

Background

Racial disproportionality and racial disparities in the U.S. child welfare system are significant and long-standing. **Firm action is needed** to correct policies, procedures, and perspectives that perpetuate systemic racism. Collaboration across service sectors, stakeholders, and communities is essential.

Objective

One jurisdiction began process called Institutional Analysis (IA) to uncover how disparities come about for Black families involved with child welfare.

50+ Collaborators



The Harm

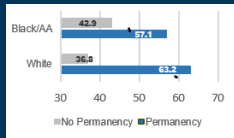
Black children are overrepresented in child welfare and experience poorer outcomes than their white counterparts

13.8%

Percent of U.S. population who are Black

24.3%

Percent of children in foster care who are Black



Development of a Covenant

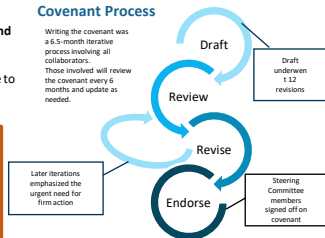
The covenant was created as a compass to guide the purpose and direction of the IA work.

The covenant is a living and dynamic document intended to bind those involved in the IA work of their intention to be accountable to the community and keep

In our efforts toward equity and inclusiveness, how can **researchers, practitioners, and implementation teams** work with one another and with **communities that have been marginalized by our systems** to strengthen accountability?

Covenant Process

Writing the covenant was a 6.5-month iterative process involving all collaborators. Those involved will review the covenant every 6 months and update as needed.



Institutional Analysis (IA) is a methodology developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy and Ellen Pence of Praxis International, Inc., that is used to uncover the policies, procedures, and practices that contribute to disparate outcomes for specific populations (Weber & Morrison, 2021).

This work to understand and address racial disproportionality and disparities is an initiative of Kansas Strong for Children and Families, in the context of the federal Strengthening Child Welfare Systems grant (HHS-2018-ACF-ACYF-CO-1360. Contact: kelechiwright@ku.edu

Community Knowledge

Black community leaders and members, including families who have experienced the system, shared insights on how they saw the child welfare institution interacting with Black families. They described the system as:

- Lacking understanding for the unique needs of the Black family
- Acting as another policing arm of a racialized legal system
- Demoralizing and stigmatizing towards Black families
- Pathologizing Black families as lazy and neglectful whereas White families in like circumstances were perceived as falling on hard times
- A history of reporting on racial disparities without taking action
- Alternatives towards removals should be considered by looking towards strengths within the Black community

The covenant was developed using an anti-racist framework that emphasizes:

- The lived experience and expertise of Black families involved with the child welfare system
- Partnership with Black community leaders and members
- Equity prioritized over equality
- Systemic dysfunction (e.g., racist policies) over individual racism