



Bruce Rauner, Governor  
George H. Sheldon, Acting Director

October, 2015



*Alex Medina, LAC Chairman; Lourdes Rodríguez, Burgos Coordinator, ex-oficio; Beatriz Ramirez, LAC past Chairperson; DCFS Acting Director George H. Sheldon; Miriam Mojica, LAC member; José López, Office of Latino Affairs, ex-oficio.*



## ¡Saludos a todos!

The Latino Advisory Council celebrates 27 years of existence this year and would like to honor every member since its inception. In 1988-

89, a group of Latino employees saw the need to advocate on behalf of Latino children and their families in care and the Latino/bilingual workforce statewide. The same group met with Senator Miguel del Valle and the DCFS director at the time, Gordon Johnson and the Hispanic Advisory Committee of Cook County was conceived with the intent to advise the Director and Deputies thereafter on issues affecting service delivery to the Latino community under the care of DCFS, including its employees, mainly hiring, retention and promotion.

We are happy to announce that the same spirit still remains strong and determined. Although we have engaged every administra-

tion in improving services and increasing the Latino/Bilingual workforce statewide, there still remain areas of needed improvement. The Burgos Consent Decree, the State Services Assurance Act of 2008 and the Office of Affirmative Action provide us with the legal guidelines to guarantee that the needs of the Latino community DCFS is mandated to serve are addressed and resolved responsibly.

In 2015, because of the efforts made, there has been an increase of CPS, CWS, and PSA Spanish Speaking Option hires. This year has been the season in which we have had more Latino/Bilingual employees moving up into PSA and SPSA positions. Caseloads in the Cook County Division of Day Care Licensing have been significantly reduced and streamlined.

Although these are results we ought to celebrate, we are far from reaching our goals. For instance, there are only 4 bilingual Day Care Licensing Representatives for the entire Cook County area. There are only 2 bilingual Case Work Specialists at the State Central Register in Springfield for the entire state of Illinois. There are only 2 bilingual Child Protective Services workers in the Central region of Illinois. There is a lack of

Spanish speaking foster homes available at the present time statewide. There is only 1 bilingual Social Service Program Planner IV in Recruitment and Resources for the entire Cook County region. Many offices which are located primarily in predominant Spanish speaking communities lack bilingual administrative assistants to answer the phone and take messages.

We are committed to having honest and transparent conversations with every Department Administrator that would lead to corrective measures. We are solution driven and devote our efforts to increasing the quality of service to our clients while promoting healthy work environments.

We invite everyone to engage and, together, further pursue solutions that would lead to the betterment of the DCFS family as a whole. Everyone must take an active role and LAC has proven over the last 27 years “que estamos presente y tenemos voz Latina.”

*¡Bendiciones a todos!*

José Alejandro Medina Alvarez  
– LAC Chairperson

# The History and Success of the IDCFS Hispanic Advisory Committee

## Today Known as the Latino Advisory Council

*Please enjoy this reprint of the history of the Latino Advisory Council.*

The Latino Advisory Council has demonstrated its commitment to helping the Latino community access state government and the services it provides, while also serving as an advocate for community concerns and needs.

In the summer of 1988, the Office of the Statewide Coordinator, Senator Miguel Del Valle, and the Chief of Staff suggested the establishment of the Hispanic Advisory Committee. In the fall of 1989, the Director, Gordon Johnson, gave his approval to form a committee to advise his office and the Deputy of Program Operations in a variety of ways.

In 1989, a group of Hispanic Cook County DCFS employees formed a group called “Workers Reaching for Excellence”. This group collaborated with the initial Hispanic Advisory Committee, solidifying the intent to bring Latino issues to the forefront.

After an initial meeting with the Director, the Cook county Regional Administrator and staff from the Governor’s office, the “DCFS Hispanic Advisory Committee of Cook county” began to take shape. The Committee was given the mandate to advise the Director and the Cook County Regional Administrator in the matters of service provision to Latino clients by DCFS and its contractual agencies, establish and strengthen relationships in the Latino community, and address personnel issue involving Latino employees.

In 1990, the Committee adopted a set of bylaws and established its original membership of 19 people, four of whom were employees from private agencies. The Director also appointed two ex-officio, non-voting members. The Committee immediately began drafting a Position Statement to inform

the Director of crucial areas of services to the Latino population: compliance with the Burgos Consent Decree, expansion of services to Latino clients, and bilingual personnel issues such as reduce caseloads, promotions, and recruitments.

