

5th Annual DCFS Partnering with Parents
Cook County Birth Parent Council Institute Day



**Keeping Our Kids: Managing
Our Children's Education**

June 17, 2011

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

Pat Quinn
Governor



Erwin McEwen
Director

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

Dear Parent:

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

The Birth Parent Councils and the Steering Council developed this Institute to reach out to all DCFS birth parents and child welfare staff who serve them. The theme this year "Keeping Our Kids: Managing Our Children's Education" will help parents to better understand the educational process and is especially timely because parents identified the topic of education as an area where they required more information.

The Department of Children and Family Services is committed to the development of Birth Parent Councils throughout the state, that provide the advocacy parents need to ensure their voices are heard in the child welfare system. The Department is very proud of the efforts made here in Cook County to reach parents and help them better navigate the child welfare system.

At this year's Institute, parents will learn how to work within the state educational systems in partnership with those responsible for educating their children. Parents will learn about their rights and responsibilities as parents. They will also learn what resources are available to help their children when returned home.

The workshops will allow each parent to learn about the many aspects of child and adult education. They will also enhance parents' ability to meet their child's needs and better advocate for their children and themselves.

The keynote speaker and each presenter will provide critical information for parents and children that will help reduce school failures. I encourage you to take full advantage of this opportunity to learn new skills and gain insight into Illinois' educational system and how it can assist you and your child.

On behalf of the entire DCFS staff and partner agencies, I thank you for taking the time to attend 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 Parent

Welcome to the Fifth Annual Cook County Birth Parent Institute Day!

This year the theme for the Institute is “Keeping Our Kids: Managing Our Children’s Education”. The primary focus is to provide parents with skills and knowledge to help their children successfully complete their education. Whether the child is in the home or recently returned home, parents need to be involved in every aspect of their child’s education. Knowledge, skills and involvement will help parents and children better work with their caseworkers and those in the educational field.

The entire day is dedicated to assisting families with children in the educational system. From the Keynote Speakers to the afternoon workshops, all information presented is designed to help children succeed. The workshops will include important information about the educational system and how as a parent to navigate. I encourage parents to participate and ask questions in those workshops selected.

The Birth Parent Council and members of the Steering Council are commended for their commitment and dedication to this program. Both Councils are partnering to provide excellent leadership and support to the Department’s Mission. I encourage you to learn more about the Cook County Birth Parent Council and consider becoming a partner. Please be sure to complete every evaluation form each session you attend as your feedback helps us to better serve you and your children.

I hope you will spend time with the child welfare experts and staff during the day; each is available to answer your questions.

Sincerely,

Shaun Lane
Deputy Director
Division of Service Support

Division of Service Support
100 West Randolph, 6-200 • Chicago, Illinois 60601-3249
312-814-6800 • 312-814-8783 / TTY

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 and 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 recently elected officers to serve in the following positions to represent Cook County Birth Parents: Rev. Terry LeNoir, Sr., Chair; and Leon Alexander, 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, 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.

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: 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 are providing parent's perspective 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.

The Birth Parent Council has developed Thursday Family Night Outings with the Chicago Children's Museum where parents and children can spend an evening free of charge.

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

Welcome to the Fifth 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!

2011 Birth Parent Core Council Officers

Rev. Terry LeNoir, Sr., Chair

Leon Alexander, Co-Chair

2011 Birth Parent Core Council Members

Leon Alexander

Greg Cox

Sharron Duffie

Judith Flenorl

Letitia Franklin

David Israel

Theresa Leggins

Jacqueline LeNoir

Reverend Terry LeNoir

Renee Littlejohn

Sharon McDaniel

Eric Prater

Ramona Randall

Rayvese Woodfork-Smith

2011 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.

