



**ILLINOIS STATE  
UNIVERSITY**  
*Illinois' first public university*

# WELCOME!

## Equity-Centered Child Welfare:

## CASA's Role in Advancing Change

<sup>1</sup>  
2023 Illinois CASA Conference  
April 21, 2023

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# About Me...



SOUTH SIDE CHICAGOAN  
CENTRAL ILLINOIS RESIDENT



DCFS CAREER: CHILD WELFARE  
SPECIALIST; ADOPTION;  
URBANA SUPERVISOR



ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY  
SOCIAL WORK PROFESSOR  
CHIEF EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER

# ...Goals



Getting to Know  
You...



Examine role of  
culture, values, and  
assumptions



Barriers that  
influence CW  
decisions/outcomes



Numbers tell the  
story



CASA' s role in  
equity and change





# Inspirational Moment

Maya Angelou:  
“Just Do Right”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGsF40SKnz0>





## ***EQUITY CENTERED CHILD WELFARE***

A commitment to **restorative practices**, policies, programs, and decisions... that **affirm the humanity**, dignity, and resilient qualities of the children, families, and communities we serve...

Equity-centered CW leadership and advocacy requires us to examine and **eliminate biases, assumptions**, and institutional **barriers** that prevent marginalized and minoritized families and children from thriving and achieving safety, family permanency, and well-being.



## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

- Pick a partner
- Discuss one aspect of your identity/ background/culture that others may make assumptions about ...

*e.g., SES, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, education, where you grew up, race, age, disability...*

