

3rd Annual DCFS Partnering with Parents  
Cook County Birth Parent Council Institute Day

# REUNIFICATION!

*Avoiding Burn-Out While Waiting*

PARTNERING



WITH PARENTS



Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

**June 26, 2009**  
**The Crowne Plaza –**  
**Chicago Metro**  
**733 W. Madison**  
**Chicago, IL 60661**

Pat Quinn  
Governor



Erwin McEwen  
Director

## Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

Dear Parents and Colleagues:

Welcome to the Department's Third Annual Cook County Birth Parent Institute Day!

This Institute was developed by members of the parent Core Council and Steering Council and is designed to reach out to DCFS birth parents and the child welfare staff who serve them. The theme this year: Reunification: Avoiding Burnout While Waiting encourages parents to hold fast while participating in child welfare services. The Department of Children and Family Services is committed to the development of Birth Parent Councils through out Illinois to ensure that parents' voices are heard and we are especially proud of the efforts made here in Cook County to reach parents.

This year parents will learn more about the Department, its history and mandate and also about the Juvenile Court, its role in child welfare and the key players in the court system. Workshops are designed to present both professional and birth parent perspectives. The enlightening late afternoon sessions will introduce you the Strengthening Families of Illinois Initiative designed to empower, train and educate birth parents as Parent Leaders in a community setting. You will also learn about the impact of separation trauma from both children and parent perspectives. The entire day will provide key information that enhances parents and staff's reunification efforts and I encourage you to participate fully.

The theme this year continues to support the Department's emphasis on reunification and keeping children in their homes when possible after ensuring their safety and well-being. It also supports the Department's commitment to partner with parents to improve DCFS policy and service delivery to families.

Parent Institute Day is designed to support, inform and challenge you as participants. My sincere hope is that you benefit from discussions with other parents, Institute presenters, and DCFS staff from the Birth Parent Council.

On behalf of the entire staff of DCFS and our partner agencies, I thank you for taking the time to attend and participate in this institute for Birth Parents.

Sincerely,

Erwin McEwen  
Director

Office of the Director

100 West Randolph, 6-200 • Chicago, Illinois 60601-3249

312-814-4650 • 312-814-8783 / TTY



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Pat Quinn  
Governor



Erwin McEwen  
Director

**Illinois Department of Children & Family Services**

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Third Annual Cook County Birth Parent Institute!

The theme for this year's institute is Reunification: "Avoiding Burnout While Waiting". Our primary purpose is to enhance your reunification efforts by sharing historic information about the Department and its mandate. We will assist you in learning more about DCFS as well as its pertinent history. You can also expect to be better informed about the Juvenile Court system and its significant role in the welfare of the children in Illinois.

Throughout the day, I encourage you to seek out and speak with child welfare experts who will be available to answer your questions with accurate and helpful information. There are several planned workshops that will help you to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain a sense of hope while working toward reunification. Professionals and other parents will share their knowledge and experience on how to make informed decisions about your family's future. There will also be a special workshop specifically aimed at helping you recognize and manage the stress that comes as a result of being separated from family.

I commend the Birth Parent Council and members of the Steering Council for their leadership in developing this year's institute and encourage you to learn more about the Partnering with Parents' Cook County Birth Parent Council. Also, please be sure to complete the surveys and evaluations. Through your shared feedback, we are better able to work with you on your children's behalf. Your participation in scheduled meetings and in-services training events throughout the year is sincerely welcome and needed.

Thank you, I look forward to seeing you at the Institute.

Respectfully,

Dr. Larry Small  
Acting Deputy Director  
Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development

**Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development**  
**Office of Training and Professional Development**

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## 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 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 officers to serve in the following positions to represent Cook County Birth Parents: Gregory Cox, Chair; David Israel, Co-Chair; Ramona Randall, Secretary; and Verna Townsend, Co-Secretary.

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 events 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 who are interested in joining the Cook County Birth Parent Council or would like more informatio may contact 773-371-6000.

*By Ramona Randall*

# Welcome to the Third Annual DCFS Birth Parent Council Institute Day!

We want to welcome each of you today, we are so glad you are here! We hope that you will enjoy the entire day which has been planned for you. The Birth Parent Council and Steering Committee Members have developed every workshop and planning event to enhance your knowledge and awareness! We want you to enjoy yourselves and participate in all of the sessions. Be sure to visit the Resource Exhibitors this year!

