



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Office of Family Assistance

Racial Equity and TANF: Building Economic Independence for All

Presentation by
BLH Technologies, Inc.
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3:00 – 4:15 p.m.



Presentation Overview

- Exploring the term racial equity
- Methodology for the literature review
- Key findings
- State and local responses
- Gaps in the literature





Exploring the Term Racial Equity

“...when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved ... equity is about fairness, while equality is about sameness.”

-- The Government Alliance on Race and Equity

“ ... equality can be conceptualized as sameness of treatment by asserting the fundamental equality of all persons, while equity can be conceptualized as fairness, where individual or group circumstances are taken into consideration.”

-- Lanfranconi et al. (2020)



Methodology

- Conducted web-based searches:
 - Journals
 - Reports from government, foundations, and organizations
 - Web content from organizations that focus on human services
- Reviewed materials from 2010 and more recent
- Reviewed more than 150 documents





Racial Equity Data and TANF

- While whites make up majority of TANF recipients, Blacks and Hispanics overrepresented in TANF
- In 2019, U.S. poverty rate was 10.5 percent
 - For Blacks, it was 18.8 percent
 - For Hispanics, it was 15.7 percent
 - For whites, it was 7.3 percent





Racial Equity Data and TANF

- Blacks may be more likely to look to TANF for economic support
- Blacks are more likely to live in states with lower TANF benefit levels, more restrictive requirements, and policies





Education and Skills Development

“...greater occupational skill led, across subsamples, to increased likelihood of working nonpoor, but only among African American and Hispanic respondents did more education increase the likelihood of working nonpoor.”

-- Cheng, Lo, and Weber (2017)



Education and Skills Development

- Several researchers have reported that there are racial differences in the receipt of work support services like childcare, educational activities, and mental health services





Workforce Development and Work Requirements

- Cultural filtering exists and presents a barrier to employment for TANF participants who are people of color
- TANF programs may not be adequately preparing TANF recipients to counter this barrier



Sanctions

- Racial disparities exist in the implementation of sanctions
- There are numerous factors influencing the likelihood of these disparities

SANCTIONS



Sanctions

- Does caseworker bias impact sanctioning decisions?
 - A study by Schram, Soss, Fording, and Houser (2009) concluded, it does
- Fording et al. (2011) looked at “how patterns of punishment are affected by the interplay of race and politics”





Sanctions

- Lanfranconi et al. (2020) studied the impact of an equity discourse vs. an equality discourse on sanctioning and exemptions
- Lee and Yoon (2012) examined the impact on sanctioning upon employment after leaving TANF





Drug Testing and TANF

- Ledford (2018) analyzed the relationship between laws *proposed* to institute mandatory drug testing of TANF recipients and race
- Found a direct relationship “between racial biases and the likelihood that states propose welfare drug testing legislation”





Leaving TANF

- McDaniel, et al., Hahn: Black TANF recipients more likely to cycle back to TANF
- Cheng, Lo, and Weber: Blacks, Hispanics less likely to achieve working nonpoor status and more likely to remain on TANF





State and Local Responses to Identify and Address Racial Equity

- Ramsey County, MN
 - Shifted strategic priorities: 1) reducing employment disparities; 2) building strategic partnerships with communities; 3) changing how to measure outcomes
 - Aligned work requirements with career coaching and education
 - Elicited input from TANF participants
 - Hired staff representing communities they serve
 - Engaged community-based organizations
 - Provided cultural competency training



State and Local Responses to Identify and Address Racial Equity

- Miami, FL created a Community Liaison Framework
- Fairfax County, VA commissioned an Institutional Analysis
- Montgomery County, MD mapped community access points
- Denver Human Services created a brand campaign
- Washington, DC
 - Shifted from a one-size fits all model to a coaching model
 - Instituted a TANF Comprehensive Assessment process



Gaps in the Literature

- Inadequate attention paid to other populations
- Understanding impact of caseworker bias
- Disparities in outcomes for TANF participants
- Asset limits and how various policies may impact racial and ethnic groups differently
- The development and effectiveness of applying a race equity lens in TANF