*(10 min...)*

# Numbers Tell a Story

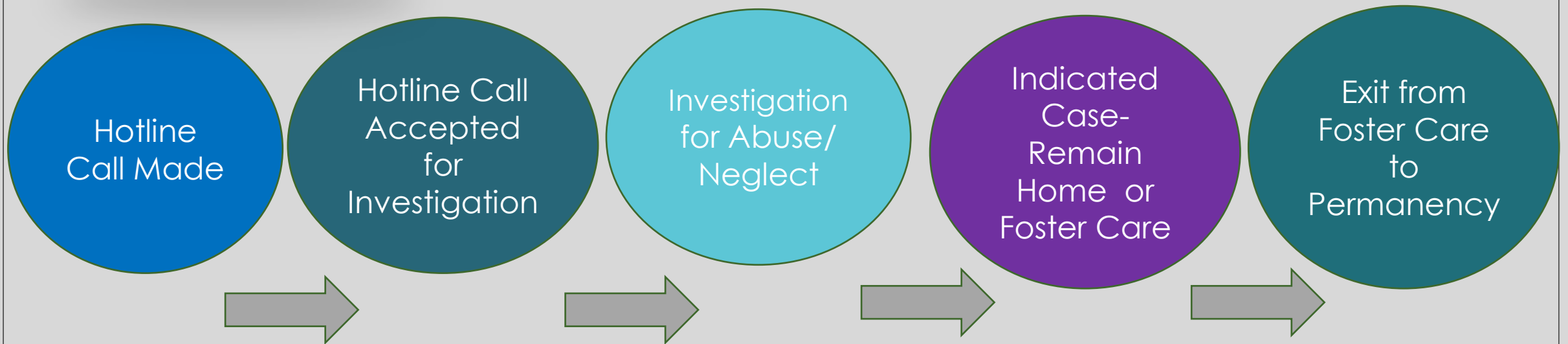


## **Illinois Permanency Enhancement Program:**

*Mobilizing Communities  
