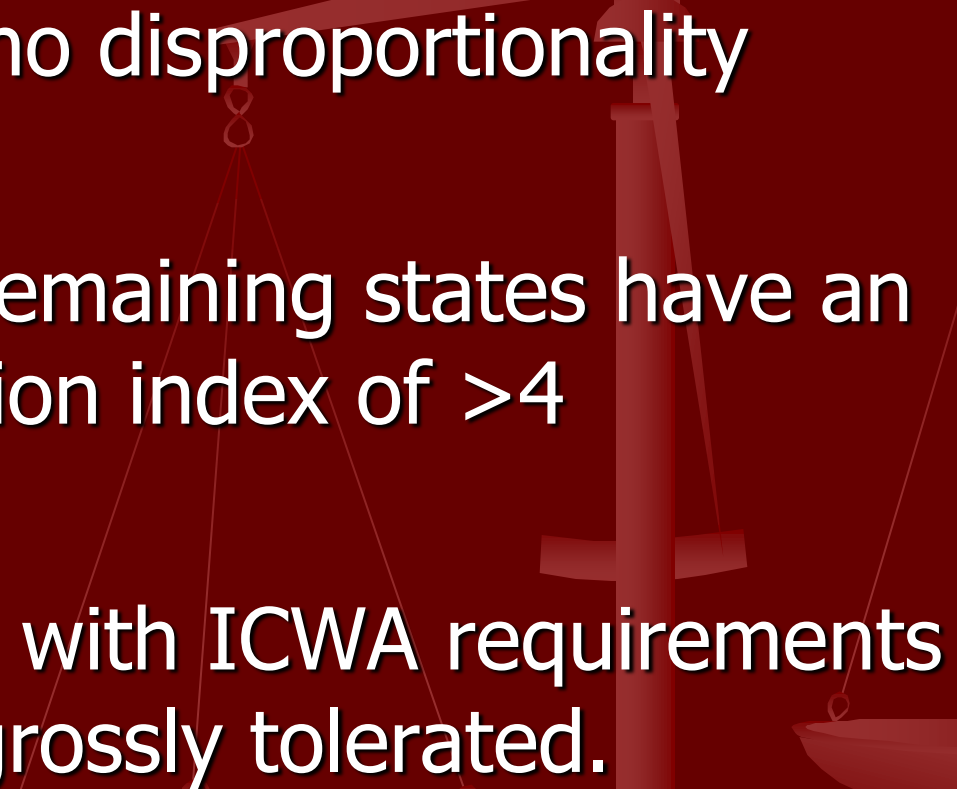
- CPS Referrals
- Children in out of home care
- Children in care >2 years
- Children in care >4 years



# American Indian Children

- There is a continued, actually desperate need for more partnering with and research documenting the impacts of the public child welfare system on American Indian children, families and tribes.
- The perceived low numbers and percentages of American Indian peoples' in this country have lent the public mind to cognitive dissonance, or denial of depth to which Indian people suffer in this country from systemic oppression throughout social systems.

# Disproportionality ratios for American Indian children in the child welfare system

- 29 States have no disproportionality
  - 26% of the 21 remaining states have an overrepresentation index of  $>4$
  - Non-compliance with ICWA requirements continue to be grossly tolerated.
- 



# The Child Abuse and Neglect (2000) Casey Family Programs

This study examined the methods used by states to collect data about child abuse and neglect within the Native American population to determine the accuracy of national statistics. Interviews were conducted with representatives from 57 tribes and officials from 21 states about investigation procedures and the maintenance of statistics at the tribal and state level.

**An analysis of the interviews revealed that only a portion of child abuse and neglect cases in the American Indian community are recorded by the state.** About one-fourth of Indian child abuse and neglect cases are investigated by the tribe only. Other cases are investigated by a combination of agencies including the tribe (65 percent); states (42 percent); counties (19 percent); Bureau of Indian Affairs (19 percent); and a consortium (9 percent). States and counties only report the cases in which they have been involved, which suggests that a maximum of 61 percent of all cases are tracked in the data collection system.

# The Child Abuse and Neglect (2000) Casey Family Programs

Fewer than 20 percent of tribes have an automated record keeping system and only 3.5 percent forward reports to a national database, such as the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. The tribes lack the technical and financial resources to develop a database of child abuse statistics and so must rely on the states and counties to report their information.

The author recommends greater coordination in the collection of data and more support for tribes to establish their own recordkeeping systems. 43 references, 4 figures, 3 tables.