## 2009 Birth Parent Core Council Officers

Gregory Cox, Chair

David Israel, Co-Chair

Ramona Randall, Secretary

Verna Townsend, Co-Secretary

## 2009 Birth Parent Core Council Members

Leon Alexander

Angela Cummins

Letitia Franklin

Cynthia Hoyle

Jacqueline LeNoir

Reverend Terry LeNoir

Angela MacGruder

Eric Prater

Rayvese Woodfork-Smith

## 2009 Steering Council Members

Special Thanks to our Steering Council Members who work to assist the needs of birth parents and to further the development of Birth Parent Councils in Cook County.

Michael Byrd

Bob Dwyer

Sheila Freeman

Luba Friedman

Karen Harrington

Jacqueline Johnson

Maya Maclin

Diane Mariani

Theresa Matthews

D. Jean Ortega-Piron

Dorretta Evans Parker

Lourdes Rodriguez

Monique Smith

Donna Steele

Carmen Valesquez

Jeff Walker

## Special Thanks

Thank you to our Program Staff members: Donnella Bishop-Ward, Marsha Harris and Marnie Winston; the DCFS Division of Communications; and our community partners for their support of the Cook County Birth Parent Council Program.

Community Partners from the following organizations graciously have allowed the Cook County Birth Parent Council Regional Councils to meet in their facilities: Marillac Social Center and St. Vincent DePaul Center.

Special thanks to The McDermott Center – Haymarket, Forever Free and A Safe Haven for its support of the Cook County Birth Parent Council.

We also want to thank all our Exhibitors for their willingness to share resources and information with our attendees.

# Birth Parent Council Institute Day Agenda

- 8:30 a.m.**      **Registration/Continental Breakfast**
- 9 a.m.**            **Welcome & Opening Remarks**  
Donnella Bishop-Ward, Program Administrator
- Introductions**  
Dr. Larry Small, Assistant Deputy Director, DCFS Division of  
Clinical Services & Professional Development  
Greg Cox, Chair, Cook County Birth Parent Council
- 9:30 a.m.**      **Keynote Address**  
Introduction of Speaker – D. Jean Ortega-Piron,  
DCFS Deputy Director of Guardianship and Advocacy  
  
The Honorable Judge Mary Mikva, Cook County Juvenile Court
- Skit**
- 10:15 a.m.**      **Break**
- 10:30 a.m.**      **Workshops**
- Juvenile Court 101, Ballroom A & B
  - DCFS 101, Ballroom C & D
- Noon**            **Lunch**
- 12:30 p.m.**     **Luceon Speaker**  
Erwin McEwen, Director, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
- 1 p.m.**            **Workshops**
- Juvenile Court 101, Ballroom A & B
  - DCFS 101, Ballroom C & D
- 2:30 p.m.**      **Break**
- 2:45 p.m.**      **Workshops**
- Strengthening Families: Live Demonstration, Ballroom A & B
  - Separation Trauma: Parent Voices, Children’s Voices, Ballroom C & D
- 3:45 p.m.**      **Closing Session**  
Jeff Walker, Steering Council  
Ramona Randall, Birth Parent
- 4 p.m.**            **Surprise Event**

**Exhibit Tables will be located on the second floor during lunch,  
afternoon break and closing session from 11:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

**CEU’s are available and will be forwarded to attendees after the conference.**

# Birth Parent Council Institute Day Workshops

## Juvenile Court 101

Ballroom A & B

**10:30 a.m. - Noon and repeated from 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.**

Often when parents become involved with DCFS and appear at Juvenile Court they are frightened, confused and sometimes angry. They report they do not understand the court language, the roles of court personnel and why the court has so much authority over them and their children. Parents report how difficult it is for them to understand the permanency goals and the timeframes they are told they must meet. Juvenile Court 101 will help parents learn more about the Cook County Juvenile Court system and will focus on how children come to the attention of the court, what happens when a child is removed from his birth parents, what the roles and responsibilities of court staff are, the goal and timelines that must be met for the child and parents, what parent rights and responsibilities are, including fathers, and the types of court hearings and what parents can expect. Attendees will hear from Juvenile Court personnel and also the parent perspective. The panelists will also provide important tips that parents will have for future reference.

