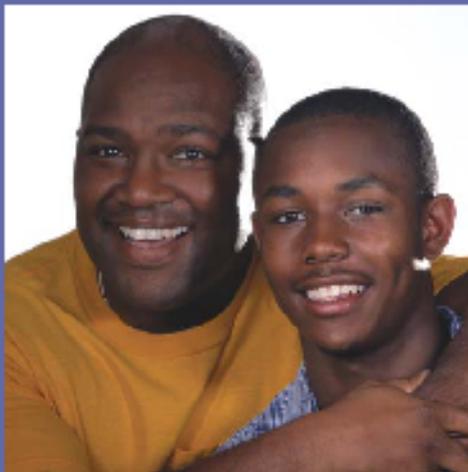


6th Annual DCFS Partnering with Parents
Cook County Birth Parent Council Institute Day



**Keeping Our Kids: Managing Parent
Relationships with Our Children and Our Teens –
At Home, Away From Home and Returning Home**



June 8, 2012

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

Pat Quinn
Governor



Richard H. Calica
Director

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services



Dear Parents and Colleagues;

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

The Birth Parent Councils and the Steering Committee developed this Institute to reach out to all DCFS birth parents and the child welfare staff who serve them. The theme this year, "Managing Relationships with Children At Home, During Placement and Return Home," will help parents better understand the importance of managing relationships successfully with their children, caseworkers, caregivers, attorneys and other members of the service team in order to achieve more timely permanency outcomes.

The Department of Children and Family Services is committed to the Birth Parent Councils that provide the advocacy parents need to ensure their voices are heard in the child welfare system. It is also proud of the efforts made here in Cook County to partner with parents to improve DCFS policy and service delivery to families.

The keynote speaker and each presenter will provide critical information for parents and staff and I encourage you to participate fully.

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

Sincerely,

Richard H. Calica
Director

406 E. Monroe Street • Springfield, Illinois 62701
217-785-2509 • 217-524-3715 / TTY



ACCREDITED • COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Pat Quinn
Governor



Richard H. Calica
Director

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Sixth Annual Cook County Birth Parent Institute! The theme this year focuses on your relationships with your children and teens at home, during placement and return home. Our purpose is to enhance your knowledge and skills in successfully managing your relationships with your children which we believe will positively impact on permanency outcomes for your family.

This year workshops will include important information about service collaboration throughout the entire child welfare process, from intake to service completion. Parents will learn tools for effective communication, the service planning process, service appeals and minimum parenting standards. In addition, a special luncheon presentation will update you on our new Parent Mentoring Program created to provide support to parents beginning at their first court hearing.

I continue to 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. I also encourage you 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Shaun Lane'.

Shaun Lane
Deputy Director
Division of Service Support

406 E. Monroe Street • Springfield, Illinois 62701
217-785-2509 • 217-524-3715 / TTY



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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 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: 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.

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, Holiday Party, Annual Regional Picnic, sporting events and the State Fair in Springfield, IL.

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, Birth Parent Media Chair

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!

2012 Birth Parent Core Council Officers

Rev. Terry LeNoir, Chairman
Leon Alexander, Co-Chairman

2012 Birth Parent Core Council Members

Leon Alexander

Greg Cox

Sharron Duffie

Judith Flenori

Letitia Franklin

Theresa Leggins

Jacqueline LeNoir

Reverend Terry LeNoir

Renee Littlejohn

Sharon McDaniel

Eric Prater

Ramona Randall



2012 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

Jacqueline Johnson

Diane Mariani

Theresa Matthews

D. Jean Ortega-Piron

Lourdes Rodriguez

Monique Smith

Donna Steele

Carmen Velasquez

Jeff Walker



Keynote Speaker
Dr. Reginald Richardson



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.

Clinical Interests: Couples, individuals and families; adolescents with life transition problems; marital conflict; mediation; crisis debriefings. Family Institute Location: Downtown Chicago.

