

# Family Separations

Working Collaboratively with the Child & Family Team

**We Can't Wait Conference**

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# Objectives



- Increase understanding of Child and Family Team members' experience and perspectives of family separation
- Identify Risk Factors including socio-cultural and systemic issues that increase trauma and stress as well as protective factors that support resilience during separation
- Explore ways to collaborate with, support and advocate for children and families during separation

# First some statistics...

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# How Many Children Are in Foster Care in California and San Diego?

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- The number of California children and youth ages 0-20 living in foster care on July 1, 2018 was 59,172
- From July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018, approximately 4,000 children spent time in San Diego County's foster care system with 1,121 entering foster care in that same period of time.
- In 2017, 44% of children in foster care in San Diego County were 5 years old or younger.
- In 2017, 47% of children in foster care that had siblings were separated from at least one of their siblings.

# One Year After Entry (2017)



For children entering care for the first time in 2017...

- 34% were reunified with their **families** and
- 64% were still in **foster care** one year after entry.
- Rates in California and San Diego were comparable.

# Rights Related to Child & Biological Family Access



- Disposition Hearing
  - Reunification plan is determined which includes decisions about when, where, and how parent and child will engage in visits
  - If Parent disagrees with decisions made, they have the right to contest decisions
- Per Child Rights in Dependency Court, a Child has the right to:
  - Visit and contact siblings (unless a judge rules otherwise)
  - Contact parents and other family members (unless a judge rules otherwise)

# Placement— Discrimination Safeguards

Both California state and Federal laws provide protections against discrimination of caregivers and foster youth on the basis of:

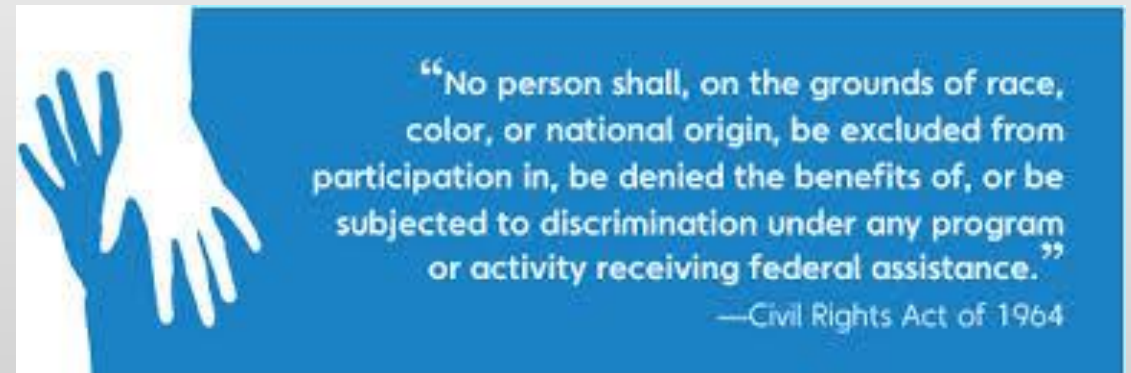
- 1) race, color or national origin, Federal law, and
- 2) actual or perceived race, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, or HIV status.



# Title VI of Civil Rights Act & the Multiethnic Placement Act

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- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declares that discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin (RCNO) shall not occur in connection with programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance.
- The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 prohibits agencies and other entities that receive Federal funding from denying or delaying a child's foster care or adoptive placement and prohibits denying any individual opportunity to become a foster or adoptive parent on the basis of the child's or the prospective parent's race, color, or national origin (RCNO).





# California Law: Multiethnic Placement Act

The Multiethnic Placement Act applies to **ALL** placements. If an appropriate placement for a child exists, an agency **MAY NOT**:

- Refuse to place a child with a prospective parent because the parent's RCNO is different than the child's RCNO.
- An agency **MAY NOT** consider or honor the requests of parents or legal guardians to place their child with foster or adoptive parents of a specific RCNO.
- The agency **MAY** individually assess the child's needs. Consideration of RCNO is assessed under a strict scrutiny standard. Advancing the best interests of a particular child, individually assessed, is the only compelling interest that satisfied the strict scrutiny standard.

# One concerning result of these laws...



They create a negative impact in the ability for placement workers to consider cultural fit when determining placement

# San Diego County Population by Race/Ethnicity (2017)

- 45.2% White
- 33.4% Hispanic
- 11.9% Asian/Pacific Islanders
- 4.7% Black
- 0.4% American Indian/Alaskan Natives
- 3.5% Other (includes multiracial)