*Moderator: Bob Dwyer, DCFS Supervisory Regional Council*

*Panel: Public Defender Patrick Bitar, Assistant Public Defender*  
*Guardian Ad Litem Kimberly Boone, Assistant Public Guardian*  
*State's Attorneys Kathleen A. Bankhead, Juvenile Justice Bureau Chief*  
*Cook County State's Attorneys' Office*  
*Joan M. Pernecke, Child Protection Division Chief*  
*Cook County State's Attorneys' Office*  
*Judge The Honorable Judge Candace Fabri*  
*Parents Gregory Cox and Rayvese Woodfork-Smith*

## DCFS 101

Ballroom C & D

**10:30 a.m. - Noon and repeated from 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.**

This workshop will focus on the operations of the Department, with a heavy emphasis on the importance of parent participation and understanding of the child welfare system. Attendees will learn about how and why DCFS functions from child welfare professional staff. They will focus on the Service Planning Process and the importance of parent and staff team building for goal attainment; clear review of the Permanency Goals, including time frames, goal shifts and the impact of service termination; and they will discuss the significant roles and responsibilities of child welfare staff and parents. The workshop will also focus on DCFS from a parent perspective with a focus on what the parent can do to ensure effective parent engagement and the importance of parent motivation and personal initiative. Child welfare professional staff and parents will focus on the importance of reunification: preparation, management and resources.

*Moderator: Theresa Mathews, Assistant Guardian*

*Staff Presenters: Joyce Hall, DCFS Regional Administrator*  
*Valerie McDaniels, DCP Cook South Intact Manager*

*Parent Co-Presenters: Rev. LeNoir and Letitia Franklin*

## Strengthening Families Illinois: A Live Presentation

Ballroom A & B

2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

### Love Is Not Enough Parent Café

At Love Is Not Enough Parent Cafés, parents take part in conversations with other parents about what it means to keep their families strong. The Café process both builds Protective Factors during Café sessions and connects parents to resources they can use in day-to-day family life to strengthen their families. At this workshop, participants will experience a demonstration of a Love Is Not Enough Parent Café process and learn how they can contribute to adapting the process specifically for birth parent audiences in the future.

*Moderator: Ramona Randall, Parent*

*Co-Presenters: Lina Cramer, Sr. Consultant, Strengthening Families Illinois and SFI Parent Leadership Team Members*

## Separation Trauma: Parent Voices and Children Voices

Ballroom C & D

2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

When families become involved with the child welfare system and children are removed the entire family system is impacted and affected by separation or the threat of separation. Often the focus is placed on the most vulnerable – the children but trauma has an impact on parents as well as children. This workshop will enable attendees to learn from a Trauma therapist the total impact and manifestations of trauma on parents and children of all ages. Attendees will also hear from the voices of parents and children who will share their perspective on Separation Trauma including Placement, Return Home and what would have made the process better for them, sharing suggestions for parents, workers and caretakers. They will also discuss how to work with workers and the court to get children returned.

*Moderator: Sheila Freeman*

*Presenter: Monique Smith, Trauma Therapist*

*Parents: David Israel and Jacqueline LeNoir*

*Children: Katrina Schroder, President, Statewide Youth Advisory Council; Kimberly Brent, Cook County Youth Advisory Council; and Gailyne Thomas, Director of Youth Advisory Program, Cook County Juvenile Court*



## Presenter Biographies

**Leon Alexander, BS**, was born May 7, 1949 on the west side of Chicago and is the youngest of eight siblings. Mr. Alexander is a husband and father of three children. He is a retired Lieutenant with Chicago Fire Department, a Nutritional Specialist, entrepreneur and Vietnam Veteran. Mr. Alexander is a DePaul graduate and an active member of the Cook County Birth Council.

**Patrick Bitar, JD, Assistant Public Defender, Office of the Cook County Public Defender** is assigned to Calendar 7-G in the Juvenile Court and was highly recommended by birth parents as an attorney concerned about his clients understanding the Juvenile Court process.

