

# Equity Begins with Listening

Alliance for Early Success  
October 24 and 25, 2019



# Beneficiary Visit Goals

- To listen, understand, and learn about families' goals for their young children, providers' goals for their work with young children, services that work or don't work well, services that exist that they can't access, and where services and opportunities which support young children's growth and development just don't exist.
- To develop experiences with populations and groups that experience racial inequities and disparities, increasing the focus on institutional and structural barriers to achieving equitable outcomes for children and their families.
- To support exploration of how historically and today, individuals and communities have fought back, resisted, and organized for self-determination, inclusion, and fairness.
- To apply lessons learned to our own practice in order to ensure ongoing communication with children and families, and providers that are served by advocacy work.



Why?

N

## The Average Black Family Would Need 228 Years to Build the Wealth of a White Family Today

*Joshua Holland*

<https://www.thenation.com/article/the-average-black-family-would-need-228-years-to-build-the-wealth-of-a-white-family-today/>

**RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION** **POVERTY** **FAMILIES**

## The Average Black Family Would Need 228 Years to Build the Wealth of a White Family Today

*Just as past public policies created the racial wealth gap, current policy widens it.*

By [Joshua Holland](#)

AUGUST 8, 2016



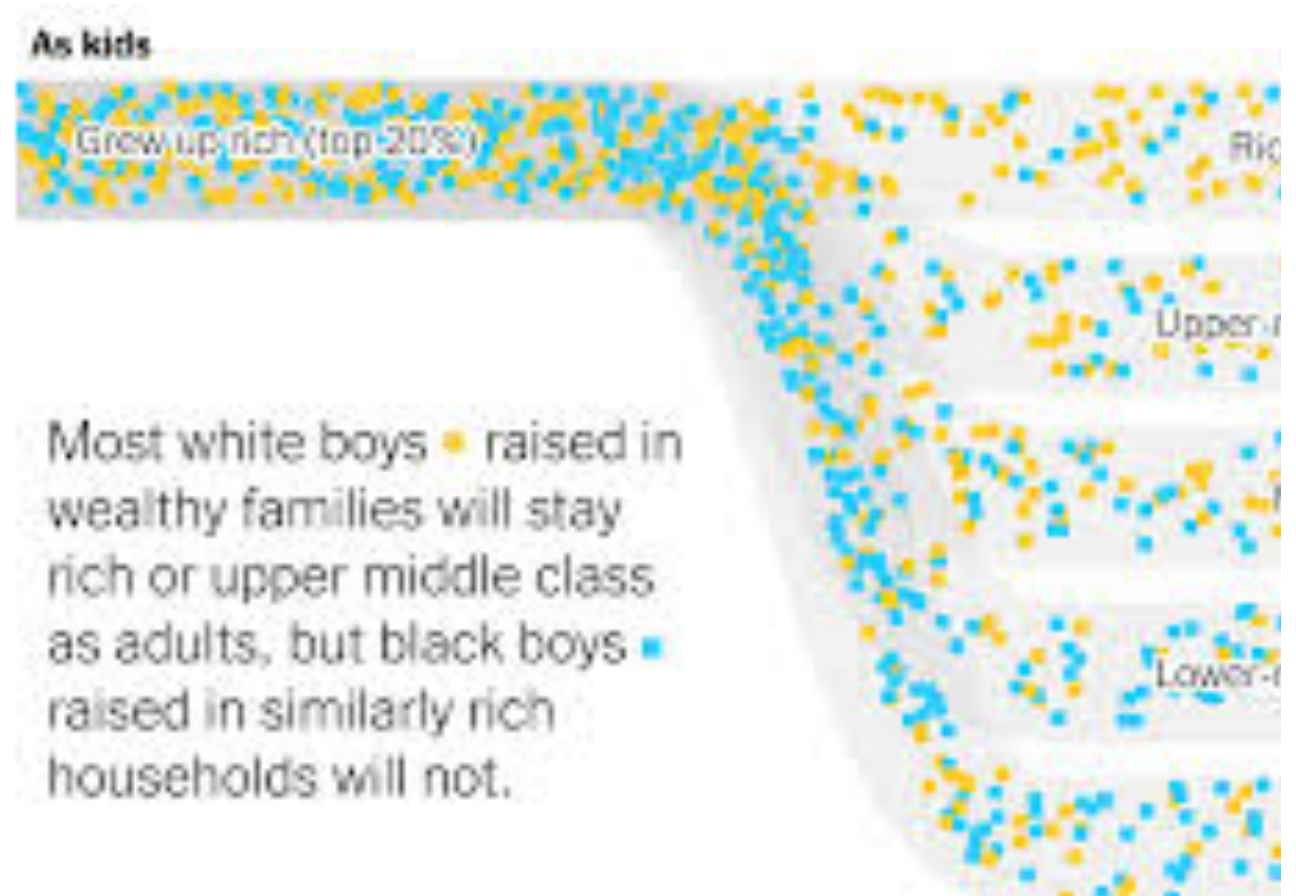
# A groundbreaking study offers undeniable proof that the fight against inequality starts with moms

