

Disproportionality of African-Americans in Public Child Welfare Services



One Organization's Experience

Linda Orrante, MSW

Karl Porter, MPA

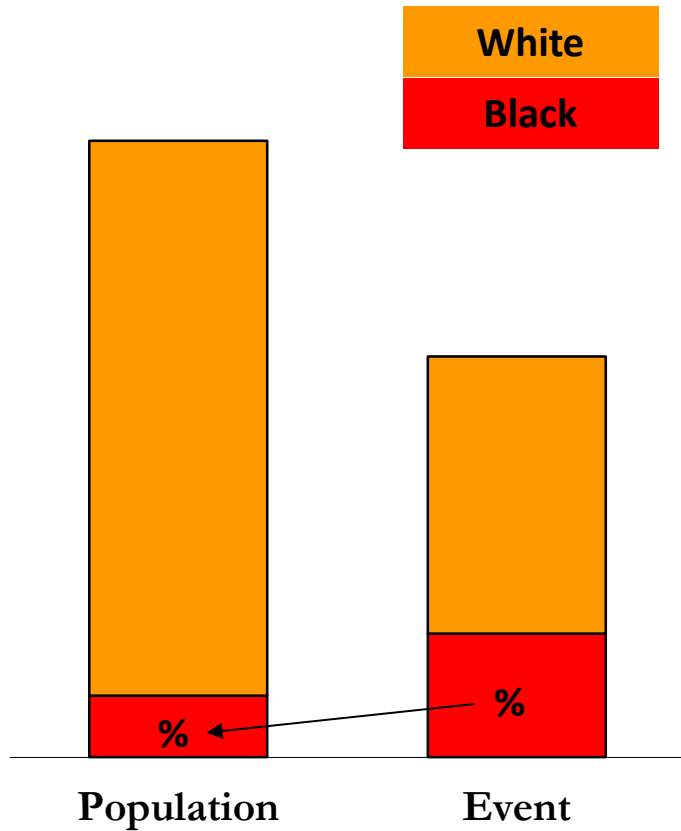
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What is Disproportionality? Disparity?

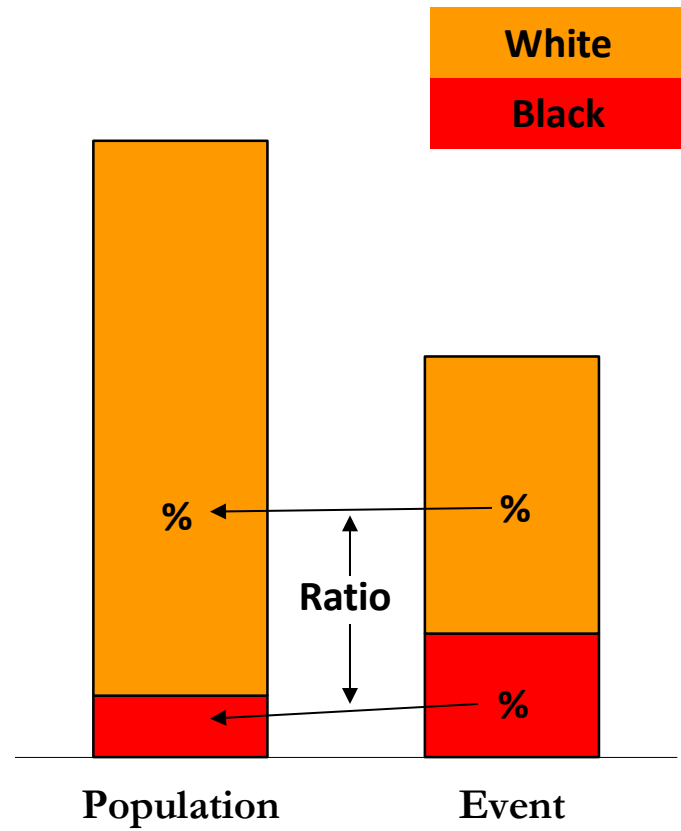
Disproportionality: Degree to which groups of children are present in the child welfare system at higher or lower percentages or rates than in the general population.

Disparity: A comparative measure of unequal, or disparate, contact in the context of child welfare.

Disproportionality



Disparity



Why Are Disproportionality and Disparity a Problem?

African-American and Indian children more likely to be placed in foster care and stay longer

How is a system meant to protect children treating children of color and poor people

Example: Are children being unnecessarily separated from their parents?

Why We Chose This Topic



After several years, major organizational changes resulted in many positive results, but with lesser impact on disproportionality

Often there are as many lessons to be learned from our failures as our successes.

Disproportionality

Nationally, the number of African American children in foster care is disproportional to the number of African American children in the general population.