Karen Felix

Sheila Freeman

Kelly Hancock

Karen Harrington

Janice Hopson

Rita Houston

Jacqueline Johnson

Diane Mariani

Theresa Matthews

D. Jean Ortega-Piron

Lourdes Rodriguez

Monique Smith

Donna Steele

Carmen Valesquez

Jeff Walker



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**
Rev. Terry LeNoir, Sr., Chair Cook County Birth Parent Council
Shaun Lane, Deputy Director, DCFS Division of Service Support
- 9:15 a.m.** **Keynote Address: “Strategies for Managing Your Child’s Education”**
Introduction of Speaker – Leon Alexander, Co-Chair Cook County Birth Parent Council
Mr. Robert W. Runcie, Chief Officer, Area 17 Office Chicago Board Of Education
- Skit**
- 10:15 a.m.** **Break**
- 10:30 a.m.** **Mega Workshop: “Education And Child Development”**
- Andria Goss, Director Early Childhood Education, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
 - Dr. Reginald Richardson, PhD, LCSW
The Family Institute, Northwestern University
- Noon** **Lunch**
- 12:30 p.m.** **Luncheon Address: “Student Progress: Parent Rights and Responsibilities”**
Introduction of Luncheon Speaker: Renee Littlejohn, Birth Parent
Luncheon Speaker: Rev. Dr. Janette C. Wilson-Howard ESQ,
Chief Administration Officer, Chicago Public Schools
- 1:30 p.m.** **Break**
- 1:45 p.m.** **Workshops**
- Child And Family Benefits
 - Dawson Technical Institute – Adult Education
 - Health, Wellness, and Nutrition
 - Homeless Youth Services
 - Parent Involvement and Advocacy
 - Special Education
 - Special Schools
 - Student Transportation
 - Youth/Mentoring
- 3:45 p.m.** **Wrap-Up Session/Evaluation**
- 4 p.m.** **Special Event**

Exhibit Tables will be located on the second floor during lunch, afternoon break and closing session from 12:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.

CEU's are available for parents and staff. Please complete the application located in the Registration area before the end of the conference and submit to the Registration staff.

Keynote Presenter

Robert W. Runcie



“The battle for quality education is the social justice cause of our time. If you believe that every child has the right to a quality education, then there is no more important work than providing the right leadership to dramatically transform public education in this country. I have found my passion and purpose in life – to improve the human condition by giving every child an equal chance to excel and achieve happiness.”
~ Bob Runcie

As the Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Operating Officer Bob was responsible for providing leadership to administrative units, developing and executing online learning strategies to improve teaching and learning, and leading community relations and external affairs activities focused on improving schools and developing the capacity of the city’s neighborhoods, parents and stakeholders to drive substantive school reform.

Bob has expanded his understanding of education policies and practices through his work with the Broad Superintendents Academy (graduated in 2009 as Broad Fellow), Council of Great City Schools, and Board Member of International Association for Truancy & Dropout Prevention.

Bob launched the district’s Safe Haven programs – Winter, Spring, Summer, and After School - with more than 100 faith based institutions serving more than 5,000 students across the city during school break periods and after school. He also developed the district’s Family & Community Engagement program that works with parents, community organizations, local businesses, faith based leaders, educators and others to develop holistic strategies to improve neighborhood schools and communities.

As a Chief Area Officer, Bob is leading the development and execution of strategies to improve student achievement in a portfolio of 23 schools with 12,000 students. He is focused on the following goals:

- Increase student achievement
- Eliminate achievement gap
- Ensure elementary school graduates are high school ready
- Increase high school graduation rate
- Decrease high school dropout rate
- Increase number of students attending college

Prior to joining the Chicago Public Schools, Bob served as the president and founder of a management consulting and technology service company specializing in project management, large scale systems implementations, and organizational strategy. He has worked for management consulting companies such as Computer Sciences Corporation and Arthur Andersen (now Accenture) and the local firm of Washington, Pittman & McKeever.

Bob’s personal story is one that connects with the extraordinary challenges our children and families face:

- He and his parents immigrated to the U.S. in 1967
- He is the first in his family to go to college - Harvard College and Northwestern MBA
- He and his wife are successfully raising three children (two currently enrolled in CPS schools, and one CPS graduate now attending college)
- He has been a resident and homeowner in Chicago’s South Shore community for 23 years.