Anderson, Jenny. A groundbreaking study offers undeniable proof that the fight against inequality starts with moms. *QZ*, 21 Feb. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/newsletters/2018/02/24/race-related?nlid=66759093>



# Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys

Badger, Emily. **Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys.** *New York Times*, 19 Mar. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/19/upshot/race-class-white-and-black-men.html>



# Roosevelt Institute article, *Rewrite Racial Rules*

Roosevelt Institute article, *Rewrite Racial Rules*, which can be found here:

<http://rooseveltinstitute.org/rewrite-racial-rules-building-inclusive-american-economy/>



# Sample Content Areas

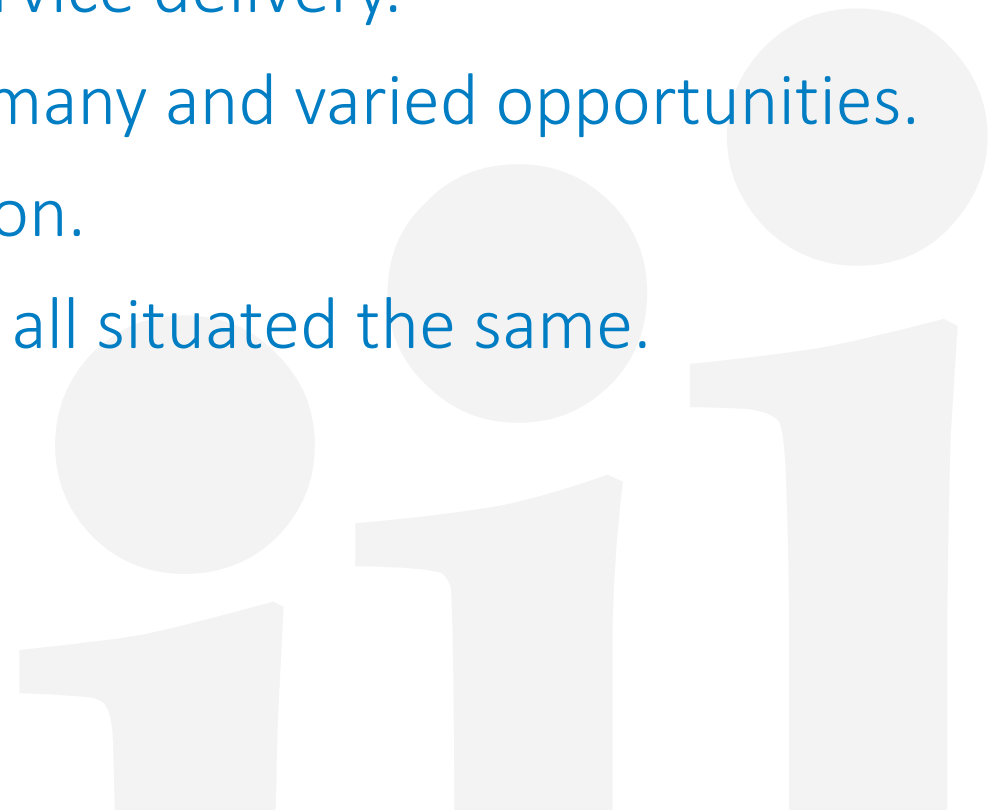
- Mississippi child welfare;
- housing policy;
- segregation and schooling;
- immigration policy;
- Native American child welfare;
- Privilege
- Intersectionality
- Implicit Bias