to Support Families and  
Promote Change*

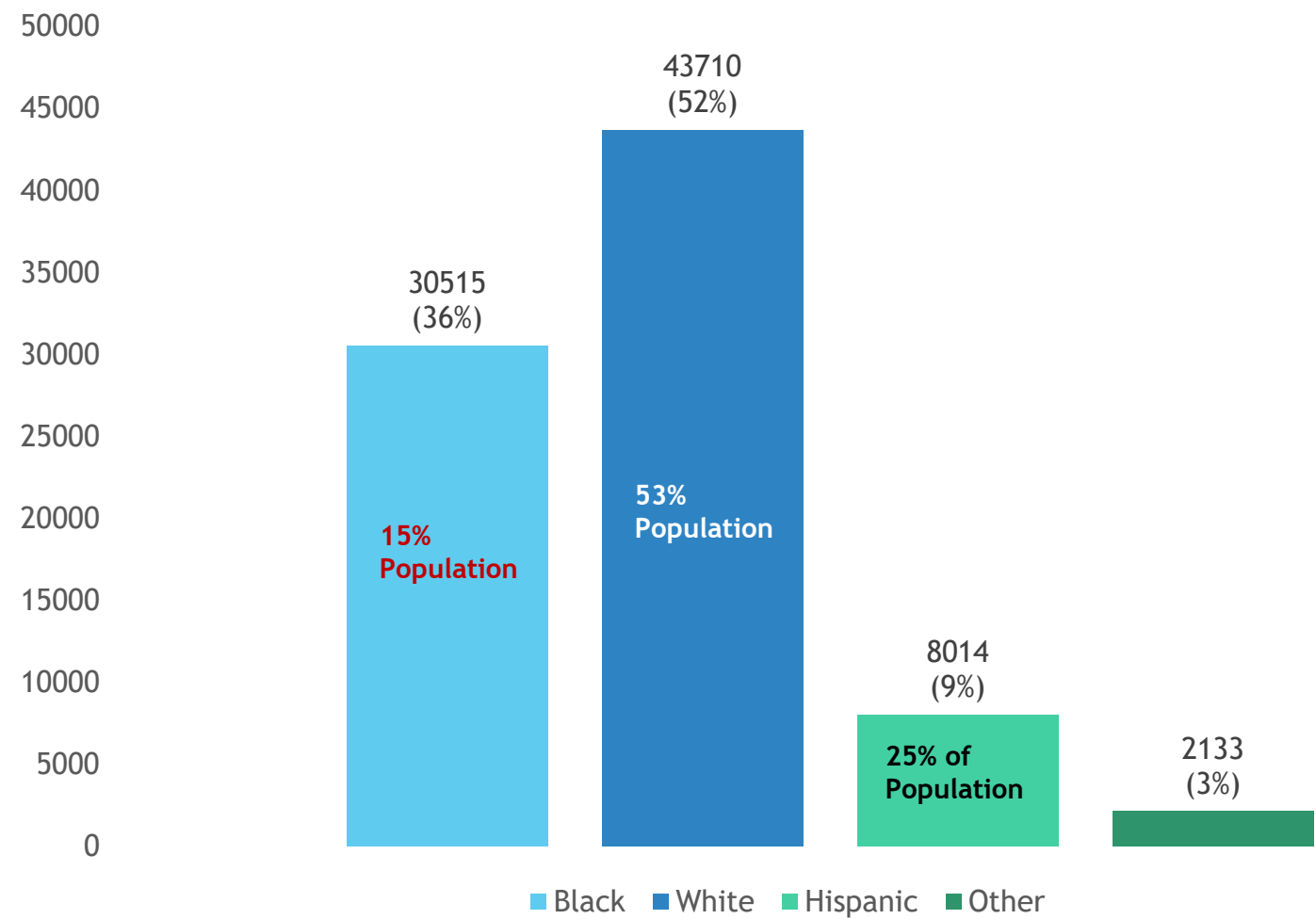


## Child Welfare Services Continuum of Decision