

## Ramsey County Children's Services Review Panel - Response to Governor's Task Force Recommendations

In the Preamble, there are two lines that reference racial disparities that state that "...the child protection system must be equipped to provide culturally competent services aimed to reduce the racial and cultural disparities which permeate the system. Public policy, statutes, guidelines and training should be reexamined through this lens as well." In the area of Transparency, it recommends training in cultural competency for workers, but our Panel would like to see an additional recommendation that calls for training in the community or community education. Families need to know what the state of Minnesota considers "illegal" when parenting a child or children. The Panel is concerned, however, that other than mentioning racial disparities in the Conclusion, there are no other recommendations that speak to this issue.

In addition, we would like to add our voice to support one of the proposals put forth during testimony to the Task Force regarding racial disparities. Our Panel supports the culturally-sensitive paraprofessional worker paired with social worker approach for working with families. This paraprofessional would be a person of the same culture and/or knowledgeable in the customs, culture and family organization as well as their child-rearing practices. This paraprofessional can serve not only the child and family but can also provide ongoing training for the social worker who is paired with this individual. There is a proposal for the creation of an Ombudsperson for Children. Since we do have a good understanding of the current Ombudsperson structure in the community, we have questions as to how this newly created position would function and whether it is necessary. There was also a proposal for more research into best practices to reduce racial disparities. We urge the Task Force to look to other states who have reduced their racial disparities, borrow their strategies and implement new and innovative practices throughout the child welfare system. While our Panel would advocate for funding to identify best practices to reduce disparities if this information is not currently available to DHS, we would prefer that there be funding dedicated to **implementing** best practices for delivery of culturally-sensitive services which may include services that are already available in the community but require more funding to be effective.

I am submitting this response on behalf of the entire Ramsey County Children's Services Review Panel.

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Co-Chair for the Ramsey County Children's Services Review Panel