

Examining Cumulative Disproportionality & Disparity *in Child Welfare System Involvement*

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Background

- ❑ Fundamental need in child welfare to understand the proportion of the child population who experience system contact during their childhood (prior to 18th birthday).
 - Allegations of maltreatment
 - Substantiated/founded instances of maltreatment
 - Entry into out-of-home care
 - Adoption from out-of-home care
- ❑ Previous studies have examined synthetic cohorts to estimate these rates.
- ❑ Automated longitudinal data systems have now been in place for sufficient time to follow birth cohorts for a full 18 years.
- ❑ It is also important to examine disparity of system contact over time by children of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Data & Method

- ❑ Data drawn from California Children's Services Archive.
- ❑ Followed all child welfare system contacts for California children born in 1999 (n=515,504).
- ❑ Number and race/ethnicity of children was determined using Vital Statistics data.
- ❑ Number and race/ethnicity of children with child welfare system contact was determined using California SACWIS data.
- ❑ Frequencies were adjusted to account for children known to have been born outside California.

Cohort Composition

- ❑ Two types of cohorts:
 - Birth: Those children who were born in the state in a specific year based on Vital Statistics data.
 - Census: Those children who were age=0 in a specific year according to the Census data.

- ❑ Issues to consider for both types of cohorts include:
 - deaths,
 - in and out migration, and
 - inconsistent definitions of ethnicity.

Birth Cohort

- ❑ Denominator = Vital Statistics Birth Records
- ❑ Consideration of ethnicity based on mother to match birth records
- ❑ CWS/CMS birthplace data are incomplete so it is not possible to accurately limit cases in the numerator to children born in the state

Census Cohort

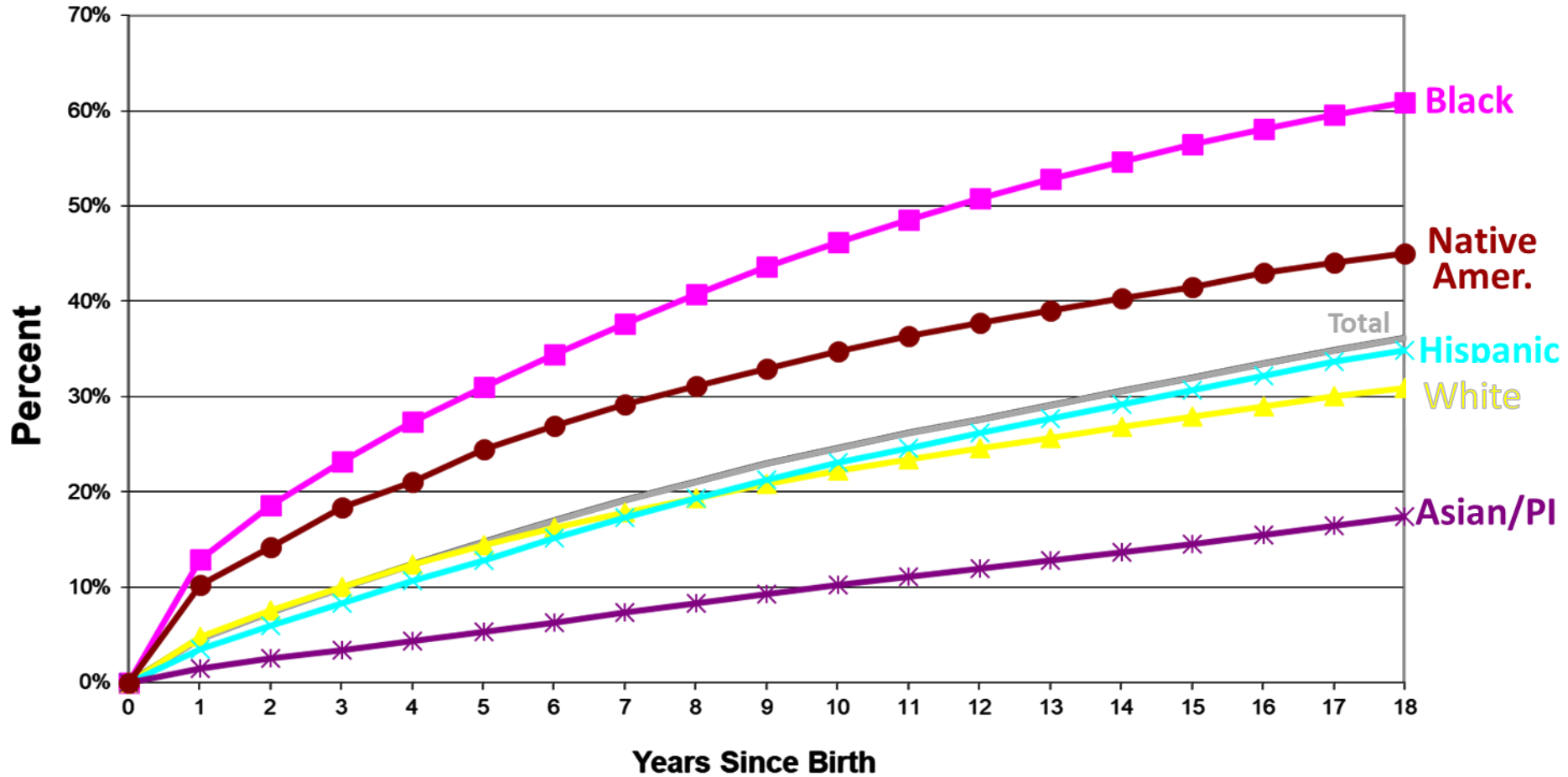
- ❑ Denominator = Department of Finance (Census based) Population Projection
- ❑ Consideration of ethnicity based on child to match population projections
- ❑ Denominator doesn't include children who have died or moved out of the state, but numerator does

