

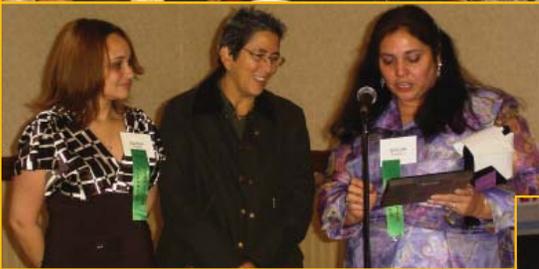
Noticias

A publication of the DCFS
Latino Advisory Committee

Pat Quinn, Governor
Erwin McEwen, Director

Fall Edition, 2009

Spanning 20 Years of Services:



Looking Back and Moving Forward

Noticias

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Welcome from the Chairperson

Evelyn Martinez

¡Saludos calorosos a todos! It is an honor to accept the role of the Chair of the Latino Advisory Committee. Our committee has a long history of assisting the Director and the Department on topics pertaining to our Bilingual/Latino employees and our communities. I know that many of you work above and beyond the call of duty to help our families and children we serve to obtain the help they need to improve their lives. Thank you for all your hard work and long hours. It is with you in mind that our committee is inspired to continue to represent our community and advocate for solutions to issues that affect us.

This year's Latino Family Institute theme is "Going Beyond the Call of Duty: Empowering the Latino Community." Our brainstorming session alone invigorated a lot of ideas and positive energy among our participants. I hope that you will plan to attend this year's Institute Days and feel the same way we do. I know so many of our Latino and bilingual employees give so much of their time and dedication to doing a good job every day. I am proud to be surrounded by the many peers who work in different capacities within the Department and in our communities that continuously "raise the bar" in regards to the standards that we try to meet everyday for the betterment of the children.

LAC will continue to be a connection between workers and the Director. We plan to accomplish this through this Noticias newsletter, the annual Latino Family Institute Days, networking events such as Octavitas, and our continued collaborative work with different offices and Deputies on assorted issues related to our Latino communities we serve. We welcome your suggestions and submission of articles to Noticias. We would also like to invite you to participate in the various LAC subcommittees and the planning committee for our annual Institute Days. Your voice is important and your participation is integral to the functioning of not only our Committee but of the Department.

Thank you,
Evelyn Martinez, Chair
Latino Advisory Committee

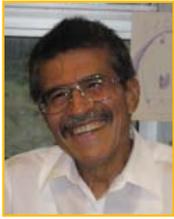


Save the Date!

DCFS 21st Annual Latino Advisory Committee Family Institute Days

October 29 & 30, 2009
Westin Hotel • Itasca, IL

2008 DCFS Bilingual Worker of the Year



Raymundo Romero works as a child protection investigator in Elgin. He has been with the Department for about eight years, but he worked in the private sector for many years before.

Romero is an investigator who goes beyond the call of duty. He stays in the office after everyone else has gone home and he accommodates his clients to serve them better. He was the only bilingual investigator in Elgin office for over a year and not even once did he complain to his supervisor about the number of investigations he was getting. He is always ready to say “echemelos”—give them to me. Romero’s dedication to the Department and to the families that he works with is admirable. Romero is a hard-working bilingual investigator who fights for the rights of his clients and

who treats the families and children with respect and professionalism. His energy and enthusiasm is inspiring.

Romero is also a member of the Elgin Hispanic Network, an organization composed of professionals in the Elgin community area who are involved in collaboration and networking in addressing service issues to Latino families. He is also a member of the Enhancement Sub-committee that addresses issues and activities with the foster parents in Kane County.

Raymundo Romero continues to be an asset to the Elgin DCP team for his dedication to work, the enthusiasm he displays, for his bilingualism, his cheerful and pleasant demeanor and his availability to assist his fellow coworkers. He is never shy about taking on additional responsibilities.

2008 Honorable Mention Bilingual Worker of the Year

Migdalia Soto is a day care licensing representative in Chicago who has been with the Department for over 20 years. Her conversations and interactions bring out the best in our providers and encourages them to challenge themselves and move forward educationally and professionally. She provides technical assistance and helps providers understand day care standards in a manner that enables them to ensure the best possible care is being given to our children. She is always very organized and well prepared. She helps our providers become active community members who help prevent child abuse and neglect and become the best providers they can be.