Race/Ethnicity of Children in Total U.S. Population vs. in Foster Care in 2008

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Total Child Population	Percentage of Children in Foster Care
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	2%
Asian	4%	1%
African-American	14%	31%
Hispanic	22%	20%
White	56%	40%

Race/Ethnicity of Children in Total California Population vs. in Foster Care in 2008

	Percentage of Total Child Population	Percentage of Children in Foster Care
African-American	6%	23%
Hispanic	51%	48%
White	27%	25%
Asian/Pacific Islander	11%	2%
Native American	.4%	2%
Multi-race	4	0

Race/Ethnicity of Children in Total Solano County Population vs. in Foster Care in 2012

	Percentage of Total Child Population	Percentage of Children in Foster Care
African-American	13%	41%
White	29%	32%
Latino	35%	22%
Asian	12%	3%
Native American	0	1%
Multi-race	10%	0%

Causes of Disproportionality

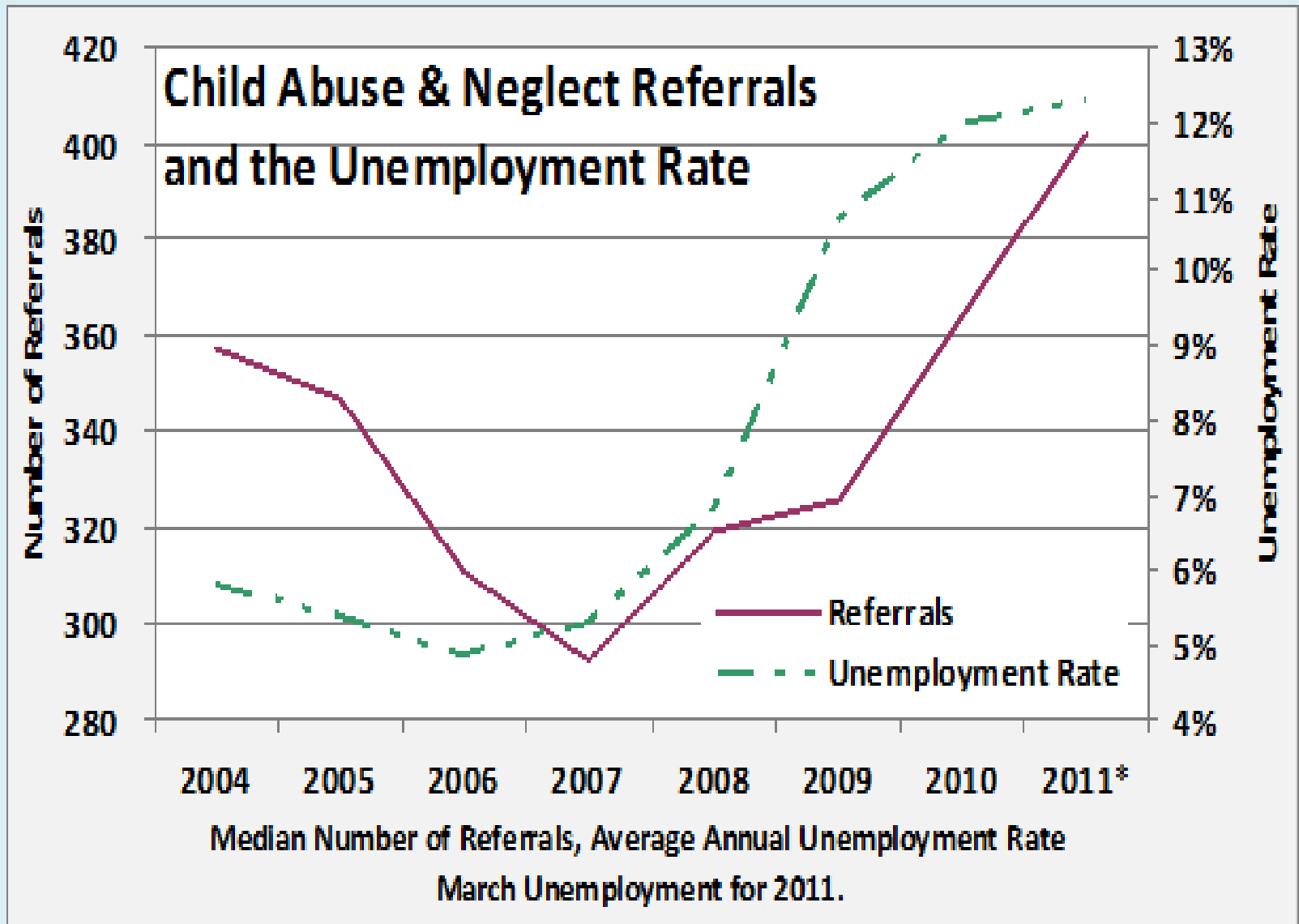
Many studies: agreement that causes are complex and co-exist, but no definitive answers and disproportionality continues.



- Disproportional and disparate needs of children in families of color
- Racial bias and discrimination in the CWS system
- CWS processes and resources
- Geographic influences

Causes of Disproportionality: Disproportional and Disparate Needs for Families of Color

CWS clients have many needs that are positively correlated with maltreatment. Poverty, unemployment, single parent households, large family size (four or more children), mental health issues, domestic violence and substance abuse are correlated to disproportionality.



