



Bruce Rauner, Governor
George H. Sheldon, Director

May, 2017

LAC Summit meets at the Chicago Children's Advocacy Center



First row (left to right): Beatriz Ramirez, Jennifer Contreras, Rebecca Crnovich, Lourdes Rodriguez, Yvonne Contreras, Carmen Alvarez, Miriam Mojica, Veronica Resa and Alissandra Calderon. Second row (left to right): Alex Medina, Damaris Acevedo, Dulce Ramirez, Sydnie Juarez, Norma Machay, Rodrigo Remolina, José López, Juanita Calderon and Daniel Fitzgerald.



The Latino Advisory Council celebrated the first LAC Summit of 2017 on April 19th, 2017, at the Chicago Children's Advocacy Center. These

Summits are intentionally designed to gather Latino and bilingual staff from middle and upper management to break bread, converse and dream together on how to improve the services DCFS provides to the Latino children and families across the state.

The attendees came from a variety of divisions and regions. We had Deputy Veronica Resa and Associate Deputy Alissandra Calderon from Communications, Deputy Rodrigo Remolina from the Office of Advocacy, Norma Machay Director of the Northern Region Immersion Site, Deputy Daniel Fitzgerald from the Office of Affirmative Action, Chief José

Javier López from the Office of Latino Affairs, Burgos Coordinator Lourdes Rodríguez. DCFS Public Service Administrators included Miriam Mojica from Resources and Recruitment and Rebecca Crnovich from Operations.

This gathering also included the private sector where 87% of our children in care are served. Leaders from the private sector present included Association House Director of Foster Care Damaris Acevedo, Director of Licensing and Intake from UCP Seguin of Greater Chicago Karla Soriano, Director of Operations at Camelot Cares Center Matteson site Lauren White, Placement Supervisor from One Hope United Yeni Rojas and Placement Supervisor from Child Link Yvonne Contreras.

These Summits are purposefully designed to celebrate our leadership, strategize for statewide transformation that would support the successful achievements of the permanency goals set forth by Director Sheldon and to intentionally reestablish and strengthen our relationship with the private sector.

The Council is convinced that a spirit of

unity, camaraderie, mutual honor and encouragement amongst us will lead us to connect with one another, dream together and empower one another to contemplate and implement creative, outside of the box ideas that will positively revolutionize existing policy and practice and enable us to recapture the human-centric spirit.

As we do this, we are fueled by the faces of children and youth in care that need to stay home, return home or find a forever home. If you are a Latino or bilingual leader, either in the DCFS or private sector, we exhort you to be part of this statewide vision. Please contact any member of the Executive Committee and share your heart, mind and spirit with us. Sit at the table with us and let the goal you carry come out!

Con el corazón en la mano,

Alex Medina, Chairperson

Latino Family Institute Day &
Professional Development Day
Committee

2016 Latino Institute Day Award Winners

DCFS EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR
GERARDO AVILA

POS EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR
CARMEN ARTILES

DCFS FOSTER PARENTS OF THE YEAR
ANTONIO & PATRICIA VEGA

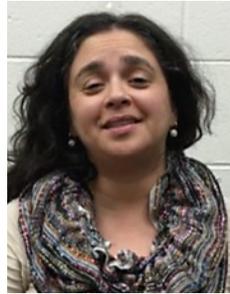
POS FOSTER PARENT OF THE YEAR
FABIOLA REYES

DCFS SUPPORT EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR
ANA GONZALEZ

YOUTH AWARDS
MOISES GOMEZ
KENNEDY COLESIO
CESAR HUERTA
OMAR SANTANA

CELESTE PEÑA AWARD
SOL A. FLORES,
LA CASA NORTE

Meet Norma Machay



*Meet Norma Navarro Machay,
Northern Immersion Site Director.*

I was born in Brooklyn, New York with two ethnic influences, a Puerto Rican mother and an Italian father. I am an only child, my parents divorced when I was three years old, and I moved to Chicago with my mother and her parents.

The first language I spoke was Spanish; I attended public school until completion of 5th grade and completed middle and high school

at Roman Catholic Schools on the south side of Chicago. I attended Saint Thomas More Elementary School and Maria High School. For college, I attended Northern Illinois University and graduated in 1993 with a Bachelors of Arts in Sociology and Child and Family Studies. My Master of Science degree at National Louis University with an emphasis in Human Service Administration in May of 1997 was earned through the DCFS Upward Mobility Program.

My love of child welfare began with my first internship in 1991 with DCFS under Aline Knight's team in Chicago. I completed a 2nd internship with DCFS under Beth Baise, and took youth in care to Pontiac's correctional facility during the summer of 1992. This prepared me to become a full time employee in October 1993 as a Social Service Career Trainee.

