

AAAC Newsletter

African American Advisory Council • Spring 2015



EDUCATION MATTERS

*“African American Foster Youth
on the Path to Academic Achievement,
Family Permanency
and Lifetime Well-Being.”*

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From the Chairman



On behalf of the African American Advisory Council (AAAC) and Illinois State University (ISU), I would like to express our sincere appreciation



Chairman Michael D. Burns

for everyone that attended the Council's 22nd Annual Institute in partnership with ISU. This was the second consecutive year that the Council partnered with ISU and we continue to appreciate your attendance and participation at this annual conference. It is because of conference participants, supports by ISU, Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University Ed-

wardsville (SIUE), University of Illinois, DCFS Training staff and Brooke Taylor, DCFS Office of Communication, Chicago Chapter Association of Black Social Workers, workshop presenters, vendors, videographer, Chris Hamb, panelist of former youth in care and others that this event was a success. We appreciate previous Acting Director Bobbie Gregg and ISU President Larry H. Dietz for their support and also taking the time to attend and address the audience. Keynote speaker Dr. Steve Perry's message was absolutely outstanding and well received by participants. Videos of Dr. Perry's speech, the panel of former youth and University professors along with the social media workshop presented by DCFS Trainer, Donald Adams can be seen on the Illinois Permanency Enhancement website at: <http://permanencyenhancementproject.org/>

I want to acknowledge the collaborative planning committee between the Council and ISU. It has been great working with Dr. Doris Houston and Dr. Diane Zosky of ISU in pulling together much needed resources for a successful conference. I also want to recognize committee co-chairs Robin Albritton and Tracy Marshall for all of their work along with much support from Angela Hassell, Millie Donelson and the conference planning mentor, Diane Cottrell.

The theme for the conference was: "Education Matters: African American Foster Youth on the Path to Achievement, Family Permanency and Lifetime Well-Being." There were outcomes from this selected theme as ISU and SIUE

have enhanced their efforts to assist youth in care that are currently attending their universities. During the summer, Dr. Doris Houston led efforts for ISU to have a reception that was well attended by youth and faculty of the University. The purpose was to establish an ongoing relationship with the college students in order to assist them with any challenges they may have to being successful students. Research has shown that youth involved in child welfare often times have difficulties that may be attributed to a lack of support or awareness of available supports. There were topics discussed at the reception that has laid a foundation to prevent unnecessary struggles by students. The topics included: Ingredients for Academic Success and Leadership, Success Always Leaves Footprints, University College Overview of Services and Summer Internships/NIU Education Access Projects for DCFS. There was a student survey and a discussion on the next steps. Gwendolyn Amber and Lynda Swan-McClendon gave the students gift bags, courtesy of Operation PUSH.

Dr. Venessa Brown, Assistant Chancellor at SIUE, is very much interested in providing support to youth in care and has established a link for DCFS involved youth on the University's Office of Retention and Student Success website. Dr. Brown also would like to establish a support group for the students.

We ask that if you have students attending these universities, please make them aware of the above mentioned supports.

Speaking of youth and giving back by former youth in care, I had the opportunity to take two young people to an enjoyable private event on August 21, 2014. William Nero, CEO of the D'Nero Group, produced the return home event for Nelsan Ellis, award winning actor and star of HBO's hit show, *True Blood*. It was a celebration recognizing Ellis for landing the cover of September's issue of *Ebony Magazine* with cast mates from the James Brown biopic movie, *Get On Up*. Mr. Ellis played the role of Bobby Byrd in the movie. "I'm extremely honored to be on the cover of a magazine I grew up reading." – Nelsan Ellis. According to Nero, Ellis had wanted to celebrate with his family and friends in Chicago for a long time. He had experienced his own hardships as a child growing up in the Illinois child welfare system and is very much interested in giving back to the community and inspiring youth currently in substitute care.

DCFS Trainer, Verleaner Lane, was contacted by her friend and affiliate of the D'Nero Group, Ms. Lisa Scott, to inquire about having two youth attend and spend some private time with Mr. Ellis. Ms. Lane referred Ms. Scott to me and I was able to identify a couple of youth with assistance from Ms.

From the Chairman *(continued)*



(left to right) Chanel Wiley, Nelsan Ellis and Elijah Lee

Audrena Spence, Executive Director of Metropolitan Family Services, Calumet Center. Ms. Spence and I took Chanel Wiley and Elijah Lee to meet Mr. Ellis. Chanel attends Harold Washington College and Elijah is a senior in high school. It was truly a pleasure meeting both of these young people. Ms. Spence and I were extremely proud to spend an evening with them as they had much fun. They were not only able to have a private meeting with Mr. Ellis, but also

had the opportunity to be introduced to the audience as his special guest.