Causes of Disproportionality: Racial Bias and Discrimination in the CWS System

Inequitable practices by CWS and referring parties/institutions

Referrals: Studies indicate that people are more likely to report African Americans in comparison to other ethnicities

Worker bias: Regardless of worker race, white children are less likely to be investigated

Causes of Disproportionality: CWS Processes and Resources

Inequitable resources for families of color, e.g., housing, child care, counseling

Multiple caseworkers or without MSW, children had longer lengths of stay

Causes of Disproportionality: Geographical Influences

- California study: Neighborhood factors-- higher rates of poverty and higher density of alcohol outlets
- Type and magnitude of disparity varied by location

One Jurisdiction's Approach

In Solano County, we applied a systematic approach to improving quality of services to abused children and their families through implementation of identified best practices

Results were significant, yet mixed in addressing disproportionality

Public Child Welfare Services in California

4 primary services:

Emergency Response – receive reports of child abuse and investigate as indicated

Family Maintenance – services while child remains home

Family Reunification – services while child is in foster care

Permanency Placement – services for children not reunified

Child Welfare Performance Measures & Outcomes

Safety, Permanency, and Well-being:

Timely response to referrals

Regular visits with children

Children placed with relatives, with siblings

Indian children placed with tribe

Placement stability

Length of time to reunification

Recidivism after reunification

Timely adoption of non-reunified children

Strategies to Address Disproportionality and Disparity

- Increasing Transparency
- Reengineering Structures and Procedures
Changing Organizational Culture
- Mobilizing Political Leadership
- Partnering in Developing Family and
Community Resources

Strategies: Increasing Transparency

Work groups:

Building community partnerships

Team decision-making

Recruitment and development of resource families

Self-evaluation

Members included community organizations, community members, and staff of CWS and other public agencies

CWS Nuts n Bolts trainings for community, stakeholders, and partners

Set up Youth and Parent Action Teams

Used existing venues to provide training

Shared outcome data

360 degree assessments of supervisors to CWS Director

Strategies: Reengineering Structures and Procedures

Changed Emergency Response from quasi-law enforcement investigators to SWs who engaged families & offered services

Established Voluntary Family Maintenance and later expanded to more intensive program

More family reunifications sooner, with minimal increase in recidivism

Established intensive concurrent planning so that if FR failed, there was alternate plan ready for children

For nonreunified children, provided intensive services to prevent aging out

Strategies: Reengineering Structures and Procedures

Evidence-based and -informed practices implemented with model fidelity

Structured Decision Making, Team Decision Making meetings, Wraparound, Nurse Family Partnership

In-home visitation services, specialized relative approval, staffing according to workload study, team based service delivery, service timeline reviews, elimination of visit exemptions, quarterly contact with parents who didn't reunify,

Strategies: Changing Organizational Culture

Family to Family

A child's safety is paramount

Children belong in families

Families need strong communities

Public child welfare systems need partnerships with the community and other systems to achieve strong outcomes for children

Child Welfare League of America assessment – staff work groups to address:

Clear expectations and guidelines for staff

Support and resources to strengthen agency performance

Increase mutual accountability and teamwork

Improve organizational communication

Strengthen leadership skills

California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I)

California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP)

In-house consultants and TA helped accountability

Strategies: Mobilizing Political Leadership

Board of Supervisors – updates and advocating for staff resources

Blue Ribbon Committee – Judge, Academics, non-Solano CWS experts

Judges – changes in direction

Community – updates, resource needs

State – System Improvement Plan

Strategies: Partnering in Developing Family and Community Resources

Superagency structure: Mental Health, Health, Substance Abuse, Eligibility

Other county agencies – Probation, First 5, Office of Family Violence, Office of Education