# Why Support Connection to Those we Intend to Benefit?

- State leaders often are far from those who they intend to benefit.
- Understanding “lived experience” of services, programs and initiatives is essential for continuous improvement.
- Voices narrow as you move farther from service delivery.
- Addressing equity requires the increase of many and varied opportunities.
- Leaders’ own stories often drive their passion.
- Families, children and communities are not all situated the same.
- Our social networks are often not diverse.

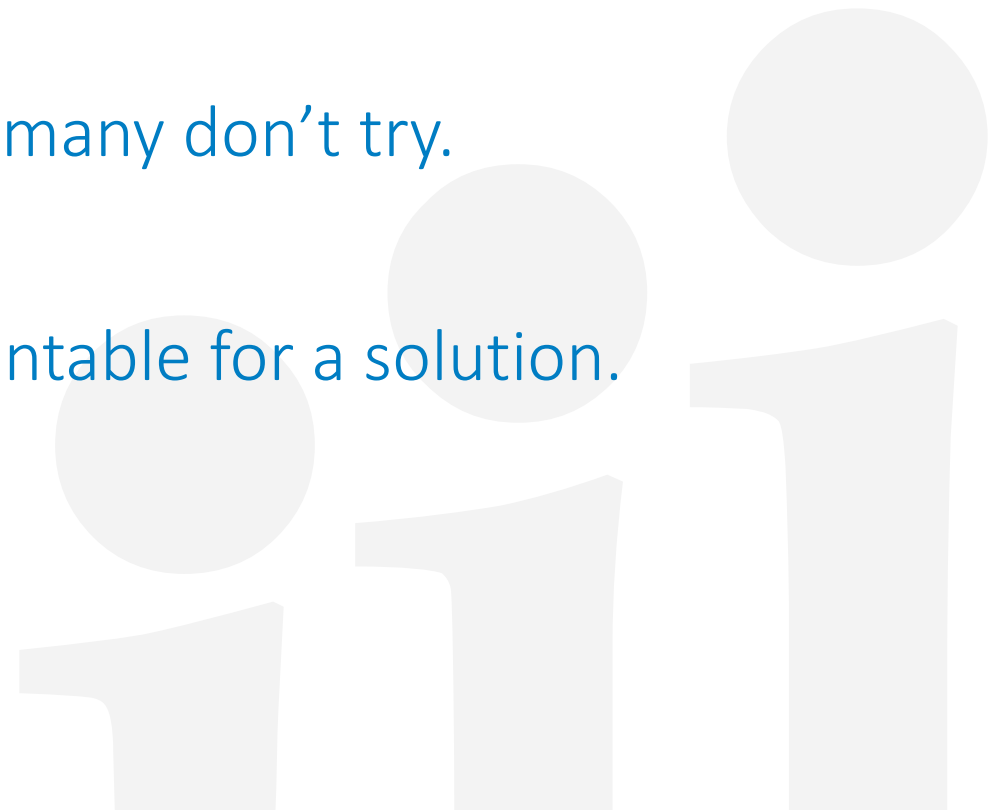


# Who are Beneficiaries?

- Children
- Families
- Workforce
- Providers
- Community leaders
- Local policy leaders

# Why State Leaders?

- Services, programs and initiatives are transactional.
- State leaders often seen as managing grants.
- Policy can be created, but implementation needs to be targeted.
- Loud voice of advocates, legislators.
- Hard to visit all communities and states, so many don't try.
- Multiple competing requests.
- Afraid they can't solve or will be held accountable for a solution.