Luncheon Speakers

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 Leggins, speaks to us as a mother of four and grandmother of five who became involved with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services because of allegations of sexual assault concerning her two 5-year-old granddaughters. 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 provides insightful perspective on what generally was for her a humiliating process based on a lie. She will share how she found ways to endure and orchestrate a successful reunification. She is thankful. *“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.”*

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
DCFS Sixth Annual Cook County Birth Parent Council Institute Day

“Keeping Our Kids: Managing Parent Relationships with Our Children and Our Teens - At Home, Away From Home and Returning Home”

Institute at A Glance

8:30 a.m.	Registration/Continental Breakfast
9:00 a.m.	Welcome & Opening Remarks Donnella Bishop-Ward, Program Administrator Rev. Terry LeNoir, Sr., Chair, Cook County Birth Parent Council Introductions Shaun Lane, DCFS Deputy Director Division of Support Services
9:15 a.m.	Keynote Address Leon Alexander, Co-Chair Cook County Birth Parent Council Dr. Reginald Richardson, PhD, LCSW The Family Institute, Northwestern University
10:15 a.m.	Break
10:30 a.m.	Workshops
12:00 p.m.	Lunch Luncheon Speakers, Parent Mentoring Program, Healthy Families Chicago Introduction of Speakers, Renee Littlejohn, Birth Parent Council Rev. Terry LeNoir, Parent Mentor Theresa Leggins, Parent Mentor
1:00 p.m.	Service Planning Exercise, Rudy Harris, Curriculum Design Manager
1:30 p.m.	Exhibits & Break
2:00 p.m.	Workshops
3:30 p.m.	Closing Session
4:00 p.m.	Special Event

Exhibit Tables will be located on the second floor during lunch, afternoon break and closing session from 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 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.

issues will be identified and strategies for parents to prepare for them mentally, physically, financially and emotionally will be provided.

Presenter: Kim Jackson-Cobb, Vanessa Lankford

Parent: Letitia Franklin

12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Lunch
Luncheon Speakers, Parent Mentoring Program, Healthy Families Chicago
Introduction of Speakers, Sharon McDaniel or Renee Littlejohn, Birth Parent
Rev. Terry LeNoir, Parent Mentor
Theresa Leggins, Parent Mentor

1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Service Planning Exercise, Rudy Harris, Curriculum Design Manager

1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Exhibits & Break

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Workshops

Workshop Title: At Home – P.M. Session **Room Assignment:** Ballroom A

This workshop will focus on what parents need to know to keep their children in their care, as well as the reasons for DCFS involvement. Compliance monitoring, engaging in services and safety planning will also be discussed.

Presenter: Monique Smith, John Bedalow

Parent: Sharon Duffie

Workshop Title: Away From Home - P.M. Session **Room Assignment:** Ballroom B

This workshop will help parents to understand the importance of planning for their children's return home the first day of their placement and the relationship building that must occur between parent, caseworker and caregiver to assist the child through the trauma of placement. It will also teach factors that impact positive engagement with children before and during the placement process, as well as discuss skills parents need to better advocate for appropriate resources and services.

Presenter: Rudy Harris

Parent: Theresa Leggins

Workshop Title: Return Home - P.M. Session **Room Assignment:** Ballroom C

This workshop will lead the participants in a self-assessment of their readiness for family reunification and identify areas where they need additional support. The realities of reunification will be explored to include outlining DCFS and the Juvenile Court's involvement after reunification. Predictable family transition issues will be identified and strategies for parents to prepare for them mentally, physically, financially and emotionally will be provided.

Presenter: Kim Jackson-Cobb, Vanessa Lankford

Parent: Terry LeNoir

3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Closing Session

4:00 p.m. Special Event

Presenters Biographies

Kim Jackson Cobb is a licensed clinical social worker and received her Masters Degree in Social Work from the University of Illinois–Urbana. Since 1981, she has practiced, trained and supervised in child welfare, academic and medical settings. She has served on state and regional planning committees addressing Illinois child welfare practices. Most recently she served as the Director of Clinical Services for the Neighbor to Neighbor Program of the Jane Addams Hull House Association and as a clinical consultant, specializing in foster care and adoption issues. Other prior endeavors include being a Peer Reviewer for the Council on Accreditation, a member of the Quality Improvement Council of public and private child welfare agencies for Chicago’s Cook County South Region and Adjunct Professor for the Department of Social Work at Trinity Christian College.

