

# **Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality and Disparities Across Systems: A GUIDE TO PRACTICE CHANGE**

## **RMJJ's 5 STEPS TO PRACTICE CHANGE**



*"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." - African Proverb*

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### **Step 1. Understand Issues and Develop a Shared Language**

- **Collect information regarding your area of focus/issue**
- **Assess your organization's current level of knowledge about the issue**
- **Develop a shared language and common definitions**
- **Review RMJJ's partner expectations (including three annual goals for practice change)**
- **Within your department or organization, create a vision statement for equity and inclusion as it pertains to your programs and work**

*The first step in Practice Change is to get folks on the same page. It is important that everyone take the time to clearly define words and develop a shared language. What terms and images and outlets are used to describe/raise awareness about the issue? A shared language is imperative to ensure that individuals mean the same thing and can understand one another. Some groups benefit from having an outside consultant facilitate these conversations.*

*With an inclusive group and the relevant facts and figures, discuss what inequities are believed to exist and how they relate to the issue. This discussion should explore what power structures contribute to or sustain the inequities related to the issue. Then, the group should work together to create a statement of the vision for equity and inclusion both within the organization and as a result of the organization's work.*

**Questions to consider:** *What are the important relevant issues? What information do you have about the issue? What are the important demographics to consider? How much does your department/organization know about the issue? How can RMJJ or other subject matter experts help you in this process? What are your department/organization's particular strengths/challenges?*

**Example:** For CMPD, some of this shared language comes through the two-day Racial Equity Workshop. The police department has also created pre-workshop information so their officers and participants know what to expect from the Workshop. Overall, the Workshop helps participants understand the history of race/racism and how they change over time and space, provides definitions of explicit/implicit bias, individual acts of bigotry, institutional racism, and structural racism, etc., and challenges individuals to critically assess themselves and their organizations.

## **Step 2. Identify Stakeholders and Develop Workforce**

- **Identify the stakeholders – including those most affected by the issue and those who can affect change/gatekeepers**
- **Train and develop your team or workforce on racial/ethnic equity**
- **Identify Racial/Ethnic Equity Champions and form a Racial/Ethnic Equity Team**
- **Present your definitions and vision to stakeholders and members of the community, and incorporate their feedback into the final stated vision**
- **Utilize outside expertise, as necessary**

*The second step towards Practice Change is to identify stakeholders and develop your workforce. Stakeholders are considered those who are not only a part of the affected population, but also those who can stimulate and affect change. Invite them all to meaningfully participate in efforts to address the identified issue. From this group of stakeholders, identify one or more Racial/Ethnic Equity Champions who have the passion and positional power to ensure the efforts to address the issue, move it forward and help resolve any barriers that may arise.*

*Agency-wide training should include guidance in understanding a racial equity so that staff can proactively use an "equity lens" when interacting with the community, their clients, and/or other systems.*

*Though racial equity training is important for the entire workforce, a smaller Racial/Ethnic Equity Team should be formed to drive the organization's efforts to identify and remedy inequities that exist within the organization and as a result of the identified issue. This team should include the Equity Champions named above, as well as community members who are impacted by the issue. (When attempting to address long-standing racial inequities, an outside facilitator can sometimes be helpful to keep conversations moving forward and ensure the group continues to progress.)*

*This team should engage the stakeholders, community members most impacted by the organization's work, and members of the workforce to present the draft vision driving the efforts to achieve racial equities. These individuals should provide input and help finalize the vision statement.*

**Questions to consider:** *Who's at the table/who's missing? How much does your community know about your topic and how can you connect with folks working in this area? What is the role of the champion and team? Can you use the presentation of your vision to increase the community's awareness and interest in this topic?*

**Example:** UNC Charlotte is an RMJJ Partner. Their stakeholders include: The NC General Assembly, the UNC Charlotte Board of Trustees, the Chancellor and Provost, the Administration, Faculty, Staff, Students, and the broader Charlotte community. The university is beginning to compare the racial/ethnic makeup of these various stakeholding groups to insure more inclusion and equity with accountability and sustainability.

