

2024



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CONFERENCE



# Reducing the Disproportionate Representation of African American Children in Foster Care Advisory Commission

Higher Education Recommendations Presented to Governor JB Pritzker

# Overview



Background,  
Structure, and  
Purpose



Recommendations  
for Higher Education



Other  
Recommendations



Next Steps

# Background and Structure

Formally established by PA 102-0470 in 2021

23-member commission appointed by statute, legislators, and the Governor of Illinois

12 Monthly meetings held in FY 23-24

Subcommittee meetings were held between monthly meetings

# Agencies Represented

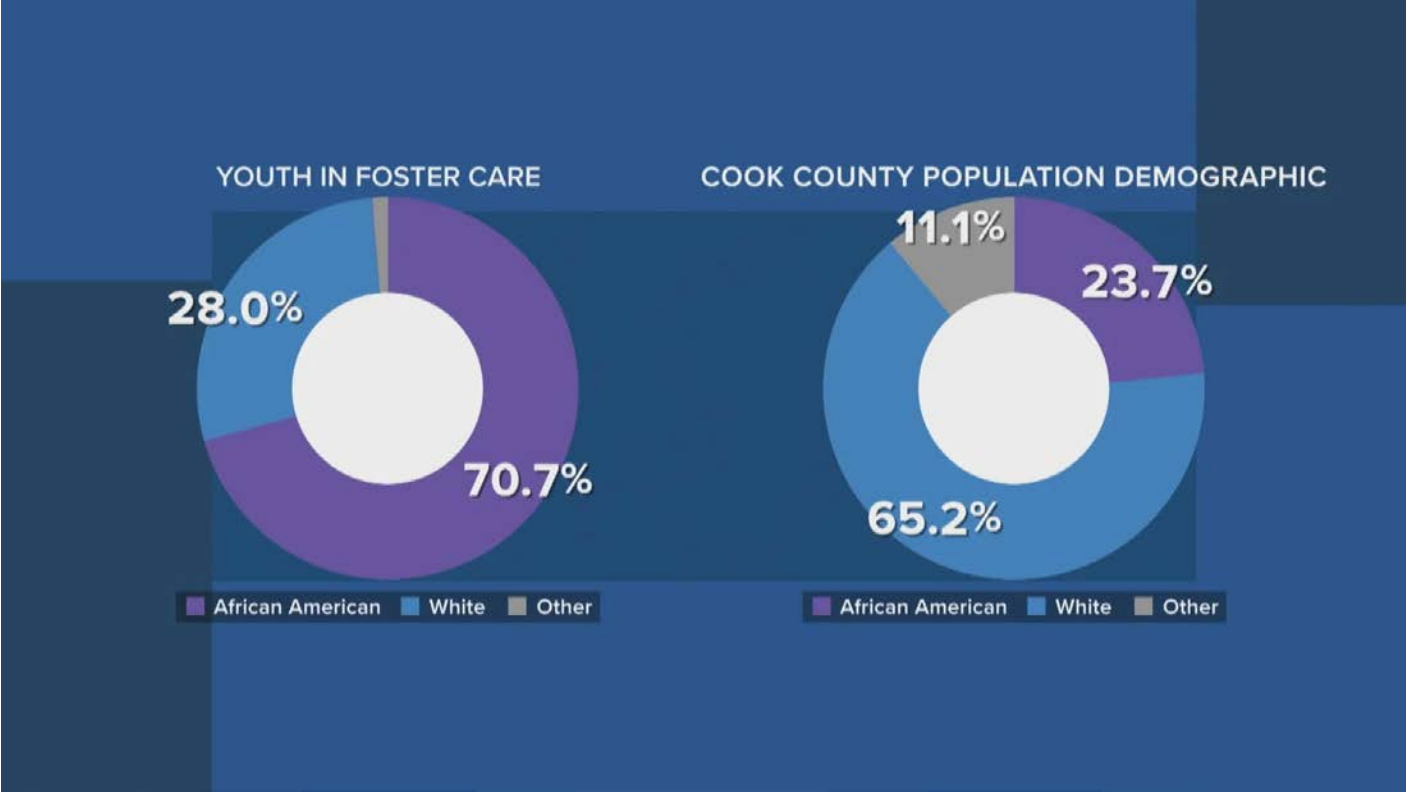


# Purpose

Develop effective holistic policies, programs, services, and strategies to include prevention resources that will prevent African American children from coming into the child welfare system

Impact the length of stay in care for those that do enter the system and ensure they receive the services or enhanced interventions needed.

