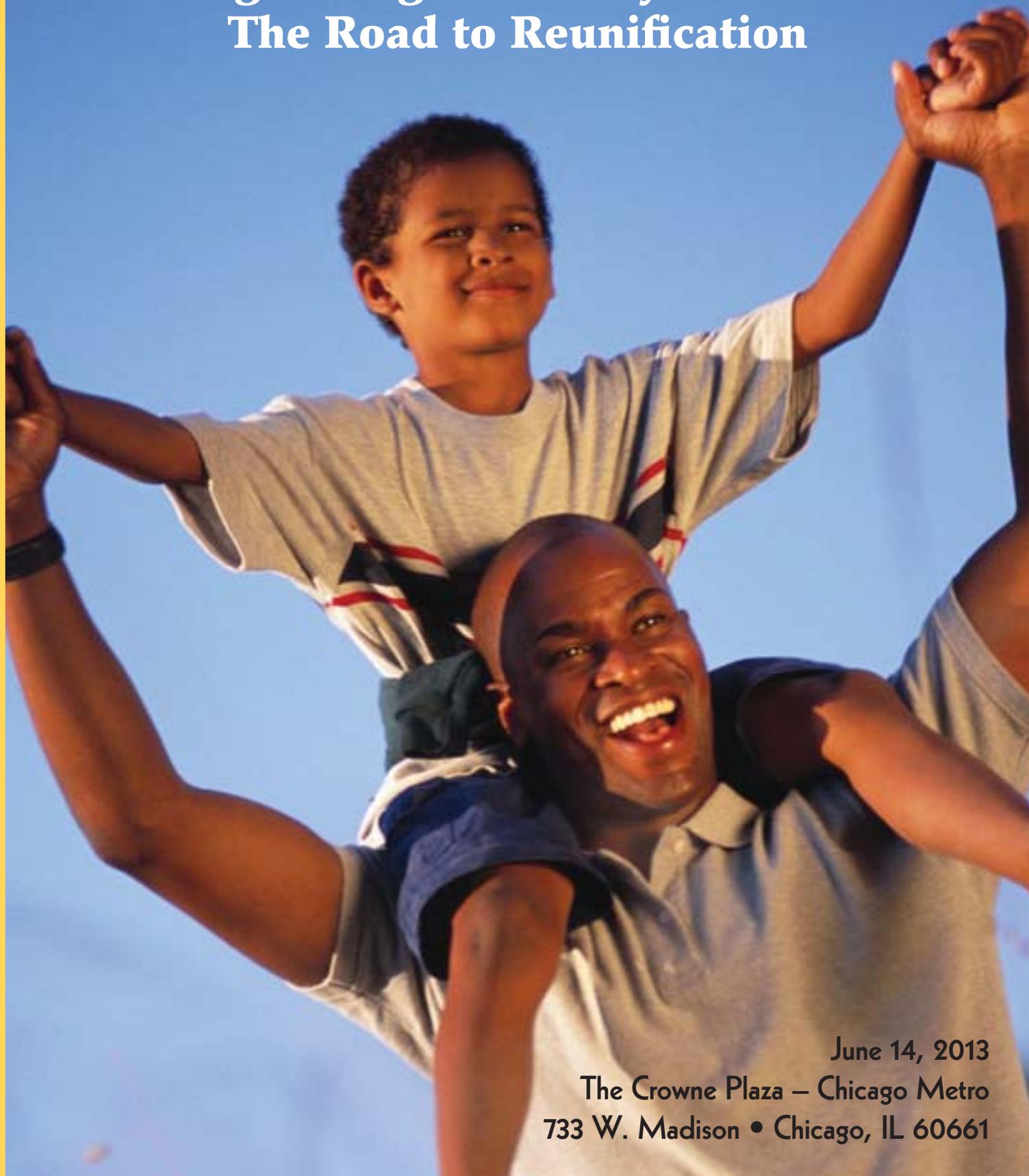


7th Annual DCFS Partnering with Parents  
Cook County Birth Parent Council Institute Day

# Organizing for Family Success: The Road to Reunification



June 14, 2013

The Crowne Plaza – Chicago Metro  
733 W. Madison • Chicago, IL 60661

Pat Quinn  
Governor

Richard H. Calica  
Director



---

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

June 14, 2013

Dear Parents and Colleagues:

Welcome to the Seventh Annual Cook County Birth Parent Institute, part of our continued effort to engage parents and support their efforts to ensure safe, loving homes and brighter futures for children. Thanks to past efforts, 47 percent of reunifications occur within 12 months, 93 percent of at-risk families remain abuse-free, and 94 percent of intact families remain intact. Through our continued efforts, DCFS hopes to see that record improve even further.