In my many years of experience in child welfare, I have had numerous opportunities to witness youth in care meeting celebrities and each time it warmed my heart to see the smile on their faces. Celebrities like Nelsan Ellis and William Nero recognize the significance of reaching out to young people involved in child welfare and for that reason they are able to provide them with inspiration that can last a lifetime. Mr. Ellis serves as an example of how one can overcome hardships and go “from a ward of the state” to one of Hollywood’s most incredible break out stars.

We wish much success to Chanel and Elijah as they continue their educational pathway for a bright future.

Peace,

Michael D. Burns

Michael Burns,
Chairman AAAC

Reflections from the AAAC Institute Co-Chairs Robin Albritton and Tracy Marshall

As we reflect on this year’s conference, whose theme was “Education Matters: African American Foster Youth on the Path to Academic Achievement, Family Permanency and Lifetime Well-Being” it makes us think about the famous quote by Robert F. Kennedy, “The Torch Has Been Passed to a New Generation.” This was evident throughout the conference by way of the workshops, keynote speaker’s address, as well as the participants’ comments.

As always, we would like to thank Illinois State for hosting the event for the second year. Thanks to the entire African American Advisory Council (AAAC) for all of their hard work and dedication to making the conference a success. A special thanks to our Chairman, Michael D. Burns, for continuing with the mission of the AAAC despite the plethora of challenges that the council have been



Tracy Marshall and Robin Albritton

up against.

One of the most amazing parts of the conference was the Mega Workshop which entailed a panel discussion with former and current wards. The youth discussed the insurmountable obstacles they were faced with in their life. They testified that these obstacles were overcome by academic perseverance, personal achievements, as well as significant people that made

a positive impact. These youth are well-accomplished in their own right.

The panelist provided insight on how direct line staff can continue to be great change agents in the lives of the youth. The stage was graced by our future leaders, doctors, CEO’s, attorneys, best-selling authors, philanthropists and etc. These individuals are making the necessary changes to embark on the journey of living their “best life.” We were so grateful to hear the stories of our youth as it instilled hope and a renewed focus on what’s of utmost importance. They are truly making a difference in our community and the world.

We can say with no reservations that, “The Torch Has Been Passed to a New Generation!”

Sincere Gratitude,
*Chairs for the Conference
Planning Committee*

22nd Annual AAAC Institute Workshop Comments from Dr. Beverly D. Washington



Dr. Beverly Washington

Education Matters

Dr. Steve Perry, keynote speaker at the 22nd Annual African American Advisory Council Institute, delivered a phenomenal speech reiterating the significance of education for all. Dr. Perry insisted the primary goal of education should not consist of

saving only one or two children. The aforementioned would indicate an unsuccessful rate of improvement. Instead, the focus should center on saving the masses. Hence, the paradigm needs to shift drastically.

How should we shift the paradigm? Dr. Perry suggested the Department and its constituents utilize an introspective approach. The aforementioned approach would employ self-examination in an attempt to begin healing one's own wounds—first. Self-analysis is therefore needed to perform at one's optimal best. Until the suggested method has had an opportunity to manifest, very little change will occur.

Human Trafficking

"You could never save these girls from me because I'm what they're looking for" (Roberts, 2014). Kisha Roberts, one of the speakers for the "Human Trafficking" presentation reiterated the above mentioned statement which originated from a pimp. This individual conceptualized his inferior subjects' desperate acquisition of love and acceptance would eventually render themselves to him because of the apparition he has been able to illustrate. As a result of this illusion, human trafficking has become a \$32

billion dollar business. On an average, the victims are usually around the age of 14. Across the globe, 27 million girls have been victimized. Reportedly, 32% of these victims reside in Chicago. Roberts (2014) also indicated 40% of the human trafficking victims are black.

The Department has addressed human trafficking through the implementation of policy and procedures (Sloan, 2014). DCFS staff and its constituents have received numerous trainings associated with this subject matter. Concurrently, a tracking method has been established to assess demographic responses and services toward this population. Legislatively, the youth are no longer considered "juvenile prostitutes," but victims of human trafficking due to no fault of their own.

Roundtable Discussion

This informal discussion included 7 youth (some former DCFS youth) and 2 adults from higher education reiterating imperative tools needed to succeed in life. The orators provided statements consisting of the following depicted stumbling blocks: "Being honest and [telling] children the truth." "It's hard being thrown into [different] foster homes." "Your 'A' in high school is really a 'D' in college." "DCFS never prepared me [for this]." "Case workers are more than ink and a pen." "I struggled with learning to think...I was taught to work and not think." Dr. Brown (2014) posed a question to all: "How do we utilize the stories of those that have already paid the price." Although the aforementioned was presented as a rhetorical statement, the answer is yet to be determined.