# Framework

**HISTORY**

**INTERNAL**

Bias

Privilege

Internalized  
Racism

**EXTERNAL**

Interpersonal

Institutional

Structural

**POWER  
AND  
ECONOMICS**

**CULTURE**

**IDENTITY**

Source: Cracking the Code by Shakti Butler

# Four Frames that Perpetuate Racial Inequity

- **Equal opportunity:** employment, education, and wealth accumulation available to all; race is no longer a factor. Minimizing or denying the existence of on-going racial disparities.
- **Personal responsibility and individualism:** people have control regardless of social position; individual behaviors and choices determine outcomes. Blaming the existence of disparities, when they are acknowledged, on pathologies in non-White groups and communities rather than on structural factors that privilege Whites.
- **Natural Preference:** asserting that factors central to racial privilege and racism (e.g., segregation) are merely normal reflections of each groups' preference to be with "their own kind."
- **Meritocracy:** resources and opportunities are distributed according to talent, effort and achievement, rather than wealth or privilege. Supporting the ideals of equality and meritocracy, while refusing to recognize that the playing field is not level for all in the society (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

Sources: Leadership and Race How to Develop Leadership and Contributes to Racial Justice July 2010; Racism without Racist Color -Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequity in American, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

# Racial Equity in Early Childhood Systems

## Four Levels of Change



### PERSONAL

The individual consistently works alone and with others, to understand their own values, beliefs, implicit biases, unconscious racism, actions and relative privileges that contribute to racial inequities and equity; the individual acts to advance racial equity.



### INTERPERSONAL

Individuals and groups are effective in relating to others not like themselves, actively include those typically excluded, share power, surface issues of racial inequality in interpersonal relationships, act to support positive change, and work to reduce interpersonal conflict.



### INSTITUTIONAL

Apply a racial equity/economic justice lens to their policies, practices, regulations and work culture to dismantle policies that perpetuate inequality and design/develop policies and practices that advance opportunities, fairness, access to resources, and other factors for those most effected by racial inequality.

### STRUCTURAL

Individuals and groups recognize that structural arrangements are interconnected and resist change; they develop approaches to advance equity that offer new or reconstituted structural arrangements; they build shared leadership and collective power that leads to change.

Model adapted from Kirwan Institute. Illustration design by Chrissie Bonner and Montréal Morant. © 2017



# Framework Beneficiary Voice

- Leaders and leadership
- Before the visit
- The visit
- Post-visit actions
  - Debrief
  - Feedback loop