[http://www.nicwa.org/policy/research/2000/CAN\\_2000.pdf](http://www.nicwa.org/policy/research/2000/CAN_2000.pdf)




# Minnesota “No Place Like Home”

- American Indian (AI) and African American (AA) children 5x more likely to live in poverty
- AI and AA children are 2x more likely to have a Family Investigation
- AI and AA children are more likely to be referred to Family Investigations Response
- AI and AA children received a less timely Face to Face contact with a social worker
- AI and AA (all non-White) children received a higher determination on maltreatment rate
- AI children received a higher rate of Structured Decision Making –Family Risk Assessment(SDM-FRA) as “high risk”
- More than half of the reasons for removal of AI children was alleged neglect or drug/alcohol abuse

# Minnesota “No Place Like Home”

- AA children are removed at a higher rate for: child’s behavior problems, and alleged neglect
- AI and Multi-Racial children are 2x more likely to be removed from home for one or more days once a CPS report is received
- AA children are 1.5 more likely to be removed from home for one or more days once a CPS report is received
- AI and Multi-Racial children had the longest length of time spent in care from removal to discharge
- AI children are the least likely to be reunified of children in out-of-home care

# Causation


- **Parent and family risk factors:** Such as unemployment, teen parenthood, poverty, substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence, and mental illness, factors that result in high levels of child maltreatment.
  - **Community risk factors:** residing in neighborhoods and communities that have many risk factors, such as high levels of poverty, welfare assistance, unemployment, homelessness, single-parent families, and crime and street violence, factors that make residents more visible to surveillance from public authorities.
  - **Organizational and systemic factors:** decision-making processes of CPS agencies, the cultural insensitivity and biases of workers, governmental policies, and institutional or structural racism.
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# Causations cont....

- **Poverty.** Poverty and poverty-related circumstances are major contributors to the overrepresentation of minority children.
- **Visibility.** Poor families are more likely to use public services such as public health clinics and receive TANF, making any problems they may be experiencing more visible to the community.
- **Overreporting.** Some felt that disproportionality is the result of discriminatory practices within society; specifically, school and hospital personnel report minority parents for child abuse and neglect more frequently than non-minority parents.
- **Lack of experience with other cultures.** Many of those interviewed felt that lack of understanding of the cultural norms of minority populations, along with racial bias, often interfered with good decision-making on the part of the case workers.