One provider in particular shared how Ms. Soto has encouraged her to continue her education. The provider related that because of her classes and continuing education she has learned better par-

enting skills and has been able to share her knowledge with parents of children in her day care. The provider said she is routinely visited by neighbors requesting information and direction on various parenting issues and concerns. This is an example of how one person, Ms. Soto, has caused a trickle effect in changing our community one person at a time.

Many times we do not hear much about licensing representatives, but they provide the foundation of what many children experience in their early years. We do not realize how one licensing representative can change the lives of not only one provider but of many children in our communities. Ms. Soto is ensuring that our children are safe in day care homes. It is an honor to know Ms. Soto and have her as a member of the DCFS family.

POS 2008 Bilingual Worker of the Year

Anel Garza has been employed with Arden Shore for three years, and every day, she approaches her job “con ganas”—with motivation, creativity, enthusiasm and passion. Garza has demonstrated great personal and professional growth in her time with Arden Shore. She has led initiatives to obtain services for her clients and truly cares for their welfare. She works late hours, including weekends, to see her clients and often makes more visits than those required by DCFS to ensure that her children remain safe. Garza is an example to all in regards to professional conduct, as she maintains an appropriate and professional relationship with all of her clients yet still engages her families.

Garza understands the difficulty Latino clients face in regards to bilingual service provision, especially when they are undocumented. She speaks on behalf of her Latino clients when their voices cannot be heard due to language barriers to ensure that their rights are respected.

Garza is knowledgeable of the services available to her clients and seeks out appropriate services within Arden Shore and the community. She does not stop working when she encounters a barrier. She is persistent, and if told that something is unavailable, she will continue working to seek what her clients need. She often searches the Internet for new options that have not been previously identified in the community. She is truly motivated and is a true example of an “agent of change.”

Garza knows firsthand how important it is to preserve language and culture. She understands that as people come into this country, they may not have very much money, but they want to work hard and provide for their families. She does not differentiate the way that she thinks about or works with Latino clients, whether they are American-born or undocumented immigrants. She treats them all equally as human beings.

Anel Garza: Focus on you



My name is Anel Garza. I was born and raised in Waukegan, Illinois. My mother, Maria Garza, was born and raised in Mexico. My father, Ricardo Garza, was born in Waukegan but was also raised in Mexico.

I have my bachelor's degree in criminal justice. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside I became employed by Arden Shore Child and Family Services as a Burgos worker. A few months later I transferred into their Intact Program, and for the past four months I have been working as a bilingual foster care specialist. I have always enjoyed helping others and these positions have not only allowed me to help strengthen families but also give back to my community.

As a bilingual worker I tend to work with primarily the Latino population. A challenge that I am often faced with is finding undocumented Latinos the same assistance as other clients.

My advice for staff is to always remember that we are dealing with people's lives, and what you do or don't do can greatly affect our clients in a positive or negative way forever. We cannot change the past but we can definitely help change their future!

Satisfying moments in my career occur when I successfully close cases and see the progress each family has made. Some changes are more drastic than others because each person and case is different. Another key moment was being awarded POS Bilingual Worker of the Year. As with many workers, I do what I do for my clients, and not expecting an award at the end of the day. Being recognized and given an award felt great!

Spanning 20 years of services: Looking back and moving forward

By Madeline Gonzalez-Garcia and Sylvia Fonseca

At the 20th Annual DCFS Latino Advisory Committee Family Institute, a distinguished group of panelists presented a workshop entitled *Spanning 20 Years of Services: Looking Back and Moving Forward*.

D. Jean Ortega-Piron, DCFS deputy and guardianship administrator, shared a historical look back with an amazing timeline spanning 20 years since the inception of the conference. She reminded us of struggles DCFS Latino employees undertook to ensure that families received needed and required services. Movement forward was accomplished via many meetings with various DCFS and key Latino leaders, including Senator Miguel del Valle and then-Director Gordon Johnson.