–Dr. Beverly D. Washington

22nd Annual AAAC Institute Workshop Comments from Facilitators

Workshop 1: State of Illinois Hiring Process: Important Items to Know

Presenters: Geny Chiaradonna / Facilitators: Keith Smith and Dana Drummer

The presenter was deft in “demystifying” the inter-DCFS hiring process. Working with children and families is often more than just a job as it takes a unique individual to deal with the daily demands of affecting people lives. One facilitator offered that “this particular workshop should be an on-going training at all conferences.”



parents, caregivers and educators understand the importance of active play. The guide also contains fun ideas for boosting daily physical activity, ways to advocate for active play in the community, and resources on children’s health and wellness.

Workshop 2: Career Exploration! Who Cares?

Presenter: Yasmina Sefiane / Facilitators: Bremen Campbell and Carole Freeman

This workshop asked that question, “Why is career exploration so important?” The presenter related to the conference theme by identifying and exploring potentially satisfying occupations and developing effective strategies for children to realize goals. The presenter stated that goals start with a dream. We must believe in a child’s dreams and start teaching the pursuit of those dreams early. Pre-school promotes social and emotional development with language and cognitive skills.

Workshop 4: Providing Supports and Resources to Caregivers that Enhance Education Achievement.

Presenters: Diane Gibson and Erin Wiese-Reichert / Facilitators: Cheryl Dampeer and Marilyn Giles

The presenters are employed with the Chicago Children’s Museum and discussed Early Childhood Learning through play. They described the various resources and activities that children become involved in at the museum. They stressed that play is necessary and important as a learning tool for children. It gives workers another option to promote an alternative way to learn and teaches parents to develop relationships with their children through fun activities, play, and laughter. As part of Chicago Children’s Museum’s (CCM’s) Made to Move initiative, CCM educators have created Made to Move: An Active Play Resource Guide to help

Workshop 5: Understanding How Social Media Websites Can Impact Youth’s Education

Presenter: Donald Adams / Facilitators Jackie Johnson and Rhonda Laye

This workshop focused on understanding social media with our youth and the important role it can lay in education. The speaker stressed that we are living in a social media era. Social media is being used in schools to educate our children. Students are using social media for research projects, reports, data, term papers, etc. Adults were encouraged to embrace this new technology to assist with their daily lives. DCFS may be developing a training to assist staff with understanding more about social media and its’ many applications.

Workshop 6: Human Trafficking: Do You Know the Signs?

Presenters: Stacy Sloan and Kisha Roberts / Facilitators: Fayette Coleman-Gill and Relunda Washington

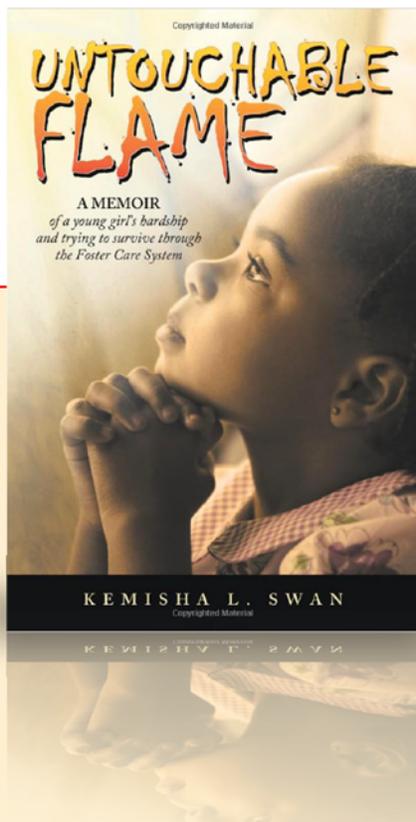
The workshop was informative and focused on identifying members of the community who recruit victims – breaking myths and what the players actually look like. It’s goal was to help staff become better aware of how to assist clients whom may be involved. Surprising facts were shared such as the average age of victims are 13 years of age and youth who are not actively involved in an educational program are more likely to become victims of human trafficking.