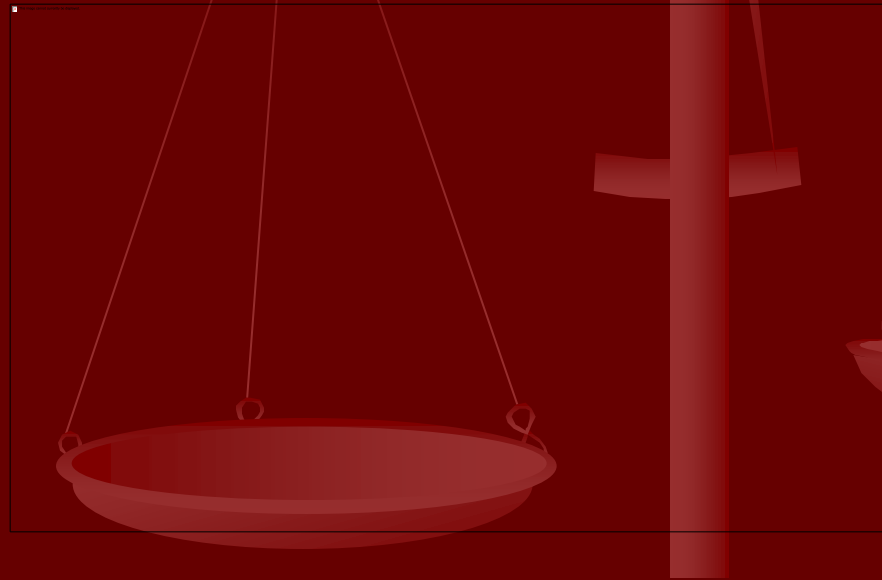


# What is Culture?

- Is the way of life of a group, an integrated way of thinking, believing, doing, and being in the world that is passed on from one generation to the next.
  - It encompasses shared values, beliefs, customs, rituals, traditions, language, communication styles, ways of behaving, norms of social and interpersonal relationships, food, music, art, etc.
  - A shared view of the world, a shared orientation of the problems and joys of human existence. Creating a form of group identity and a sense of “peoplehood”.
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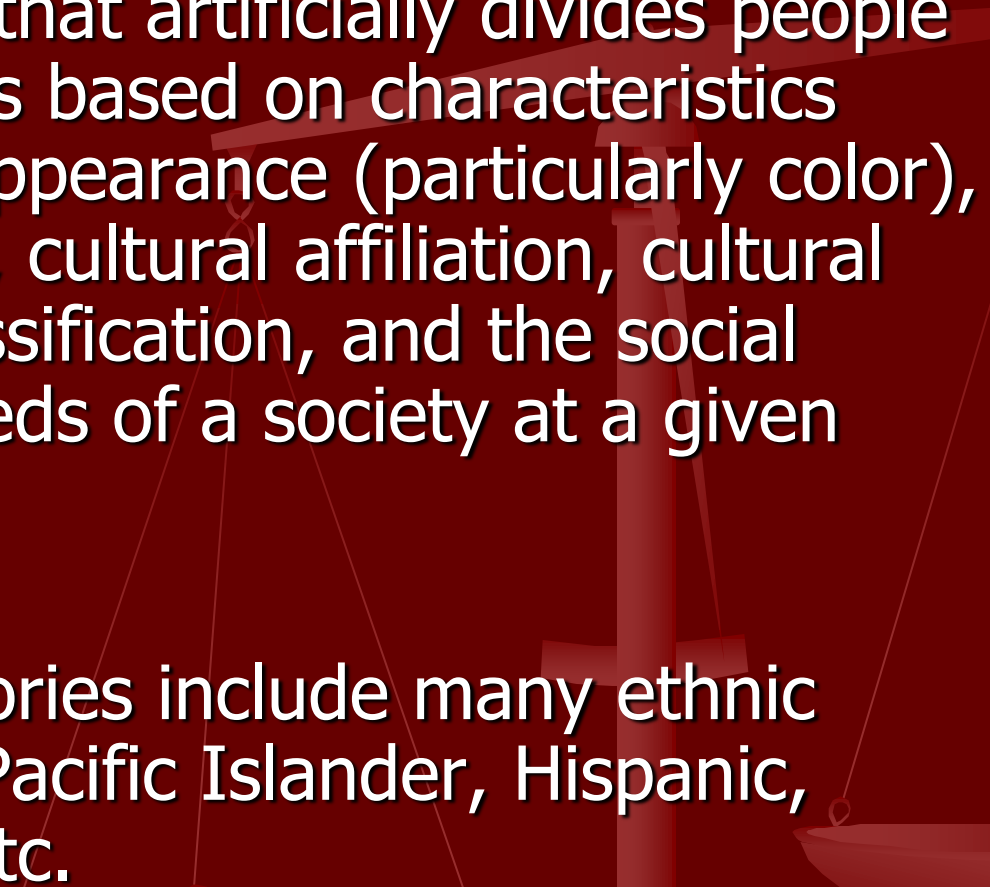
# What is Ethnicity

- Is a quality of group identity that comes from a shared history, ancestry, language, usually tied to time and geography.
- Within any Ethnic group there are many cultures

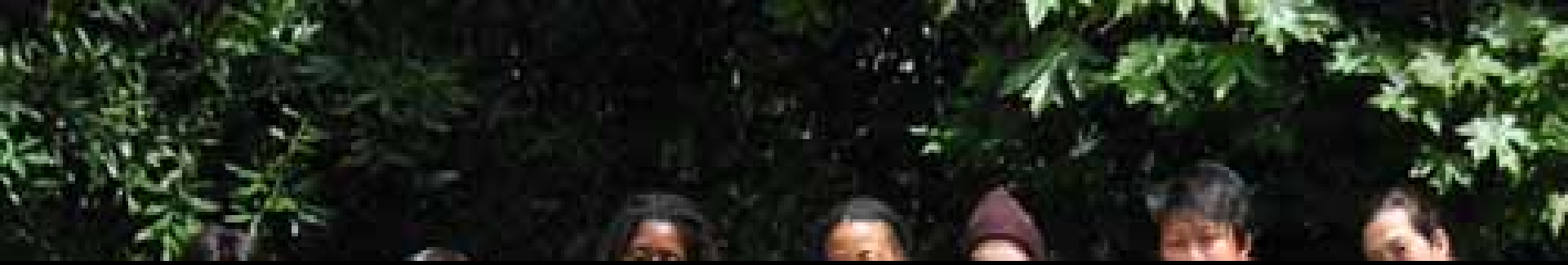




# What is Race

- A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social economic, and needs of a society at a given period of time.
  - Some racial categories include many ethnic groups i.e. Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American etc.
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# Prejudice

