

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 16, 2021

Contact: Bret Crow
Phone: (614) 307-9562
Email: Bret.Crow@jfs.ohio.gov

ODJFS Addressing Racial Inequity in Children Services System

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) is taking immediate steps in response to a [report](#) released today that found racial inequity in the state’s children services system. Those steps include launching a new approach to recruiting, retaining, and racial equity training for children services caseworkers via virtual reality headsets to help them be mindful of possible implicit racial bias in their decisions affecting children.

ODJFS partnered with The Columbus Foundation to embark on a human-centered design study to identify how to improve the children services system in response to a directive from Governor Mike DeWine to review current practice and find ways to advance racial equity.

Key findings in the report include:

- A lack of valuing youth and Black voices/experiences. Study participants said they raised concerns for care and their needs for assistance but were not heard.
- Ill-equipped foster parents. Foster parents did not feel well-trained to raise children in multi-racial settings, while some foster youth experienced racism because of a lack of cultural competency training for foster parents.
- Gaps in support. Foster youth shared that they felt unprepared for adulthood, and foster parents expressed the need for more readily available supports.

As part of its efforts to address the disparity, ODJFS will incorporate the voices of minority children and families in all planning and policy decision-making. It is critical to ensure that those involved in the children services and foster care system have equitable awareness and access to the available resources, supports, and interventions in their communities.

ODJFS oversees the delivery of children services across the state. Ohio operates on a state-supervised, county-administered children services system where the 88 county public children services agencies provide direct services to children and families.

-30-

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.