Mega Workshop Presenters

Andria Goss, M.S., MSW
Director, Early Childhood Program,
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

A graduate of Erikson Institute's Child Development Program and Loyola University Chicago's Social Work Program, Andria Goss has worked with children and families in the child welfare setting for the past 16 years. Early in her profession, she worked in the capacity of a Child Welfare Specialist employed by Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, a private agency contracted to serve families in the Child Welfare System. This job afforded her the opportunity to provide direct service and support to families in need. During her five years at the same agency, Andria Goss held several positions that included being a licensing representative, education liaison, and lead child welfare specialist.

In early 2000, Andria Goss began working with the Early Childhood Program which was then a new specialty services project. The Early Childhood Program is a collaborative project between the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and Erikson Institute and provides services to children between birth and five years old who are involved in the Child Welfare System. As the program director, Ms. Goss manages a team of developmental specialists and clinical practitioners who provide comprehensive services to complex families and their young children. Child development, trauma, and attachment are Ms. Goss' areas of interest and expertise.

Dr. Reginald Richardson, PhD, LCSW
The Family Institute, Northwestern University



Reginald C. Richardson, PhD, LCSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Vice President for Evaluation and Clinical Services at The Family Institute at Northwestern University. He holds undergraduate degrees in psychology and social work, a graduate degree in psychiatric social work and a doctorate from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Richardson is also a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers.

Dr. Richardson is a Clinical Lecturer in Psychology at Northwestern University and a frequent speaker and trainer in the area of child and family issues. His research has focused on Understanding Behavioral Problems in Children of Color, Parenting Practices in Kinship Foster Care and Evaluation of Social Service Programs. Dr. Richardson maintains a clinical practice that specializes in individual, couple, family therapy and outreach to persons of color in under-resourced communities.

Luncheon Keynote Speaker

Rev. Dr. Janette C. Wilson-Howard ESQ



Rev. Janette C. Wilson began her career as a chemist, which led to various teaching positions at all levels– from elementary school to college–in the Chicago area, to the legal profession and finally to Christian ministry. Her employment record is as diverse as her educational background. Dr. Wilson has taught schools, served as an environmental chemist, a pump engineer, trial lawyer (for 15 years), hosted a weekly cable television broadcast (for 15 years), administered a union based medical center (for 8 years) and been engaged in the struggle for civil and human rights all of her life. Dr. Wilson has served as Associate Pastor of Grace Calvary United Methodist, and Cosmopolitan Community Church, Associate Pastor for Family Ministry for the 1st Baptist Congregational United Church of Christ in Chicago and currently the Associate Pastor of Leadership Development and Strategic Planning for the Providence MB Church. She recently served as the 1st African American female Dean of the Doctor of Ministry Program for United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

Dr. Wilson is employed as the Manager of School Climate for the Chicago Public Schools. She organized the volunteer legal clinic for the National Rainbow PUSH Coalition Inc. and became its first volunteer director for a number of years. Prior to her employment with the Chicago Public Schools, Rev. Attorney Wilson was the Acting General Counsel for Chicago State University. Prior to that, she was Executive Director of Operation PUSH. In this role, she implemented day-to-day operations of the organization, created community development networking programs, and created local and national voter registration and education seminars, and introduced alternative sentencing programs in cooperation with various religious organizations. Rev. Wilson spent most of her adult life as a civil rights advocate. She has utilized her investigative skills developed during her years as an environmental scientist, her negotiating skills developed while practicing as a criminal defense attorney and her conscience as a Christian, to assist minorities in receiving social justice and economic parity. Rev. Wilson's commitment to youth is unquestionable. She has spent her adult life hiring, mentoring, employing, and establishing internship programs for youth.

Dr. Wilson accepted the call to the ministry in 1994, when she preached her first sermon on October 5, 1994, at the Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois. She was ordained by the Reverend Clay Evans, Pastor of Fellowship, September, 1997. She was awarded a Doctorate of Divinity from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio in May of the same year.

In 1971, Dr. Wilson received her Bachelor's degree in Chemistry from MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Illinois. Four years later, she earned a Master of Arts Degree in Environmental Science/Planning from Governor's State University and in 1980, received her Juris Doctorate from the John Marshall Law School and was admitted to the Illinois Bar the same year.

