Racial Disparities in Multnomah County

Ann Curry-Stevens
Associate Professor, School of Social Work

Portland State University
The Coalition’s mission is:

• To address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities

• To organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity
Research Findings

• Broad and deep disparities across 28 various systems and institutions, such as
  – Education... early, public school, higher education
  – Income, employment & unemployment
  – Justice... juvenile, adult, policing
  – Child welfare
  – Health & health insurance
  – Public sector employment & protected contracting
  – Housing

• Disparities mostly deteriorating across time

• Worse here than USA averages and than in King County (home to Seattle)
Population of Multnomah County

- White: 85.2%, 76.5%, 71.9%  
- People of Color: 14.8%, 23.5%, 28.1%
Across Oregon, the population of people of color is 21.5% yet 33% of Oregon’s public school students.
• Communities of color earn **half** the incomes of Whites, earning $16,636 per year, while White people earn $33,095 annually.
Child Poverty Rates, 2008, Local and National

- USA: 25.4%
- Multnomah County: 36.0%

Comparing White children (10.8% USA) and Children of Color (25.4% USA) in Multnomah County.
Size of community that has not completed high school, Multnomah County, 2008

- White: 6.3%
- Students of Color: 24.4%
- Latino: 43.7%
- African American: 14.8%
- Native American: 38.2%
- Asian: 21.9%
- Slavic: 15.7%
- African Immigrant & Refugee: 12.1%
Graduation Rate, Multnomah County
(% of g.9 students who graduate on time with regular diplomas)

And across Oregon, we have fourth worst rate in the nation.
Recommendations

• **Eliminate disparities**
  – At all levels of government and academic institutions
  – Clear benchmarks, timelines and measurable outcomes
    • Developed in real partnership with communities of color
    • Ending tokenistic involvement of communities of color
  – Accountability structures... internal & external
  – Entrenched in policy (not in goodwill)
  – To be made a public priority

• **Visibility of disparities**
  – Accurate & transparent identification of people of color, disparities & inequities
  – Standardized across the region

• **Build same requirements into contracts, grants & subcontracts**

• **Name racism and white privilege**
Thank you!

• Ann Curry-Stevens, Principle Investigator
  – currya@pdx.edu
  – 503-725-5315

• The full Coalition reports can be downloaded for free from:
  – www.coalitioncommunitiescolor.org