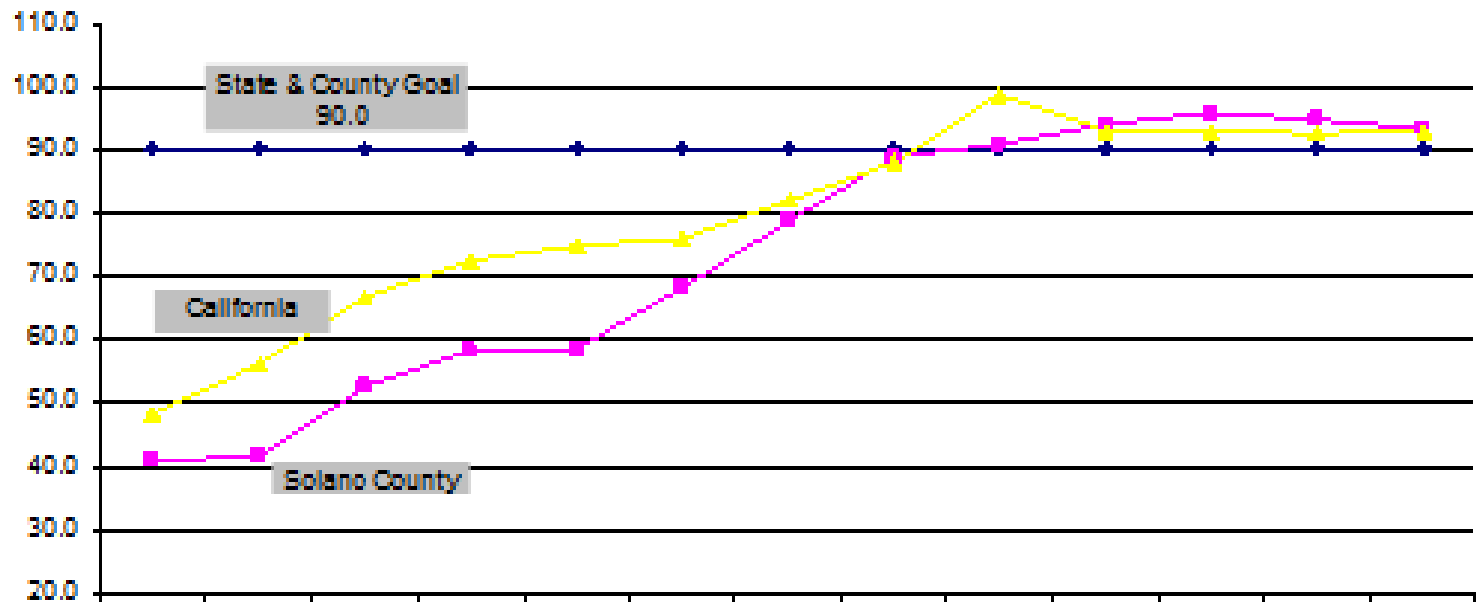
CASA – family finding, HUD grant, Community College

Impact of Organizational Restructuring and Best Practices Implementation?