## Learned pre-judgment-Internal

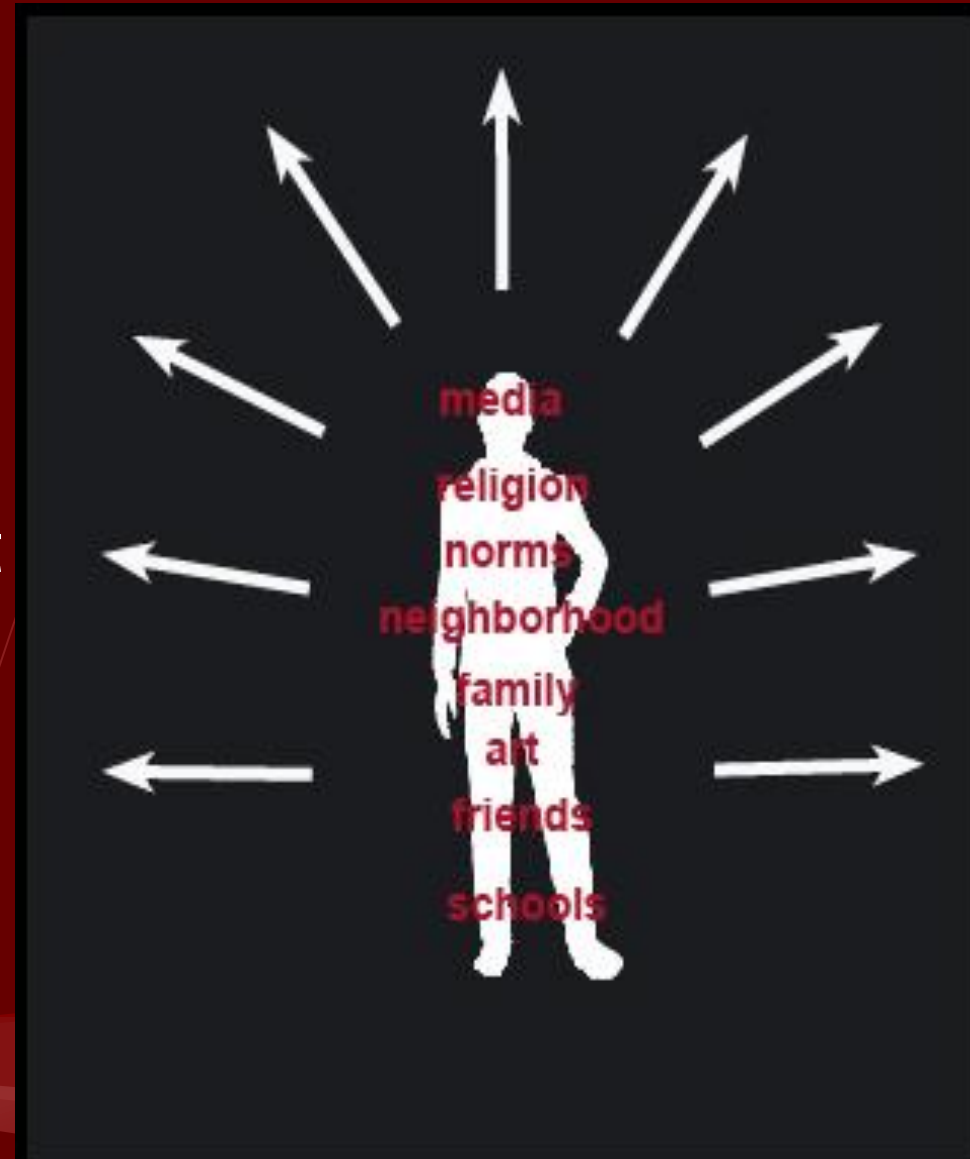
- Thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, values, assumptions, unfair bias (positive or negative), stereotypes, generalizations
- Based on little or no experience and projected onto entire group
- Emotions include: anger, hate, resentment, envy and discomfort



# Discrimination

## Actions based on prejudices

- Excluding, ignoring, avoiding, threatening, ridiculing, jokes, slurs, violence, unfair treatment
- Discrimination is an individual's external behavior