Points

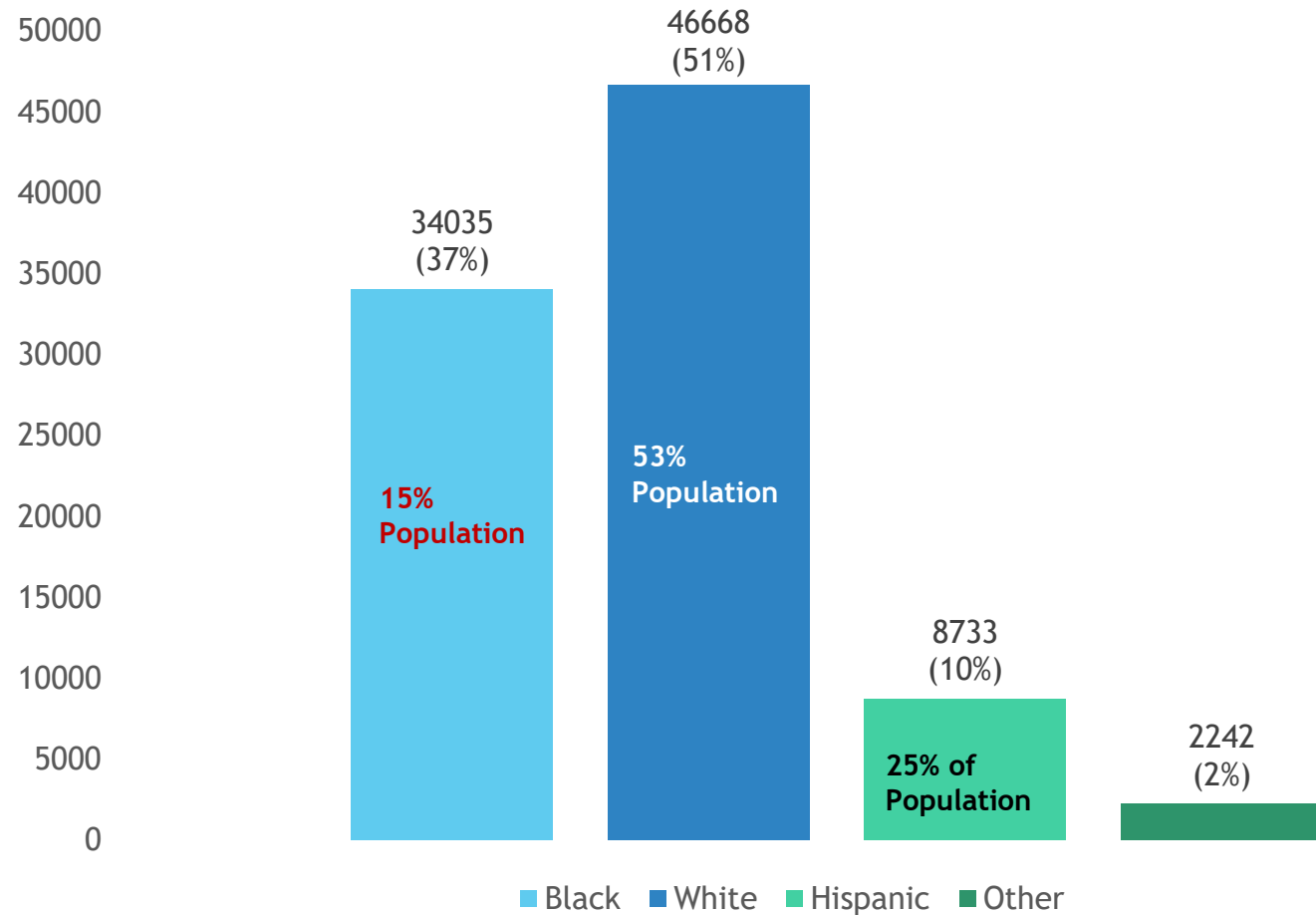




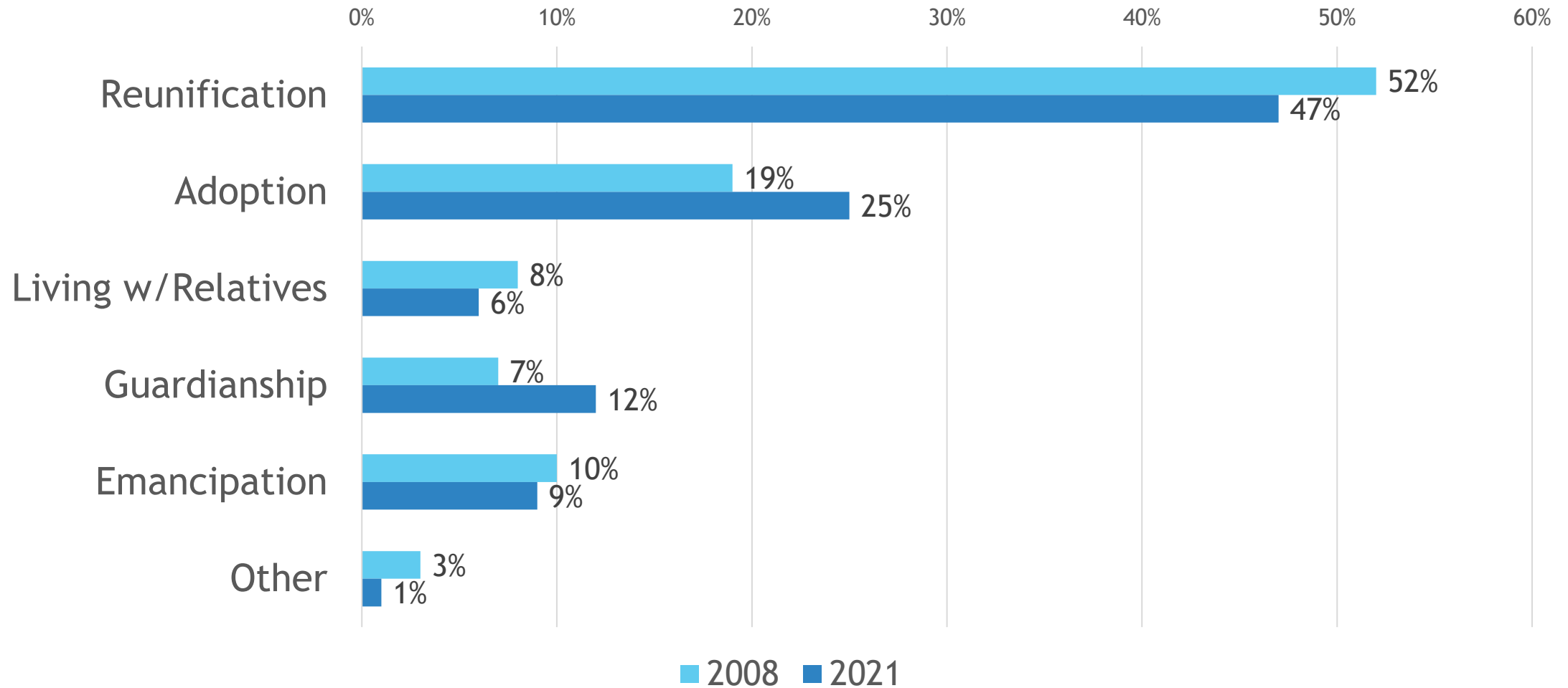
# 2022 Foster Care Entries by Race: Illinois