Impact of Changes

Timely Social Worker Visits With Child

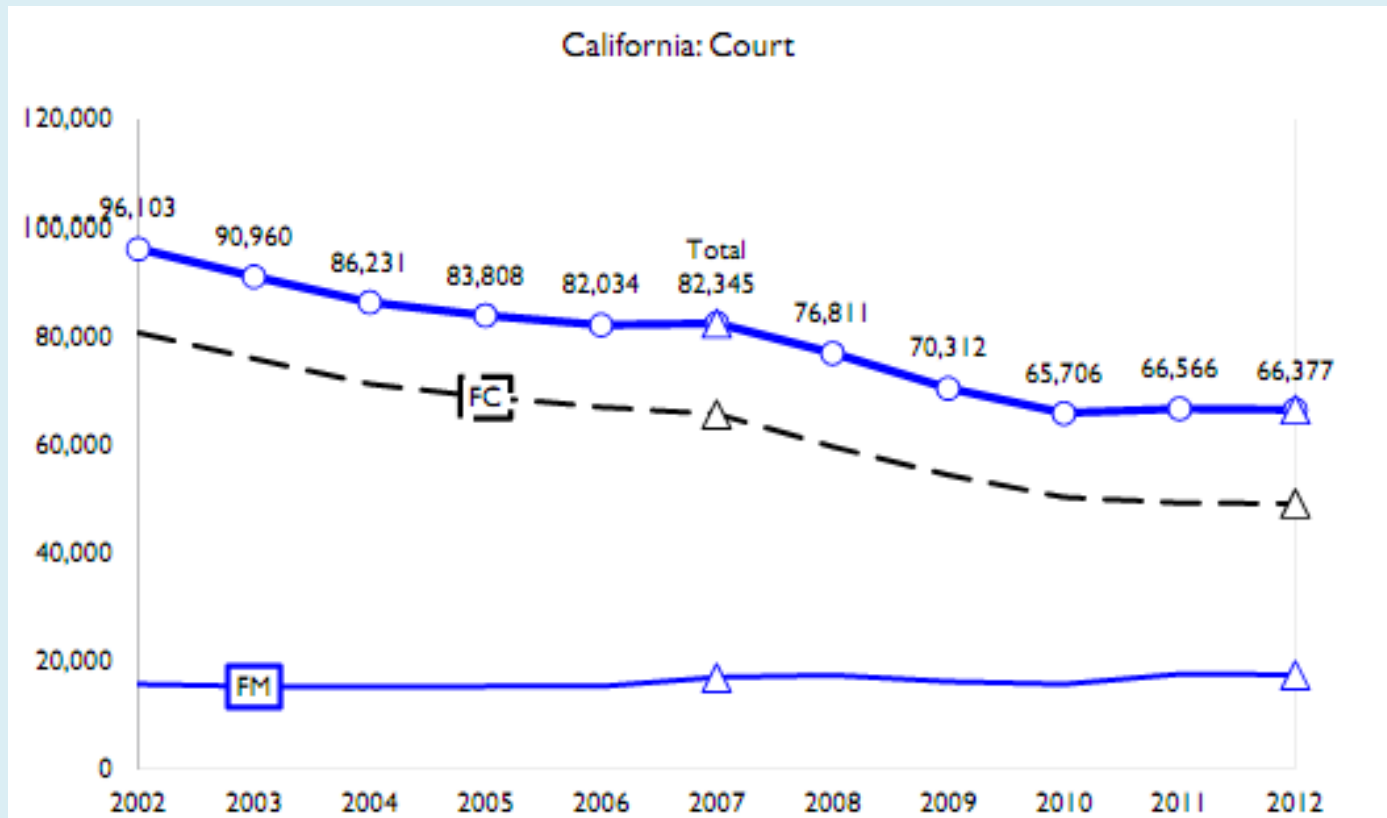


	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
State and County Goal	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0	90.0
Solano County	41.0	41.7	52.5	58.3	58.7	68.3	78.8	88.7	90.9	94.2	95.9	94.7	93.2
California	48.4	56.1	66.7	72.3	74.9	76.1	81.9	88.1	98.7	93.1	92.9	92.8	93.0