# Systematic Oppression

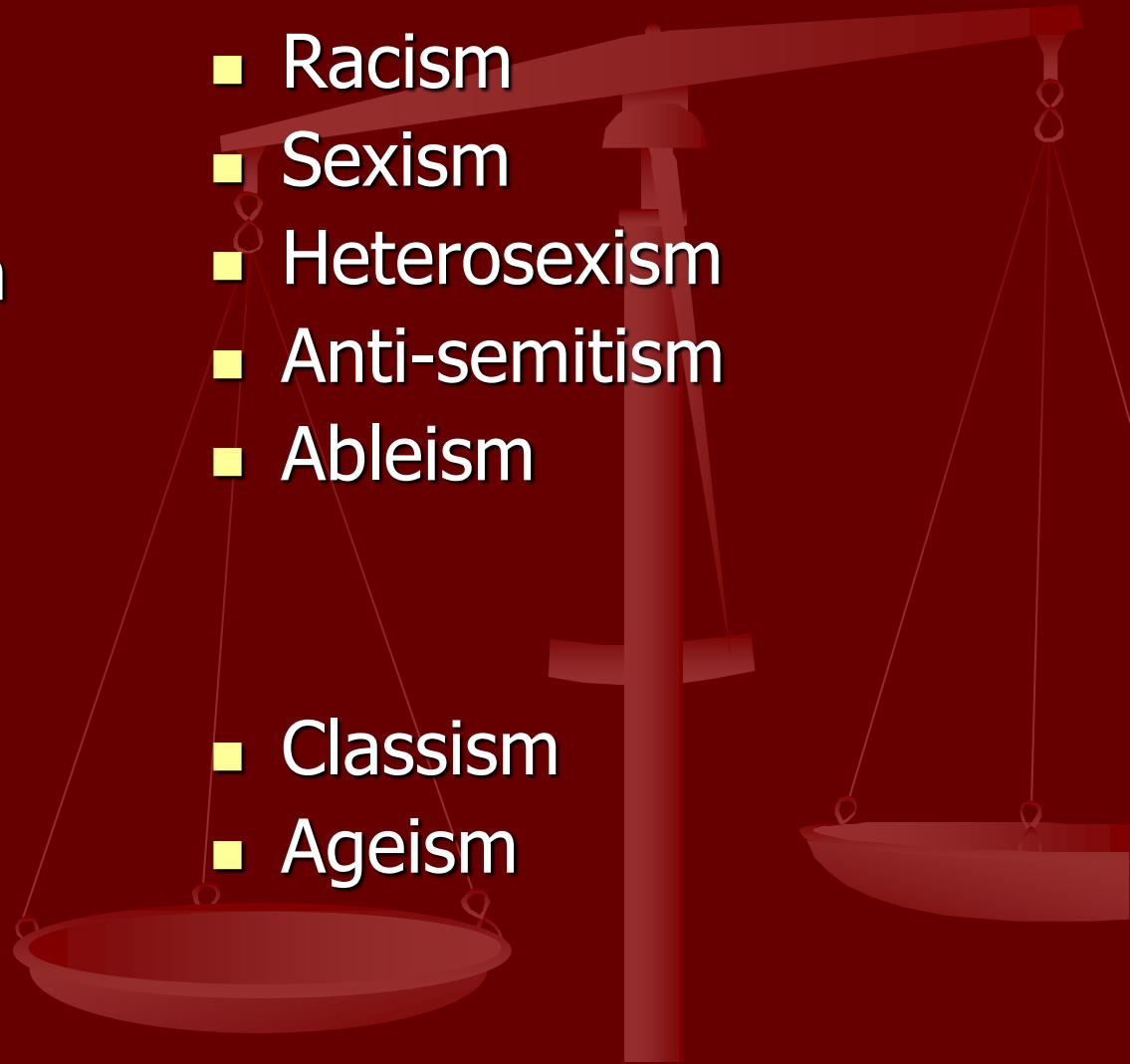
- The result of prejudice plus the power to enforce it throughout the culture. Embedded in institutions: media, family, religion, education, language, economics, criminal justice and in cultural definitions of what is normal, real, correct, beautiful and valuable.