**Kathleen A. Bankhead, JD**, is the Juvenile Justice Bureau Chief, Cook County State's Attorney's Office.

**Kimberlie A. Boone, JD**, is a supervising attorney with the Cook County Office of the Public Guardian. The Juvenile Division of the Public Guardian's Office currently represents approximately 10,000 children under the jurisdiction of the Circuit Court of Cook County. Ms. Boone joined the office in 1996 as an entry level attorney. She currently supervises eight attorneys who represent over 650 children. On a day to day basis, she provides direction and guidance to the attorneys under her supervision. Ms. Boone is also involved in various committees that impact the child welfare system. She is currently a member of the Committee on Visitation, the LANS 82, 84, 87 Action Team Committee, and the Public Guardian's Committee on Cultural Diversity. Ms. Boone attended the University of Illinois at Chicago and obtained a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Mass Media Communications. She obtained her law degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago Kent College of Law in 1994. Ms. Boone serves as a volunteer member of an HIV/AIDS awareness organization. She also acts as a mentor to a teen youth choir, and is an assistant organizer of an annual youth event.

**Gregory Cox** is the Intake Coordinator at the Chicago Christian Industrial League. Formerly he was an employee at TASC as an Assessor conducting assessment and making referrals to other agencies and resource providers. Mr. Cox is a birth parent of eight children who had been removed from his home in 1990 as a result of substance abuse by him and the mother of the children. Mr. Cox has been free from substance abuse and alcohol for 16 years and has been reunited with six of his eight children, the first three in 1992 one each for the years of 1993 and 1994 and finally the sixth child returned home in 2001. Mr. Cox is certified as a parent instructor at CCI, IADAPCA, and CARS (Certified Assessor Referral Specialize) and he is a minister of one of the fastest growing ministries in Chicago, New Life Covenant Oakwood.

**Lina Cramer, MSW**, provides technical assistance, training and consultation to programs, agencies, grant-makers and state agencies in the areas of family strengthening, parent engagement and leadership, family-school partnerships, conversational cafés, child abuse prevention programming and community building. For the past four years, she has served as a Senior Consultant with Strengthening Families Illinois, a child abuse prevention initiative. In her other role as Director of the Illinois Family Partnership Network, she developed the Love Is Not Enough Parent Cafe process with local parent leaders and Strengthening Families Illinois. These cafés promote meaningful conversations among parents about keeping children safe and families strong.

**Bob Dwyer, JD**, has served as an attorney for the Department of Children and Family Services since September 2004, beginning his career as a staff attorney in the AHU unit. In this position he presented cases on behalf of the Department at expungement hearings. In January 2005, Mr. Dwyer was promoted to Supervisory Regional Counsel at Juvenile Court in Chicago. Presently he supervises the work product of one paralegal and three attorneys who are assigned to four calendars 1-A, 7-G, 12-L & 13-M. Mr. Dwyer is also an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Steering Council.

**The Honorable Judge Candace Fabri, JD**, has served in the Cook County Juvenile Court Child Protection Division for 12 years, and is one of the longest serving judges in the courthouse. Before going to the bench, Judge Fabri spent 10 years doing commercial litigation in a major Chicago law firm and 10 years as a federal prosecutor in the United States Attorney's Office

**Letitia D. Franklin** received her G.E.D. from McKinney Job Corp Center and also has worked as a hospital Ward Clerk. Ms. Franklin describes herself as a worker for God who is a mentor for women's support and 12 step groups. She is the mother of six children, three of whom have been adopted by relatives and a former foster parent. Two of her children have reached adult age, and her sixth child was returned to her custody in April 2007. Ms. Franklin has been involved with DCFS since 1994 and has participated in numerous meetings and services in an effort to have her sixth child returned home. She is an active member of the Partnering with Parents Council. Ms. Franklin's believes her strong faith in God has helped her during her DCFS involvement and maintaining nearly four years of sobriety.

**Sheila Freeman, BS**, is currently an Agency Performance Monitor for the DCFS Division of Monitoring and Quality Assurance. She has been employed at the Department of Children and Family Services for 20 years, and for nearly 18 of those years she has been responsible for monitoring private agency service providers. She is a Purchase of Service Coordinator for the DCFS/DASA Program, and is a member of Health and Safety Committee for her division. Ms. Freeman volunteers for the St Agnes PADS program and Meals on Wheels in the south suburbs of Chicago. Ms. Freeman was a teacher at Crete-Monee High School for several years and was a supervisor at two community based correctional facilities. She has a BS degree and is currently enrolled in the MSW program at Chicago State University. Ms. Freeman is an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Steering Committee.