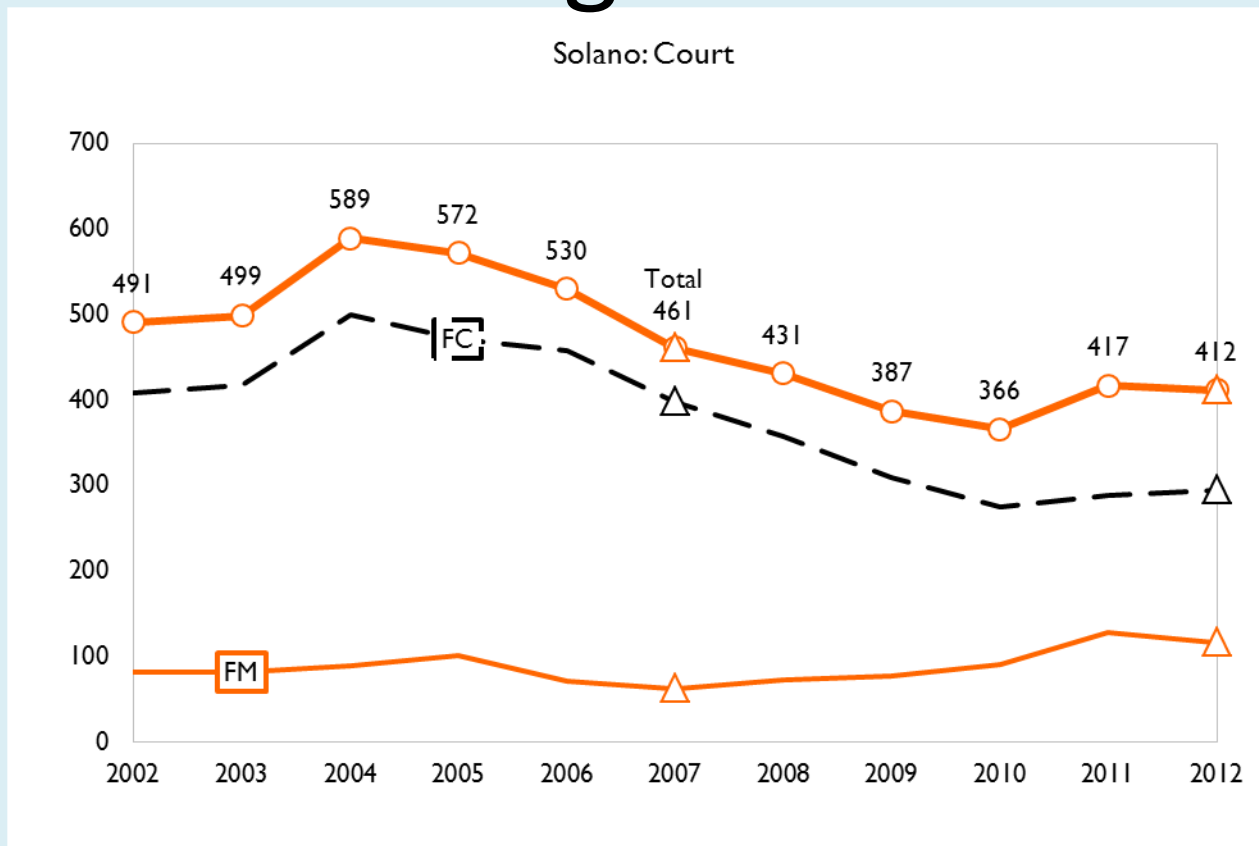
*FY 2011 Data YTD through March

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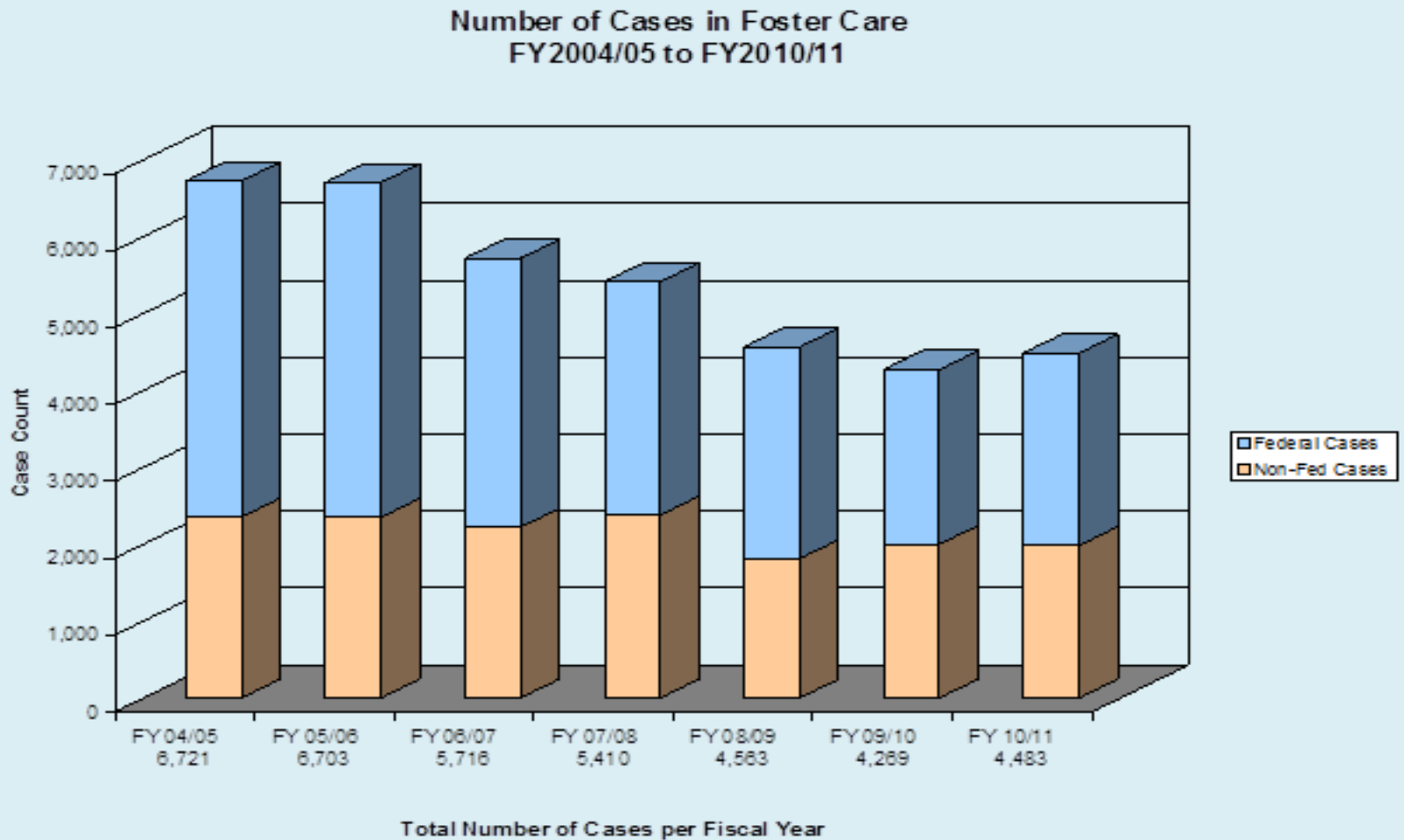
Impact of Changes: State Reduction in CWS Cases 21.6% change 2005-2010