I commend the parents who give their time to the Birth Parent Council, Steering Committee, and as mentors and educators to other parents and DCFS staff. This year's institute, "Organizing for Family Success: The Road to Reunification," provides a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of key people collaborating in the reunification process, including: therapists, parents, coaches, foster parents, caseworkers and legal staff. The institute also recognizes that the single most important role in reunification rests with parents, stated better than anyone by Terry LeNoir:

*"Blaming everyone else instead of looking in the mirror can be hard. But when your child or children are no longer in your home, it's time to get real with yourself and face the fact that something was wrong or went wrong in your home that caused your child or children to be removed from your home." – Terry LeNoir, Birth Parent Council*

At the same time, the department has an obligation to the best interest of children to support your efforts to reunify your family safely and as quickly as possible. DCFS remains committed to: the continued training and education of birth families; involving birth parents in shaping departmental policy through the Birth Parent Council; and ensuring our frontline staff are well-trained to collaborate whenever possible with birth families to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard H. Calica', written over a horizontal line.

Richard H. Calica  
Director

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Office of the Director

100 West Randolph, Suite 6-100 • Chicago, Illinois 60601-3249  
312-814-2074 • 312-814-1888 Fax

Pat Quinn  
Governor

Richard H. Calica  
Director



---

**Illinois Department of Children & Family Services**

June 14, 2013

Dear Parents:

Welcome to the Department of Children and Family Services' Seventh Annual Cook County Birth Parent Institute!

The theme this year "Organizing for Family Success: The Road to Reunification," focuses on strategies for successful collaboration to engage with families in reunification planning. The institute is designed for foster parents, therapists, parent coaches, caseworkers and legal staff.

Our keynote presentation will focus on the importance of successful collaboration with youth and other members of the reunification team. In addition, we are happy to provide participants with a special luncheon that will include an update on the Birth Parent Mentoring program; this program continues to provide support to parents at the Cook County Juvenile Court.

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 Cook County Birth Parent Council. Please be sure to take the time to complete all session evaluations. Your feedback is very important and helps us to better serve you and your children. Thank you. I look forward to seeing you at the institute.

Sincerely,

Dr. Larry Small  
Deputy Director  
Division of Clinical Practice and Development

**Division of Clinical Practice and Development**  
**Office of Training, Caregiver & Parent Support**  
100 W. Randolph – 6th Floor • Chicago, Illinois 60601  
312-814-6800 • 312-814-1888 (fax)

406 E. Monroe Street • Station 225 • Springfield, Illinois 62701  
217-524-2422 • 217-524-3966 (fax)



ACCREDITED • COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

## 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 one council in the Cook South Region. More meetings are scheduled as parents register to attend.

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 elected officers to serve in the following positions and represent Cook County birth parents: Jacqueline LeNoir, chair; and Judith Flenorl, co-chair.

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 recruits and retains parents, and encourages and mentors them when requested. This committee also identifies resources and services within the community and the Council to assist parents as they navigate the child welfare system.
- The Media Committee develops newsletters, flyers and materials for the website
- The Training Committee plans in-service training sessions based on parents' priorities and identifies the presenters for sessions. They also plan the institute days, in-service trainings and birth parent presentations to new child welfare staff attending foundations and child protection training.

Members of the Birth Parent Council have provided training to child welfare staff in foundations training sessions by sharing their parent perspective on DCFS services provided to them during their involvement with DCFS. Birth parents have participated in several focus group discussions providing a birth parent perspective, including the DCFS Transformation Team addressing race issues and youth development. Parents have presented at Loyola University School of Law as panelists discussing birth parent issues and concerns.

Birth parents are members of the University of Illinois Steering Committee in the School of Social Work. They provide parents' perspectives on the child welfare social services curriculum. There is birth parent participation in the Cook County Juvenile Court's voluntary Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. Fathers active in the Birth Parent Council provided their input in development of the Father Engagement Curriculum co-sponsored by Northwestern University and DCFS for the Statewide Learning Collaborative. Birth parents have been hired as parent mentors and work to reach out to parents new to the child welfare system.

The Birth Parent Council has developed Family Night Outings with the Chicago Children's Museum where parents and children can spend an evening free of charge. In addition, birth parents and their families have participated in several DCFS events, including the Holiday Party, Annual Regional Picnic, sporting events and the State Fair in Springfield, Illinois.