# Total Youth in Care by Race: ILLINOIS



# Children in Foster Care have a 50/50 Chance of Returning Home (National Outcomes)



# Foster Care, Child Trauma, and Educational Outcomes

## *Illinois Data*

2x more likely to be absent from school

50-75% change schools upon FC entry

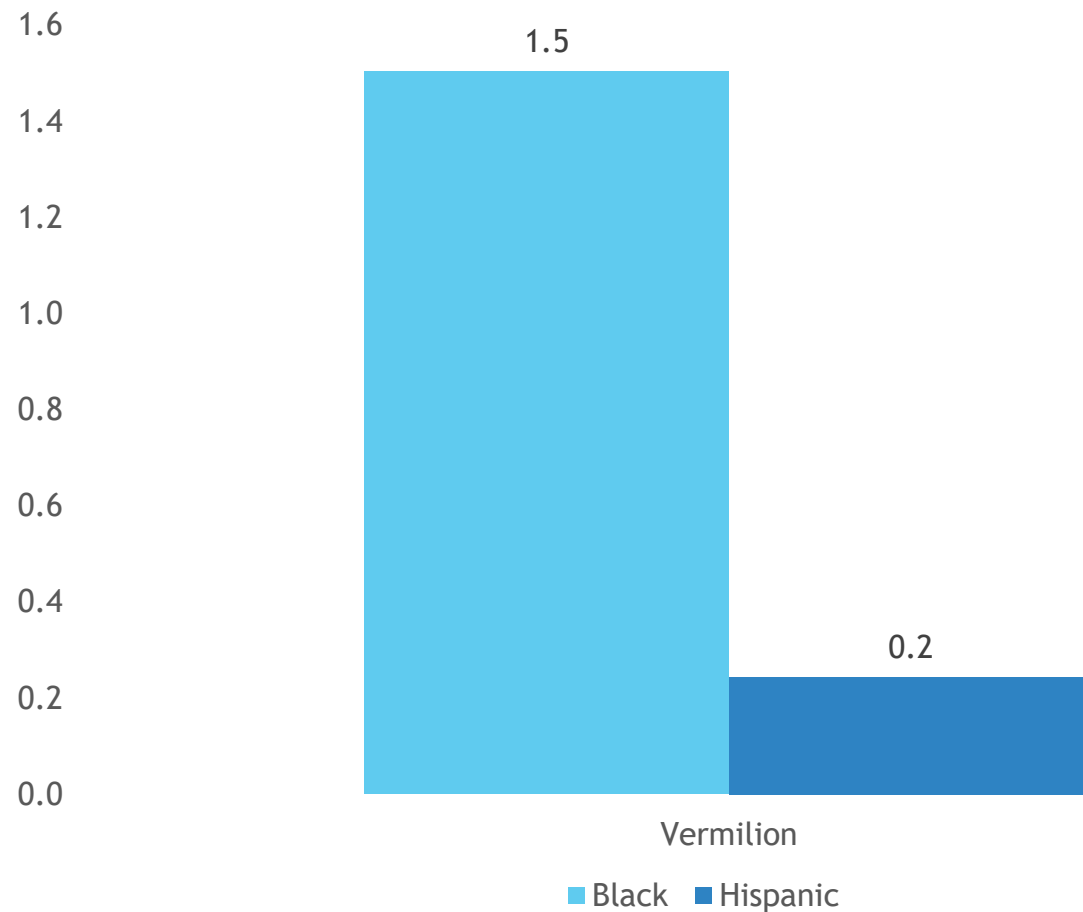
2.5-3.5x more likely to receive special education services