Remembering the 22nd Annual AAAC Institute



“Untouched Flame”

Supporting One of Our Own Young Authors



In continuation of efforts to gather input from former youth in care, the Council has been supporting Kemesha L. Swan, Author of “Untouchable Flame.” This courageous young lady has written a book regarding her experiences growing up in the foster care system. Kemesha’s desire is that her story will benefit youth currently in the system and also child welfare professionals in their work with youth and caregivers. The feedback from many readers of this book has been tremendously positive. In order to support Ms. Swan, the Triple A-C formed collaboration with DCFS, Chicago State University (CSU) and Chicago Association of Black Social Workers (CABSU) to host a book signing event for the Author. The event was held at CSU and was well attended. The interactive conversation between Ms. Swan and the audience was very informative and inspirational. Dr. Mikal Rasheed, Chairman Department

of Social Work, and Lolita Godbold, Director of Field Instruction for the Department of Social Work at CSU were instrumental in getting social work students from the University to attend. Dr. Kimberly

Mann, Associate Professor, CSU Department of Social Work helped to develop the collaborative effort and also served as the Mistress of Ceremony. We appreciate Ms. Cathy Gilham for representing the CABSU on the planning committee. We thank DCFS Office of Communication, Deputy Director Karen Hawkins, Humberto Tijerina, Jennifer Florent and Veronica Resa for developing posters and promoting the event.

We certainly appreciate everyone that was in attendance and staff that have supported Ms. Swan. We encourage everyone to support Ms. Swan and to take advantage of what her story has to offer as we continue to learn improved ways of achieving permanency for youth in care.

Someone You Should Know: Reginald J. King

By James Robinson



For this issue of the AAAC newsletter Reginald J. King has been selected as one of the staff to be highlighted. I volunteered to interview Reggie as he and I were college classmates back at SIU, Carbondale back in the 70's. Reggie has been married to Tracy King for the past 4 years, they have four children. One of their children, Kelly King, is also employed at DCFS as a Child Protection Investigator.

Reggie began his career in social service in 1985 as a Job Coach for the Chicago Association for Retarded Citizens where he trained people who were developmentally delayed with job readiness skills. He worked for the Association for three years.

After graduating from Chicago State University and receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice in May of 1988, he began his professional career as a Case Manager for Sullivan House working with at risk youth and as a teacher in their alternative high school. While working towards his Master's Degree in Criminal Justice and receiving it in December 1992 from

Chicago State University, he completed an Internship for the Salvation Army's Halfway House for Adult Offenders on Parole from 1991-1992. From 1996-2007, he worked swing shift for Hartgrove Hospital as a Mental Health Counselor. While working towards his Master's Degree in Social Work, from 2006-2007, he completed another Internship as a Hospice Social Worker for Joliet Hospice. Reginald received his Master's Degree in Social Work in May 2007 from Chicago State University.

In 1994, Reginald began his DCFS career as a Child Protection Specialist for Cook North Region; advancing to a Child Protection Advanced Specialist for Cook South Region in 2007. During his time here at DCFS, Reggie has worked seventeen years as an investigator - three as a supervisor and has been in his current position as an Area Administrator for the past 8 months. Reggie states that the job can be overwhelming at times. He believes that the job will be a lot better once his 2 vacant supervisors' positions are filled.

When asked which job at DCFS has been the most rewarding, he stated his current position, as he gets a lot of support from his co-worker, Charlotte Robinson, who is the other Area Administrator at his site. Reginald J. King has a total of 26 years in Social Service.

“When asked which job at DCFS has been the most rewarding, he stated his current position ...”

In closing, I asked Reggie what would be his ideal job? He stated that his ideal job would be working for the FBI. He stated that he has always wanted to be in law enforcement and had actually applied to the FBI but was told that at age 36 he was too old. I also asked Reggie what would be his ideal job at DCFS? He stated that he would like to be the Director of DCFS.

AAAC Regional Dialogues

During the fall of 2014 the African American Advisory Council (AAAC) was granted permission by Acting Director Bobbie Gregg to hold Dialogues in each Region. On behalf of the Council I would like to thank Acting Director Gregg, Operations Bureau Chief Michael Ruppe and Regional Administrators for their support. We appreciate everyone who took the time to attend, contribute and provide an interesting dialogue. Individuals that volunteered to serve as scribes in each of the respective Regions were very helpful with documenting and providing the information. We are also very grateful for the outstanding job of facilitating by our Permanency Enhancement Project University Partners, Angela Baron Jeffrey and Sabrina Tatum of Northern Illinois University, Dr. Venessa Brown of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Dr. Alan Dettlaff and Alexandra Ibrahim of the University of Illinois Chicago.