### **Step 3. Collect, Analyze, and Share Data**

- **Gather and review national and local quantitative (QT) and qualitative (QL) data on the issue**
- **Assess your community's knowledge of the issue**
- **Consider the qualitative feedback you received from your stakeholders and your organization's history and determine what's contributing to current outcomes (root causes)**
- **Examine the results of the issue disaggregated by race and ethnicity**
- **Document your organization's baseline (QL & QT) data related to the issue prior to initiating any policy or practice changes**
- **Share your data with RMJJ and other local organizations**

*Data are central to each step of this process. Data help you to: 1) understand the issue, 2) establish a baseline - document disproportionality/disparities, 3) include diverse voices and experiences, 4) recognize root causes and contributing factors, 5) identify strategies and solutions, and 6) assess impact.*

*Data regarding the issue should be gathered and broken out by race and ethnicity. This may first require that racial and ethnic data be gathered and that the categories used are consistent across the various sources of data. Then, results across racial and ethnic groups should be examined, particularly to understand how the issue may produce outcomes that vary by race or ethnicity.*

*Both qualitative and quantitative data should be gathered and analyzed as part of this process. One key source of QL data that should be collected from the community is their perspective and experiences related to the issue. QT data sources should also be sought in order to concretely measure the impact of the issue. Comparing local data and findings to national data can provide insights and inform the local efforts to address the issue. Also, community members affected by the issue should be involved in interpreting the findings to ensure that the results and their meaning are fully understood. The data should then be used to shape potential strategies and outcomes to address the issue.*

**Questions to consider:** *What data do you collect as part of this work? Are there gaps in your data – what data would be helpful to add/collect? Are your data focused on one geographic area, one contact point, etc. in your system? Do outcomes vary by race or ethnicity? Which goals have you set, how do you track results, measure progress, and make adjustments in your partnership with RMJJ? What are your specific performance measures, outputs, and outcomes? What help might RMJJ's Practice Change or Data subcommittee provide?*

**Example:** RMJJ partners regularly collect, analyze, and share data. In recognition of Juvenile Justice month in October 2018, RMJJ and partner, the Council for Children's Rights, published three short papers (Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), Raise-the-Age, and The School-to-Prison Pipeline) as well as an overall state of juvenile

justice in Mecklenburg County report. These publications were designed to: Raise awareness and educate the community; Create dialogue and stimulate conversation; and Provide baseline data for future comparisons and analysis.

#### **Step 4. Commit to Stated Outcomes and Enact Practice, Policy Change**

- **To achieve your department/organization’s shared vision, document your specific desired strategies and outcomes (these should include your three attainable and measurable, annual goals for practice change)**
- **Enact practice and/or policy change steps that will achieve your stated outcomes**
- **Designate responsibility (including members of the community) for assessing the attainment of your stated outcomes**

*With careful consideration of your data and findings, your team identifies the desired outcomes and your department/organization commits to these in writing. Outcomes are the specific results you seek to achieve through the group’s activities. Work backwards from the desired outcomes to specify the activities needed to achieve the desired changes. Once a problem is recognized, the affected populations and stakeholders should collaborate to best address it as a whole (with the root causes) and the Racial/Equity Teams assist in facilitating the desired practice changes and measuring the outcomes.*

*It is critical that the selected outcomes and corresponding policy and practice changes address current power dynamics and the ways the issue creates or maintains dominance based on categories of race. Without addressing the reality that institutional and structural racism are sustained by inequitable power sharing, the group’s activities will be at risk of failing to achieve the stated vision for equity and inclusion. This is particularly important for government agencies that are accustomed to sustaining a level of dependence within the communities they serve in order to justify continuing or increasing expenditures of tax dollars for public services.*