Maria Vidal de Haymes, Ph.D., professor in the School of Social Work at Loyola University in Chicago, highlighted the work Loyola University has done in collaboration with DCFS developing a culturally-sensitive training module for serving Latino children and families. This training tool is serving as a national model for service providers across the country in understanding how Latino families' culture influences their decisions.

Layla P. Suleiman Gonzalez, Ph.D., assistant professor in human development at the School of Education at DePaul University in Chicago, reminded us that the Burgos Consent Decree is about meaningful communication and interaction and that language is not only protected by the consent decree but also by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. While progress has been made we still have a long way to go to adhere to the spirit of the Decree.

Dr. Ramon Nieves, executive director of Tuesday's Child, shared his memories of

uplifting staff and youth and how we are all responsible to and for one another. He shared the perspective of POS agencies and DCFS Latino staff coming together to champion the cause of ensuring Latino families and children were provided the quality of services they deserved and in their primary language during the DCFS layoffs of the 1990s. He also spoke of the support of Latino workers and the Latino community as he became the first Latino regional administrator in Cook Central.

Dr. Dora Maya, president and CEO at Arden Shore Child and Family Services, reminded us that "Latinos are everywhere." She shared how she accomplished staffing her agency with over 50% professional Latino staff given, she was told, that no professional Latinos could be found. She reminded us to not believe the misconceptions that it is difficult to find qualified Latino child welfare workers as those Latino child welfare workers attending the conference prove otherwise.

Daniel Fitzgerald, deputy director of the Division of Service Intervention, spoke about his beginning with the opportunity to work at the up-and-coming Latino agency "Casa Central" where Rev. Alvarez gave him his first opportunity to serve his community. He has seen the growth of professional Latino child welfare staff and shared the importance of mentorship: experienced Latino workers developing and supporting their less experienced peers. Deputy Fitzgerald was excited about developing programs in which he hopes to help cultivate more professional Latino leaders for the future. He invited attendees to e-mail him with their thoughts and recommendations for new programs.

Spanning 20 years of services: Looking back and moving forward



2008 Bilingual Foster Parents of the Year

Aida and Luis Soberal of Chicago, IL have been licensed since 1998 and have provided temporary care to many Latino children and teens over the years. Their beliefs and conduct epitomize an ideal bilingual and bicultural home that is suitable for the Latino children and youths they have welcomed into their home and family. Despite the various ethnicities of Latinos that have been in their care, the Soberals promote the importance of embracing dual languages and cultural awareness and preservation.

Over the years, they have always supported children and parents towards reunification and have experienced seeing children in their care be successfully reunited with their parents. They have willingly met parents and allowed them access to their phone number and their home, have repeatedly transported children to and from parent-child and sibling visits and have supported shared parenting activities.

The Soberals have also readily accepted children on a short-term basis until a more appropriate long-term placement could be arranged. Mrs. Soberal is very accommodating and active in her role as a foster parent. She invests herself in the individual lives for which she is entrusted.

The Soberals are very kind-hearted and genuine people. Their commitment and dedication is admirable. Mrs. Soberal connects with and relates well to the children in their home be they young children or willful teens. Caseworkers often call Mrs. Soberal or her licensing worker to see if she has any openings when they have a Latino child or youth that needs placement. It is rare for the Soberals to have an opening. When a child does leave, it usually is not very long before another one is placed. The Soberal home is almost always a full house.



*Evelyn Martinez, D. Jean Ortega Piron,
Aida and Luis Soberal, DCFS Director
Erwin McEwen and Carol Kline*

Knowing the Soberals is truly a joy. They deserve to be recognized and thanked for the many years of loving care and warm attention they have provided to many of our Latino children and the encouraging support they have given to Latino parents and families.