Letitia 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. Ms. Franklin is a member of the University of Illinois Steering Committee working on Social Work Curriculum to develop a student curriculum that includes a birth parent perspective.

Rudy Harris has more than 30 years of professional child welfare experience. He has served as a Department of Children and Family Services Child Protection Specialist and Child Protection Public Service Administrator. He currently supervises the Department of Children and Family Services’ Curriculum Design and Development Unit for the Office of Training and Professional Development. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in the Teaching of Secondary Education from the University of Illinois at Chicago, as well as a Master of Arts in Communication with a specialization in Human Performance and Training from Governors State University.

Vanessa Lankford is the former Director of Foster Care for the Neighbor to Neighbor program of the Jane Addams Hull House Association. She has over 25 years of experience in the field of child welfare, particularly in the area of family reunification. Ms. Lankford played an integral role in the expansion and the nation-wide education of the sibling foster care model that she specialized in at Neighbor to Neighbor. Ms. Lankford was part of a team that established foster care programs in Florida that was based off of the Neighbor to Neighbor program. She has traveled nation-wide educating other states about sibling foster care. She has recently provided consultation to the Village Network in Columbus Ohio and Children’s Home and Aid Society around

professional foster parenting and keeping siblings together. Prior to being employed by Hull House, she was a foster care administrator at Children's Home and Aid Society. Ms. Lankford has a Masters Degree in Social Work from Loyola University of Chicago and a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Illinois Chicago.

Theresa Leggins, speaks to us as a mother of four and grandmother of five who became involved with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services because of allegations of sexual assault concerning her two 5-year-old granddaughters. 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 provides insightful perspective on what generally was for her a humiliating process based on a lie. She will share how she found ways to endure and orchestrate a successful reunification. She is thankful. *“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 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 husbands 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.

Monique A.L. Smith is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over 22 years of experience in Behavioral Health and Child Welfare. She has held a variety of clinical, administrative, and training positions with several universities and social service agencies in the Chicago area. In addition to owning and operating her own consulting business,

Mrs. Smith is currently a Program Coordinator for the Supervisory Training to Enhance Practice Program. This innovative program provides statewide support for child welfare supervisors and operates as a partnership between Chicago State University and the Department of Children and Family Services. Mrs. Smith received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Bradley University and her Master of Social Work Degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago Jane Addams School of Social Work.

John Bedalow: Not available

Sharon Duffie: Not available

Judith Flenor: Not available

Institute Training Credit

All registered attendees are expected to arrive on time and attend the full Institute in order to receive DCFS clock hours, or CEUs. It is the attendee's responsibility to sign-in at the Institute and return completed attendance verification sheet for the workshops, Keynote Address, and luncheon in order to receive full credit for the Institute. A maximum of 5 CEUs and DCFS Clock Hours may be awarded to all participants who attend eligible sessions.

The Birth Parent Institute Planning Committee wishes to recognize
the special contributions of the following:

Jennifer Florent
DCFS Communications

Sondra Massey
Office of Training and Professional Development

Brooke Taylor
Office of Training and Professional Development

Be Sure To Visit Our Exhibitors

EXHIBITORS

A Knock at Midnight (Julie Scott)

Catholic Charities Forever Free (Hilda Diaz)

Chicago Park District (Nicole Berry)

Child Protection Mediation Program (Susan Dominguez)

DCFS Administrative Hearing Unit (Marko Djurisc)

DCFS Advocacy Office (Joni Limper)

DCFS Norman Services (Barbara Hiram)

Healthy Families Chicago (Lorez White)

Mary & Tom Leo Associates, Inc. (Moira Baker)

NIU Educational Access (Diane Fitzhugh)

Passages Alternative Living Programs, Inc. (Cherry, Darlene, Danielle)

SOS Children's Villages (Eva Muro, Alfonso Diaz)

The Salvation Army Family & Community Services (Joan Kurtz)

TASC RCP (LaShaun Dumas)