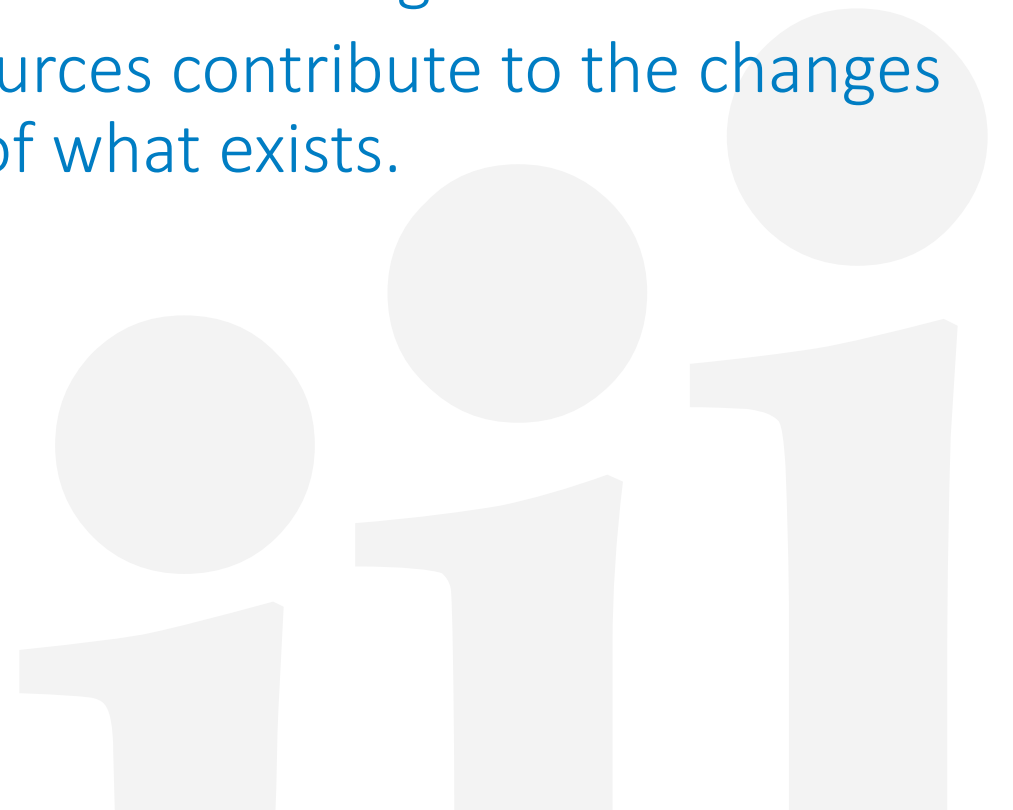




# Cross-Sector Leaders and Leadership

# Leaders

- Can't reduce inequities as a single leader alone—the intersecting ways inequities exists.
- Multiple ways of hearing the voices.
- Multiple methods and approaches to tackle the challenges.
- Different expertise, experiences, and resources contribute to the changes that are needed and increase awareness of what exists.



# Commitments to the Equity Conversation

- Stay engaged.
- Experience discomfort.
- Speak your truth.
- Expect and accept non-closure.
- Assume positive intent.
- Own your own learning.
- Means of interaction must respect others “methods.”
- Other?
- Critical Thinking—look for what challenges your thinking rather than what confirms you are right.
- Humility—come as learner, not expert.
- Dialogue—think and make meaning together.
- Hope—believe that a better future is possible.

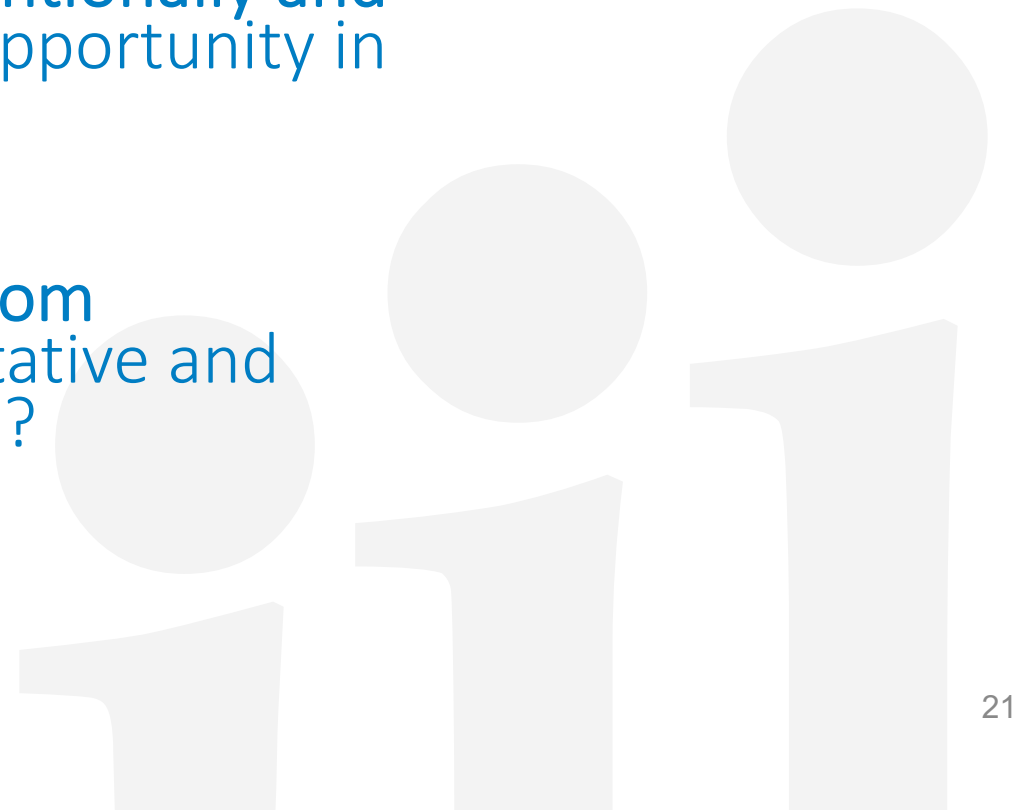
Source: “Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools” (Chapter 4 pp. 58-65); Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton. Corwin Press, 2006