**Joyce Hall, LCSW**, is the DCFS Regional Administrator for the Cook Central region. Ms. Hall has worked in the child welfare field for over 25 years and has been a licensed clinical social worker for over 18 years. During her career, she began as a DCP investigator on a Specialized Sex Abuse Team. She has served as DCP and Placement Supervisor, Field Services Manager, and was also a member of the prototype for the Child and Youth Investment Team. She is also a certified trainer for DCFS. Ms. Hall has been a DCFS Field Placement Instructor for several of the Chicago area Schools of Social Work and managed the utilization of the Cook County Diagnostic Shelter. In 2002, Ms. Hall organized the Cook Central Choral Group "Expressions In Excellence." The group has performed during the years at luncheons, Cook Central Youth graduations, the African-American Advisory Council Conferences, the Cook Central African-American celebration, and programs at local Westside churches. Ms. Hall is always willing to share her expertise and skills to assist parents, staff or members of the local community.

**Cynthia Hoyle** is a Case Manager & Retention Specialist with Haymarket Center's Family Enrichment Program. Ms. Hoyle is a single parent of five children, all girls, and the grandmother of two. She graduated from Joliet Central High School and currently works for The Haymarket Center – McDermott Center in a new program called The Family Recovery Program. The program is designed to work with DCFS-involved mothers by providing support and assistance. Ms. Hoyle is a Lead Case Manager in this exciting program and also works as a Case Manager for the Family Enrichment Center at Haymarket. Ms. Hoyle became involved with DCFS in 1995 due to neglect of her children. The children were in placement for two years and were returned to her home April 22, 1997. Being a very good parent and grandparent is one of her greatest accomplishments, and she is described as a friend to her friends and a worker among workers. Ms. Hoyle is very committed to her job and to being a very productive member of society. She is an active member of the Partnering with Parents – Cook County Birth Parent Advisory Council.

**David Israel** is the Co-Chair of the Cook County Birth Parent Council and works with other members of the Council to help parents involved with DCFS better understand and navigate the child welfare system. He has represented the needs of birth parents at various speaking engagements on behalf of DCFS and the Birth Parent Council. He is a hard working family man who resides in Chicago. Mr. Israel is married with two young adult children. He attended Senn Metropolitan Academy High School and graduated in 1987. Mr. Israel has embarked on many trades which have enabled him to maintain viable employment. He is a recent graduate of Mega Truck Driving School and is currently employed by Coke Enterprises as a Merchandiser and hopes to become a truck driver for Coke in the near future.

**Jacqueline LeNoir** is the mother of six children, four boys and two girls, and the grandmother to two granddaughters and six grandsons. She became involved with DCFS nearly 14 years ago. She successfully completed services but became re-involved with DCFS. All of her children were placed in various relative foster homes and group homes and during this time Mrs. LeNoir also battled with substance abuse problems that resulted in many years of treatment. Mrs. LeNoir is a strong supporter of the importance of the worker/parent relationship because she experienced firsthand what happens to families when there is an ineffective and dishonest caseworker. Mrs. LeNoir believes that her family's life changed for the better when they were assigned a new case worker that did not judge them and was honest, helpful and consistent with them. As a result of Mrs. LeNoir and her husband's overcoming many challenges, all of their children were returned home successfully.

**Rev. Terry LeNoir, Sr.** is the father of five children who became part of the child welfare system and learned firsthand what happens to fathers who are not legally connected to their children when in Department custody. As a result of his treatment in the child welfare system, Rev. LeNoir works to ensure that fathers are included in the provision of services provided by DCFS. Prior to his receiving the call to ministry in 2004, Rev. LeNoir worked as an entrepreneur and small business owner until circumstances forced him to give up his businesses. Rev. LeNoir has battled with substance abuse but overcame his addiction to alcohol and has been six years clean and sober. He is currently raising his three sons and granddaughter with his wife Jacqueline. Together they support one another in ministry and in participation on the Cook County Birth Parent Council.

