

Our History and Our 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 three local councils. Currently there is one council in each Region: North, South, and Central. Meetings are scheduled for each site as parents register.

The mission of all councils is to identify issues concerning birth parents and present these issues to the appropriate DCFS administration 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.

Ramona Randall, Cook County Birth Parent



COOK COUNTY BIRTH PARENT COUNCIL
PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

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COOK COUNTY BIRTH PARENT COUNCIL INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE FOR BIRTH PARENTS

WHAT IS THE BIRTH PARENT COUNCIL?

The Partnering With Parents Birth Parent Council is the official council DCFS created to advise the Department on issues affecting families. In the Councils parents participate in discussions, reviews and comments about agency policies, procedures, programs and practices for families who are served by the child welfare system.

The goal of the Council is to provide families with a voice in the services provided to them. The Council is one way parents can help DCFS to understand the needs of families as they journey toward reunification or work to stay together.

Council members discuss areas of concern or interest. Council members may discuss and make recommendations to the Department. DCFS staff may also ask members for comments on issues and to provide opinions and suggestions about child welfare programs.

In addition, the Birth Parent Councils can also provide parents a safe and neutral environment where they can share concerns and learn from other parents how to overcome the problems that caused their DCFS involvement.

The Council is open to any parent who is involved with DCFS through investigations, placement or intact services. Parents may be currently active or were previously involved with DCFS. Your participation in the Council is voluntary and we hope you will take advantage of a wonderful support the Department has designed to assist parents.

WHAT CAN THE BIRTH PARENT COUNCIL DO FOR PARENTS?

1. As you are going through the DCFS system, the Birth Parent Council can provide you with additional information about DCFS and its processes.
2. If there are problems, it can help you navigate the system to bring your concerns to staff that can help.
3. It can help you better understand and use the information given to you by the investigator, the caseworker or court personnel.
4. By attending Council meetings, you can meet and link with other parents that are experiencing or have experienced some of the feelings you may have. They can offer encouragement, support and hope.

5. Participation in the Council will empower you to take responsibility for your own circumstances and learn about other systems involved in your services.

6. Provide you access to Advocacy services designed to make sure you understand your rights, what is expected of you, your caseworker, and others that provide services to your family.

7. The Council also provides in-service training that will help you and your family successfully handle your DCFS situation.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Contact the Cook County Birth Parent Council staff at 773-371-6000, or attend the next meeting. Meeting and location times are posted on the DCFS website at:

http://dcfswebtest/DCFS/library/com_communications_advisory.shtml and go to Parent Advisory Link or simply call.

You are not alone in this process; there are other parents that are available to provide you with support and encouragement!