Results

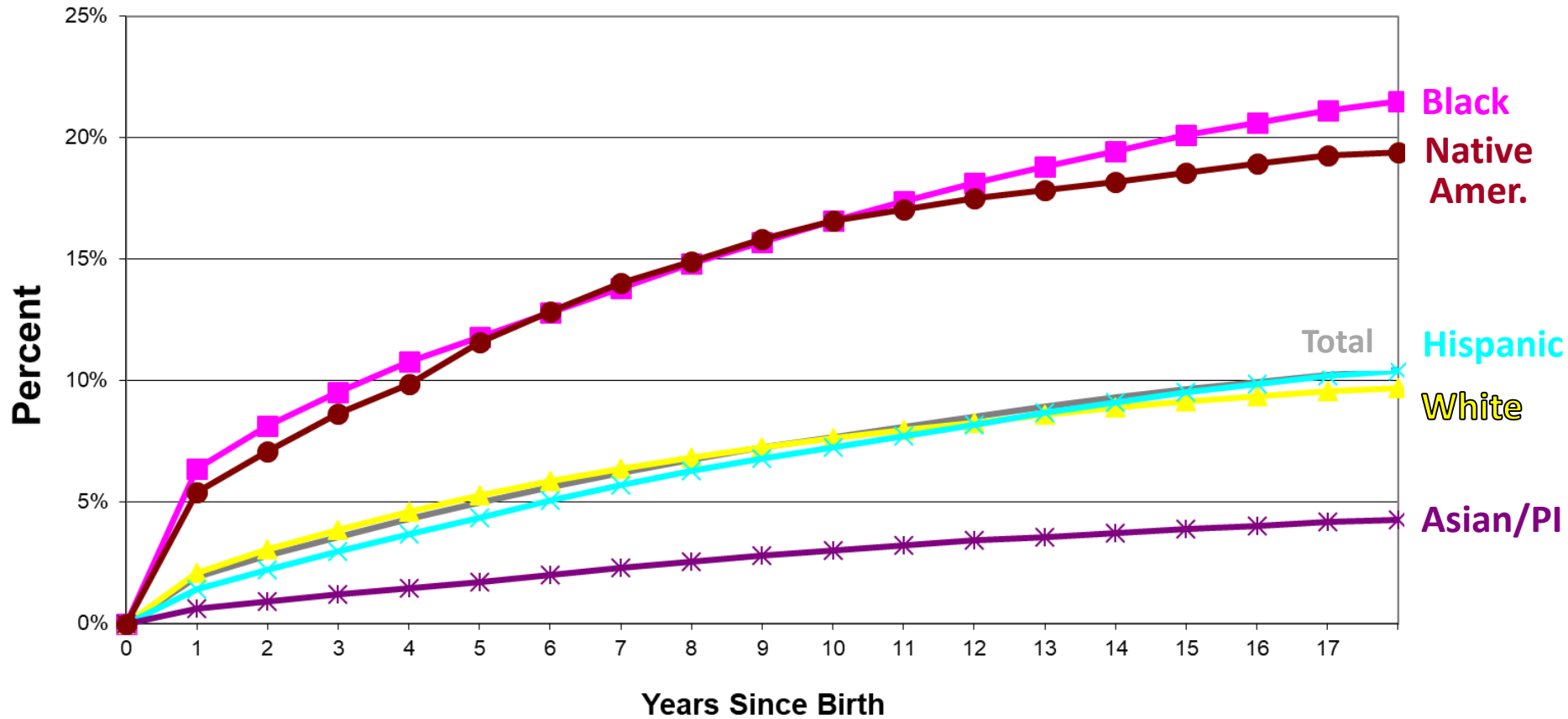
System contact during childhood for:

- Children with any allegation of maltreatment.
- Children who were the victim of substantiated maltreatment.
- Children who were taken into foster care.
- Children who were adopted.