Latino 2008 Youths of the Year

Jonathan Lopez

Jonathan Lopez is currently participating in the Kaleidoscope Independent Living Program. He is employed full-time as a Loss Prevention Officer and attends Morton Community College full time as well. Jonathan's grade point average is 3.786 and he is currently on the Dean's Honor List at Morton. Furthermore, Jonathan is certified in CPR through the Red Cross. He hopes to enter law enforcement as a career. Jonathan recently became the father of a son. He attended all pre-natal/birthing classes and is an active co-parent to his child. He has a strong work ethic and is highly goal-oriented. Jonathan has been totally compliant with all program expectations.

Josue Martinez

Josue Martinez is involved with the Pathways Independent Living Program and is employed as an assistant art instructor at Youth Service Project, which primarily services the Humboldt Park community. He teaches a class compiled of teenagers and young adults who want to improve their artistic talents. Josue voluntarily created the Pathways Independent Living Program picnic posters in August 2008 and has been asked to design a mural on the Pathways office wall. Josue has attended several art shows and has received monetary offers for his paintings. He declines to sell his paintings because he feels emotionally attached to his work. Josue continues to be a positive role model for his two brothers. He is a positively charged person who is dependable, responsible and dedicated to his love of art. Josue maintains a GPA of 2.4 at Richard Daley College and plans to graduate in the spring of 2009 with an Associate's Degree in Art. He plans to attend the Illinois Institute of Art in Chicago in the fall of 2009 to secure his bachelor's degree and pursue a career in game design.



*Bonita Guerra, Jonathan Lopez, Kenny Martin-Ocasio,
Josue Martinez and Angela Huerta*

DCFS Domestic Violence Policy

Have you ever considered the amount of violence present in the families we serve? Many of the children who come to the attention of the Department have experienced violence of various forms, typically at the hands of someone who was supposed to love and care for them. One of the greatest ways we can help the children in care is to think of these children as a part of a unit – the family. We do this when provide services, such as parenting classes or anger management classes, to families. But in the cases of families experiencing domestic violence, can the same services still apply?

At the core of any relationship experiencing domestic violence is one individual exerting power and control over another person. This dynamic takes place in adult relationships, teen relationships, heterosexual relationships and same-sex relationships. It is the offender's desire to exert complete control over their partner that leads them to isolate the non-offending partner from family and friends; use the children as weapons; use methods of intimidation; or use economic or emotional abuse.

When you come into contact with family members like the ones described, how do you serve them? Do you feel overwhelmed by the process of identifying the offender and the victim, or are you

unsure of the services available to clients experiencing and perpetrating violence? To help workers answer these questions, in 1998 the Department convened an advisory council that included members of the domestic violence and violence prevention communities, public health, family law practitioners, the Department of Health and Human Services, case-workers and other members of the child welfare community to create a protocol for addressing domestic violence within a child welfare framework.

The Department saw the connection between domestic violence and child welfare in practice well before the researchers saw it in their studies. The American Psychological Association's Task Force on Violence and Family found that each year 3.3 million children are exposed to violence against their mothers. A 1995 publication entitled "The Family Secret" revealed that child abuse is 15 times more likely to occur in families where domestic violence is present.

The DCFS Domestic Violence Policy became effective in October 2005. The purpose of the policy is to provide guidance to child welfare staff when assessing risk to children in cases where domestic violence is present or suspected. The policy is comprehensive, extending beyond a "procedural" or "how-to guide"

and serves as an educational resource for staff. The policy provides statistics on the overlap between domestic violence and child abuse; defines some of the dynamics of domestic violence and terminology commonly used; identifies when a domestic violence screen should be used and the screening process throughout the life of the case; and discusses the importance of appropriate interviewing and intervening (including safety planning) when domestic violence is an underlying issue in a child welfare case. The Domestic Violence Policy (Procedure 300 Appendix J) can be found on the D-net under "Procedures".

In addition to the Domestic Violence Policy, DCFS developed the Domestic Violence Intervention Program which is housed under the Department's Clinical Division. Nisha Patel, program administrator, and Stephanie Holifield, clinical domestic violence specialist, provide training to DCFS staff and POS agencies on the Domestic Violence Policy, dynamics of domestic violence, case consultation and technical assistance, participation in CAYITs involving domestic violence, and safety planning. For more information on the Domestic Violence Intervention Program please contact program administrator, Nisha Patel at 708-338-6691, or the clinical domestic violence specialist at 312-328-2288.