The purpose of the Dialogues was to have participants identify and prioritize issues that they would like to have addressed both within their Region and statewide. The logic model process was utilized to assist with the leading of the discussion. The AAAC has a history of gathering information from staff through this process in order to provide the Director with staff concerns. We also learned from the Dialogues, how passionate staff can be regarding their jobs. The employment issues were discussed that pertain to the actual concerns relating on how to improve the system for the children and families that we serve.

We have provided a report from the Dialogues to Acting Director Sheldon. The Director being new to the Department, Director Sheldon has been given time to respond on the recommendations. However he has indicated a strong willingness to hear concerns from staff. We look forward to supporting Director Sheldon in his efforts to guide and fulfill the Department's mission and goals.

Here is a synopsis of issues identified in the Dialogues:

- Lack of resources for delinquent youth and the negative impact on resources for abuse/neglect population
- Maintaining appropriate staffing levels and improvement of the hiring process
- More preventive and innovative resources
- Enhanced foster home recruitment and specialized training for foster parents
- Training on racial equity/tools and more opportunities to address issues of disparities
- Court issues that lead to more children entering care and remaining in care longer
- Ongoing training pertaining court related issues to include representatives from all DCFS divisions, private agencies and external systems
- Improved work with non-custodial parents



2014 AAAC Outstanding Achievement Awards

AAAC is proud to acknowledge awarding 178 department staffers since 1993 with an Outstanding Achievement Award during our annual Conference/institutes. It is flattering that co-workers take time to acknowledge one another not only for professional work performance but public service and community involvement. The “awards ceremony” is a critical portion of each conference/institute and we endeavor to continue these celebrations with your support. In celebration of our 21st anniversary, we are pleased to present another outstanding group of committed, preserving, devoted, loyal, dedicated, tenacious, and determined DCFS employees (and one honorary) with this award. The awardees are:



Valerie McDaniels

Years at DCFS: 29

Current Position:

Associate Deputy,
Bureau of Operations

Ms. McDaniels has extensive experience within child welfare through employment with both private agencies and DCFS. She has worked in child protection for many years and has advanced throughout her career in this area. She is known to be compassionate with her staff, children and families that she serves. She encourages staff to perform at the highest level and to be aware of the empirical data that portrays disparities of African American youth across systems. In addition to the task at hand within the Department, Ms. McDaniels has found the time over the past 12 years to work with the Illinois State University (ISU) Black Colleague Association. She has done fund raising, donated funds and volunteered time to assist and support African American students at ISU. She has also provided the same support as a member of the University of Chicago, Social Service Administration. Students are intrigued by the wealth of knowledge and experiences possessed by Ms. McDaniels. Ms. McDaniels is also a member of the Donella Bishop Ward Scholarship Committee, Certified Council on Accreditation Team Leader and Peer Reviewer for Councils on Accreditation for Children and Family Services, New York, NY. She is active with her church and volunteers for community event.



Lisa Robinson

Years at DCFS: 13

Current Position:

Assistant Guardian

Lisa Robinson is the Assistant Guardian and has been employed with DCFS for 13 years. Ms. Robinson is very knowledgeable of policy and procedure and provides advice and direction to program staff, caseworkers and DCFS administrators. She is recognized for the way she protects and cares about the well-being of DCFS wards. She is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including holidays. Ms. Robinson is completely committed to each child's well-being. To demonstrate her dedication, while on a three week jury trial, she went to the office before jury duty, on her lunch break and after she finished for the day to ensure that everything was running smoothly. In the absence of the Guardianship Administrator, she assumes overall responsibility for the Guardian's Office where she demonstrates exceptional initiative, leadership, judgment and teamwork. She performs her duties like the Guardian's Office is truly the parent for all the children in care.



Donna Steele

Years at DCFS: 25

Current Position:

Area Administrator,
Operations – Harvey

Ms. Steele is respected by her staff as being thoroughly knowledgeable of policies and procedures along with a plethora of community resources and essential contacts. She is known to be passionate in how the staff engages clients and has not hesitated to intervene in volatile situations that have prevented negative results. Ms. Steele is very much aware of what leadership entails and has the ability to display a management style that allows involved parties to feel ownership of a decision. Ms. Steele takes advantages of opportunities to promote a sense of cultural awareness. He leaves from behind her desk and go out in the community to assist staff in informing the community about programs and procedures within the Department. She is a vital member of the Cook Transformation Team where a Strategic Plan has been approved by the late Director Calica. As a result of this plan, work groups are being established across the State of Illinois to evaluate and make recommendation on policies that may result in disparities for African American, Latino children and families.