As part of the Committee’s commitment to its vision of excellence, the agenda for 1991 included broadening the Department’s outreach into the Latino community, and a commitment to hire Latino and bilingual personnel. The priorities of the Committee included the development of Latino foster homes and services and meeting with executive staff members to address these important issues.

The results of the Committee’s perseverance could be seen in several areas. The Director’s office was given the recommendation to implement written protocol and procedures for dealing with private agencies about licensing, recruitment, and resource development. The Committee and the African American Advisory Council also united to oppose the centralization of resource development.

In 1992, the Committee became statewide, expanding its membership to include DCFS employees and private agency staff from outside of Cook County. Presently there are members on the Committee from all six regions of the stat. One of the major issues on the agenda that year was the impending layoffs of DCFS employees. The Committee expressed its concerns to the current Director, Sue Suter, of the serious ramifications that would be seen by the layoff of recently hired and promoted bilingual staff.

Recruitment of Latinos and other bilingual individuals continued to be a priority for the Committee. The Executive Subcommittee met with at that time Director, Sterling Ryder, to discuss the Department’s plan for

hiring new staff, despite the layoffs. The Committee cited that lack of bilingual staff throughout the Department, particularly in the Ombud’s Office (present day Advocacy Office), and called for department plan for the development of additional resources for Latino families. The Committee drafted a “Bilingual Resource Development Policy Statement”, which outlined these recommendations, as well as the Committee’s responsibilities toward the Director’s office.

In response, Director Ryder issued an Action Transmittal which confirmed DCFS’ commitment to provision of quality bilingual services to all limited non-English speaking clients.

Throughout the years, the participation of many DCFS and private agency employees on the Hispanic Advisory committee (today known as the Latino Advisory Council) has contributed to providing a voice for the Latino community within DCFS in an effort to assure quality service provision. As Latino children and their families continue to be involved with the child welfare system, there will remain a demand on our understanding of the impact that the nuances of language and culture have on us all.

Thanks to D. Jean Ortega-Piron and Naida Valdez for their contribution and recollections of the history of then HAC today LAC in order to put this article together.

Currently, the Council’s goals statewide are: the hiring of bilingual staff in every division; the retention of staff in existing divisions; and finally, increasing available Spanish-speaking foster homes. Unfortunately, as can be seen by our history, the issues remain the same and our struggle continues. We have persevered thus reminding everyone, “Estamos Presente!”



### LAC MEMBERSHIP

Chair-Person: Alex Medina  
Chair-Elect: Norma Machay  
Scribe: Jennifer Contreras

### DCFS Members:

Carmen Alvarez  
Glendy Aponte  
Juanita Calderon  
Julia Camacho de Monzon  
Rebecca Crnovich  
Claudette Gomez  
Beatriz Ramirez  
Nancy Rodriguez  
Miriam Mojica

### POS Members:

Yeni Jimenez  
Mariana Osoria  
Karla Soriano  
  
**Ex-officio Members:**  
José J. López, OLS  
Lourdes Rodríguez,  
Burgos Coordinator

## People You Should Know

We have had 19 bilingual new hires since our last Institute Day in 2014. Welcome to DCFS!

### **Cook County:**

Maria Cruz, L. Sanchez-Serrato, Celia Dankenbring, Lidia Davila, Leticia Fernandez, Raul Gutierrez, Jose Leon, George Martinez, Yadira Mazon, Angela Moncada, Maria Paredes, Luis Perez and Sandra Vera

### **Galesburg:**

Susana Olivas

### **Rockford:**

Luis Fernandez  
Roberto Hernandez  
Angela Lopez

### **Rock Island:**

Glendy Aponte

### **Sangamon:**

Katie Frederick

### **Promotions:**

Richard Echevarria, Public Service Administrator, Northern Region

Annabel Michaels, Public Service Administrator, Northern Region

Norma D. Machay, Senior Public Service Administrator, Northern Region

Rebecca Crnovich, Public Service Administrator, Cook North

Sylvia Fonseca, Public Service Administrator, Cook Region

Victor Aranda, Public Service Administrator, Cook Region

Miriam Mojica, Public Service Administrator, Cook Region

Marco Leonardo, Public Service Administrator, Cook Region

## Spanish Speaking Birth Parents attend the Cook County Birth Parent Institute Day

For the first time ever, Spanish speaking Birth Parents were able to attend the Birth Parent Institute in Chicago this past June. The Partnering with Parents, Cook County Birth Parent Council sponsors this event every year for birth parents providing them with useful information, training, inspiration and motivation.