34% 17-18-year-olds: 5+ school changes

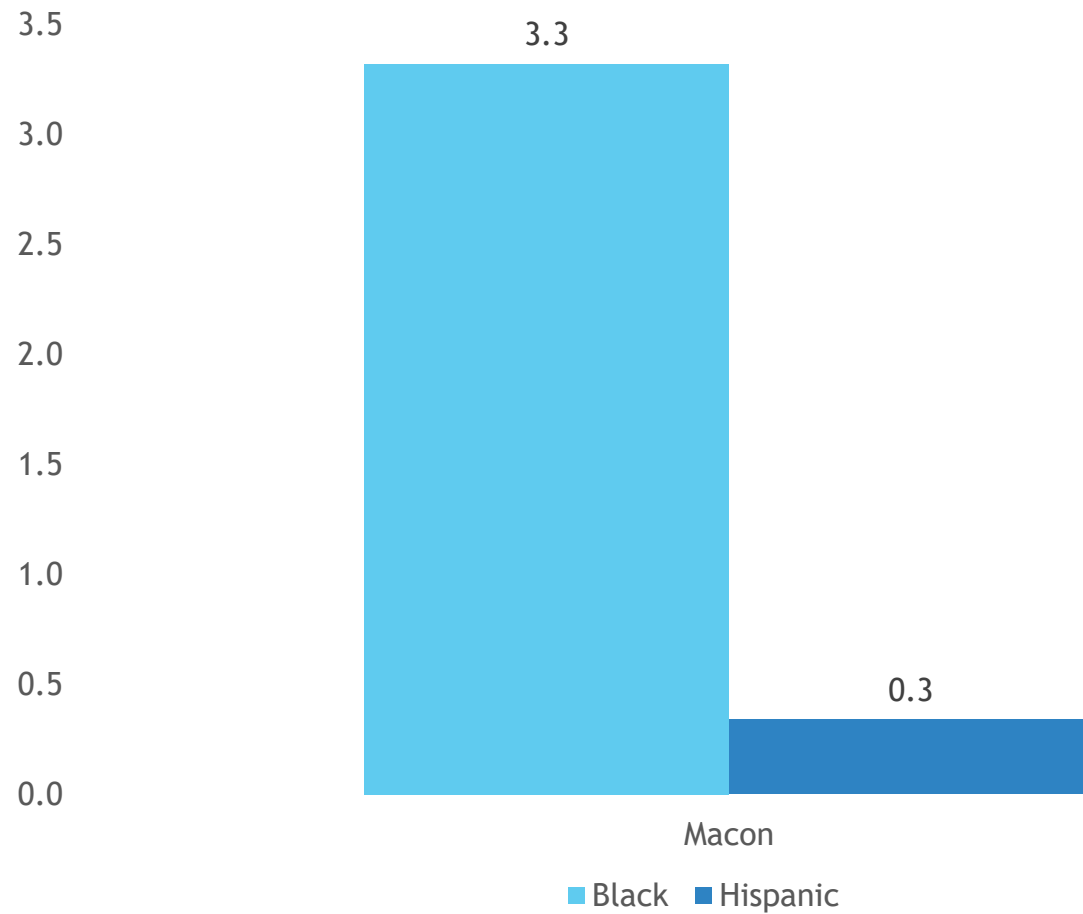


# Differences by Community: Racial Disparity Index...

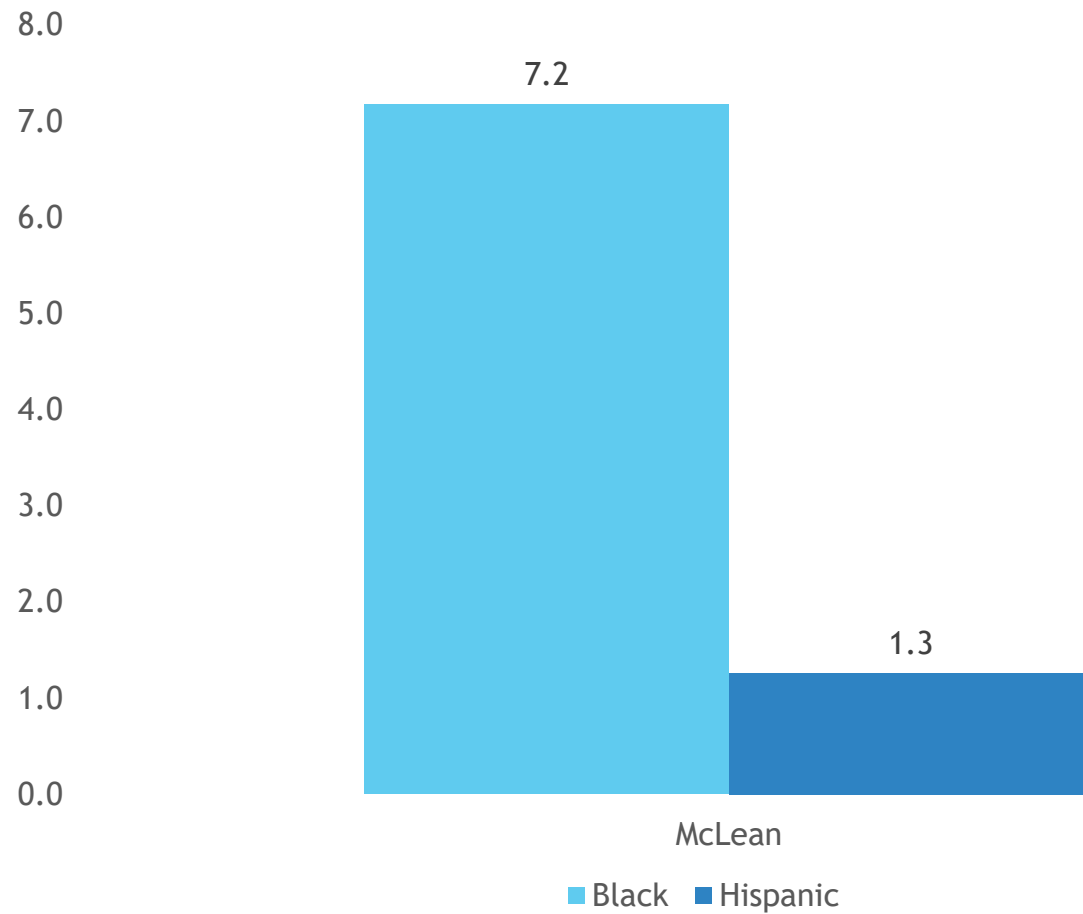
# Total Youth in Care Disparities: Vermillion County