Achievement Awards *(Continued)*



Monica Walker

Years at DCFS: 13

Current Position:

Office Associate,
Administrative Hearings Unit

Monica Walker is an Office Associate in the Administrative Hearings Unit in Cook County. She has been employed with DCFS for 13 years. Ms. Walker is known for her sunny disposition, steady equilibrium and position outlook in the face of adversity and constant changes. She has impacted the lives of colleagues, clients and persons served by the Department; and treat every colleague and client with respect, no matter how challenging, difficult or irate they may be. Ms. Walker is active in African Dance and has performed with the Mantu Dance Group. She has mastered some of the original almost forgotten African musical instruments. Ms. Walker also cares for the aging and elderly, volunteering to read to, feed and dresses senior citizens. Ms. Walker has also supported the Ray of Hope Foundation, supporting vulnerable, at-risk youth, especially young girls, combating the pernicious influence of commercially exploitative sex traffickers. Ms. Walker is currently seeking educational advancement through Upward Mobility for personal growth.



Darlene Cannon

Years at DCFS: 14

Current Position:

Public Service Administrator,
Business Manager

Ms. Cannon is responsible for processing billings and contracts for over 60 providers and in this role she is highly respected for the thoroughness and timeliness in how she perform her duties. She is recognized by her colleagues as being a person that is very much compassionate of others. She is the person that promotes laughter to those that she encounters in the work place and is often called the walking community resource directory. She is supportive of youth, families and the elderly in her community through her active involvement with her church. She drives the church bus weekly to ensure that the elderly have safe and reliable transportation to and from church no matter the weather conditions.



Tacey Vinson

Years at DCFS: 20

Current Position:

Child Welfare Advanced Specialist
Springfield

Tracey Vinson is a Child Welfare Advance Specialist in Springfield and has been employed with DCFS for 20 years. She has served in her current role as an Adoption Specialist for the past 15 years. Through her experiences and exposure to poverty, racism and discrimination she was inspired her to

confront these negative aspects of society which led to her career in the social work field. Her desire to use her skills to impact and change the systems sparked her to later earn her MSW degree. She possess a strong belief in the need for education and the need to advocate for oneself and to teach others to advocate for themselves and their families. One of her favorite quotes is “you suffer more from what you don’t know opposed to the color of your skin. Educate yourself to advocate for yourself.” Ms. Vinson is a member of the DCFS Central Region Legal Screening Team, Central Region Transformation Team and leads the DCFS Parent Council. Ms. Vinson is also an active member of the Fresh Vision Church reaching out to new and inactive members as well as identifying youth for educational scholarships.



Angela Baron-Jeffrey

Current Position:

Director of Northern Illinois University
Center for Child Welfare
and Education

For over 17 years, Angela has led educational initiatives, and provided leadership and support that have benefited thousands of children and families involved with the Illinois child welfare system. Since 1995, the main focus of her work has been to help children who are or have been involved with the foster care system attain access to appropriate educational services, supports and opportunities that promote successful outcomes. To this end, she provides oversight and participates in policy making, forging public-private partnerships in education, research for continuous quality improvement, professional development for educators and social workers, training and support for caregivers, and direct technical assistance for resolving educational issues that youth in foster care experience.

Achievement Awards

(Continued)



LeDrena Bobo

Years at DCFS: 21

Current Position:

Public Service Administrator,
Serious Harms

Ms. Bobo is recognized as a person that promotes camaraderie and cultural awareness in the work place. She utilizes her excellent clinical skills to mentor and support other Serious Harms Child Protection Staff and also assist her staff with visits and staffing to keep the work moving. She is known to work early and late on a regular basis. In addition to all that Ms. Bobo does for DCFS, she also demonstrates her concern for youth by serving as a mentor in her church. She is an outstanding role model for youth and provides her mentees with toiletries, appropriate seasonal clothing, gifts for Christmas and birthdays. Ms. Bobo is well respected throughout the child welfare arena and as a result, she is in a great position to be an advocate on behalf of children and families.



Keith Smith

Current Position:

Child Welfare Specialist

Currently, he is performing duties as a Child Welfare Specialist in the Northern Region. He's an active member of the African American Advisory Council.

With twenty years of social work experience, he has passion and hopes of improving the conditions of the Afri-

can American community serviced by the agency. Specifically, he is actively involved with the Cease Fire organization servicing the Morgan Park area of Chicago, IL. This organization works closely with the community leaders in creatively reducing the gang violence, as well as minimizing the criminal effects surrounding that neighborhood. In addition, he is the President of the Mount Calvary Baptist Church Senior Usher Board. Also, he works closely with twenty-two neighboring churches providing technique training for the South End Zone United Usher League of Chicago, IL. As a standing member of this organization, they encourage young adults to engage in the discipline of Ushering encouraging them to excel academically. The South End Zone participates in a State of Illinois Conference drill performance exhibiting the skilled level of ushering techniques annually. During the State Conference, the young adults are elicited to participate in an essay contest, where they are awarded scholarships and computers, which will assist them in successfully completing post-secondary education. The above demonstrates his dedications and enthusiasm in working with and improving the community through agency collaboration.



