

**Youth Risk Part II**  
*Children in Need*  
**Massachusetts Family Impact Seminar**  
Sponsor: Clark University Mosakowski Institute for Public Enterprise  
Massachusetts State House  
March 30, 2013

“Transracial Foster Care and Adoption: Issues and Realities”  
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**Adoption at the Fault line**

1. The older children are, the more difficult it is to move them from foster care to adoption.
2. There is a disproportion number of children who are Black and Hispanic in the foster care/adoption system.
3. Foster care and adoption operate in the context of decades-long controversy about the importance of racial matching.

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**Focus for the presentation**

- I. Demographic and Process Perspectives on Foster Care and Adoption
- II. Transracial Adoption—Different Viewpoints on Racial Matching
- III. Adoption and Changing U.S. Society—a Massachusetts Perspective

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## I. Demographics of Adoption:

Who are the children waiting for homes and families?

- 2008 Adoptions: Massachusetts Court data
  - 2,272 children were adopted
  - 1/3 of the adoptions were through the public agency system
- 2011 profile: MA Dept of Health and Human Services
  - Over 7,000 children under 18 years were in the adoption placement system
    - ❖ 5,700 in foster care
    - ❖ Adoption set as a goal for 1/3 of these children (32%/ 2,368)

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- 2011 median age for MA children waiting for placement
  - White = 11.1
  - Black = 12.7
  - Hispanic = 11.7
  - Native Am = 4.5

Note: data not available for children of Asian ancestry

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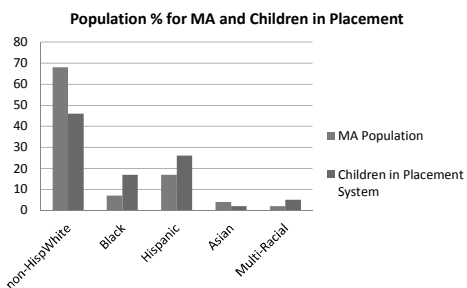
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## Race and Hispanic Origin of Children Waiting for Adoption: FY 2012




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### Race and Ethnicity of Children Waiting for Adoption: FY 2012

- ❖ Black children are *overrepresented* in the adoption system.
  - 17% of children in placement system v. 7% of MA population
  
- ❖ Latino and Latina children are *overrepresented* in the adoption system.
  - 26% of children in placement system v. 17% of MA population
  
- ❖ Non-Hispanic White children are *underrepresented* in the adoption system.
  - 46% of children in placement system v. 68% of MA population

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### Implications for Race as a Factor in Adoption: Enter the Controversy

All things being equal (but they likely are not):

- ▶ **Children in Massachusetts who are in the public agency system and waiting for adoption will not in all cases be placed in a home with parents of the same race.**

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### Selected Standards for Approval as Foster/pre-Adoptive Families & Homes

Such things as:

- Background record check for everyone 14 years and older in household
- Physical standards check of home
- Maximum of 6 children in the home at any time
- Adoptive parent(s) must be able to support the child on current income
- Firearms in home must be licensed, trigger-locked and stored without ammunition in a locked area

Source: Official Website of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), 2013. <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/family-services/adoption/dss-adoption-faqs.html>

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## II. Transracial Adoption

### THE LAW

1. Federal Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994
2. Interethnic Adoption Provisions of 1996 (IEP)

### In a nutshell...

- prohibits delay or denial of child's placement on the basis of race, color, or national origin
- requires states to make diligent efforts to recruit a diverse population of foster and adoptive parents

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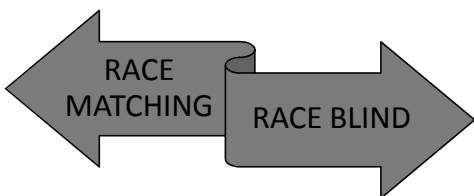
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## Different Viewpoints on *Racial Matching*



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## Race-Matching Pole

- Position of the *Association of Black Social Workers*
  - Oppose adoption of Black children by White adoptive parents
  - Argue that White parents cannot adequately prepare Black children to deal with racism in society
  - Recommendations in 2003 statement:
    1. Repeal laws (MEPA and IEP) that bar race as a factor
    2. Mandate community boards to monitor child welfare agencies
    3. Mandate "culturally competent services" in staffing, policy, and procedures
    4. Enhance recruitment of adoptive parents of African ancestry

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### Race-Blind Pole

- Legal standing
- At its extreme, provides little specific racial training for prospective White adoptive parents of children of color.
- Embraces the idea that current society is "post-racial."

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### Balancing with Reality

- Children need stable, loving homes.
- Efforts to recruit more adoptive parents of color and to examine processes that may be "race-insensitive" should be standard practice.
- Whites who adopt children of color need comprehensive "race-sensitive" training to understand white privilege and to learn vigilance against racism and racial attitudes and behavior.

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### III. Changing U.S. Society: Massachusetts Perspective

- Massachusetts is diverse, but less so than the U.S. overall.
- Society is becoming more multi-racial and racially mixed.
- Racial-matching in dating, marriage, and families is evolving through more population mix.

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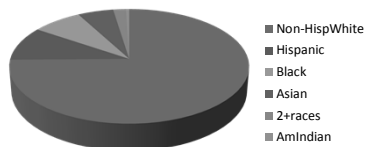
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## Diverse and Changing Population

2011 MA Population



Source: U. Bureau of the Census. *Quick Facts*.  
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25000.html>  
Note: Hispanics include those of any race

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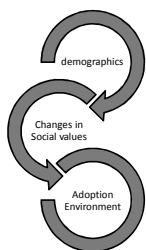
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## Evolving Adoption Environment



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## Children first

***"Children in foster care come to adoption with many risk factors that pose challenges for healthy development. For these children, research points to the importance of adoptive placements with families who can address their individual issues and maximize their opportunity to develop to their fullest potential."***

—E.B. Donaldson Adoption Institute  
*Finding Families for African American Children*

### PRIORITIES

1. Vigorously address any racial barriers for prospective adoptive parents.
2. Provide both pre- and post-adoption cultural competence programs for White parents of children of color.

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