The keys to active listening

Active listening is a style of listening that creates a safe, open space for the person who is sharing. It asks for very little speaking or speculating on the part of the listener. The style is characterized by reflective statements, attention to body language, and permission for silence.

To be a good active listener:

1. Assume nothing - especially do not assume you "know" how the person sharing is feeling
2. Stay with the person in the present moment
3. Do not judge what is being shared
4. Lay aside the need to direct the conversation or problem-solve
5. Use and respect silences; know that silence can be helpful and doesn't need to be "filled"

Non-verbal communication is central to active listening. A listener can show a person they are engaged by maintaining calm eye contact, facing the person openly, and by avoiding distractions/fidgeting. Active listening ultimately accepts how a person is feeling in the moment. The listener's job is not to alter a mood, find a solution, or commiserate. The active listener is a safe, non-judgmental sounding board for the person sharing. Regardless of age, genuine listening is imperative for building trust and rapport. For more information on active listening, contact NAMI of Greater Chicago at 312-563-0445.

Using dance movement therapy to address trauma

By Andrea K. Brown

This article is a brief synopsis of the dance movement therapy workshop presented on November 13, 2008 at the Latino Family Institute. The workshop provided a clinical perspective for understanding how dance movement therapy can be utilized to promote the healing of emotional trauma. By fostering the development of inner resources, dance movement therapy can address many of the symptoms of emotional dysregulation.

Past life experiences appear to influence how humans think and feel. These experiences are part of memory networks which provide information about ways to address problems. When an event has not been adequately processed to an adaptive resolution, persistent anxiety and anger can be present. Unprocessed events set up the foundation for an impoverished sense of self and patterns of maladaptive behaviors. From a dance movement therapy viewpoint, the physical body holds experiences and memories. At every moment, states of mind are stored in the body and expressed

through its movements. A gesture or posture can express happiness, tension, grief, pain, joy or fear. Movement provides a framework for addressing these emotional issues.

Unprocessed memories of earlier experiences can push people into inappropriate responses in the present. They can be the source of a variety of psychosocial issues. The sensations, emotions and perspectives of unprocessed events impact perceptions of the past. Humans can be propelled into doing things they do not want to do or prevented from doing some of the things that they need to do. Through the use of movement, the emotional factors which drive people to use maladaptive behaviors can be addressed. Dance movement therapy interventions can reveal patterns which cause distress and interfere with functioning.

These interventions can be used to help people discover the patterns that trigger feelings which can sometimes be

uncomfortable, such as anger, sadness, guilt, envy and anxiety. Memories of life experiences which fuel maladaptive attitudes and behaviors can be changed so that they can be a source of useful learning. Movement can be used to help people understand the mechanisms that influence their emotions and provide a guide for them to discover healthier ways to express their feelings. This source of learning can be available to guide future actions.

As a modality, dance movement therapy can provide the means for helping people make deep personal growth. Negative emotions can be replaced by positive ones, insights can surface, body sensations can change and a new sense of self can emerge. Dance movement therapy can help people integrate the cognitive and emotional aspects of their personalities with their physical expression. It has the potential for helping them transform and become more whole.

ACR: No cookie-cutter planning

By Rachel Román

At the 20th Annual DCFS Latino Advisory Committee Family Institute, participants had the opportunity to attend an array of interactive workshops and panel discussions, and to network with DCFS administrators, service providers, and case managers. The tone of the event was a progressive one that encouraged empowerment and advocacy. One workshop that echoed such a message was “ACR—No Cookie Cutter Planning.”

Among the presenters of the workshop were Jeffrey Walker, ACR program manager for Cook Central, Arlene Rodriguez, an administrative case reviewer for Cook Central, Maricela Flores, a Lifelink foster care case manager, and two biological parents.

Each presented a unique perspective to the workshop and provided the audience with a thorough landscape of what goes into the ACR process. One perspective that really stood out was the one the biological parents brought to the presentation.