**Questions to consider:** *Is your plan realistic and adequately resourced? If not, what can be done? Will your plan address the causes identified by your stakeholders? What are potential unintended consequences - who may benefit from or be burdened by the proposed practice or policy change? Are there complementary strategies that you can implement to improve your chances of success? What are ways existing partnerships could be strengthened to maximize impact in the community? How will you partner with stakeholders for long-term positive change?*

**Example:** The overall vision of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) is to provide all students the best education available anywhere, preparing every child to lead a rich and productive life. To that end, CMS recognizes the importance of increasing equity and excellence in our schools and the community. Two of our goals are to improve cultural proficiency and to reduce racial disproportionality. To date, 450+ district leaders and

school-based staff have participated in the REW. Cultural proficiency modules have been developed specifically for CMS and more than 3,800 teachers have completed all four modules. Almost 500 operations and administrative support staff members have participated in the cultural proficiency overview sessions. CMS has worked with RMJJ to revise our Code of Student Conduct in order to reduce racial disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions. In February 2018, CMS published the inaugural *Breaking the Link Report* in order to give stakeholders and members of the community access to information regarding student achievement, chronic absenteeism, and out-of-school suspensions. Through our relationship with RMJJ, CMS has strengthened our determination to address implicit bias in our staffing, budget priorities, training programs, and teaching and other interactions with children.

### **Step 5. Assess, Raise Awareness, and be Accountable**

- **Incorporate racial equity principles in reporting the group’s progress and raising awareness regarding the group’s effort to address the issue**
- **After implementing change, reassess your baseline data from Step 3**
- **Compare the level of knowledge/awareness for your department/organization and community now, to what you found in Steps 1 and 3**
- **Document barriers to success**
- **Share what you’ve learned broadly**

*For the final step, you plan to track the impact of your work over time. The entire process is iterative – with each step informing one another. Consider what your organization learned from this process and if there were any unresolved issues. As you look forward to the next steps you’ll take towards equity, what would you do differently?*

*Information regarding the work should be shared with the community impacted by the issue – this dissemination should be shaped in close collaboration with members of the affected community.*

**Questions to consider:** Were you able to produce more equitable outcomes? If so, are these results sustainable? What were your barriers to success? How will you be able to retain your stakeholders’ participation? What do you still need to effect greater change?

**Example:** Incorporating the racial equity principle of building and investing in leadership, the Clerk of Superior Court implemented an employee training curriculum that focused on implicit bias and decision making. Managers invested in a three-part series while other staff completed a 90-minute module. Within the course of one year, over 200 court employees were engaged and the curriculum continues to be offered to new employees quarterly. Pre- and post-tests were administered to measure baseline knowledge and subsequent change. Results were examined by the Clerk, discussed

among managerial staff, and showcased at the 2018 National Association of Court Managers' Conference.

### **Example: A brief overview of how GAL has incorporated all 5 steps**

**Step 1** - In 2011, national data as well as data from the Judicial District 26 Guardian ad Litem Program (GAL) revealed disproportionality and disparities. As a result, GAL began using the REW to build a foundation to understand the issues and develop a shared language. The District Administrator mandated the workshop for all paid employees as well as volunteers, staff supported through other programs, and/or student interns who spend a significant amount of time in the office. The District Administrator also distributed materials on systemic racism, disparate outcomes, and implicit bias to all staff, engaged in discussions during individual supervision sessions, and encouraged staff to participate in RMJJ's Catalyzing Change. The vision is to develop a work culture with open dialogue regarding race and racism.

**Step 2** - GAL identified their stakeholders as children in care, volunteers, staff, and community members. Using the "equity lens" learned from working with RMJJ, GAL worked to train its workforce and began identifying GAL Supervisors as Racial/Ethnic Equity Champions and asked them to follow up with all volunteer workshop attendees to process the content and ask how the new racial analysis will affect/influence their child advocacy efforts. Volunteers were also encouraged to refer their child clients to the youth version of the REW and then supported them in their analysis following workshop participation.