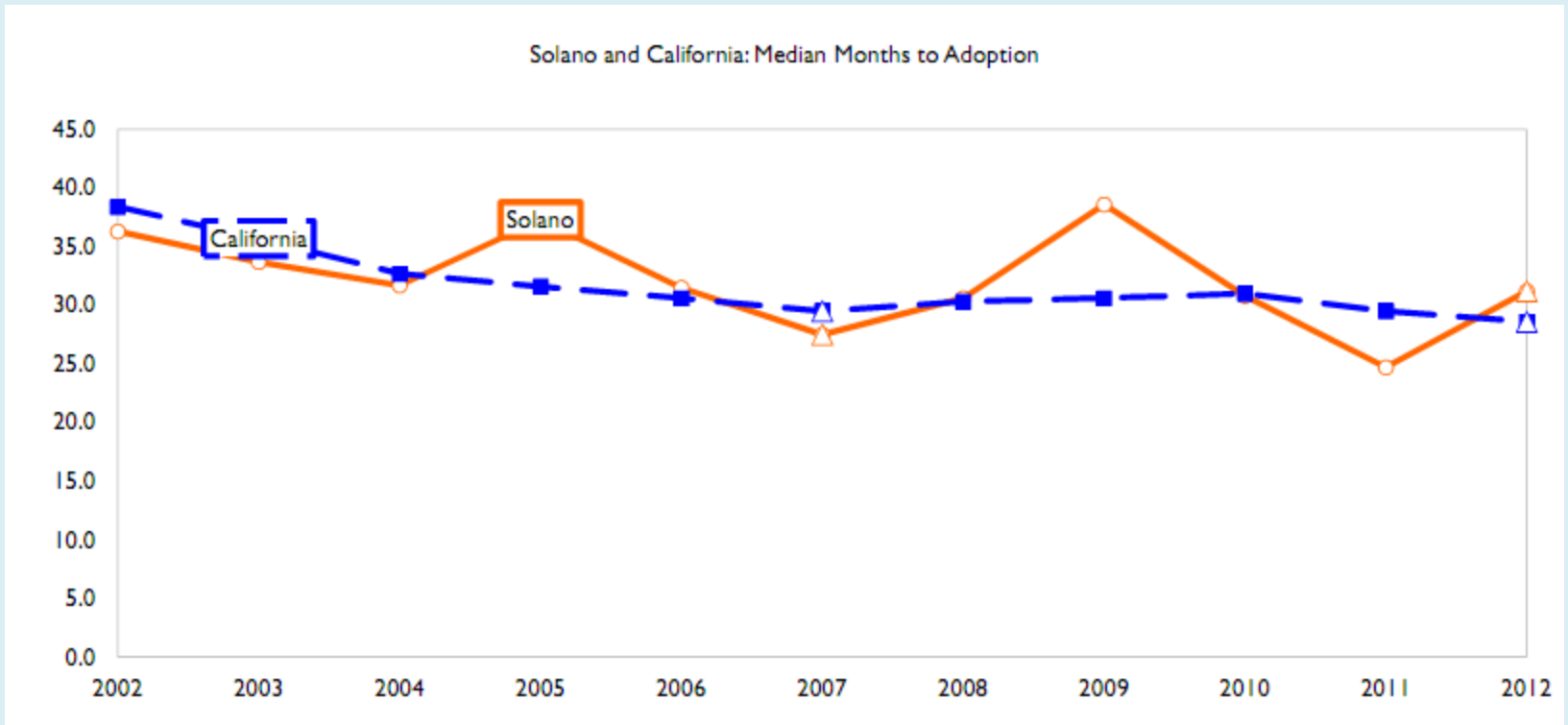
Impact of Changes: Solano County CWS Caseload Reduction 36 % Change 2005-2010



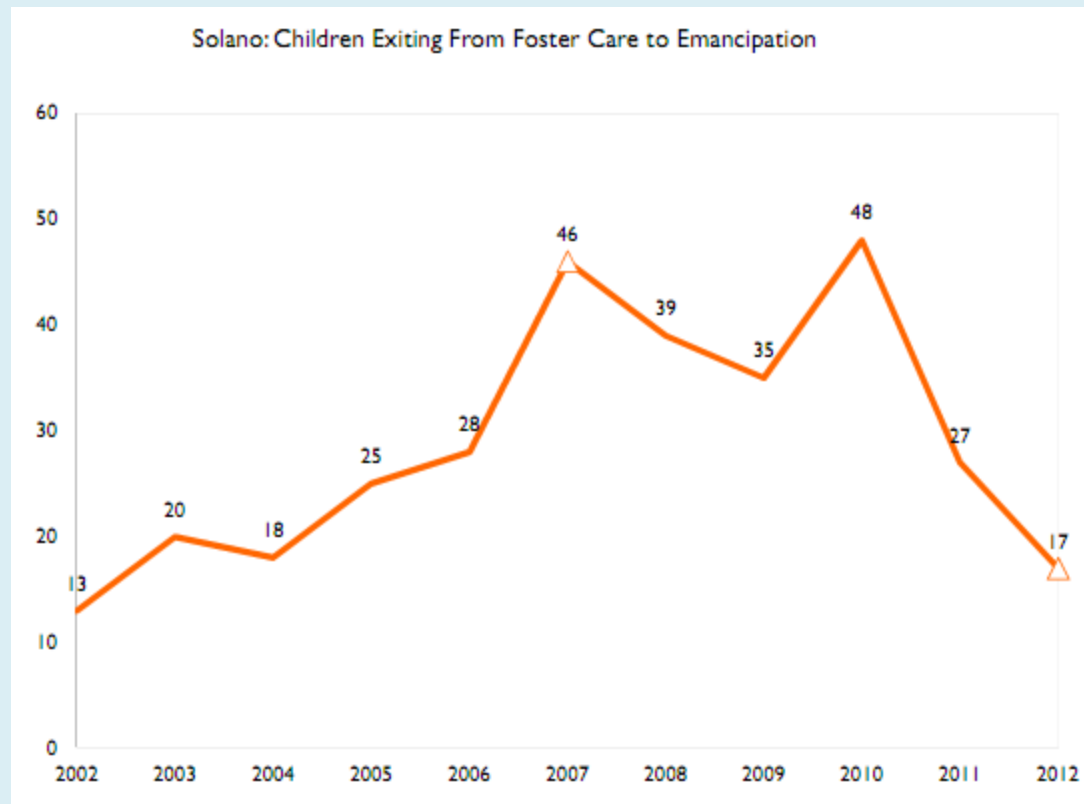
Impact of Changes: Fewer Children in Foster Care



