



The Kentucky CASA Network's Commitment and Plan to Build and Sustain an Anti-Racist Network: 2020-2022

The Kentucky CASA Network (KCN) is fully committed to building and sustaining an anti-racist culture in the organization. This renewed effort to enhance the KCN's commitment to [anti-racism](#) comes in the context of several converging factors: (1) the KCN holds equity as a key organizational value; (2) racial disproportionality is a documented occurrence in Kentucky's child welfare system, within which CASA plays a significant role; and (3) current events continue to amplify the call for racial justice, imploring all organizations to examine the ways in which their foundational policies and practices may unintentionally uphold what Jones and Okun (2011) call a "[white supremacy culture](#)" and contribute to systemic racism. The attention demanded to address these factors will contribute to the KCN's goal of improving the outcomes and wellbeing of children and youth experiencing abuse and neglect in the Commonwealth.

The KCN proposes a two-pronged approach to embracing an anti-racist culture both internally and within local CASA programs across the Commonwealth. The two tracks of this plan allow the KCN to engage in the "long, hard, and slow" work required of meaningful anti-racist efforts while fulfilling the urgent need to immediately work toward equitable advocacy for all children in Kentucky. These tracks will be implemented concurrently, with each track continually informing the other.

Track 1: Evaluating and Addressing Organizational Culture

The first track of this two-pronged approach will focus on the internal organizational culture, policies, and practices of the KCN with the goal to ensure that structural racism and "white supremacy culture" are not prevalent in the organization's policies and practices. Achieving this goal will enhance the work of the KCN as well as inform efforts to provide technical assistance and guidance to local CASA programs on anti-racist and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, specifically as they relate to developing DEI policies and procedures that comply with new National CASA/GAL Association local program standards and identifying appropriate measures to assess annual progress. This work will be led by a consultant with professional and personal experience in the DEI arena. Potential steps, necessary action items, and possible areas of focus are further detailed below.

Immediate action item: Hire a DEI consultant.

The KCN will solicit proposals from organizational DEI experts with local ties.

Potential process to achieve Track 1 goals:

The selected consultant will possess the expertise needed to collaborate with the KCN staff and Board to develop an effective process for assessing KCN's organizational culture and practices. The below

“Reflect, Plan, Implement, Evaluate, and Expand” framework illustrates what the deliverables of this effort could entail. This framework may be shared with the selected consultant to inform that person of the KCN’s desired scope of work; ultimately, though, the KCN will defer to the expertise of the consultant in the development of an impactful process.

- **Reflect:** With the guidance of the hired consultant, the KCN staff and Board may engage in learning and reflection to authentically examine the organization’s commitment to DEI. This process will account for the influence of other intersectional social categories (e.g., gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, nationality, ability, age, religion, language). Possible deliverables may include trainings, lunch and learns, facilitated dialogues, and/or a formal assessment conducted by the consultant.
- **Plan:** Based on the results of the self-reflection and/or assessment, the KCN will seek formal recommendations from the consultant and collaboratively develop an action plan. This action plan will ensure that the KCN is upholding the National CASA/GAL Association Guiding Principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- **Implement:** The KCN will implement the action plan. A process will be established for tracking “lessons learned” during the implementation phase that can be shared with local programs.
- **Evaluate:** With the help of the DEI consultant, the KCN staff and Board will evaluate the success of the action plan and make note of challenges, lessons learned, and suggested adjustments to the plan moving forward.
- **Expand:** The KCN may expand its efforts by repeating the “reflect, plan, implement, and evaluate” cycle in order to test strategies and develop best practices over time. Additionally, this work will provide a model of organizational anti-racism and DEI assessment, action planning, and policy/procedure development for the entire Kentucky CASA network that will inform DEI technical assistance and guidance provided to local programs. By engaging in this process internally, the KCN will be much better equipped to lead by example and assist local programs with developing and implementing policies, procedures, and training plans to meaningfully meet the new National CASA/GAL Association local program standards related to DEI (Standards 2 and 3).