**Step 3** - The NC Guardian ad Litem Program operates under a multi-representation model with every child client having representation from an Attorney Advocate and a GAL volunteer (dependent upon the number of volunteers recruited and maintained in the program). In 2014, an examination of the data revealed that 100% of the children ages 12 and older who had been in the Department of Social Services' (DSS) custody for 3 years or longer and who did not have an assigned GAL volunteer, were Black. This is a significant disparity within the GAL program and these results were shared with GAL staff and volunteers, the GAL state program, National CASA, and to RMJJ.

**Step 4** - Based on the finding in step 3, the District Administrator and GAL staff developed a plan to address the disparity. First, two grants would be submitted to fund a Volunteer Recruiter position and to develop a specialized training for volunteers who work with adolescents. Second, the District Administrator and Volunteer Recruiter developed a plan, including outreach to community churches, to increase the diversity of the volunteer applicant pool. Third, a staff retreat was held and trainers were invited to present information on the science of heuristics, implicit bias, and how both affect perceptions and the language we use to describe youth of color in foster care. At the conclusion of the retreat, staff developed strategies to correct the identified disparity. The strategies included: 1) "Ah-ha" moments will be highlighted at monthly staff meetings to provide a structured time and place to discuss systemic racism and implicit



bias and how it plays out with our child clients, 2) Systemic racism and implicit bias will be included in individual supervision discussions regarding cases, 3) As GAL volunteers become available and new volunteers are trained and sworn in, GAL Supervisors will assign them to Black children first, 4) Positive images of youth of color will be displayed in the GAL office, and 5) The REW became a mandatory component of the newly implemented GAL Adolescent Advocacy Specialist Training and volunteers who are assigned to youth ages 12 and older are strongly encouraged to participate in the new training.

**Step 5** - The Judicial District 26 Guardian ad Litem Program uses RMJJ's Principles for Anti-Racism Organizing to guide their racial equity efforts. After implementing the aforementioned changes, by June 2015, 100% of Black children, regardless of age, had GAL volunteers (JWise data, 2015). To date, over 139 GAL staff, volunteers, and interns have attended the REW. GAL volunteers who have attended the REW report that they approach advocacy differently as a result of attending the workshop. Volunteers participating in the GAL Adolescent Advocacy Specialist Training have completed a pre- and post-survey, which indicates an increase in knowledge and a change in attitude regarding systemic racism and implicit bias.

GAL Supervisors have asked specific GAL volunteers to serve as leaders in the racial equity work among their peers to continue to move the work forward. And, the District Administrator has asked African American staff to serve as the program's Racial Equity Team, to hold the District Administrator (who is White) accountable and, with the help of RMJJ and the District Administrator, to be responsible for assessing the attainment of GAL's stated goals. Finally, accountability and sharing both barriers and successes have been central to GAL's efforts towards racial equity. GAL's plan for practice change has been presented to RMJJ, the Racial Equity Institute, the directors of Leading on Opportunity Council, and to GAL staff and volunteers across the state at the statewide GAL Conference and 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in July 2018 and the statewide Staff Meeting January 2019.

*Guide Co-authors: McCarter, S., Granberry, J., Neal, M., & Frady, D.; intended as a dynamic resource and guide. We hope this helps you effect transformative practice change and we welcome your input and feedback.*

**References:** (for additional organization/individual resources, see RMJJ's Practice Change - Resources)

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation:* [http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF\\_EmbracingEquity7Steps-2014.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF_EmbracingEquity7Steps-2014.pdf)

*Center to Advance Racial Equity:* <http://www.centertoadvanceracialequity.org/>

*The Government Alliance on Race and Equity:* <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/>

*The W.K. Kellogg Foundation:* <https://www.wkkf.org/>

*Race Forward - The Center for Racial Justice Innovation:*

<https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/racial-equity-impact-assessment-toolkit>

*Racial Equity Institute & The Groundwater Approach:* <https://www.racialequityinstitute.com/>

*Racial Equity Tools:* <http://www.racialequitytools.org/act/strategies/organizational-change-processes>

*Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative:* [www.seattle.gov/rsji](http://www.seattle.gov/rsji)