

Fall 2016

## Racial Disproportionality of Foster Care Outcomes in Omaha and Sarpy County

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## About the College of Public Affairs and Community Service

The College of Public Affairs and Community Service (CPACS) was created in 1973 to ensure that the university was responsive to the critical social needs of our community and state. The College was given the mission not only to provide educational programs of the highest caliber to prepare students for leadership in public service, but also to reach out to the community to help solve public problems.

The College has become a national leader among similar colleges, with nine programs ranked in the top 25 in the nation. Our faculty ranks are among the finest in their disciplines. Faculty, staff, and students are integral to the community and state because of our applied research, service learning, and community partnerships. We take our duty seriously to help address social needs and craft solutions to local, state, and national problems. For more information, visit our website: [cpacs.unomaha.edu](http://cpacs.unomaha.edu)

## CPACS Urban Research Awards

Part of the mission of the College of Public Affairs and Community Service (CPACS) is to conduct research, especially as it relates to concerns of our local and statewide constituencies. CPACS has always had an urban mission, and one way that mission is served is to perform applied research relevant to urban society in general, and the Omaha metropolitan area and other Nebraska urban communities in particular. Beginning in 2014, the CPACS Dean provided funding for projects with high relevance to current urban issues, with the potential to apply the findings to practice in Nebraska, Iowa and beyond.



# Racial Disproportionality of Foster Care Outcomes in Omaha and Sarpy County

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**Fall 2016**

Funding for this research was provided by a 2014 Urban Research Award from the  
College of Public Affairs and Community Service Dean's Office.





## SUMMARY

The intent of this grant, in conjunction with Policy Research & Innovation (PRI) was to examine whether African American and Native American children in urban settings spend longer times in foster care prior to achieving permanency (i.e. reunification or adoption) and, subsequently, whether they return into the system faster, either due to failed reunification or failed adoption.

Because of challenges in procuring the most recent data, the decision was made to use the most recent data available at that time to researchers and from which results could be published - the FFY 2013 foster care file from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS), housed in the National Data Archive for Child Abuse and Neglect at Cornell University. This analysis allowed for an analysis of the complete population of youth who spent any time in foster care in 2013 in the state of Nebraska; however, since the dates of entry and discharge are present in AFCARS, the data are not artificially censored due to the parameters of the federal fiscal year. AFCARS allows for highlighting counties in which their caseloads are over 1,000 children; in Nebraska, this means that Douglas and Lancaster Counties can be isolated for focused study.

Using Douglas County as a comparison group, we found in general that African American children achieved reunification on average 6 weeks later than White children and Native children. African American children also took longer time to achieve adoption, as did Native children (an expected result given the challenges to adopting Native children due to the Indian Child Welfare Act). We also found generally that Lancaster County is slower to permanency overall.

We also found that children in rural areas achieved permanency faster. This is particularly interesting given the lack of services generally available to families in rural Nebraska. This is worthy of further exploration. We intend to replicate the same analysis with this new data and then write at least one, if not two, journal articles for publication. The racial disproportionality results will be sent to Children and Youth Services Review, and the rural results to the Journal of Public Child Welfare. Some of these findings were presented in an oral presentation at the October 2015 Annual Program Meeting for the Council on Social Work Education.

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