In this profile, we examine the systems that directly impact the lifecourse of Native youth in Oklahoma—systems that displace, control, and/or attempt to correct a social ill. Below, existing data reflecting the experiences of Native youth in child welfare, juvenile justice, and school correctional systems are shared.

To determine their degree of system involvement, statewide population data for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth under age 18 were retrieved from the 2010 Census. If Native youth are 10% of the under 18 population in a state, then we would expect them to represent approximately 10% of those youth involved in juvenile justice and foster care systems. Where the percentages are greater or smaller, we observe disproportionality.

**Child Welfare Systems**

The child welfare system *profoundly* touches the lives of Native youth at disproportionate levels on a national level. However, in New Mexico, Native youth are *underrepresented*, making up 7% of all youth currently in care. Among those Native foster youth, 24% were adopted, and an impressive rate of 47% were reunified with their families. (2)

In 2010, Native youth comprised 3% of the total state population and 11% of the population under age 18. (1)

Native youth, despite being 10.8% of the population under age 18 in Oklahoma, were *underrepresented* in the child welfare system. In fact, they were 40% less likely to be system involved. (3) Black youth were the only group facing disproportionately higher rates of system involvement. A stark contrast can be drawn with Montana, where the population sizes of Native youth are similar (9% v. 11%), but the outcomes dramatically different, as Montana Native youth make up 35% of foster children. (4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Disproportionality Index</th>
<th>Entries</th>
<th>In care</th>
<th>Exits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black (a)</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White (b)</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino (c)</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native (e)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCJFCI, 2014.
**Juvenile Justice Systems**

In Oklahoma, Native juvenile offending in 2013 was roughly proportionate to what we would expect given their representation in the state youth population, at 12% in 2013. (5) The top three offending categories were property crimes, technical violations, and person crimes—which there were zero status offenses. (6)

Across offenses, 57% of all Native juvenile offenders were committed to facilities as wards of the state, while 54% of non-Natives were committed. (7) This means there is almost zero disparity in commitment rates between Native and non-Native juvenile offenders. However, when we analyzed the courts’ rulings for the same crimes, some concerning findings emerged. For example, Native juvenile offenders were over 2 times more likely to be committed for drug offenses than their non-Native counterparts (100% vs. 45%). (8) These data highlight the need to address both disproportionate rates of offending among Native youth—to get at the root causes of delinquent behaviors—as well as the disparate treatment of Native youth once they have entered the juvenile justice system.

**School Disciplinary Systems**

While juvenile justice and child welfare systems were rather apparent choices for a profile on system involvement, school discipline has increasingly become a site or a system for funneling youth—particularly students of color, with disabilities, and special learning needs—into the hands of law enforcement through what has been referred to as the “school-to-prison pipeline.” This pipeline is enabled through out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. These systems of punishment remove youth from learning contexts and increase the likelihood that they will fall behind and/or drop out.

The out-of-school suspension rate in Oklahoma is lower than what we would expect given the percent of Native youth in school (13% vs. 16%). (9) When we look to the suspension of Native students with disabilities, the rates are equal for Native girls and boys. (10) Last but not least, the expulsion rates of Native students are, once more, than what is proportionate (13% v. 16%). (11) These school disciplinary data reveal rather positive trends—but require further investigation regarding the higher rate of suspensions for girls with disabilities.

**References**

(6) Ibid.
(7) Ibid.
(8) Ibid.
(9) Ibid.
(10) Ibid.