# Total Youth in Care Disparities: Macon County



# Total Youth in Care Disparities: McLean County





# Potential Contributing Factors



## Agency

Policies

Practices

Staffing

Resources/training

Communication/collaboration



## Court related

Policies

Practices

Communication/collaboration

Resources/training

# Potential Contributing Factors



## Community

Shared ownership/responsibility

Knowledge about the needs of children/families

Need for more foster parents

Social/economic conditions

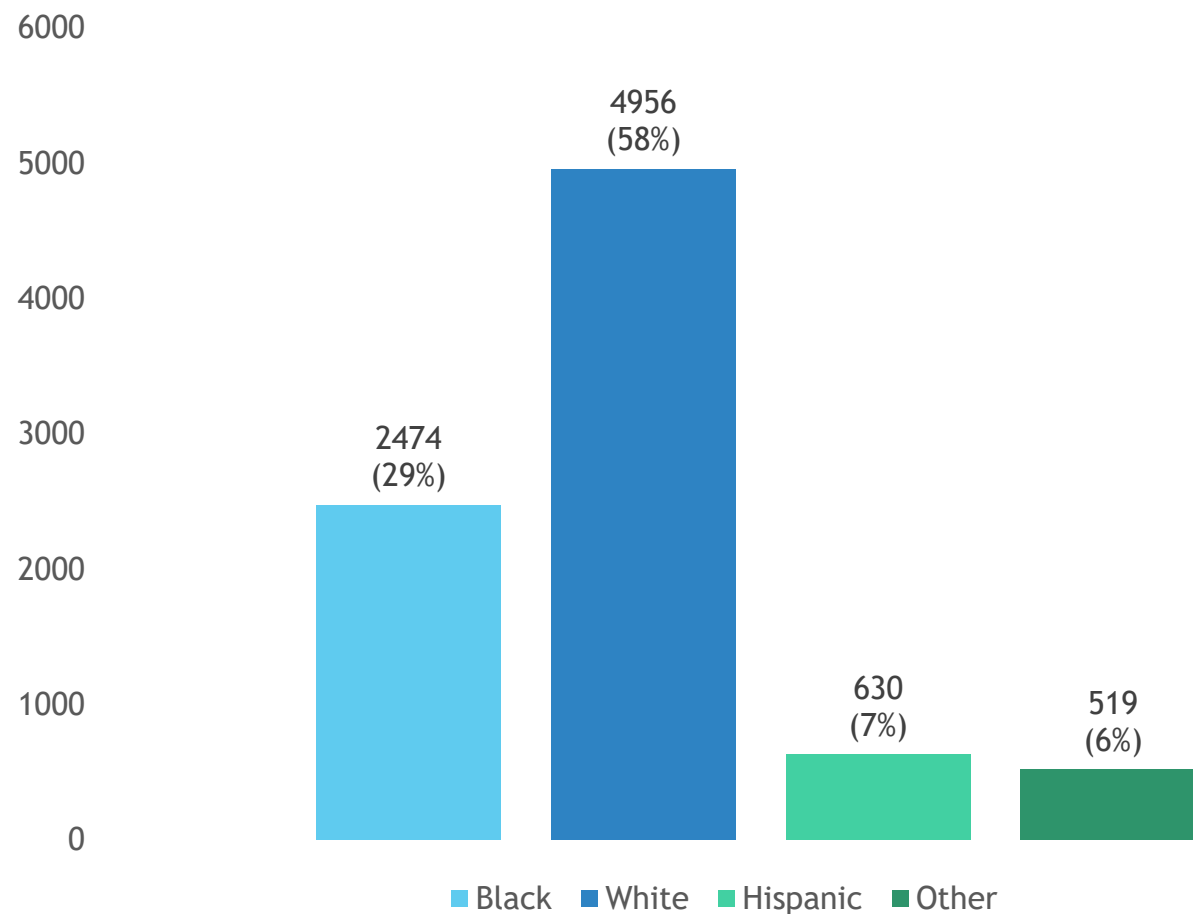


## Cross Systems

Communication/collaboration

Resources/training

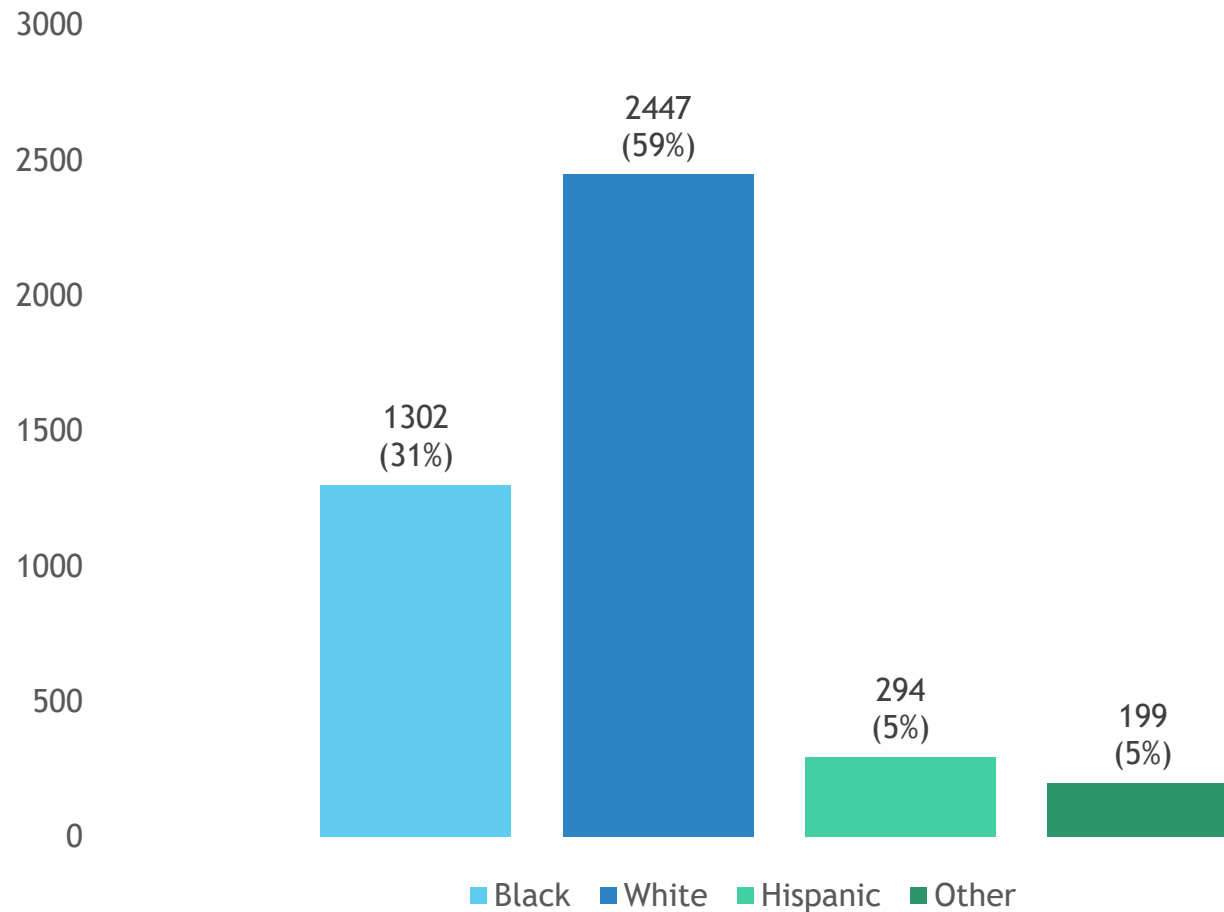
# Reunification Permanencies by Race: ILLINOIS



Source: Central Region DCFS | Mindshare Data FY 22

Note: Blank spaces indicate no data were available

# Adoption Permanencies by Race: ILLINOIS







# What Can CASAs DO?

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- ▶ Build community ties and relationships
- ▶ Know the community history
- ▶ Know community leaders (formal and informal)
- ▶ Initiate dialogue on race/racism

# What Can CASAs DO?

- ▶ Initiate dialogue on race/racism
- ▶ Promote economic and social empowerment
- ▶ Become Allies
- ▶ Start where you... are but don't stay there!

# Thank You!