Rev. Dr. Janette C. Wilson currently resides with her husband, Rodney, and daughter, Naima, in Chicago, Illinois. Dr. Wilson is a member of several civic and religious organizations including: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., various Legal Associations and Rainbow/PUSH Coalition Inc.

Birth Parent Council Institute Day

Workshops

Child and Family Benefits

1:45 p.m. - 2:25 p.m

2:25 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

3:05 pm - 3:45 p.m.

This workshop will increase access, enrollment, and renewal of CPS's students and families in the following Programs: SNAP (Food Stamps), All Kids/Family Care (Health insurance), and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). The workshop will also clear up misunderstandings about eligibility criteria (i.e. immigration status and working family status) and the workshop will address parents' need for information regarding eligibility access enrollment and renewal of support and public benefit programs that parents need to maintain their child's school enrollment and achievement. It will help parents work with Illinois Department of Human Services, Chicago Public Schools and Community Agencies and Organizations. With the economic down turn in the nation, it has had significant impact on many parents who struggle to provide basic essentials for their families.

Presenter: Mr. Sergio Obregon, Liaison Child & Family Benefits, Chicago Public Schools

Parent: Jacqueline LeNoir

Dawson Technical Institute – Adult Education and GED Programs

1:45 p.m. - 2:25 p.m

2:25 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

3:05 pm - 3:45 p.m.

This workshop will inform participants what is needed to pursue adult education for the GED program, Literacy Program and what programs are available, the enrollment requirements and resources that facilitate program completion.

Presenter: Ms. Pamela Thomas, Coordinator GED Program, Chicago City Colleges – Dawson Technical Institute

Parent: Ms. Renee Littlejohn

Health, Wellness and Nutrition

1:45 p.m. - 2:25 p.m

2:25 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

3:05 pm - 3:45 p.m.

This workshop will address the goals and program benefits of the Chicago Public School (CPS) nutrition program and the cause and effect relationships between diet and performance in school. Parents will learn more about the resources available to students and parents through CPS health and wellness initiatives, including healthy school food, nutrition education, physical activity, vision exams, dental exams, asthma prevention and treatment, and school-based health centers. The reduced price breakfast and lunch applications will also be included in the presentation as well as any other resources that can enhance parent's knowledge, parenting skills and relationships with school personnel.

Presenters: Ms. Annie Lionberger, Health & Wellness Manager

Ms. Virginia Montgomery, Chicago Public Schools

Parent: Mr. David Israel

Homeless Youth Services

1:45 p.m. - 2:25 p.m

2:25 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

3:05 pm - 3:45 p.m.

This workshop will help parents and children address the issues students face when challenged by homelessness or temporary living situations while trying to maintain school attendance. It will inform families of the supportive services available to Chicago Public School students who are homeless, doubled up, or unaccompanied. This information provides critical education about federally mandated resources that are available at every Chicago Public School.

Presenters: Ms. Keisha Keith and Mr. Luis Valadez, Program Support Coordinators, Educational Support For Students In Temporary Living Situations (STLS) Chicago Public Schools

Parent: Rev. Terry Lenoir Sr.

Parent Involvement and Advocacy

1:45 p.m. - 2:25 p.m

2:25 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

3:05 pm - 3:45 p.m.

This workshop will address parents' need for information regarding parent relation and advocacy programs that enhance their knowledge about becoming involved in the Chicago Public School (CPS) services that positively affect their children's school achievement and their relationship with school personnel. It will focus on the importance of family involvement in the child's education using current research showing the importance of family involvement on children. In addition, the workshop will focus on the parent as teachers from the beginning and parents' role in education partnership with schools. Parents will learn about effective communication, getting involved, steps to take and the CPS problem resolution contacts.

Presenter: Ms. Tricia Luzadder, Parent Involvement and Dispute Resolution Administration, Office of Special Education and Support

Parent: Ms. Sharron Duffie

Special Education

1:45 p.m. - 2:25 p.m

2:25 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

3:05 pm - 3:45 p.m.

