



# TRAVIS COUNTY CHILD WELFARE RACE EQUITY COLLABORATIVE (CWREC)

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## Press Release

### Deep dive into child welfare data shows an urgent need to support child and family well-being

#### *Travis County Child Welfare Race Equity Collaborative conducts an analysis of child welfare outcomes*

**Austin - October 2, 2023** A Travis County Child Welfare Race Equity Collaborative (CWREC) analysis of child welfare data reveals Black Children in Travis County are **4 times more likely** to have a report to Child Protective Investigations than white children. This is compounded by Black families being routed less often to the "less adversarial and more collaborative" path of Alternative Response.

The report also showed that for Black families the disparity grows at each step of Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) involvement leading to the separation of Black families at a rate **6 times higher** than those who are white. This disparity is worse than the statewide average. Other key findings:

- Hispanic families in Travis County have experienced a higher rate of separation by Child Protective Investigations following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Law enforcement makes the most reports to DFPS in Travis County and also has the highest rate of disparity by race in their reporting compared to other professional reporters. Law enforcement reported families to DFPS at a rate **5.3 times** higher for Black families than for white ones.
- Reports to DFPS and family separations are not equitably distributed geographically. Families living along and east of the IH-35 corridor experience the highest number of reports to DFPS.

"CWREC Data Analysis & Mapping Report" is based on data from DFPS from the state fiscal year 2018 through 2021. The findings underscore the urgent need for leaders from all sectors of the community including government, business, nonprofit and faith-based, philanthropic, and the community members themselves to collaborate, address the lack of equity and fair treatment, and support child and family well-being in Travis County.

Conducted in partnership with cross-sector providers, community, caregivers, and youth with lived experience, CWREC analyzed detailed data capturing child welfare outcomes in Travis County by zip code, and by race and ethnicity. CWREC would like to thank DFPS for providing

the data for this report. This report presents a deeper analysis of the DFPS Child Removals by Race and Ethnic Group Rider Report released annually in October.

The Honorable Aurora Martinez Jones, 126th District Court Judge and co-founder of CWREC views the report as groundbreaking for anti-racism work in Travis County. According to Judge Martinez Jones, “Travis County must do better. All of our children deserve actual support and not just reports to CPS. The Child Welfare Race Equity Collaborative is asking the community, professionals, and those impacted by the child welfare system to join the movement to better understand how families can be supported in a way that best assures a healthy and safe community for us all.”

“All of my dad's siblings were separated from each other and my indigenous grandmother. I could not understand the tension in my family when a cousin called someone else grandma until I learned about what the child welfare system did to our lineage. We are still healing and meeting family today, 40+ years later” stated a community partner.

Involvement with the child welfare system, especially when a child is separated from their family and community norms, is traumatic for all involved. Family involvement with DFPS is primarily impacted by three divisions, Statewide Intake, Child Protective Investigations, and Child Protective Services. According to Dr. Eloise Sepeda, a restorative justice expert, “Supporting families and keeping children safe and connected to those they love provides the best outcomes but is not always the result of our current system, especially for families of color.”

**The full report and executive summary are available at:**

<https://www.traviscountycps.com/cwrec>.

This news release can be found online at: <https://www.traviscountycps.com/cwrec>.

Requests for comments can be made to: [CWREC@traviscountycps.com](mailto:CWREC@traviscountycps.com)

**If you are interested in collaborating with the Texas Child Welfare Race Equity Collaborative, please email [CWREC@traviscountycps.com](mailto:CWREC@traviscountycps.com).**

A roadmap of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) can be found at <https://www.dfps.texas.gov/> and includes the following divisions:

- **Child Protective Investigations (CPI):** Child Protective Investigations (CPI) examines reports of child abuse or neglect to determine if any child in the family has been abused or neglected.
- **Child Services (also known as Child Protection Services or CPS):** Child Protective Services (CPS) becomes involved with children and families when they are referred by the DFPS Investigations division, which investigates allegations of child abuse and neglect.
- **Adoption & Foster Care:** After CPS removes a child from their home, caseworkers work with families on what we call a permanency plan. Prevention

- **Alternative Response:** Alternative Response lets CPI handle cases of abuse or neglect that initially present with less immediate safety or risk issues in a more flexible way – engaging families while still focusing on the safety of the children.

The most recent Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Rider 33 Disproportionality and Disparity Analysis can be found at:

[https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About\\_DFPS/Reports\\_and\\_Presentations/Rider\\_Reports/default.asp](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About_DFPS/Reports_and_Presentations/Rider_Reports/default.asp)

***The Travis County Child Welfare Race Equity Collaborative's (CWREC) mission is a focus on racial inequities within the child welfare system, in order to confront and acknowledge the racial disparities in our community through building awareness, providing education, advocacy and holding systems accountable for inequitable practices and policies. CWREC was founded in 2018 directly in response to data from the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) on Child Removals by Race and Ethnic Group\* showing Travis County had disproportionate outcomes for African American children compared to Anglo children related to allegations of abuse and neglect, investigations by DFPS, and removals from their home at rates that are far above statewide figures.***

*\*DFPS Rider Reports entitled "Child Removals by Race and Ethnic Group" were formerly entitled "Minority Child Removals."*