# Shifting Discourse

Discourse I	Discourse II
Single truths.	Multiple stories.
Improving what exist.	Addressing root causes.
Answers and technical fixes.	Inquiry and adaptive challenges.
Externalization/blame “look out the window.”	Internal reflection “look in the mirror.”
Limited time and ability.	Getting started anyway.

# Ask yourself about your leadership:

- In my work and responsibilities **who is and is not benefiting** from my state's/county's/organization's policies and programs?
- As a leader, what actions can I take to **intentionally and consistently** include those furthest from opportunity in my/our work?
- **Do I intentionally engage those furthest from opportunity** in understanding data quantitative and qualitative to advance shared equity goals?



# Authority and Influence: Considerations

- In your current position, **what are the specific activities you are responsible for in relation to early childhood systems work** (e.g., are you a staff person with full or partial responsibility for child care licensing, maternal and child health, early learning or some other area, policy, initiative or advocacy)?
- In your current work, **what types of decisions are you accountable for making?**
- How does your current position offer you **opportunities to influence others** with whom you come in contact (e.g., through committee meetings, interdepartmental activities or partnerships) in areas of work affecting children, families and/or communities over which you do not have direct authority?
- In those areas where you have **“influence but not direct administrative authority”** which decisions, issues, or areas do you influence by consulting others?

# Your Role

## Authority

- Decisions
- Giving directives
- Enforcing policy

## Responsibility

- Activities
- Programs

## Influence

- Status, role, expertise
- Interdepartmental committees
- Workgroups
- Partnership
- Goals for child well-being
  - Universal
  - Targeted e.g. equity goals
- Tools for decision-making
  - Budgets
  - Design rules and policies
  - Initiatives
  - Key decision-makers