Family Advocacy Centers (FACs) with predominately Spanish speaking clients banded together to get the word out. Two Spanish speaking workshops were provided as well as interpretation services for the keynote speaker and general sessions. Mujeres Latinas en Acción, Erie House Pilsen/Little Village, Family Focus “Nuestra Familia” and the Illinois Latino Resource Institute all worked together to make it happen for our Spanish speaking birth parents. Be Strong Families conducted a special Parent Café in Spanish during the afternoon session.

Devia Murray-Homes, the PWP Program Director and her team met with the FACs to plan their participation, months in advance. The FACs contributed gift baskets along with the Council Steering Committee members to help make the event a success. A special shout out to Erie Neighborhood House for lending their equipment: individual radio sets so that the birth parents could receive simultaneous interpretation and fully participate.



*Maria Ugarte-Ramos formerly of Erie Neighborhood House with Director Sheldon*



*Francine Cossyleon, Mujeres Latinas en Acción*



*Birth Parent Focus Group led by Julia Camacho de Monzon observed by José López, OLS*

# Cook Regional Recruitment Efforts Take Off



*Miriam Mojica,  
Recruitment & Resources  
Cook North Region Supervisor*

There is a great need for more bilingual/Latino foster homes statewide, especially in the Cook North Region. In addition, the need for foster homes for teenagers is also rising. The Recruitment and Resources Unit has been actively recruiting homes for this population. Community outreach is pivotal for the development of resources in our communities.

Recruitment staff has attended many events to inform the public about these needs.

One of our goals was to reach out to prospective foster/adoptive parents and create awareness of Child Abuse Prevention Month. April was Child Abuse Prevention Month and May was Foster Parent Appreciation Month.

The biggest event the recruitment team attended was “El Día Del Niño” Family Festival sponsored by the National Museum of Mexican Art and held at the UIC Forum. Thousands visited the day-long event where sponsors including DCFS provided informational materials, posters, blue ribbons and take-home photos of children and their families. The Recruitment/Resource Unit, Office of Latino Services and Office of Communica-

tions also participated in the “El Día Del Niño” parade.

Another community outreach event was aired on WGN’s “Adelante Chicago” program with Lourdes Duarte who allocated a segment for DFCS Child Abuse Prevention Month and foster care recruitment. Recruitment Staff also participated at a fundraiser event sponsored by New Life Covenant Church in April sponsored by Mike Oquendo Events. Other churches were identified for future recruitment events.

Foster and Adoptive Caregivers are welcome to become part of the DCFS professional team. If interested please contact: Miriam Mojica, 312-328-2324, or by email at [miriam.mojica@illinois.gov](mailto:miriam.mojica@illinois.gov)



*Día del Niño event at the University of Illinois at Chicago on April 11.*



## Life Without Limits for People with Disabilities



In 1994, UCP Seguin of Greater Chicago began its Children's Foster Care program to provide permanent, safe, and loving homes for abused and neglected children with disabilities and other special needs, from birth to college age. UCP Seguin also facilitates adoption, reunification with the natural family, and permanent guardianship for these children. Today, 140 heroic, nurturing foster parents care for 240 abused or neglected children with specialized medical needs, behavioral challenges, and other disabilities.

Because of UCP Seguin's outstanding reputation, DCFS, family shelters, and other foster care entities often refer their most difficult cases to UCP Seguin, such as children with significant behavioral and emotional disturbanc-

es, as well as children with complex medical needs. DCFS has also recognized UCP Seguin as a Champion of Adoption.

UCP Seguin has established itself as a primary "go-to" agency for children of Latino backgrounds, offering culturally sensitive homes with bilingual foster parents as well as support through a corps of bilingual staff. The number of Latino children served by UCP Seguin has grown by 720% over the past decade. Currently, 34% of children and families served by the Foster Care program at UCP Seguin are Latino.

In May, DCFS faced an increase in children needing placement. Given its longstanding history and outstanding reputation of service to foster children with these unique needs, UCP Seguin was approached by DCFS to take on this challenge. Since June of this year UCP Seguin has welcomed more than 90 foster children, nearly all of whom have specialized medical needs, into its

Children's Foster Care Program, many of them of Latino backgrounds. This represents a 50% expansion in UCP Seguin's Foster Care program. But it is an expansion representing the organization's significant commitment to the service of children in need.

UCP Seguin of Greater Chicago is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit human services agency dedicated to enriching the lives of people with disabilities. Providing programs and services from birth to old age, UCP Seguin helps children and adults with disabilities achieve their potential, advance their independence and act as full members of the community. Its programs include innovative training and education, family support, employment and life-skills training, residential services, and foster care. For more information about UCP Seguin's Children's Foster Care program, contact Karla Soriano, Director of Licensing & Intake at UCP Seguin at 708.222.3563.