This Cracker Barrel workshop will provide participants with a brief overview of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The workshop will cover how a child qualifies for special education, what an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is, and what kinds of services can be provided in Special Education. It will also briefly discuss how parents can advocate with the schools for special education services.

*Presenters: Ms. Donnis Briscoe, IDCFS Education Advisor
Ms. Yasmina Sefiane, IDCFS Education Advisor*

Parent: Ms. Judith Flenorl

Special Schools

1:45 p.m. - 2:25 p.m

2:25 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

3:05 pm - 3:45 p.m.

This Cracker Barrel workshop will discuss the many types of Special Schools that are often confusing to parents and children. The workshop will discuss what each of these is and how a student is enrolled in them, and why. This includes Attendance Area Schools, Controlled Enrollment Schools, Magnet Schools, Charter Schools, Contract Schools, Therapeutic Day Schools, Special Education Schools, Co-op Schools, and Alternative Schools.

Presenters: Ms. Arlecia Brown, IDCFS Education Advisor

Ms. Rebecca Lawrence , IDCFS Education Advisor

Parent: Mr. Leon Alexander

Student Transportation

1:45 p.m. - 2:25 p.m

2:25 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

3:05 pm - 3:45 p.m.

This Cracker Barrel Workshop will discuss school transportation issues like – who qualifies, how to obtain transportation, why a student does not qualify for transportation, how a student can be removed from transportation, and transportation as it relates to an Individual Education Program.

Presenter: Ms. Diane Fitzhugh, IDCFS Education Advisor

Parent: Ms. Theresa Leggins

Youth And Mentoring Services

1:45 p.m. - 2:25 p.m

2:25 p.m. - 3:05 p.m.

3:05 pm - 3:45 p.m.

This workshop will provide parent's with information about the services provided by the Chicago Urban League and how to access these services for their children. This information is helpful to parents separated from their children many of whom have recently returned home after separation from their birth families for extended periods.

Presenter: Mr. Antoine Harris, Chicago Urban League

Parent: Ms. Sharon McDaniel



Presenter Biographies

Donnis Briscoe graduated Suma Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Education from Northeastern University. Upon completing student teaching and obtaining her teaching certificate, she accepted a teaching position within the Chicago Public School District. Ms. Briscoe joined Northern Illinois University Education Access Project for the Department of Children and Family Services in 2004 as the Assistant Education Advisor for the Cook North City Region. In June 2009, she was promoted to the Education Advisor position for the Cook North City Region.

Arlecia Brown is the Northern Illinois University /DCFS Education Advisor for the Cook Central City Region. Prior to this, she was the Assistant Education Advisor for the Cook South Region for six years. Before coming to DCFS, Ms. Brown was a math teacher with the Chicago Public Schools. Ms. Brown has an undergraduate degree from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia and a Master's Degree in Adult Education from Northern Illinois University. After graduating from Spelman, she lived in Atlanta for nearly eighteen years. During that time, she was the director of a preschool program and worked in the library at Georgia State University.

Diane Fitzhugh is the Northern Illinois University /DCFS Education Advisor for the Cook South City Region. Ms. Fitzhugh has been an Advisor for nearly ten years. Prior to working with DCFS, she was with Chicago Public Schools for thirty years as a special education teacher, a high school English teacher and an assistant principal. Ms. Fitzhugh has an undergraduate degree in English from NIU and a Master's Degree in Special Education from Chicago State University; and a Master's Degree in Administration and Supervision from Roosevelt University.

Antoine P. Harris is a native of Chicago's South Side where he attended Dunbar Vocational Career Academy. He graduated with an Associates Degree from Kennedy King College and from there went on to complete his undergraduate studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Antoine also received a scholarship from the University of Illinois at Chicago to complete his Masters Degree in Social Work. For the past seven years, Antoine has worked in social services and currently works as a Life Coach with the Chicago Urban League, where he mentors young men between the ages of 12-18. Antoine is passionately committed to serving youth and helping them make a successful transition into manhood.