Birth parents that are interested in joining the Cook County Birth Parent Council or would like more information may contact 773-371-6000.

# Welcome to the Seventh 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.

## 2013 Birth Parent Core Council Officers

Jacqueline LeNoir, Chair

Judith Flenorl, Co-Chair

## 2013 Birth Parent Core Council Members

Leon Alexander

Judith Flenorl

Gregory Ford

Letitia Franklin

Kenisha Harris

Theresa Leggins

Jacqueline LeNoir

Rev. Terry LeNoir

Renee Littlejohn

Chantesse O'Neal

DeLean Payton

Eric Prater

Lashelly Saterfield

Taniya Scott

Celeste Woodson

## 2013 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.

Sheila Freeman

Kelly Hancock

Karen Harrington

Janice Hopson

Rita Houston

John Huff

D. Jean Ortega-Piron

Monique Smith

Donna Steele



# Birth Parent Council Institute Day Agenda

- 8:30 a.m.**                      **Registration/Continental Breakfast**
- 9 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.**            **Welcome and Opening Remarks**  
*Jacqueline LeNoir, Chair, Cook County Birth Parent Council*  
*Donnella Bishop-Ward, Program Administrator*
- Introductions**  
*Judith Flenorl, Co-Chair, Cook County Birth Parent Council*  
*Richard H. Calica, Director, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services*  
*Dr. Cynthia Tate, Ph.D., Deputy Director, DCFS Office of Child Well-Being*  
*Ray Gates, Administrator, Office of Training, Caregiver and Parent Support*
- 9:30 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.**    **Mega Drama Presentation**  
*Monico Whittington-Eskridge, Producer; Rita Houston, Director;*  
*Karen Harrington, Narrator; Cast Members: Bremen Campbell (Father),*  
*Pat Morris (Youth), Sheila Freeman (Caseworker), Earl Pleasant (Public Defender),*  
*Monique Smith (Foster Parent), Karen Birk (Supervisor) and John Huff (Therapist)*
- 10:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.**    **Break**
- 10:30 a.m. - Noon**            **Morning Workshops**
- The Roles and Functions of the Therapist in the Reunification Process
  - Foster Caregiver Collaboration in the Reunification Process
  - The Roles and Functions of Legal Staff in the Reunification Process
  - Parent Collaboration in the Reunification Process
  - The Roles and Functions of the Caseworkers in the Reunification Process
- Noon - 1 p.m.**                      **Lunch**
- 1 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.**            **Cook County Parent Mentoring Update**
- 1:30 p.m. - 2 p.m.**            **Break/Visit Exhibits**
- 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.**            **Repeat Workshops**
- 3:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.**            **Closing Session and Special Event**

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

*Continuing Education Units (CEU's) are available for parents and staff. Please complete the application located in the registration area before the end of the institute and submit to the registration staff. Registered attendees are expected to arrive on time and attend the full institute in order to receive DCFS clock hours.*

# Birth Parent Council Institute Day Workshops

## The Roles and Function of the Therapist in the Reunification Process

### Ballroom A

This workshop will discuss the roles and functions of therapists and how treatment evaluations of families impact the reunification process. It will also discuss how parents are expected to engage with them, appropriate sharing of requested information, as well as tips for successful relationships during assessment and pitfalls that hinder progress.

*Presenter: Jataun Williams, Clinical Service Coordinator, DCFS*

## Foster Caregiver Collaboration in the Reunification Process

### Ballroom B

The role of foster parents in the reunification process is paramount. This workshop will discuss the role of foster caregivers and also share techniques for supporting children's relationships with their birth families, including preparing them for their eventual return home. Tips for successful parenting, relationship management and pitfalls that hinder the reunification progress will also be discussed.

*Presenter: Monique Smith, Birth Parent Steering Committee, Cook County*

## The Roles and Functions of Legal Staff in the Reunification Process

### Ballroom C

This workshop will discuss the legal reasons for children's placement in the child welfare system, as well as the on-going roles of the juvenile court and legal staff members in the lives of children and parents. It will also discuss the different types of court hearings and legal decisions that are made in the interest of children's safety and well-being. Tips for successful collaboration with court staff will be included, as well as identifying the pitfalls that hinder progress.

*Presenter: Jessica Bryar, Chief Public Defender's Office, Cook County*

## Parent Collaboration in the Reunification Process

### Metro Room 2 (Second Level)

There are many reasons why families are referred for child welfare services. This workshop will discuss some of those reasons, as well as provide information about parents' rights with DCFS and the juvenile court. It will also provide information parents need for self-advocacy and discuss how parents can work better with caseworkers and foster parents in the best interest of their children. Tips for successful collaboration with caseworkers, foster parents, therapists and other key individuals who assist in the reunification process will also be discussed.