I became a Child Welfare Specialist because of my love for children and because I have the ability to engage with children and families and have been actively involved in child welfare for 23 years.

I am passionate about serving the DCFS staff and the children and families who become clients of DCFS.

There are always investigations, intact families and placement cases which I remember and hold close to my heart for the success or failure, which is was part of being a representative of DCFS.

Helpful advice: Be yourself, find your passion and you will succeed.

Challenges faced: Realizing that not everyone in child welfare who is serving our employees and clients has passion in their hearts, minds and souls but we can work to revive that passion they once had.

Through the years many DCFS employees and clients whom I have served and do serve restore my passion daily so I can continue doing work for righteousness.



LAC MEMBERSHIP

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Sydnie Juarez
Miriam Mojica
Beatriz Ramirez

POS Members:

Jennifer Contreras
Maritza Lopez
Lisa Marie Perez
Yeni Rojas
Karla Soriano

Ex-officio Members:

José J. López, OLS
Lourdes Rodríguez,
Burgos Coordinator

Committees:

Child Safety & Permanency
Community Risk Reduction
and Staffing
Data Validity & Disproportionality
Strategic Communications
Latino Family Institute

"Proyecto Cuidate" Strengthens Families with Skills and Resources



Instructor Ramón Marino in an art therapy session as part of the Woman's Empowerment group.

Historic Chicago settlement house agency Erie Neighborhood House launched Proyecto Cuidate in 2010, offering a cadre of services to families from its site in the city's Little Village neighborhood (4225 W 25th St) as a DCFS Illinois Family Advocacy Center.

Honored with the Strengthening Families Award by the National Council of La Raza in 2014, Proyecto Cuidate is dedicated to family well-being by providing support and education on various topics intended to strengthen the individual and family

unit in order to prevent violence and family division.

The program provides parenting classes in both English and Spanish; women's empowerment support groups (Spanish only); individual youth and adult counseling; and case management. In addition, Proyecto Cuidate staff members also work with three community schools to provide training and support for integrating restorative justice practices into the classroom setting.

Last year Proyecto Cuidate reached 134 participants through direct services offered in individualized or group settings; roughly 1 in 4 of those individuals represented a DCFS/POS referral. Through these services, Erie House is able to successfully unify families, address the needs of children who have suffered trauma, and support parenting skills based on concepts of self-care knowledge and child development.

One notable example of this success can be observed in the Mendez family (names changed for confidentiality), referred to Proyecto Cuidate through DCFS for parenting classes in July 2016. Lourdes

and Juan initially felt apprehensive about the services being provided, but once trust was built between staff and other participants the two began to thrive. They demonstrated commitment to the program's objectives, arriving on time and participating actively in each session. Both parents have expressed an interest in tapping into other classes and resources available through Proyecto Cuidate.

Many participants also explore other programs offered by Erie House at the Little Village site including English as a Second Language classes, computer classes and open work time in the agency's technology lab. Immigration consultations are also offered for free (the site is recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals) and is another popular service. The comprehensive nature of the services Erie House provides ensures that families are supported in a holistic manner.

For more information on the services available through Proyecto Cuidate, please call 773-542-7617 and ask for Rosa Sanchez, Proyecto Cuidate program manager.

DCFS Family Advocacy Centers

The Family Advocacy Centers is a statewide network of unique community based providers. These providers were strategically selected by DCFS to operate in some of the areas where there are the highest rates of protective custodies. Although they often serve community residents, their priority goals are to provide supplemental support to parents involved with child welfare interventions.

Most offer parenting classes or other types of family enrichment opportunities. Many offer services at non-traditional times (evenings and weekends). Family Advocacy Centers accept self-referrals as well as referrals from child welfare and child protection staff, DCFS and Private Agencies. Family Advocacy Services are provided at no cost to the family



Children from the SOS Children's Village Family Advocacy Center planting a pinwheel garden.

or agency! Some programs are small and others have a myriad of additional social services they provide based on other funding sources. However access to those other services is subject to their agency policies. DCFS and POS staff teams are encouraged

to establish ongoing networking relationships with FACs, especially those nearest to their office locations.

Family Advocacy Centers located in areas with a high population of Latino clients are Erie Neighborhood House Proyecto Cuidate-Little Village, SOS Children's Village Casa Tepeyac-Pilsen, National Youth Advocate Program Fellowship Connection-Humboldt Park, Family Focus Nuestra Familia-West Town, Latino Resource Institute of Illinois-South Chicago, and La Voz Latina-Rockford.

