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**Statewide News Release**

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**Forum to Address Racial Disproportionality and Disparities for Children of Color**  
*Public meeting will be at Louisville's Ali Center on Thursday*

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (Nov. 16, 2016) – Racial disproportionality and disparities for youth of color in the areas of child welfare, education and juvenile justice will be the topic of a community forum and panel discussion Thursday night, Nov. 17, and the public is invited to attend.

The free forum is sponsored by the Race Community and Child Welfare Initiative and several public agencies, including the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), and will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 17, at the Muhammad Ali Center, 120 North 6<sup>th</sup> St, Louisville.

DCBS Commissioner Adria Johnson said that the forum invites the community to be part of the state's approach to easing the over-representation of minority youth in the state's child welfare, education and juvenile justice systems.

"This discussion is another step in finding solutions to racial disparities for children and youth in our care," she said. "With so many groups working together, we are noting trends and making a lot of recommendations for change that can improve outcomes for youth in Kentucky."

Johnson, Administrative Office of the Courts Executive Officer Rachel Bingham and Jefferson County Public Schools Superintendent Donna Hargens will present data from their agencies and discuss efforts to address disproportionality in their systems. Youth and community panelists will discuss opportunities for community involvement. A call to action will be issued for community participation and cross-system collaboration to address the issue of equity in services and opportunities for all children.

In Jefferson County, racial disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children of color are seen across all public systems. Disparate outcomes include children of color being removed from their homes and entering out of home care at a rate one and a half times that of white children. Data shows that children of color are less likely to achieve permanency when exiting out of home care.

Also, children of color are more likely to be suspended from school and less likely to graduate from high school. Children of color are more likely to be committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice for offenses and more likely to be referred to criminal court as a youthful offender.



Other sponsoring partners of the forum include the Department for Juvenile Justice, the Center for Health Equity, the Department for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods, the University of Louisville and Spalding University.

The Ali Center is supporting this and other events during its “RACE: Are We So Different?” exhibit featured through January 2017. The mission of the Race Community and Child Welfare Initiative is to amplify the evidence of racial injustice to engage the community in equitable policies, practices and programs for children and families.

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*The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state’s human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services, the Department for Public Health, and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.*