*Presenter: Judith Flenorl, Cook County Birth Parent Council, Co-Chair*

## The Roles and Functions of the Caseworkers in the Reunification Process

### Ballroom D

This workshop will discuss the caseworker's role in the reunification process, how parents and caseworkers collaborate together in the best interest of children's safety and well-being, and the caseworker's role in identifying and defining resources and services needed. The workshop will also provide tips for successful relationships with caseworkers and other members of the reunification team and identifying the pitfalls that hinder progress.

*Presenter: James Bracey II, Child Welfare Advanced Specialist, DCFS*



## Presenter Biographies

**Jessica Bryar** is the chief, Civil Division, Law Office of the Public Defender of Cook County.

**James Bracey II**, holds an Master of Social Work degree from Jane Addams Graduate School of Social Work and has served as a child welfare advance specialist with DCFS since 1999. He is a strong advocate for youth and is currently the regional supervisor of the National Association of Youth Clubs.

**Judith Flenorl** is the mother of seven children and an 8-month-old grandchild. She became involved with DCFS in 2009 and is a strong supporter of the Birth Parent Council. Ms. Flenorl is very open about her journey and has helped several parents successfully navigate the child welfare system. She has also shared her story in over 15 foundation classes for new workers.

**Sheila Freeman** is an agency performance monitor for the DCFS Division of Regulation and Monitoring. She has been employed by DCFS for 20 years, and for nearly 18 of those years she has been responsible for monitoring private agency service providers. She is also a purchase of service coordinator for the DCFS/DASA Program, and is a member of the Health and Safety Committee for her division. Ms. Freeman volunteers in the St Agnes P.A.D.S. 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. Ms. Freeman is an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Steering Committee and DCFS/DASA Program.

**Karen Harrington** is an agency performance liaison for the DCFS Division of Regulation and Monitoring. Ms. Harrington has worked in the field of social services for 29 years and has been with DCFS for 20 years. She has held numerous positions throughout her employment, including: multi-service worker, intact family worker and placement worker. Ms. Harrington has experience working in the domestic violence and developmental disabilities fields. As a result of attending the permanency symposium, she is an active member of the Cook South Action Team. Karen is serving on the steering committee for the Birth Parent Council and has assisted in the planning of the Institute Day.

**Janice Hopson** received her Master of Social Work degree from the Aurora University, George Williams College-School of Social Work. She's a member of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Janice is founder and CEO of the Bradley Youth Center, an organization dedicated to helping youth transition into independent living. For the past four years she has also worked as a community organizer in the North Lawndale community. This group organizes the community against the foreclosure crisis developing in the surrounding communities and provides information about Tax Increment Financing, (TIF). After undergraduate school, she worked for DCFS for 13 years. After leaving DCFS she worked in residential treatment facilities in the capacities of clinical supervisor and program manager. She has experience writing grants, program policies, procedures, and personnel policies.

**Rita Houston** is the Statewide DCFS/DASA coordinator and has been an employee of DCFS since 1979. In her present role, she has served as a member of a small team of staff whose goal is to facilitate the accessibility of much needed services to DCFS parents in need of a range of recovery

services that will benefit children and families. Ms. Houston has also developed regional DCFS/ DASA partnership meetings which have covered several cross-training topics relative to child welfare and substance abuse. She has also developed community partners meetings in several of the Cook Regions. These meetings were designed to link community organizations, public agencies, educators, parents, child welfare staff, and substance abuse providers with DCFS and our common goals to strengthen and sustain families. Ms. Houston has worked as a caseworker, team supervisor, targeted case management coordinator and Cook County sexual abuse coordinator. Ms. Houston is known throughout the child welfare community as a resourceful and creative professional who understands the need for linkage and connection with all members of the child welfare team.

**John Huff** is an agency performance monitor with the DCFS Division of Regulation and Monitoring. He is an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Council and has taken on the role of council photographer.

**Theresa Leggins** speaks to us as a mother of four and grandmother of five who became involved with DCFS. As a result, DCFS removed all seven children residing in her home. Ms. Leggins will share her journey toward reunification with the children, including experiences with court, parenting classes, counseling, drug drops, family therapy and visitation. She will share how she found ways to endure and orchestrate a successful reunification. Her motto is: "Things happen, and once they happen, you need to pull your life back together. It's not easy, and kids get messed up in the system, but you need to have faith and humble yourself and do the best that you can."