Sandra Davis

Years at DCFS: 16

Current Position:

High-End Residential Monitor

Ms. Davis established herself as a committed and dedicated employer during the years that she worked at the Child Abuse Hotline. She was a reliable team supporter as she would always fill in when there were staff shortages. She possessed the skill to handle difficult

and complex callers in a professional manner and was always calm in her demeanor. Ms. Davis recently transferred into the position of High End Monitor. She is known to have a kind heart when it comes to assisting youth as she often sponsor activities such as Christmas Balls, bible classes, teen programs and youth groups. She also serves as a member of the Sangamon County Action Team.



Reginald King

Years at DCFS: 20

Current Position:

Senior Public Service Administrator
Area Administrator – Cook

Mr. King has a wealth of experience working for several organizations such as a Job Coach for the Chicago Association for Retarded Citizens, Case Manager for Sullivan House and as a Mental Health Counselor at Hartgrove Hospital. These experiences along with his work in Child Protection at DCFS are what laid the foundation for him to recently become the Area Administrator in Cook County. He also finds the time to do volunteer work with youth as the Vice President of the Donella Bishop Ward Scholarship Committee. Mr. King mentors young male college students and visits them on campus and also serves as a counselor to young men in their personal lives. He assists in raising funds for the scholarship committee so that youth can receive support with their college needs.

Achievement Awards

(Continued)



Stephen C. Mittons

Years at DCFS: 19

Current Position:

Child Protection Specialist

Mr. Mittons promotes excellence in the work place and puts forth the effort to treat respectfully and uplift all employees in their professional roles. He is highly involved with some of the Department's Initiatives such as providing Mandated Reporting Training within the African American community, Chicago Kent School of Law, Chicago Board of Education, Field Liaison for Pediatric Interns from Lurie's Children Hospital and Loyola Hospital. Mr. Mittons has completed some 4,000 investigations that include Serious Harms and Sex Abuse cases. He is also the current President of AFSCME Local 2081 where he has been active with Labor/Management issues. In this role he is currently one of the 26 litigants in the We Are One Coalition where they are engaged in the fight for a fair State Retirement Pension Plan. He has retired from the United States Marine Corps where he served his country for 22 years. He has served as a Board Member for Copeland College, an up-start Historical Black College that will afford additional educational opportunities to youth of color. Mr. Mittons has been an Assistant Scout Leader for both a Cub Scout Pack and Boy Scout Troop. Mr. Mittons is an avid runner and is now training for his eleventh marathon.



Jane Francis Kelly

Years at DCFS: 20

Current Position:

LGBT Statewide Manager

Jane Francis Kelly has been employed with DCFS for over 20 years. She is a LGBTQ Statewide Manager and is housed in the Northern Region – Aurora office. She has held various positions within the Department and has shown a continuous commitment to providing exceptional services to children, families, and other child welfare professionals. Ms. Kelly is keenly aware of cultural differences and the uniqueness of each individual and utilizes her clinical skills to help children understand their sense of identity and value. Ms. Kelly is an active member and volunteer of the Friends of Lords Park in Elgin, IL. and leads a group of community advocates who crusade for the return of the petting zoo at Lord's park.



Mary Kennedy-Moore

Years at DCFS: 13

Current Position:

Adoption Specialist
Springfield

Mary Kennedy-Moore has been employed with DCFS for 13 years. She recently transitioned to the Post Adoption Division as an Adoption Specialist in Springfield. Her clear understanding of policy and procedure has allowed her to quickly adapt to her new role. Ms. Kennedy previously worked the midnight

shift among other shifts at the State Central Registry Child Abuse Hotline as a TA, call floor worker, authorized agent, consultant and most of all "friend" to everyone on the call floor and in the community. She is known for her great sense of humor and ability to offer words of encouragement and comfort to those in distress. It was stated that "after 13 years on the call floor, hearing reports of the most horrific nature (reports of abuse and neglect of children), Mary never lost her heart for people or her contagious sense of humor." Her ability to laugh at life is infectious. Ms. Moore is also known for her gifts and donations to those in need; both at work and in the community where she has also taken time to feed the homeless.