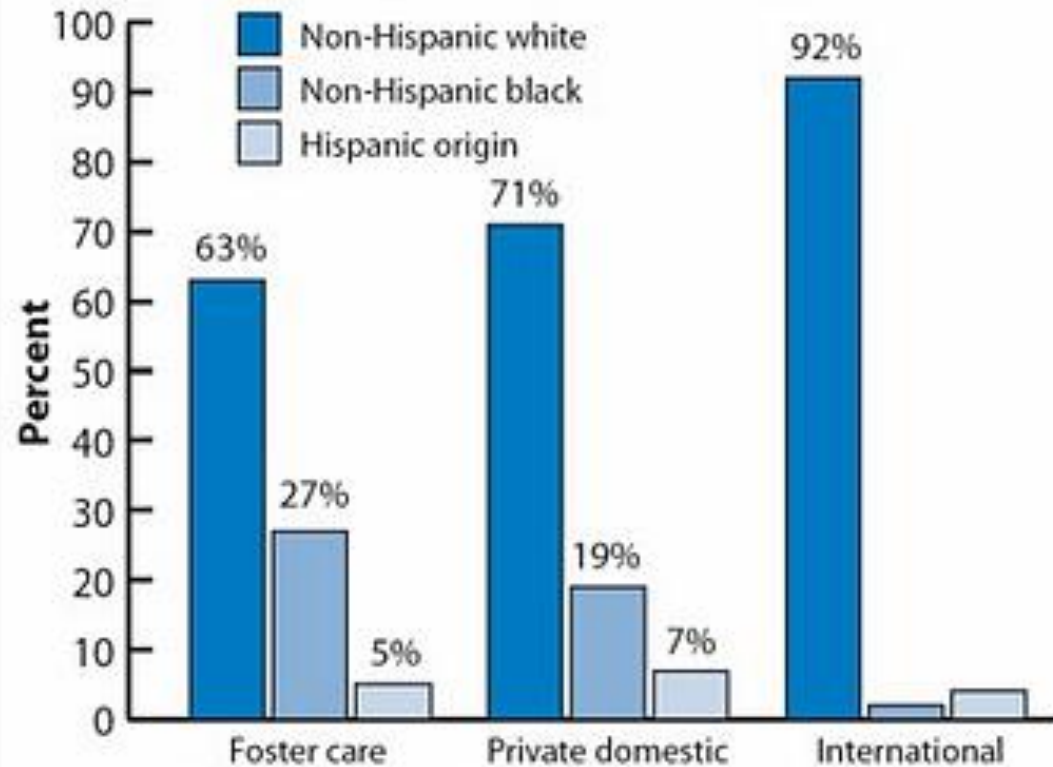
# Children in Foster Care by Race/Ethnicity (July 2018)

San Diego County	Rate per 1,000
African American/Black	10.3
American Indian/Alaska Native	18.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.7
Hispanic/Latino	2.7
White	1.9
Total Children in Foster Care	2.5

# Foster Parent Ethnic/Racial Demographics (2015)

The majority of children of color in foster care are placed with caregivers that look different than their family of origin.

**Figure 6. Percentage distribution of adopted children by race and Hispanic origin of their parents, by adoption type**



Note: Values corresponding to unreliable percentage estimates have been suppressed in this figure.

# Risk Factors During Separation

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- Removal is typically a sudden and a traumatic experience and ongoing separation is a chronic stress. Both may be overwhelming to the child
- Young children, even newborns and infants, can experience long-lasting sadness, grief, loss, and rejection when separated from their primary attachment figure
- Separation can undermine attachment and trust in adults and puts child at risk for ongoing attachment concerns throughout life

## Risk Factors Continued...

Disrupted caregiving puts child at risk for decreased capacity for resilience

Lack of cultural fit exacerbates stress and trauma

Stress between caregiver and biological family results in increased anxiety and confusion

Developmental tasks including linguistic, cognitive, emotional, social, regulatory, and moral capabilities are at risk for delay and/or regression



# Protective Factors that Support Resiliency

- Safe and secure relationships with caring adults are the building blocks of how children develop cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social, and moral development.
- Our early relationships and attachments with a stable primary caregiver are the most consistent and enduring influence on social emotional competence.
- Resilience is a process where a child develops the capacity to successfully adapt to adversity, to bounce back.
- Resiliency is best supported when protective factors outweigh risk factors





# Protective Factors Specific to Family Separation



- Protect family connections whenever possible with regular, frequent, quality contact between child and their family that supports and enhances relationships especially the parent-child relationship
- Maintain siblings in same placement whenever possible; maintain separated sibling connection via frequent and quality visits
- Provide support for secure attachment to the current caregiver as well as the biological family to encourage both carers to become sources of safety for the child
- Provide support and opportunity for offending parent to repair with their child, to take responsibility, to apologize and for them to process their experience together therapeutically



# Protective Factors Continued...

- Engage in teaming with all child and family team members including bio family and resource family to collaborate, and respectfully and constructively engage in front of and on behalf of the child
- Support cultural, racial/ethnic familiarity for the child
- Support future transitions with sensitivity, and as possible, with continuity of relationship (ie upon reunification, as possible maintain connection with previous caregiver)
- Grown ups involved can help by holding the child's story respectfully and answering questions that the child is ready to have answered.



# Meet our Panelists