# The Process



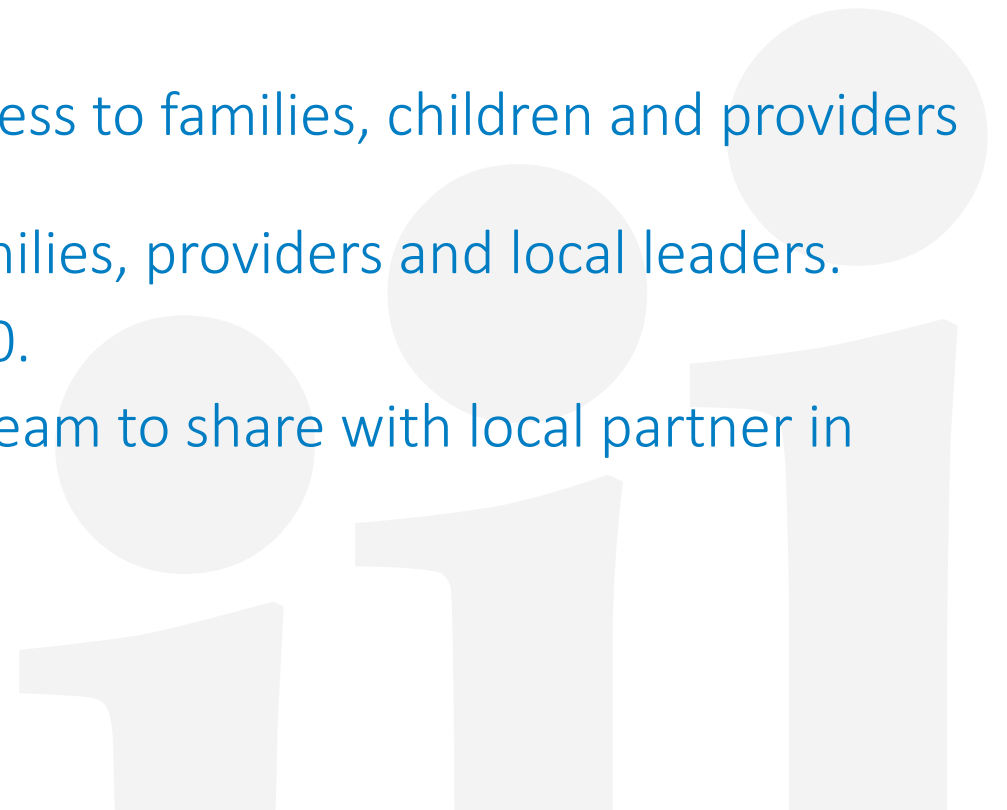
# Not a Destination; a Process

- Why? Why are you doing this work?
- How do you know solutions are right?
- How do I connect to those that I intend to benefit?
- What is the process for connecting to those farthest from opportunity?



# Process: Before the Visit

- Build a **cross-sector team** with diverse interests: health, early learning, economics, local, state, county.
- Determine and discuss your **why, individually and as a team.**
- **Review qualitative data** to determine one or more locations with low opportunity communities.
- **Select targeted places** to start.
- **Identify a local partner** in selected places with access to families, children and providers in targeted communities.
- **Co-design the site visit with local partner(s)** for families, providers and local leaders.
- Plan for a cross sector group of not more than 8-10.
- Co-create **6 to 8 core questions** with cross sector team to share with local partner in advance, especially for families.



# Process: The Visit

- Plan and pay for meals and stipends to programs and individuals.
- Identify someone to capture the site visit conversations, especially actual quotes from the participants.
- Hold site visit, 60 – 90 minutes per location.



# Process: After the Visit

- **Debrief with the cross-sector team** immediate reactions right after site visit.
- Discuss a **responsive strategy**, other **essential partners**.
- **Return to the community** through local partner, expand group visited or sites as appropriate.



# Beneficiary Visit Protocol

## Guidance for Setting Up the Visit

Clarify what you hope to learn, your goals for the visit, and the population you have chosen. Consider how to frame why you are asking for this opportunity, what you hope to gain, how you will use the information and experiences you will hear about. Share your desire to listen and learn.

Listen for what families' goals are for their young children, what services work or do not work well, what services exist that they can not access, and where services and opportunities just don't exist. Consider the definition of access as awareness, affordability, accessibility, availability, accommodation, and acceptability. How do the available services align with the needs of the family and what are the barriers to access?

### Population

Select a population that relates to an equity challenge in your state:

- What information and data (quantitative and qualitative) will you use to select your location and beneficiaries?
- What does this information make you curious about?

### Location

Recommend that the visit take place outside the state capital (or where your office is positioned) by at least one hour and in a community you do not know. If you choose a different option, share your reason. Hold it in a location where families typically gather and are comfortable.

## Recommended Goals of the Beneficiary Visit

1. Consider how individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and identities experience programs, services, regulations, and policies designed to benefit young children and their families within the state early childhood system.
2. Develop experiences with populations and groups that experience racial inequities and disparities, increasing the focus on institutional and structural barriers to achieve equitable outcomes for children and their families.
3. Support exploration of how historically and today, individuals and communities have fought back, resisted, and organized for self-determination, inclusion, and fairness.

