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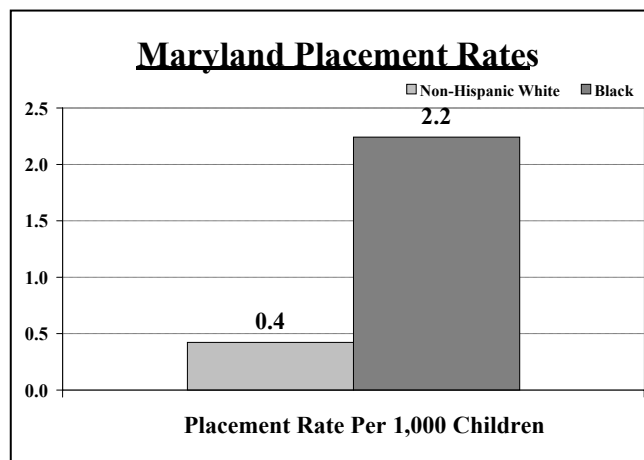
# **Huge Racial Disparities Found in Maryland Child Welfare**

*Foster Care Gap Exceeds National Average by More than 50 Percent*

## **Executive Summary**

African-American children in Maryland are in out-of-home placement at 5.3 times the rate of white children, more than 50 percent higher than the national gap. African-American children are being removed from their homes at 3.5 times the rate of white children. These disparities exist despite no evidence of any difference in actual maltreatment rates. Solutions include: Alternative Response; Cultural Competency; and Family Team Decision Making.

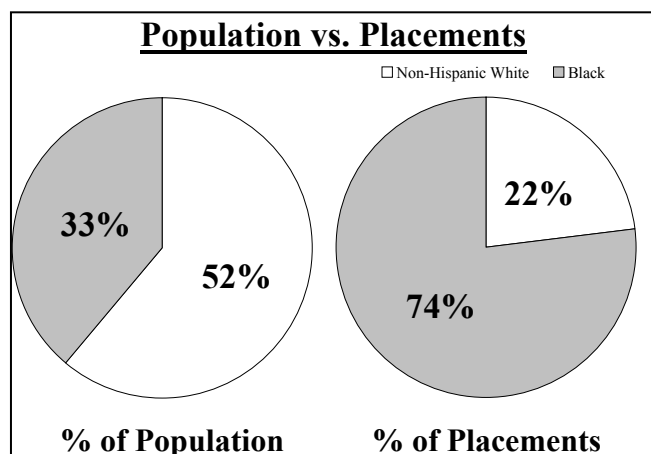
African-American children in Maryland are 5.3 times more likely than their white counterparts to be in foster care, as shown below.<sup>1</sup>



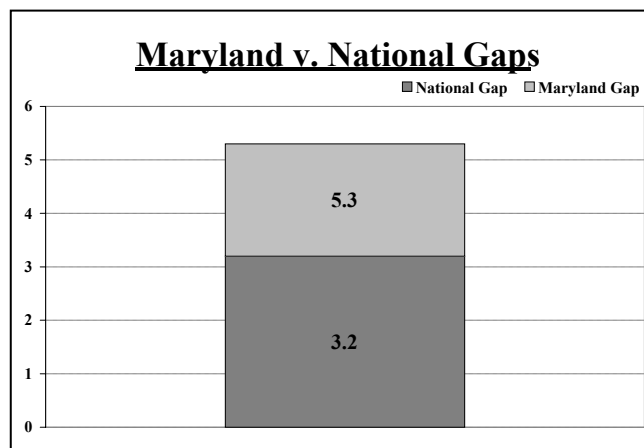
## **The Disparities**

### *Out-of-Home Placement*

African-American children in Maryland make up one third of the State's children, yet they are almost three-quarters of the children in out-of-home placement due to maltreatment, as reflected below.



This disparity exceeds the national disparity of 3.2 by more than 50 percent, as shown below.<sup>2</sup>



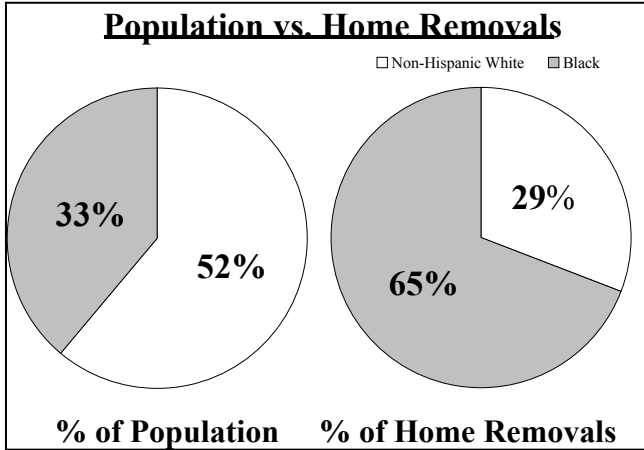
<sup>1</sup> Using data from Annie E. Casey Foundation; U.S. Census Bureau; Citizens' Review Board for Children.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Robert Hill, Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System, *Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality in Child Welfare* at p. 15 (Oct. 2006).

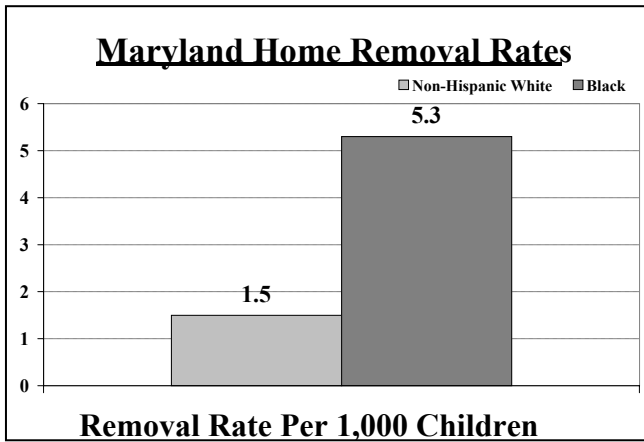


### Home Removals

Annually, African-American children account for almost two thirds of the children entering into the child welfare system.



African-American children in Maryland are 3.5 times more likely than their white counterparts to be removed, 5.3 vs. 1.5 per 1,000 children.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Using data from Annie E. Casey Foundation; U.S. Census Bureau; Citizens' Review Board for Children.

### Possible Explanations

There is no greater incidence of child abuse or neglect in African-American families. The Third National Incidence Study, which examined the incidence of child maltreatment in a nationally representative sample of 42 counties, did not find racial differences in actual child abuse or neglect.<sup>4</sup>

These findings suggest that the overrepresentation of African-American children in the child welfare system is not attributable to higher rates of maltreatment in this population but instead to factors related to the child welfare system itself. Indeed, a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office notes that, "at each decision point in the child welfare process the disproportionality of African-American children grows."<sup>5</sup> This means that the solutions lie within the child welfare system to ensure that, at each stage of the process, racial inequities are addressed.

### Recommendations

1. **Alternative Response:** Depending on the risk of harm, this allows workers to refer families to community services, suggest child welfare and family support resources or fast track extreme cases of maltreatment.
2. **Cultural Competency Training:** Workers are trained to be aware and respectful of different values, beliefs, traditions, customs and parenting styles and make adjustments accordingly.
3. **Family Team Decision Making:** This allows workers to help families form supportive teams of relatives and friends, thereby taking more complete advantage of the extended, informal networks in the African-American community

<sup>4</sup> See National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, *Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect* (1997).

<sup>5</sup> Government Accountability Office, *African-American Children in Foster Care* at p. 13 (2007).