**Jacqueline LeNoir** is the mother of six children, four boys and two girls, and the grandmother of two granddaughters and six grandsons. She became involved with DCFS nearly 14 years ago. Mrs. LeNoir and her husband overcame many challenges, and as a result, 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 they are in the department's 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. He is currently raising his three sons and one granddaughter with his wife Jacqueline. Together they support one another in ministry and in participation on the Cook County Birth Parent Council.

**Ramona Milan** has been employed by DCFS for over 20 years and currently serves as the regional manager for clinical services. She was one of the first content experts for parents in Cook County.

**Eric Prater** is a single parent who became involved with DCFS in 2005. He is an active member of the Cook County Birth Parent Council and is a strong advocate for parents, especially fathers. Mr. Prater recently participated in a review of the fatherhood training curriculum and provided insight to the professional staff about the needs of fathers.

**Monique Smith** 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 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.

**Donna Steele** has more than 20 years of experience with DCFS. She oversees staff and programs within the Division of Program Operations for the Cook Central Region. Ms. Steele is an active member of the Birth Parent Steering Committee and the LAN 67 Action Team. Ms. Steele has trained and collaborated with foster parents, private agency personnel and community providers who are working within various neighborhoods to assist families in need within their own communities. She has been a social worker for more than 21 years, working with children, the elderly and the adult mentally ill. Ms. Steele also provides field instruction for social work students.

Ms. Steele has over 30 years of experience in working collaboratively with adult learners through a variety of educational mediums. She is an adjunct professor at DePaul University, teaching social responsibility, ministry in contemporary society, and future of race in America. She has been a guest lecturer for St. Francis University and a guest speaker for workshops and conferences for organizations such as NAACP and the National Association of Black Social Workers. She is an ordained minister who has provided leadership and instruction for over 30 years. Ms. Steele holds a masters degree in social service administration from the University of Chicago and a bachelors degree in music with a concentration in therapy from DePaul University. She holds numerous certifications and licenses.

**Jataun Williams** has been employed by DCFS for 18 years, the bulk of that time spent as a case manager. In 2008 she was promoted to the position of public service administrator with the Division of Day Care Licensing, where she remained for three years. She currently serves as a public service administrator in the Division of Clinical Practice and Development. Prior to coming to DCFS, she was a training counselor and evaluation and assessment specialist for CARC; worked with senior developmentally-disabled residents in a community integrated living arrangement at Victor C. Neumann Association.

Ms. Williams is a former adjunct faculty member in the social work departments of Northeastern Illinois University and Chicago State University. She is president of the Chicago Chapter of the National Association of Black Social Workers, where she has been a dedicated member since 2004. For two years she held the position of chair over the counseling ministry of Trinity United Church of Christ. She has always been a proponent of birth parents exercising their rights and facilitated fatherhood groups to focus on the issues and barriers that prevent non-resident fathers from engaging with their children. Ms. Williams holds a bachelors degree in psychology from Eureka and her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Chicago SSA.

**Monico Whittington-Eskridge** is the statewide administrator of the Field Support Program, Supervisory Training to Enhance Practice Program.

## Exhibitors

Paternal Involvement Center	Department of Human Services TANF
Strengthening Families Illinois Initiative	DCFS Service Interventions Intact Families
Catholic Charities-Therapeutic Services	Office of Child Development
DCFS Norman Services	Chicago Park District
One Hope United	Black Star Project
Chicago Christian Industrial League	Chicago Children's Museum, Navy Pier
DCFS DASA Initiative-TASC	Community Mental Health Center
Illinois Employment Security	A Knock At Midnight
McDermott Center-Haymarket	Tiealade-Women's Ministry
Salvation Army Social Services	Passages
Illinois Department of Health	Centers For New Horizons
CEDA	Healthy Families Chicago
Mary & Tom Leo and Associates	

*Exhibitor Coordinator: Sheila Freeman, Agency Performance Monitor, DCFS*

*Photographer: John Huff, DCFS*

## Department Content Experts

**Located 2nd Floor • Available by appointment during Institute**

Donna Steele, DCFS Program Administrator – Division of Program Operations, Cook Central

Ramona Milan, DCFS Clinical Services Administrator – Cook South

**The Birth Parent Institute Planning Committee  
wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the following:**

Dorothy Gordon, Clinical Practice and Development/Foster PRIDE

Patricia Lofton, Foster-Adopt PRIDE