Keisha Keith is currently the Program Support Coordinator for Chicago Public School's Educational Support for Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS). She received her BA in Sociology from Central State University (Wilberforce, Ohio) and her MA in ABS, Social Problems from Wright State University in 1999. A former ward, teen mom, and homeless youth, she went on to obtain her child welfare license and multiple social service advocacy certifications. During a career that spans 20 years, she has made many contributions at the local, state, and national level by providing crisis intervention, education, advocacy, and consultation services related to homelessness, domestic violence, and sexual assault prevention.

Rebecca Lawrence is the Education Advisor for the Cook South Suburban Region. Ms. Lawrence is a career educator with three adult children and the proud grandmother of two pre-school boys. She has a master's degree in education administration, and is a retired teacher with more than 30 years of experience with the Chicago Public Schools as an elementary school teacher, high school English instructor, assistant principal, and director of an evening high school program. Ms. Lawrence has been an educational advisor with DCFS for five years.

Annie Lionberger is the Manager of Health and Wellness Promotion at the Chicago Public Schools. In this capacity, Annie provides leadership and administration in developing advocacy, policy approaches and guidance to advance Chicago Public Schools commitment to student health and wellness. Annie has worked in several local and international organizations to address socioeconomic and health disparities, including the Greater Chicago Food Depository where she served as the Director of Programs from 2009-2011. She obtained her B.A. from Middlebury College in Vermont and her Master's Degree in Public Policy at the University of Chicago.

Tricia Luzadder joined the Office of Special Education and Supports at CPS in November 2011. Her current role is that of Parent Liaison in the Dispute Resolution Process. As a parent of a child with disabilities in Chicago Public Schools, Tricia represents all parents with children with disabilities in CPS. She is there to support parents, guide them through the special education process, share resources with them and give the parents' the perspective to the processes and procedures at CPS. Tricia is also in charge of the Parent and Educator Partnership (PEP) grant at CPS. The PEP's mission is to help educators and parents collaborate to ensure every child's success. For the previous ten years, Tricia was very involved with the National Association for Down Syndrome (NADS), first as a parent support volunteer and eventually taking on the role as the Family Support Coordinator for the organization. Prior to working for NADS Tricia spent several years at home raising her three children. Shortly after the birth of her second son, Tricia left her job in Fixed Income Sales and Trading at Goldman, Sachs International, where she spent several years in Chicago, London, England and Frankfurt, Germany. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1985 with a degree in German and Linguistics. Tricia, her husband and three children live on the north side of Chicago.

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 the Cook South Regional Administrator in the Division of Child Protection. Previously she served as a Senior Public Service Administrator in the Division of Guardian and Advocacy where she managed the Statewide Consent and Immigration Units. She has also 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.

Virginia Montgomery is a Coordinated School Health Specialist at the Chicago Public Schools. She works to develop and maintain health related partnerships for the district and manages the dental program and school based health services, including school based health centers and mobile healthcare vans. Prior to this role, Virginia worked as a school nurse for CPS at five elementary schools on the north side of Chicago. She obtained her Bachelor's of Science in Nursing from the University of New Hampshire and her Master's Degree in Public Health Nursing from Rush University in Chicago.

Sergio Obregon, M.Ed. is a graduate from the University of Illinois at Chicago. He has worked for the Chicago Public Schools for the past 11 years. Through his studies and dedication to helping families achieve success, he has developed a deep appreciation on the importance of educating families in a holistic manner. By focusing on the "whole child/whole family" philosophy of education, Sergio continues to fight for equal education opportunities for all families. Furthermore, Sergio has discovered a passion of assuring that families receive equal access to information and programs to overcome economic and educational deficits. Because of his dedication to these issues, he has been instrumental in improving services offered by state and federal agencies. By initiating collaboration between state, federal, not for profit and grassroots organizations he has helped formulate a system to improve the gaps in accessing resources.

Dora Rodríguez is a long time employee of the Chicago Public Schools. Dora began her career as a Teacher Assistant in Early Childhood. During her ten-year stint in the classroom, she developed a streamlined method of reporting and record keeping that was recognized by funding Federal Agencies. After receiving training in Early Childhood Education, Dora moved to the Field Office for Early Childhood. There, she provided Social Services to families, relying on her Spanish speaking skills to assist families in accessing services. Mrs. Rodriguez then moved to the offices, of Early Childhood where she was an integral part of the daily operations and follow up of over 100 classrooms throughout the City of Chicago. In 2006, she took a position in the Office of School Financial Services, Children and Family Benefits Unit. Her focus since then has been to assist families' access public benefits. Her experience and empathy for families has helped her ensure that families receive the services they qualify for and that they are treated with dignity and respect.