# First Annual LAC Summit



*José Alex Medina, Chair of the Latino Advisory Council*

On July 15, 2015 the Latino Advisory Council made history by holding the first Annual Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Spanish

Speaking Public Service Administrators and Spanish Speaking Senior Public Service Administrators Summit. There were over 36 Spanish speaking professionals in attendance.

Sylvia Fonseca, PSA CAPU gave a short presentation in which we learned about the Latino Advisory Council history and origin. José Alex Medina, Chair of the Latino Advisory Council gave a presentation highlighting the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services historical trends and practices which have affected the decrease of the bilingual work force and the lack of Burgos homes. He also shared the vision and goals of the Council.

Throughout the Summit, many attendees participated in the free flowing conversation about the Latino Advisory Council's goals, restoration of the Bilingual workforce and the transformation of the collaboration with DCFS

Management.

The Summit ended with an agreement by all who attended to hold this summit annually. We all caught the vision and will be working together promoting awareness and moving forward with the Council's goals of increasing the quality of service to our clients while promoting healthy work environments.



*Sylvia Fonseca, PSA CAPU*



*Seated: Frank Navarro, Beatriz Ramirez, Lourdes Rodriguez, Gloria Navarro, Rebecca Crnovich, Maria Hernandez, Nancy Rodriguez; First standing row: Norma Machay, Julia Camacho Monzon, Clara Yanes, José Alex Medina, Carmen Alvarez, Miriam Mojica, Karla Soriano, Jennifer Contreras, Sylvia Fonseca, Yeni Jimenez, Desire Silva, Claudette Gomez; Second standing row: Ricky Echevarria, Eric Pantoja, Veronica Resa, unknown, Bert Tijerina, Sydnie Juarez, Juanita Calderon, Rodrigo Remolina, Daniel Fitzgerald, unknown, Jose Garcia and Andy Martinez*

# Latino Advisory Council Retro Photo Gallery



*José López, OLS and Commissioner Jesus "Chuy" Garcia enjoying a past conference lunch*



*Former DCFS Director D. Jean Ortega Pirón (left) with former Director Irwin "Mac" McEwen and Former LAC Chairperson Evelyn Martinez applaud former conference award winners.*



*Former State Senator Miguel Del Valle posed with former DCFS Director Jess McDonald at a conference way back when. Bookends in the photo are Ramon Nieves and Celeste Peña who have passed on but are fondly remembered for their service to DCFS and the Latino community*



*April Curtis, former DCFS "Alum" addresses past conference attendees with former Director Arthur Bishop and former LAC Chair Evelyn Martinez looking on*



*Former DCFS "alum" Ricky Echevarria addresses prior conference attendees*



## 2015 Illinois Latino Statewide Events

Festivals, Parades, Civic Events, Community Fundraisers, Training Conferences, Job and Health Fairs

DATE/TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	ORGANIZER/CONTACT
<b>OCTOBER</b>			
Oct. 16 8:30 – 5 pm	DCFS Latino Family Institute Day	Northeastern Illinois University	DCFS Latino Advisory Committee
Oct. 29 6 pm	25th Annual Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Gala	Hyatt McCormick	Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
<b>NOVEMBER</b>			
Nov. 6 6 pm	Day of the Dead Ball	1833 W. 19th St.	National Museum of Mexican Art
Nov. 7 6 pm	17th Annual National Cuatro Festival	Harris Theater 205 E. Randolph St.	Cuatro Committee
Nov. 13 6 pm	Annual Gala Dinner	6876 Spring Creek Rd. Rockford, IL ( <i>pending</i> )	La Voz Latina
Nov. 20 8:30 am	12th Annual ILLCF Conference	Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, IL	Illinois Latino Legislative Caucus Foundation
<b>DECEMBER</b>			
Dec. 31	LULAC White and Black Gala Ball	Apollo's 2000 2950 W. Cermak Rd.	League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)



**312.814.6800**  
www.DCFS.illinois.gov



**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: Norma Machay, Strategic Communications Committee Chair

Norma.Machay@illinois.gov  
800 Roosevelt Rd, Bldg. D-10,  
Glen Ellyn 60137

and to:

Juanita Calderon, Co-Chair  
Juanita.Calderon@illinois.gov

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

Norma Machay, Chair, Juanita Calderon, Co-Chair, Carol Kline, Editor in Chief, Julia Camacho Monzon, 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