# Social Identity Groups & Types of Oppression

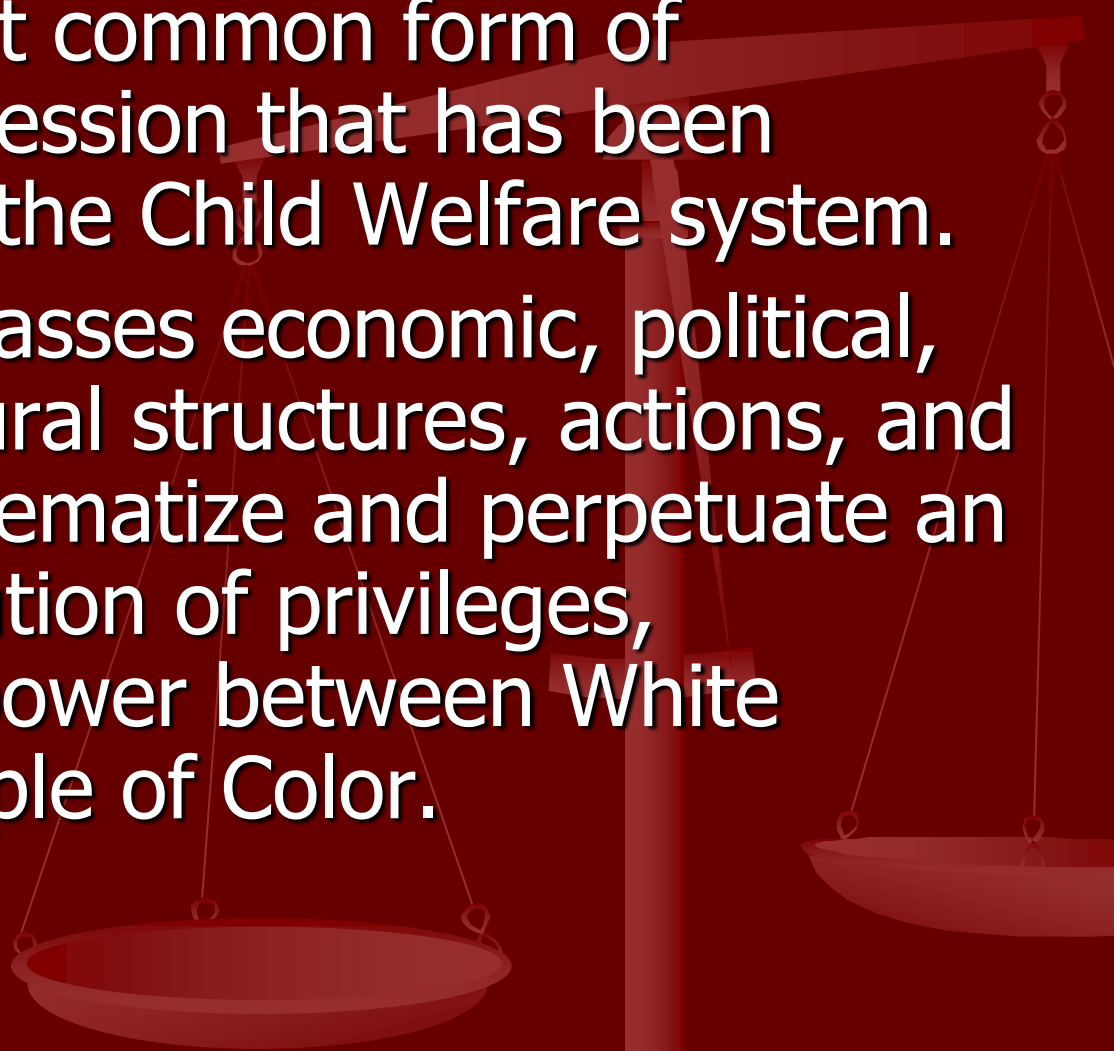
- Race
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion
- Physical,  
Developmental,  
Mental Ability
- Class
- Age

- Racism
- Sexism
- Heterosexism
- Anti-semitism
- Ableism
  
- Classism
- Ageism



# Racism

- Racism the most common form of systematic oppression that has been embedded into the Child Welfare system. Racism encompasses economic, political, social, and cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that systematize and perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources and power between White people and People of Color.



# Embedded Inequities...

- Is a term that is used to define the many factors that work to produce and maintain racial inequities in America today.
- Identify aspects of our history and culture that have allowed the privileges associated with “whiteness” and the disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time.
- Point out the ways in which public policies and institutional practices produce inequitable racial outcomes.

# Cultural Competency & Disproportionality

## The “Duh” Factor

People of Color, specifically Black people are overrepresented in every “Service System”, resulting in disparate outcomes for the “people” as a whole i.e. education, health, economics, and family unity

All-most every report, book, website, or research project that has an honest discussion or review of the facts argue or conclude the issue of a lack of “cultural competency in service delivery for these individuals and families.

