

Cook County Birth Parent Council History and Mission

The ultimate purpose of child welfare agencies is to help families in crisis become stable and unified. In child welfare, birth parents have been sorely overlooked, which hinders and many times defeats the purpose. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) introduced the Partnering With Parents Initiative to address the concerns and needs of birth parents as the agency recognized the need for change on behalf of parents receiving child welfare services. Its main goal is to give families a voice regarding the policies, programs and services provided to them. To that end, the Birth Parent Councils of Cook County were created, which includes a Core Council and currently there is one council in each Cook Region: North, South, and Central.

The mission of all councils is to identify issues concerning birth parents and present these issues to the appropriate government officials to bring about durable policy changes that will aid all parents with DCFS involvement, now and in the future. All members of the councils are birth parents.

The Council of parents recently elected 2010 - 2013 officers to serve in the following positions to represent Cook County Birth Parents:

- Chair, Rev. Terry LeNoir
- Co-Chair, Leon Alexander
- Secretary, Ramona Randall
- Co-Secretary, George Lyke

The Council would like to thank the outgoing officers for their hard work and dedication to the Cook County Birth Parent Council.

The Council also has developed committees chaired by birth parents to continue the planning and development of the Cook County Council. The committees are:

- The Support Committee, which helps to recruit and retain parents, encourage parents and mentor parents when requested. Help to identify resources and services within the community and the Council to assist parents as they navigate the child welfare system.
- The Media Committee, which helps to develop newsletters, flyers and materials for the Web site
- The Training Committee, which helps to plan in-service training sessions based on parents' priorities and identify the presenters for sessions, they also plan the Birth Parent event that will be held such as: Institute Days, In-Service trainings and Birth Parent presentations to new child welfare staff attending Foundations and Child Protection training.

Birth parents that are interested in joining the Cook County Birth Parent Council or would like more information may contact 773.371-6000.

By Ramona Randall Updated 2010