**Theresa Matthews, LCSW**, possesses a wealth of varied and valuable professional child welfare experience totaling more than 20 years. She has served as a Department of Children and Family Services Child Welfare Specialist, Child Welfare Supervisor, Child Protection Investigator and Public Service Administrator. She is currently a Senior Public Service Administrator in the Division of Guardian and Advocacy where she manages the Statewide Consent and Immigration Units. Previously, she served as a Prevention Coordinator for the Human Resources Development Institute. Ms. Matthews

is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She holds a Master's degree in Social Service Administration from the University of Chicago and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Augustana College, Rock Island, IL. Ms. Matthews is also an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Steering Council.

**Valerie McDaniels, MSA**, has been employed with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services since February 1985. During her tenure with DCFS, she has served in the capacities of Child Protection Investigator, Child Protection Lead Investigator, Child Protection Supervisor, and Child Protection Manager. Currently, Ms. McDaniels is the Intact Manager for Cook South Division of Child Protection's Intact Family Services teams. Ms. McDaniels served on many workgroups and committees responsible for revising and/or drafting new policies for DCFS, and serves as the regional DCP coordinator for all activities related to COA reaccreditation efforts. Ms. McDaniels has also worked for Catholic Charities, Ada S. McKinley and Volunteers of America, and enjoyed the experience of serving as a house parent with her husband to three to six DCFS wards through the agency Homes for Children. Ms. McDaniels holds a graduate degree from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration; is a certified case reviewer for the Council of Accreditation (COA); and is a member of the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) National Staff Development and Training Association (NSDTA) an affiliate of APHSA. On the lighter side, her hobbies are church, bowling, dancing, and gathering with family and friends.

**The Honorable Judge Mary L. Mikva, JD**, was elected in November, 2004 to be a Judge in the Circuit Court of Cook County. She is currently assigned to the Juvenile Court, Child Protection Division. Until she became a judge, Ms. Mikva was a partner in the firm of Abrahamson Vorachek & Mikva, where she represented plaintiffs in employment related claims. She was also a partner in the firm of Seliger and Mikva, where she represented plaintiffs in employment claims, including several large class actions. Before becoming a plaintiffs' attorney, Ms. Mikva was in the Law Department of the City of Chicago, defending employment claims and also worked in the Appeals Division. Early in her career, Ms. Mikva was a criminal defense attorney in the firm of Patrick A. Tuite & Associates. She graduated in 1980 from Northwestern Law School, cum laude and Order of the Coif. After law school, she was a law clerk to Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. of the United States Supreme Court and to Judge Prentice Marshall of the Northern District of Illinois.

**Monique Smith, LCSW**, has 20 years of experience in the Behavioral Healthcare field. She has held a variety of clinical, administrative and training positions with various social service agencies and universities in the Chicago area. Ms. Smith received her Bachelor's of Arts degree in Social Services/Criminal Justice from Bradley University and her Master of Social Work degree from the University Of Illinois-Jane Addams School Of Social Work. Ms. Smith is currently employed as a Trainer Specialist with Chicago State University. She is also an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Steering Council.

**Joan M. Pernecke, JD**, is the Child Protection Division Chief – Office of the Cook County State's Attorney.

**D. Jean Ortega-Piron, JD**, was appointed Guardian of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services on September 3, 1996. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Ortega-Piron served as Executive Assistant to Governor Edgar's Special Counsel for Child Welfare Services. Ms. Ortega-Piron began her career in human services in 1980 as a law clerk for the Illinois Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (DMHDD). She served in a variety of attorney positions for that agency, including General Counsel. In 1987, she left her DMHDD General Counsel position to serve as the DCFS Chief Administrative Law Judge and Administrator of the Administrative Hearings Unit, which she created. Ms. Ortega-Piron holds a Bachelor's degree from Rosary College and a Juris Doctorate

degree from IIT/Chicago Kent College of Law. She has served on the Illinois Special Olympics Board of Directors, the St. Joseph Catholic School Board, a board member of the Illinois Christian Legal Society, an executive committee member of the Abraham Lincoln Marovitz Inn of Court, and chairwoman of the Chicago Bar Association Mental Health Law Committee and the DuPage County Bar Children's Advocacy Committee. She is a recipient of the IIT/Chicago Kent College of Law 2007 Professional Achievement Award, the 2005 Chicago Bar Foundation, Richard J. Phelan Award for Outstanding Public Service and an honorable mention for the 2005 Jefferson Awards. She is also an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Steering Council.