Cultural competency cannot be achieved or provided in services with addressing the explicit and implicit issues of individual and systematic oppression as manifested through institutional racism and other forms of oppression that maintain embedded inequities.



# Cultural Competency

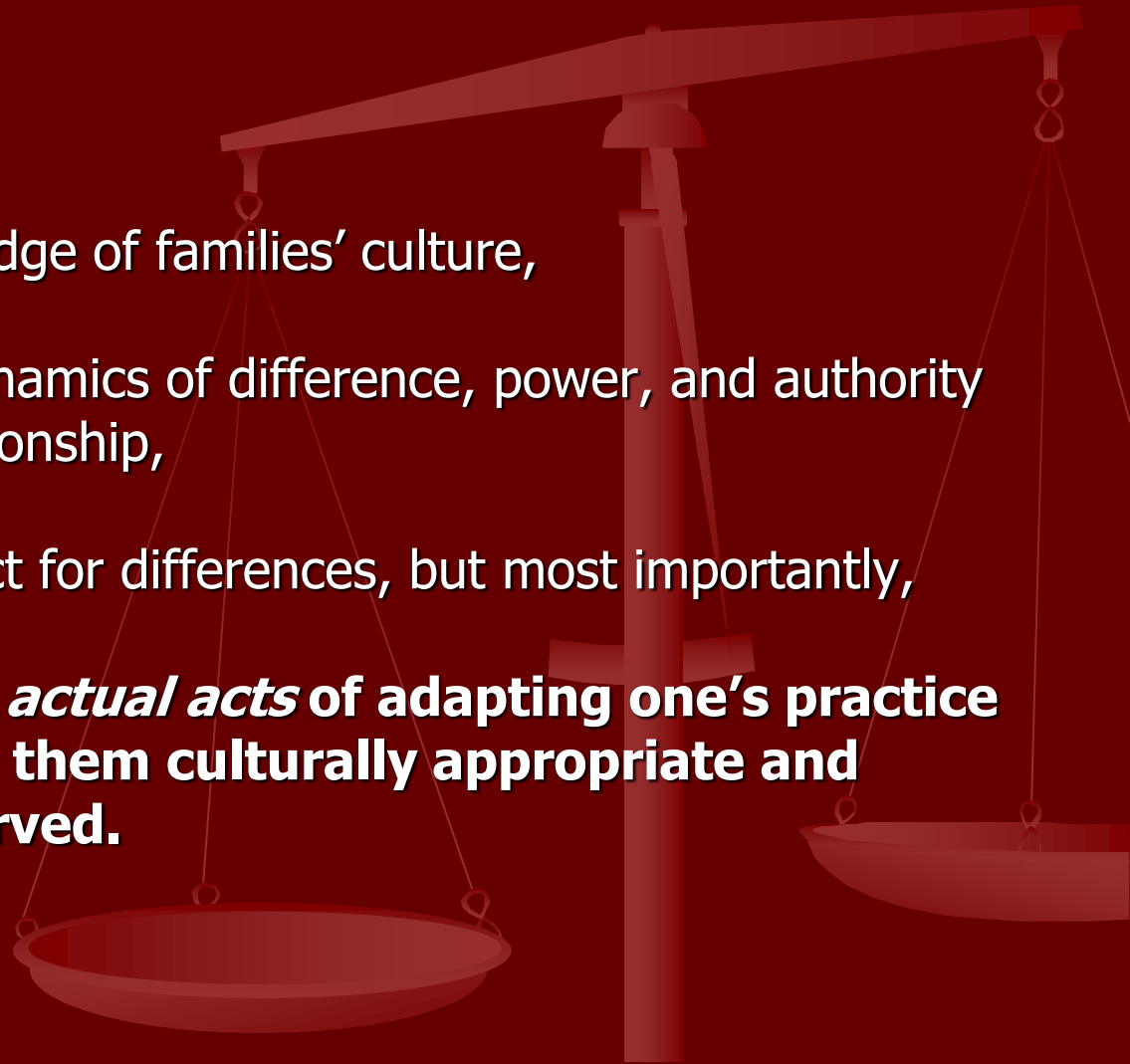


- Refers to ways of thinking and behaving that enables members of one culture, ethnic, or linguistic group to work effectively with members of another.
- The ability to transform knowledge and cultural awareness into interventions that support and sustain healthy outcomes for families served within any system.