### Local Partner

Partner with a local organization. Coalitions and advocates are not substitutes for family members but they might have experience and insight to share that will help establish the specific visit location and support its success.

### Length

Expect the site visit or focus group to take no more than 60 to 90 minutes, unless it involves a tour or other special activities suggested by the host.

# Discussion Question

How do you connect with beneficiaries of your programs and services?

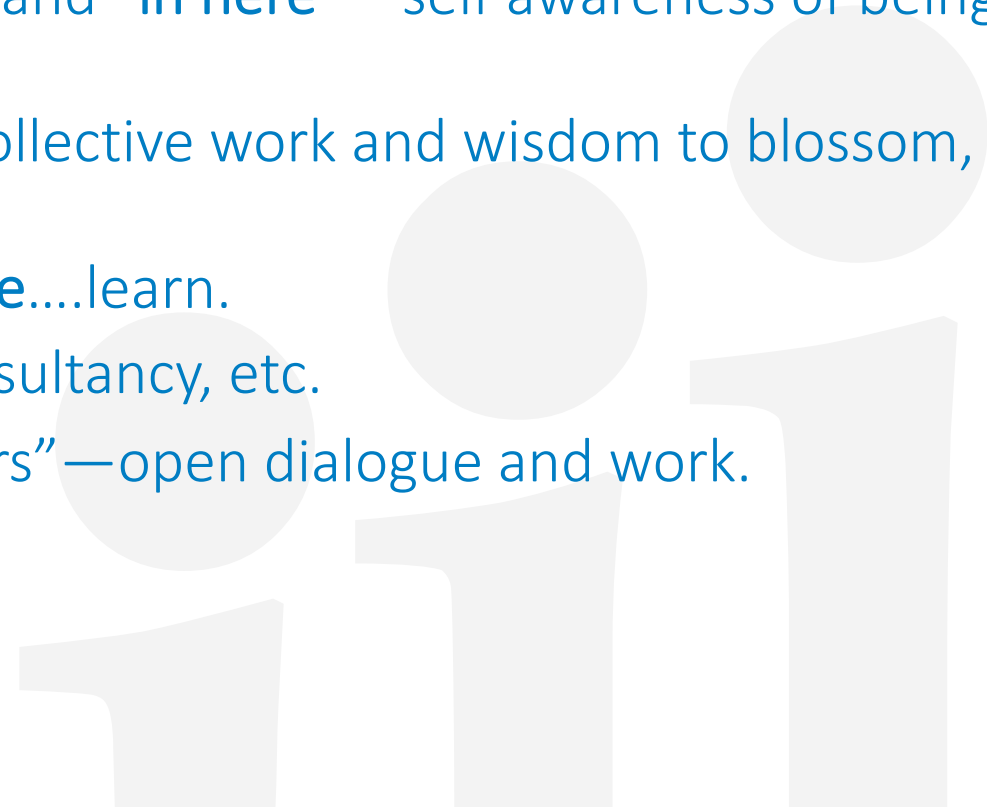
What is your cross-sector team's level of involvement?



# Leading with Race Requires Systems Leadership

While many have a vision for equitable systems or equity in their own work efforts, achieving these goals requires:

- **Deep commitment** to the work of racial equity.
- **Strong communication skills.**
- Recognizing that problems are both “**out there**” and “**in here**” —self awareness of being part of the solution and the problem.
- **Building and sustaining relationships**, allowing collective work and wisdom to blossom, attention to process.
- **Practice, practice, fail, reassess, practice, practice....learn.**
- **Use of tools**, e.g., systems mapping, inquiry, consultancy, etc.
- **Open boundaries**, tables and spaces to “outsiders” —open dialogue and work.
- **Build networks.**



# Contact

Sherri Killins Stewart Ed.D  
Director of System Alignment and  
Integration

Co-Director of State Services  
[skillins@buildinitiative.org](mailto:skillins@buildinitiative.org)

[www.buildinitiative.org](http://www.buildinitiative.org)