The ACR points to how the service plans should be tailored to the needs of each family and also highlight the strengths of the parents. At this workshop, biological parents spoke to their experience with the ACR process. They spoke from a standpoint that gave insight into how the ACR empowers parents. They discussed how the service plans include a strengths-based and family-focused perspective that they

much appreciate for it brings attention to their own fortalezas or strengths. They even pointed to how taking part in the creation of the service plan itself gave them a sense of control by planning both short-term and long-term goals.

Personally, having their viewpoint provided a reminder of why I have chosen social work as a career. The way the biological parents spoke of how their strengths were highlighted was empowering and reminded me of the importance of compassion and empathy. Prior to the workshop, I found myself zipping through the preparation of the ACRs for my assigned cases. Now I see to it that service plans are planned alongside the families that they represent.

Compassion Fatigue

By Kelli Underwood

How often, at the end of the day, do you feel that you have nothing left to give when you arrive home? I sometimes have the urge to say, “Sorry, I used up all my empathy at work. Sorry, I am emotionally and mentally exhausted and I just can’t muster listening to any more problems.” Usually, these urges are silenced before they hit my vocal chords. Often I don’t feel fully present to others, am distracted, fatigued and irritable. We are supposed to be present and emotionally available to our families most of all, yet they often get our leftovers.

If you can relate, you have symptoms of compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is the state of exhaustion that results from passionately and compassionately giving care to others. If you care about people, you have compassion fatigue to varying degrees, but by consciously balancing your energy, you can successfully manage it.

First, consider the four domains of energy that are on overdrive in our personal and professional lives: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual (We define spiritual energy as our deepest core values). At work we are constantly expending energy on all domains with our clients. At home we are outputting energy in relationships with children, spouses, parents and friends. To be intimately involved in relationships takes energy. We are constantly expending our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energy, yet we do not maintain the necessary balance for health.

Our health and happiness require balancing our input and output of energy. Take a moment to assess where you are expending your energy. How much energy do different tasks take, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually? What tasks or people are you avoiding? What activities have you stopped doing? Are you sleeping enough? Are you eating and drinking sugar and caffeine for quick energy? How is your mood and how well do you tolerate the unexpected?

So you admit to having some symptoms? Great, now we can move to what to do about it. First, you’ll need an attitude adjustment. We approach energy as if we could fill up our car with a tank of gas and drive to New Orleans. When we run out of gas, we get out and start pushing. We’re exhausted and can’t understand why. We know we have to fill our car with gas regularly, yet we don’t give our bodies the same courtesy. The principle of creating sustainable energy is just like building muscle. When you lift weights, you are overexerting your muscles to the point of creating micro tears. You then rest those muscles for at least a day, during which time the muscles re-build even stronger. Sustainable energy works in the same manner: exertion followed by intermittent rest and recovery. Research supports the concept that approaching life as a series of sprints, not a marathon, is most effective. We must begin adding rest and recovery to our life’s work out.

Next we must find small energy boosters to add to our daily routine. Healthy foods, regular sleep, and laughter are three essential ingredients to sustainable energy. What replenishes you physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually?

Ask yourself throughout the day, “how much energy do I have and what can I do to recharge for a moment?” A yoga pose before that next meeting, a two minute meditation, a glass of water, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, burning a candle or going out to lunch are all excellent energy boosters. Identify ways you can replenish throughout the day at work and at home. Consider the obstacles that may impede you and strategize on how to address them. Allowing ourselves to mindfully experience the replenishment is necessary and challenging. If I am pondering that upsetting conversation during my bubble bath, I am not going to feel better. If you manage your energy better, your clients and family will have a happier, healthier and more present you.



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The use of art in assessment and service delivery

On November 13, 2008, at the Pheasant Run Inn in St. Charles, IL, Frederica Malone gave a presentation on the use of art in assessment and service delivery. She introduced participants to information regarding art therapy and its use in a clinical setting with children in the child welfare system. Special attention was also given to promote more awareness of cultural sensitivity in service delivery.

This presentation provided caseworkers and others involved in the child welfare system the opportunity to learn about the dynamics of the art-making process, how strength in identity is built in the individual and within the family context, and how art-making is helpful with transitioning children from foster care through the reunification process. Several exercises helped to promote a deeper understanding of the process, and allowed workers to become more self-aware of their own cultural contexts.

