

## Penn State's Child Maltreatment Solutions Network Call to Action

The murder of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement, and the fact that this incident is one of the thousands that are emblematic of race relations in our country, should spark outrage—but more importantly action—in all of us. Given the role that the Child Maltreatment Solutions Network and the our P50 plays in setting the national research, training, and dissemination agenda, the child maltreatment field will rightly look to us to provide and model leadership regarding how to address systematic racism inherent in the child welfare system. Moreover, via Child Maltreatment and Advocacy Studies (CMAS) minor and the T32, our education mission puts us in a very unique position to create and nurture a pipeline of students of color who will be the next generation of leaders in our field. We should be actively creating real opportunities to support the trajectories of these scholars so that they are in the best position to occupy seats at the table of change and whose voices will spark a cultural paradigm shift to combat academic and institutional racism and racial bias within the child welfare system. All trainees should leave Penn State more sensitive to racial bias, armed with tools that address it and its effects on the systems we study and work in.

Instead of producing a statement or platform that merely reiterates what we have seen from the likes of Pr. Barron, Dean's offices, Department Heads, professional associations, etc., we should instead outline a plan of action and effort toward inclusivity and promoting equality that is indeed in our power as the national Center to adopt and enact. To this end we have adopted a '3 things' strategy—that is, what 3 things can we do today which are tangible, actionable steps specifically devoted to achieving this agenda and to developing an infrastructure of sustained change?

1. Increase, support, and encourage the pipeline of students of color. Some examples include:
  - a. Create a scholarship from a portion of our endowment to fund 2 scholars of color each year to fund a portion of tuition plus summer stipends for research and policy assistantships.
  - b. Regular outreach to historically Black colleges and universities to partner with faculty who study child maltreatment/welfare in order to foster intellectual collaborations (data sharing, grants, publications), student pipelines, and outreach/policy efforts.
  - c. Partner with the McNair scholars to mentor students of color and include them in our labs.
  - d. Hold and support workshops for faculty and trainees on how to access the loan repayment program, diversity supplements on R grants, and F31/2 options specifically designed for students of color.
  - e. Be inclusive in publication opportunities by including students of color in research at a level that merits authorship.
  
2. Evaluate and augment our education model to focus on racial factors that promote inequalities in child welfare and create racial disparities in prevention efforts and in outcomes for youth and families of color. Some examples include:
  - a. Examine and restructure course content to include clear lessons in the role of race and racism in child welfare.
  - b. More effectively utilize our annual conference series by devoting our next conference to the topic of racism in child welfare, devoting one session per conference to racial issues, creating opportunities for scholars of color to be

- speakers, integrative speakers, and poster presenters, creating travel scholarships and events for students of color, etc.
- c. Create a 'library' or repository of case examples, readings, videos, etc. that more accurately reflect families in the child welfare system such that families of color are not over-represented.
  - d. Have a student spotlight in our newsletter with specific focus on diversity representation.
3. Foster an environment of inclusivity where students of color will both seek out and be safe at Penn State. Some examples include:
- a. Create a student of color network for CMAS minors.
  - b. Develop a rotating-membership Network committee on racial equality comprised of students and faculty who maintain growth in this area. Support the functions of this committee with course releases, summer salary and stipends, resources, etc.
  - c. Hold one another accountable to action through regular support and sharing of resources and devoting portions of the Network faculty meetings and retreats to actions that result in racial equality.
  - d. More effectively involve faculty of color on student mentoring teams, in our national coalition, and within our policy activities.
  - e. Provide resources and education materials for all faculty that will enhance their ability to both recognize where there might be racial bias in their writings/readings/leadership and mentoring styles, and how to have more effective conversations with colleagues and students about difficult and uncomfortable topics around racial disparities and inequities inherent in academia.

We have committed substantial resources and effort by our faculty and trainees to these efforts. We fully recognize that any and all changes will require more work on our part and that any real change in the field will take 10-15 years. Thus, our commitment must be for the long haul. As with everything we do in the Child Maltreatment Solutions Network, we can and should think big, but act even bigger.