Yasmina Sefiane is the Northern Illinois University/DCFS Education Advisor for the Cook Central and North Suburbs. Previously she was the Advisor for the Cook South Suburbs and Assistant Advisor for Cook Central. Ms. Sefiane has been with the Department for eleven years. She has been a part of the Youth Advisory Board as well as the Foster Parent Advisory Board in Cook South. Prior to working with DCFS Ms. Sefiane taught elementary school in Forest Park and Waukegan. She also taught English as a Second Language at the College of Lake County. Her undergraduate degree is from Moody Bible Institute and her Master's degree is from NIU.

Donna Steele, MA is the Cook Central Regional Program Manager with more than 20 years experience with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. 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. One of the other many roles Ms. Steele enjoys is training of staff. She 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 where she has worked with the children, the elderly and the adult mentally ill. Ms. Steele also provides Field Instruction for BSW and MSW students. Ms. Steele has over 30 years of experience in working collaboratively with adult learners through a variety of educational mediums. Ms. Steele is an adjunct professor at DePaul University, teaching Social Responsibility, Ministry in Contemporary Society, and Future of Race in America. She also has been a guest lecturer for St. Francis University. She has been the guest speaker for workshops and conferences for organizations such as NAACP, and 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.

Pamela Thomas is an Adult Education Program Coordinator for City Colleges of Chicago. Ms. Thomas coordinates the efforts of adult educators and adult learners at the following levels: Literacy, Adult Basic Education (ABE), Intermediate and Pre-GED. Ms. Thomas helps prepare adult students to meet the educational and completion requirements of the program. She has a strong commitment to ensuring that parents involved with DCFS understand the requirements for the attainment of academic goals at Chicago City Colleges and beyond. Ms. Thomas has a passion for educating adults and after thirty years, she returned to graduate school at DePaul University and is in the process of completing her Master's Degree in Educating Adults.

Luis Valadez is the AmeriCorps VISTA Supervisor with Chicago Public Schools Educational Support for Students in Temporary Living Situations Program (STLS). He has been with STLS since 2008 and currently supervises two teams of VISTA members: Chicago HOPES, an after-school tutoring and arts program for K-12 students living in homeless shelters; Program Support, an outreach team tasked with coordinating parents, schools, community organizations, social service agencies, and the Chicago City-Council with STLS to meet the holistic needs of homeless students. He received a BA from Columbia College Chicago and MFA from Naropa University.

Exhibitors

A Knock At Midnight – Family Advocacy Center	DCFS Office of Education & Transition Services
A Safe Haven	DCFS Special Services Unit
Black Star Project	DCFS Field Operations
Chicago Park District	Fatherhood Initiative
Chicago Public Library	Fellowship Connection – Family Advocacy Center
Chicago Public Schools – STLS Program	Forever Free
Citizen’s Utility Board (CUB)	Haymarket Center
DCFS Action Teams	Lawndale Christian Health Center
DCFS CAYIT	Mary & Tom Leo
DCFS Cook County Birth Parent Council	Metropolitan Family Services
DCFS Division of Child Protection	Passages
DCFS Differential Response	Salvation Army
DCFS Educational Liaisons	Sankofa
DCFS Family to Family	Strengthening Families Illinois
DCFS Follow-up Services	TASC – DCFS/DASA Project
DCFS Latino Services	YMCA Alliance
DCFS Norman Services	Youth 1st Counseling

Exhibitor Coordinator, Janice Hopson, CEO, Bradley Youth Center

Department Content Experts

Located 2nd Floor • Available by appointment during Institute

Donna Steele, DCFS Program Administrator – Division of Program Operations, Cook Central
Theresa Matthews, DCFS Regional Administrator – Division of Child Protection, Cook South