Impact of Changes: Solano County Reductions in Time to Adoption

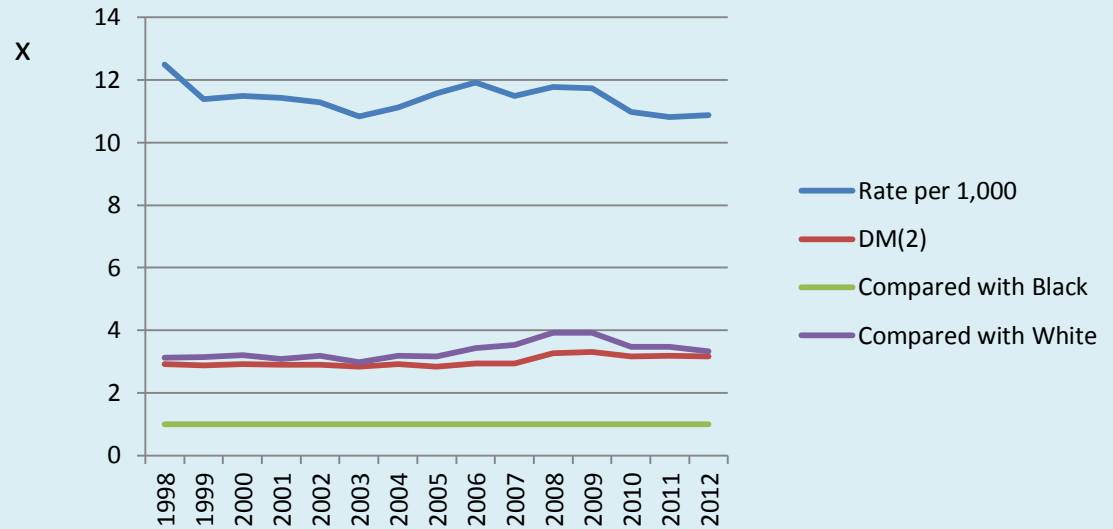


Impact of Changes: Solano County Reductions in Youths Aging Out of Care

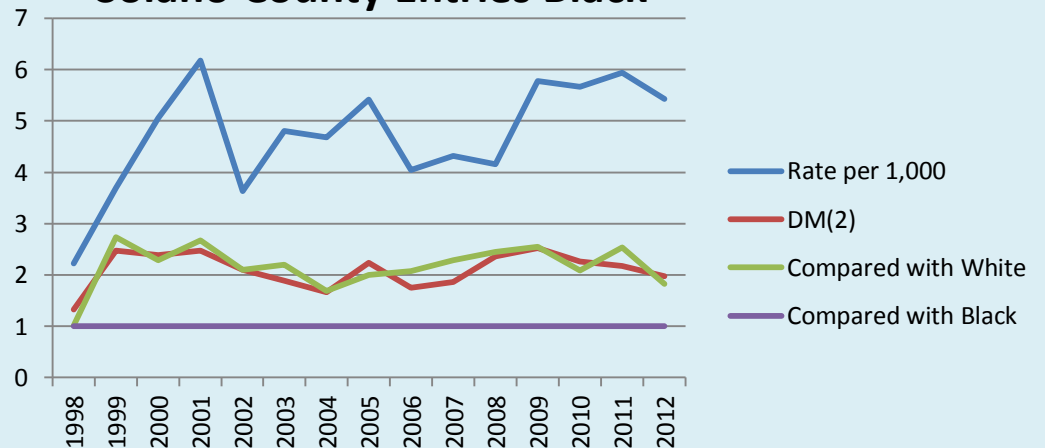


Impact of Changes: Foster Care Entries

California Entries Black



Solano County Entries Black



Impact of Changes: Mixed Results

Significant improvements in organizational effectiveness

Decrease in number of African-Americans entering foster care but not in those already in care

Harvard study: Does maltreatment occur at a higher rate among African-Americans?

Recommendations



- Continue to refine the research question and research practices.
- Direct more resources on those factors that are known to increase child maltreatment and that are beyond the scope of CWS: poverty, housing, unemployment.
- Need increased research on interventions.
- Continue with current best practices because they have produced improved overall system performance.

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