# Cultural Competency/ The Equity Factor

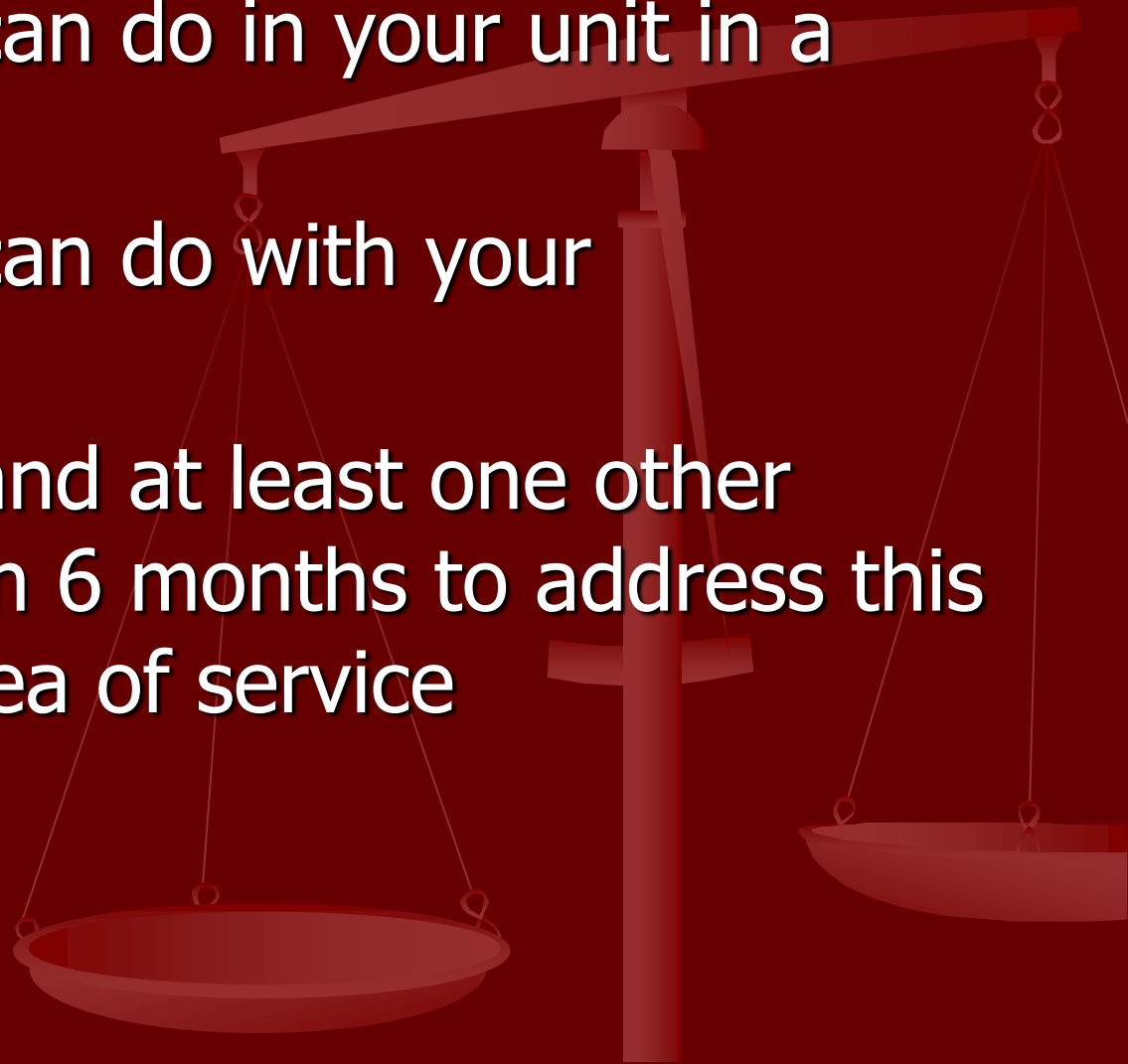
- **Process Includes:**

1. Becoming Self Aware,
2. Acquiring base knowledge of families' culture,
3. Understanding the dynamics of difference, power, and authority in worker-family relationship,
4. Acceptance and respect for differences, but most importantly,
5. **the Willingness and *actual acts* of adapting one's practice approaches to make them culturally appropriate and relevant to those served.**



# So What?

- One thing you can do in your unit in a week?
- One thing you can do with your colleagues?
- One thing you and at least one other person can do in 6 months to address this issue in your area of service



# Humanity



## **Golden Rule:**

Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.

## **Platinum Rule:**

Do unto others, as they would have you do unto them !