**Eric Prater** is a single parent who became involved with DCFS when his two daughters were placed in foster care in 2005. Mr. Prater successfully worked to get both daughters returned to his care in 2007 and 2008. He is an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Council and is a strong advocate for parents, especially fathers.

**Ramona Randall** is employed at Haymarket Center, a comprehensive drug and alcohol treatment facility, as an Administrative Assistant to the Vice President of Support Services. Ms. Randall has served on the Cook County Birth Parent Council since its introduction to parents three years ago as a Core Council Member. She works with DCFS to plan events that encourage and empower birth parents striving to regain custody of their children. As the Media Committee Chairman, Ramona writes articles, gathers information for parents, and develops the basic artistic layout of pictures and articles from other writers for publishing. As a single mother of six children and the grandmother of one, Ms. Randall has been free from an active 12 year addiction for four years and has regained custody of her four-year-old son who was in the DCFS foster care system. She is an active member of Haven of Prayer and Praise Church, where she received her Missionary License and serves as the Missionary and Youth Department Secretary, Youth Department Choir Director, and creates weekly bulletins for Sunday Service.

**Jeff Walker, MSW, MBA**, began his employment with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services in January 1989 as a Child Welfare Services Caseworker. He then worked as a Child Protective Investigator from January 1994 through June 1998. Mr. Walker became the Special Assistant to the Deputy Director of Administrative Case Review in June 1998 and held this position until May 2000. He became the ACR Program Manager for Cook North region and subsequently became the ACR Program Manager for Cook Central in June 2002. Mr. Walker became the acting ACR Program Manager for Cook South in March 2004 and Cook County ACR Administrator in May 2004. He has worked in the Division of Administrative Case Review for the past 10 years. Mr. Walker has a Masters of Arts in Social Work and a Masters of Business Administration. He is also an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Steering Council.

**Rayvese Woodfork-Smith** is the birth parent of five boys. Her case came into the system as a result of a substance-exposed infant. Ms. Woodfork-Smith's case has been closed since 1998. She has been employed at TASC (Treatment Alternative for Safe Community) as an outreach worker in the recovery outreach program since 2005. When her boys were returned home she began to work on the Parent Education Program, working with DCFS clients to educate them on court proceedings at the Cook County Juvenile Court. She went on to work for HRDI (Human Resources Development Institute) as an educator for substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, ex-offenders program, and as a gambling counselor. Ms. Woodfork-Smith currently attends Malcolm X College, has obtained her associates degree and is working towards a BA in psychology. She mentors women at Leslie's Place (for women who have been incarcerated). She serves on two aldermanic committees, the Partnering with Parents Birth Parent Advisory Council to DCFS, and is an active member of her church.

## Exhibitors

A Knock At Midnight  
Black Star Project  
Catholic Charities – Forever Free  
Centers For New Horizons  
Chicago Children’s Museum  
Chicago Christian Industrial League  
Community Mental Health Center  
Cook County Birth Parent Council  
DCFS – DASA Project - TASC  
DCFS – Administrative Case Review  
DCFS – Division of Child Protection – Investigations/Intact Services  
DCFS – Family To Family  
DCFS – Division of Program Operations – Placement Services  
DCFS Education Access Project – Cook South  
DCFS – Guardian and Advocacy Services  
DCFS – Norman Services  
DCFS – Office of Latino Services  
DCFS – Service Interventions Intact Families  
DCFS – Special Services Team, Domestic Violence, Hearing Impaired  
Department of Employment Security  
Department of Human Services  
Fatherhood Initiative Centers For New Horizons – Cook South  
Fatherhood Initiative Internal Involvement Center – Cook North  
Mary & Tom Leo & Associates  
Passages  
Restoration Ministries  
Strengthening Families Illinois – Initiative  
YMCA – Metropolitan Chicago  
Westside Health Authority

*Exhibitor Coordinator Karen Harrington, Member, Birth Parent Steering Committee*