Tracy Reasonover

Years at DCFS: 9

Current Position:

Child Welfare Specialist
State Central Register

Tracy Reasonover has been employed with DCFS for 9 years and is currently a Child Welfare Specialist at the State Central Register. Mr. Reasonover has excellent assessment skills that are essential with the many diverse hotline calls that he take daily. He volunteers to cover when supervisors are unable to be present. He has served his country as a United States Marine and is a Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He is a Deacon at Abundant Faith Christian Center and is also a Sapphire Life member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity where he has served as the Eta Psi Sigma Chapter President and the Illinois State Director. Mr. Reasonover volunteers at the St. John's Breadline serving food for the homeless.

Chairman's Award



Angela Baron-Jeffrey

Director of Northern Illinois University
Center for Child Welfare and Education

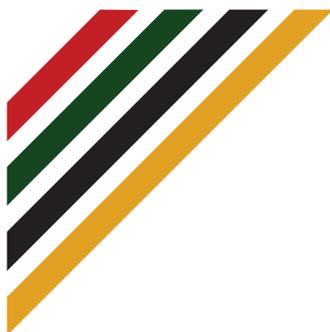
June 6, 2014

For Outstanding Contributions and Collaborative Support to the
Illinois Department Of Children And Family Services

African American Advisory Council

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the African American Advisory Council is to advise and make specific recommendations with solutions to the Director and Bureau Deputies concerning the Department's provision of services to African American clients, staff and its contractual service providers in the following areas: recruitment, legislation, employment, community relations and development of professional issues.



African American Advisory Council Members

OFFICERS:

Michael Burns, Chairman
Tracy Marshall, Vice Chair
Angela Hassell, Secretary

MEMBERS:

Robin Albritton
Bremen Campbell
Michelle Carter
Fayette Coleman-Gill
Diane Cottrell
Cheryl Dampier
Shirley Davis-Barsh
Vendetta Dennis
Millie Donelson
Marilyn Giles
Dr. Anthony Grady
Veronica Gray-Mattison
Jacqueline Johnson
Rhonda Laye
James Robinson
Jataun Rollins
Keith Smith
Audrey Sneed-Morton
Relunda Washington

Ex-Officio:

Carole Freeman
Jere Moore

African American Services:

Rochelle Crump

Rev. 4/27/15

Standing Committees

MEMBERSHIP

Chairperson: Diane Cottrell

The African-American Advisory Council's By-Laws stipulate a membership consisting of a maximum of thirty-one (31) department employees. The Council is a statewide organization. Seventy-two percent of the members are from Cook County and twenty eight percent are from the remaining three regions, this formula reflects the proportion of African Americans within Cook and downstate.

African-American Advisory Council members are, at this point, African American staff that was selected based on their expressed interest and willingness to work for African American issues in the Department. Employees may become members after two years of employment and submitting a brief narrative noting their interests in problems and issues affecting African Americans to the membership chair.

The Membership Committee meets periodically to review applications upon receipt. The committee prepares recommendations for selection by vote of council members at the next regular meeting.

CONFERENCE

Chairpersons: Robin Albritton and Tracy Marshall

This committee plans the annual conference. Committee members develop the theme, workshops and presenters in addition to identifying keynote speakers.

NEWSLETTER

Chairperson: Bremen Campbell

The newsletter is a quarterly publication of articles submitted by Council members or agency staff. Each quarterly edition presents information about how staff can better provide services using new policies and protocols, reflect judicial rulings, and effectively implement new legislation. Our Editorial Board reviews draft articles for professional content and relevancy to current events around the six regions. Sections of the newsletter include: viewpoint, book review, and resource identification. Those interested can submit articles to chairperson of the newsletter committee Bremen Campbell, 15115 Dixie Hwy., Harvey, IL 60426

LEGISLATIVE

Chairperson: Jere Moore

The objective of this committee is to monitor General Assembly Legislation affecting African Americans and child welfare programs. Members also confer with legislators and the Director's Legislative Liaison. The Chair may designate AD HOC committees, as needed which may include staff who are not members of the Advisory Council.

TRAINING

Chairperson: James Robinson

This committee was established to present information regarding the Council to new employees during the Department's foundation training.

AD HOC COMMITTEES

The AAAC Chair recommends formation of Ad Hoc Committees when key issues are brought to the council's attention.

“Keeping Our Children First”



Interested in Joining AAAC?

Contact Diane Cottrell,
membership chairperson

email: Diane.Cottrell@illinois.gov

708.210.3716

Illinois Department of
DCFS
Children & Family Services

DCFS.illinois.gov