Additional Track 1 tasks (schedule TBD by consultant proposal):

- Solicit and review proposals from consultants, KCN selects consultant
- KCN staff and Board engage in reflection and assessment work with consultant
- Development of action plan with consultant, KCN staff, and Board as appropriate
- Begin implementation of action plan

Track 2: Ensuring Equitable Advocacy Efforts

The second of this two-pronged approach will focus on immediate efforts to improve CASA advocacy services by promoting network-wide understanding of racial disproportionality in the Kentucky child welfare system and knowledge of how CASA advocacy can remedy the consequences of racial disproportionality for children and families. This will involve (1) assessing the racial demographics of local program volunteers, children served, and service areas using Census data; (2) providing comprehensive network-wide training to local program directors on how implicit bias influences CASA

advocacy with appropriate follow-up training; (3) developing strategies and measures to reduce the impact of racial disproportionality in targeted communities; and (4) tracking progress over time.

Immediate action item: Hire a DEI trainer

The KCN has already engaged with Pastor Edward Palmer, a local certified diversity trainer, and believes him to be best fit to lead trainings on recognizing and addressing racial disproportionality in the child welfare system. Palmer led preliminary regional implicit bias trainings for CASA staff and volunteers in four locations throughout 2019, resulting in the training of 100 staff, volunteers, and Board members. The KCN will continue hosting trainings led by Palmer, collaborating with him to further target the focus and impact of these trainings. Edward Palmer is a certified Racial and Ethnic Disparities Capstone Project Fellow through the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University. He chairs the State Interagency Council's Racial and Ethnic Disparities Standing Committee and is Chair of the National Coalition for Juvenile Justice. Palmer has worked extensively with the Kentucky Court of Justice on disproportionate minority contact and with the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) on racial disproportionality in the child welfare system.

Process to achieve Track 2 goals:

- The KCN will conduct implicit bias training to educate CASA staff, volunteers, and Board members on the prevalence and impact of implicit bias in child welfare and other systems. Trainings were offered to participants on a voluntary basis throughout 2019. This round of training will be completed with two additional offerings strongly encouraging the participation of all remaining local program directors who have yet to be trained and any additional staff and volunteers who choose to attend. The KCN highly encourages program directors to attend implicit bias training so that all CASA leadership is equipped to participate in planning strategic statewide efforts to reduce disparities in CASA advocacy and the network can list that 100% of local program directors have completed the training. (August or November 2020)
- The KCN will gather data to determine targeted areas of focus for enhanced work to address racial disproportionality in child welfare and CASA advocacy.
 - The KCN will examine CASA service data (in comparison with each county's demographic data) to determine to what extent CASA staff and volunteers are representative of the local communities and children served. (July 2020)
 - In partnership with Pastor Palmer, the KCN will examine DCBS data on racial disproportionality and identify CASA service areas with the highest rates of racial disproportionality within the child welfare system. The KCN will partner with local programs to select 3-5 CASA service areas to serve as target communities. The programs selected will engage in intensive training and strategy development aimed at mitigating the impacts of racial disproportionality on the children and families they serve. (August 2020)
 - KCN will identify necessary metrics and develop a plan for collecting data needed to examine the potential for implicit bias at various CASA advocacy decision-making points. For example, the KCN may develop a process for collecting data that would illustrate any existing racial disproportionality in CASA assignment, volunteer case acceptance, characteristics of recommendations, etc.

- The KCN (in partnership with Pastor Palmer) will implement intensive training initiatives within the target communities, including advanced training topics such as “Cultural Collisions” and “Let’s Talk About Race.” “Cultural Collisions” invites participants to explore culture and how systems respond to it as well as equips them with skills to assist them in navigating “cultural collisions” when working with families and within systems. “Let’s Talk About Race” educates participants on the construct of race and its impact on race relations within the U.S. (2021)
- The KCN will identify metrics and data that will be required to measure the impact of efforts to address racial disproportionality within the child welfare system. A plan to begin collecting this data will be developed and implemented within the targeted communities and technical assistance will be provided to local programs as needed. (2021)
- The KCN will convene a work group that will develop recommendations and oversee the statewide strategy for addressing racial disproportionality within the child welfare system and CASA advocacy. (2021)
 - Track 1 progress and deliverables and the above training process will inform the recommendations and actions of this work group. Pastor Palmer’s expertise may be solicited to assist the work group as needed.
 - The work group may develop statewide goals and recommendations, but each program/county of focus will create a specific, locally tailored action plan.
- The KCN will use the data collected to address racial disproportionality within the child welfare system and CASA advocacy over time and evaluate the effectiveness of Track 2 activities. Activities will be modified, expanded to other programs, and/or replicated over time. (2022)