Please use link below for a full directory of Family Advocacy Centers:

http://dnet/Resources/Family_Advocacy_Center/doc/Family_Advocacy_Directory.pdf

Service Delivery for Latino LGBTQ Families

By Ben Anderson



Dr. Milka Ramirez

The 2016 DCFS Latino Family Institute was held on October 10, 2016 at Northeastern Illinois University. Attendees enjoyed good food, entertainment and informative workshops. Dr. Milka Ramirez, Assistant Professor of Social Work at Northeastern Illinois University, presented a workshop on the topic of Service Delivery with Latino LGBTQ Families. She has a background in school social work and she received her PhD in the philosophy of social work with a certificate in gender and women's studies from the Jane Addams School of Social Work at University of Illinois at Chicago. Her dissertation focused on homophobia amongst school social workers.

Her workshop was well attended by DCFS staff and staff from various foster care and social service agencies. She presented on some of the unique challenges that LGBTQ youth in care face. She also discussed the essentials of cultural competency that are necessary to support and advocate for LGBTQ youth in care. Afterwards there was a lively question and answer time. Earlier this month I sat down for an interview with Dr. Ramirez and she elaborated further on ways that foster agencies can support LGBTQ youth in care.

Dr. Ramirez explained that often times when agencies want to become more competent in their understanding of the challenges that LGBTQ youth in care face, they often look outward for support and resources. While this is an important piece in providing better care for LGBTQ youth, she suggested first looking inward. Agencies should be asking themselves important questions about their values, hiring practices, and staff trainings. What are your agency values? Are you living out those values in practice? Do your hiring practices seek to recruit individuals who represent the LGBTQ community? Ramirez also asks if we are doing trainings on issues that impact LGBTQ indi-

viduals such as reproductive rights and bullying. LGBTQ youth in care (and LGBTQ youth who have aged out of care) are one of the most vulnerable populations in this country. Dr. Ramirez reminds us that as agencies that serve this population we need to help by advocating and lobbying for change in the areas which impact LGBTQ youth in care the most.

In regards to policies which could benefit LGBTQ youth in care, Dr. Ramirez again encourages agencies to look inward and start with internal policies. Are forms, assessments and documents inclusive of diverse genders and sexualities? Do LGBTQ youth in care and parents see things in our offices that communicate safety and inclusion? Simple things such as posters and signs which affirm LGBTQ identities can go a long way to make LGBTQ youth in care and parents feel safe and included.

After making internal changes it is important to connect with outside agencies and resources. Dr. Ramirez suggests connecting agencies that support healthy coming out experiences and are anti-bullying, but healthcare and housing are also issues which have a significant negative impact on LGBTQ youth in care.

Dr. Ramirez emphasizes that LGBTQ youth in care are some of the most vulnerable youth in our care, "Then you add intersecting identities such as race, poverty, and especially transgender youth in care. We need a lot more allies in this field to work with these populations. If we aren't the allies of the LGBTQ youth in care, who will be? We are in a time of big change right now as gender identity and sexual orientations are discussed more openly and frequently, but because of that we have a big responsibility to take action."

EXTRA RESOURCES:

Caring for LGBTQ Children and Youth
http://assets.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC_Caring_For_LGBTQ_Children_Youth.pdf?_ga=1.92490461.1567027443.1488581327

LGBT Foster Parent Recruitment
<http://www.hrc.org/resources/all-children-all-families-family-recruitment>



NOTICIAS is brought to you by the Latino Advisory Council and the Illinois Department

of Children and Family Services. It is distributed to DCFS employees, POS agencies and agencies affiliated with DCFS. The newsletter includes articles pertinent to child welfare, Latino welfare issues, and DCFS/POS programs and strives to be an informative source for staff by providing updates on new child welfare initiatives as well as upcoming events.

It is our hope to continue providing staff with a vehicle for the sharing of information. A major part of this endeavor is you! We are asking for your input, submission of articles, and suggestions for improving *Noticias*. Articles related to your experiences with families and personal stories are also greatly appreciated.

Please submit articles, information about incoming events or news to: Julia Camacho-Monzón, Strategic Communications Committee Chair julia.camacho-de-monzon@illinois.gov 1911 S. Indiana Ave. Chicago, IL 60616

and to:

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Or to any of the **Strategic Communication Committee members:**

Julia Camacho-Monzón, Co-Editor, Chair; Juanita Calderon, Co-Chair; Carol Kline, Co-Editor; Norma Machay, Karla Soriano, Sydnie Juarez, Alex Medina

If you would like more information or would like to participate in one of the LAC subcommittees, please contact Alex Medina at JoseAlex.Medina@illinois.gov

Special thanks to:

Bert Tijerina, DCFS Office of Communications; José López, DCFS Office of Latino Services and Daniel Fitzgerald, Deputy Director, Office of Affirmative Action



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