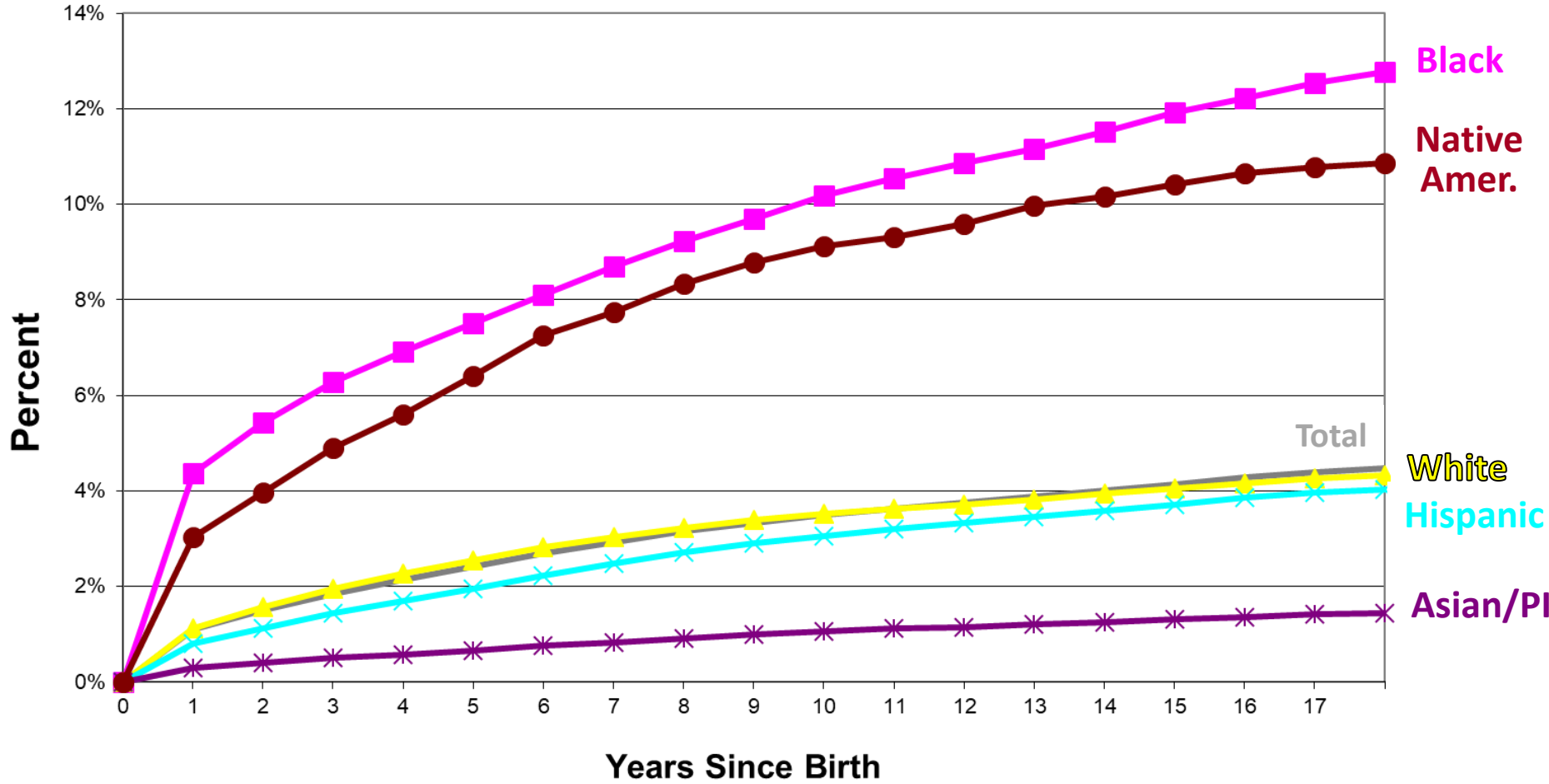
Children Referred - Births in 1999



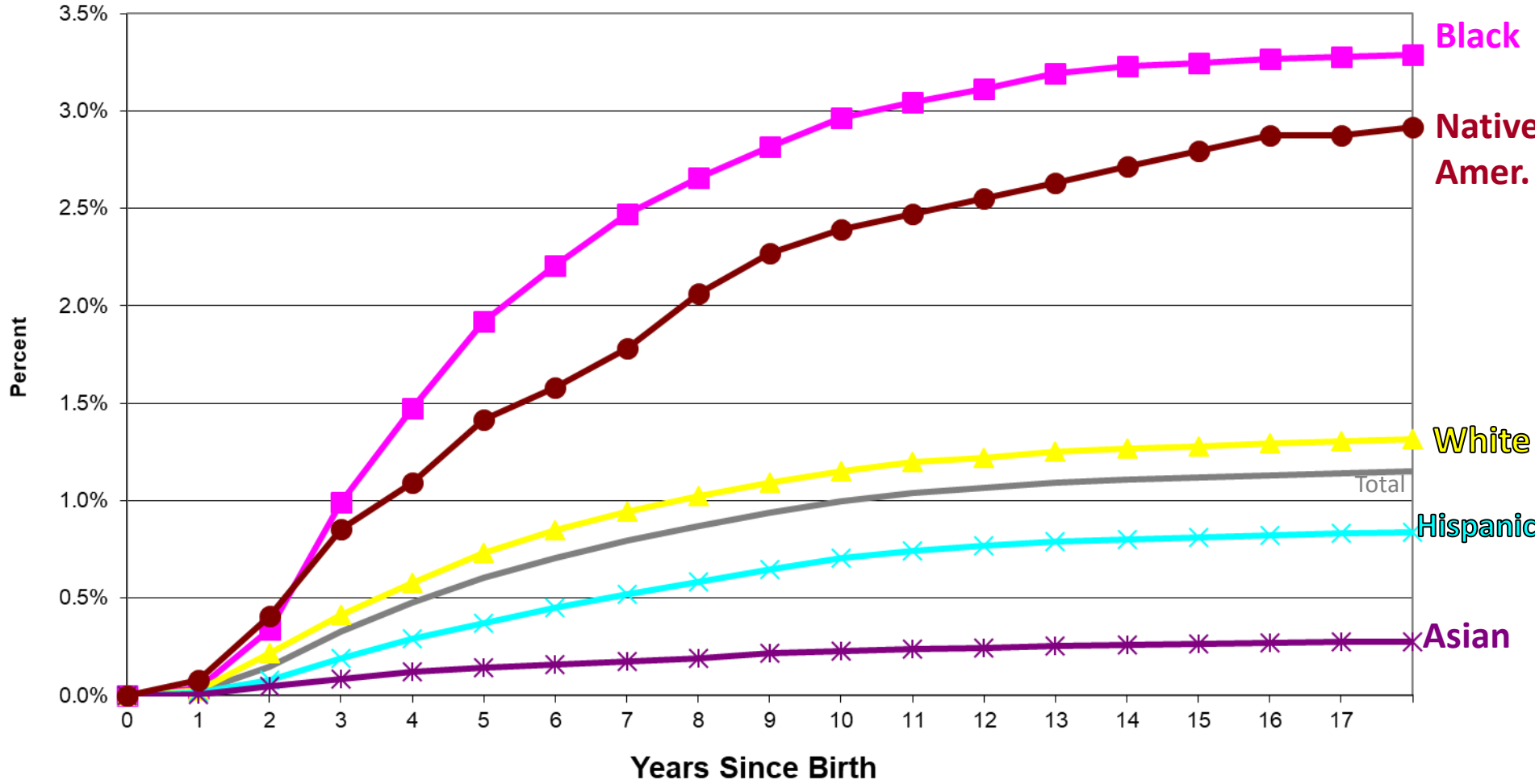
Substantiated Referrals - Births in 1999



First Entries into Foster Care - Births in 1999



Child Welfare Adoptions - Births in 1999



Results

- ❑ More than a third of the children in the 1999 California birth cohort have been referred to child welfare services at least once during their childhood.
- ❑ About 10.5% of the birth cohort had at least one substantiated referral.
- ❑ About 4.5% of the birth cohort were removed from their parents' care at least once during their childhood.
- ❑ Lifetime rates of system contact varied markedly by ethnicity:
 - Allegation rates—Asian/PI 17%, African American 61%.
 - Substantiation rates—Asian/PI 4%, African American 20%.
 - Removal rates—Asian/PI 2%, African American 13%.
 - Adoption rates—Asian/PI 0.3%, African American 3.3%
- ❑ Rates similar to those observed in synthetic cohort analyses.

Conclusions

- ❑ Effect of child welfare services is greater than expected in some communities.
- ❑ Disparity in system contact between ethnic groups was the same when examining the 2000 birth cohort.
- ❑ Simplicity of methodology lends itself to replication in many states.

Limitations

- ❑ Data duplication—may not have successfully disaggregated records for some children.
- ❑ In and out of state migration:
 - Children moving out of state may have contact in another state not captured in this study (would yield artificially low study rate).
 - Children moving in state not included in this study (would yield artificially high study rate).
- ❑ Identification of Native American children—a challenge due to many who have mixed ancestry, and how they are identified in the Census as well as to the CWS.

Next Steps

- ❑ Examine disparities in achieving permanency during childhood for children experiencing foster care.
- ❑ Analyze impact of additional factors (e.g., SES) on lifetime disparities in system contact.

Questions?

http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare

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