# Demographics/Disproportionality



<https://news.wttw.com/2022/12/14/cook-county-black-youth-make-70-foster-care-system-advocates-say-more-support-needed>

# Impact of Foster Care

Negative affect on children's brains, bodies and behavior

Turning to crime, drugs, and other high-risk activities

Housing insecurity/homelessness

Low college graduation rates

Early incarceration

High unemployment





# Process

Review and analyze State and regional data

Examine and develop strategies and policies

Monitor and comment on existing and proposed legislation

Collaborate with other State agencies and social services

# Framework

The Commission took into consideration

Socioeconomic status

Family support networks

Access and contact with community-based systems

*Medical and mental health*

*Education*

*Housing*

*Employment*

# Subcommittees





# Recommendations for Higher Education

# External Resources Sub-Committee

## Recommendations

Specifically directed Promise programs

Established peer advocates

Advanced “automatic” eligibility and access for housing

Expanded childcare waivers and allotments

# Poverty and lack of employment opportunities: Promise Programs

Recommendation:  
The Subcommittee recommends Promise Programs specially aimed for this demographic.

## TRADE SCHOOL

QUALIFIED  
ELECTRICIAN



\$55,590  
avg per year

HVAC  
TECHNICIAN



\$47,380  
avg per year

SOME BLUE  
COLLAR JOBS



as high as  
\$100,000

## COLLEGE

BACHELORS  
DEGREE



\$55,590  
avg per year

ENGLISH  
DEGREE



\$47,380  
avg per year

ENGINEERING  
DEGREE



\$61,819  
avg per year



# Promise Programs

Can be state-wide or localized

Can reduce or eliminate student loans

Benefits to recipient demographics vary by target.

Increases enrollment and completion of AA students

Graduates more likely to stay in their communities

# Tennessee Promise



Tennessee Promise—statewide

Scholarship and mentoring program

Valid at any community college or institution offering an AA degree

Must meet eligibility requirements



# Kalamazoo Promise



Kalamazoo community (not state-wide)

Community and business collaboration

Limited to KPS resident high school graduate

Benefit based on KPS length of residency

Business collaboration creates workforce pathways.

Provides a Promise Coach

# Illinois Promise Programs



## Institution specific

UIUC (I-Promise)

City Colleges of Chicago (Chicago STAR Scholarships)

UIC (UChicago Promise)

Sandburg College (Galesburg Promise)

Harper College (Harper College Promise Scholarship)

ICC (Peoria Promise)

QU (Quincy Promise)

District 205 (Rockford Promise)

# Parent Advocacy/Mentorship

## Recommendation

Establish peer advocates for parents that aid in the accomplishment for achieving housing, education, and childcare for a specified timeframe



# Access to Housing



Pilot housing assistance program partnering with housing assistance agencies

Specific to biological parents seeking/receiving court approved reunification.

Provide 18- 24 months of subsidy support that will gradually decrease in subsidy

Advocacy and educational support throughout the 24 months period.

External entity evaluation for further recommendations

Cook, East St Louis, Peoria, and Will County.

IDCFS and Illinois government officials shall continue to expand public housing opportunities for Illinois families.



# Expanded Childcare Waivers

Review current childcare waiver allotment to expanded waivers for cases reported to the IDCFS Hotline for specific allegations, such as inadequate supervision.

An option for diversion if supervision is ruled as the critical protective factor that addresses risk/safety.

Increased funding, support, and development of statewide 24 Hours childcare resources



**Other Recommendations**

# Other Recommendations

Support for reunification

Support of House Resolution 85

Expand policies to assess cash assistance needs

Adopt a Robust statewide network of services

Mandated reporter training

Review language for the Juvenile Court Act

# Continued...

Review  
Investigative  
Process

Increase  
collaboration  
between agencies

Review barriers to  
reunification

Urgent strategy  
for IDCFS staffing

Parental voice in  
juvenile court  
proceedings

Statewide data  
review

Expand Maternal,  
Infant, Early  
Childhood Home  
Visiting Program





Next Steps

# What can we do?

While the Advisory Commission awaits updates from the governor's office, institutions can:

- Examine student services
- Communicate available services
- Evaluate program modality
- Designate peer mentors
- Coordinate with external agencies
- Examine the big picture

# Questions?



thank you

## Contact Info

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Please put “foster care” in the subject line.