The act of making art is therapeutic in itself, while the art product is a symbolic form of communication for the internal process of the client. In essence, art therapy:

1. Enhances or improves visual thinking
2. Allows someone to express what cannot be put into words (especially when verbal acquisition is difficult)
3. Allows for an emotional release
4. Creates a format for a dissemination of ideas through the art product;
5. Can be a foundation for cultural discourse
6. Becomes a way to explain the symbolic realm
7. Enhances life through self-expression
8. Allows for creating meaning and making sense of our world
9. Becomes a playground for the imagination
10. Is a process of learning about one's self
11. Can be a transformational process
12. Allows for communication at a visceral level

13. Allows for a format for people to engage in a cultural dialogue
14. Challenges how we think about the world
15. Allows for a way to respond to life's challenges, celebrations, strife, and social ills

Scientifically, art therapy helps with language acquisition, as there is a link between visual art and language development. It is also useful in developing problem-solving skills and self-esteem building. Art therapy enhances one's sense of pleasure, based on the creation of something aesthetic, as well as enhances overall functioning, especially within the context of trauma, severe brain injury, or physical limitations. Finally, art therapy enhances the cognitive process. When one thinks, images are conjured. When we experience art, we think about what we see and communicate about our observations. Art also provides us with a visual representation of ideas. It can trigger emotions for which words can be developed and attributed.

Participants also engaged in activities to help them get a sense of how I use art therapy and what the experience is like for clients. The first activity involved exploration of participant's family of origin's strengths and supports, as represented by people based on gender, faith, sexual identity, race, and ethnicity. Participants used colored beads and pipe cleaners to explore these supports. The second activity involved imagining feeling what separation from their family of origin would be like. Participants discussed what this might feel like, with particular attention paid to the sense of loss of the supports they illustrated prior to this activity, as well as any negative feelings associated with this loss. This exploration was conducted by coming up with words that represented the strengths within their support network of origin, as well as feelings of negativity and sadness regarding the change with separation from their support network of origin. Participants gave these strengths and feelings their



own personal symbols. Negative feeling symbols were transformed by the strength symbols then used in an overall image, using line, shape, and color, to act as a source of reference or support for the participant when feeling disconnected, lonely, or confused. It became a source for coping. Finally, we discussed the overall process in which the participants engaged, and how a client could explore the reunification process through art using similar strategies explored in the second activity.

Giving workers the opportunity to explore their feelings, while learning about their clients' perspectives within the stressful context of the child welfare system, proved to be a dynamic process. Many appeared to have a stress release by being able to focus on themselves in a way that they typically do not have the opportunity to do. Often, workers are self-sacrificing, giving all of their mental and emotional energy to balancing our most vulnerable populations' lives. The art-making process provided a format with which participants could explore feelings in such a way that promoted more self-insight as well as opened a door to perceiving their clients' feelings and experiences in different ways.

Many participants were re-energized as the art-making process uplifted them. Others learned more about themselves and how they could be more culturally aware and more sensitive to their clients' needs and overall well-being.

Statewide Provider Database: A helpful tool that relies on your feedback

By Sylvia Fonseca and Madeline Gonzalez-Garcia

We recently sat down with Susan Pinto and Darnell Motley, health interviewers for the Statewide Provider Database (SPD), an online database of service providers across the state of Illinois. We briefly discussed how this program can help frontline workers as well as the children and families they serve.

Ms. Pinto was a caseworker who worked with relative and traditional foster care for Association House and Childserv for four years before pursuing her masters degree in counseling and continuing her work in child welfare as a therapeutic case manager at Jane Adams and then as a child welfare supervisor at Lifelink Latino Services. She was excited to be part of this project, developed and overseen by Dr. Dana Weiner at Northwestern University. Having been a frontline worker, she understands the frustration of not

being able to locate appropriate resources that match the needs of the children and families along with the language capacity to service them. She hopes that caseworkers will utilize this valuable tool to access resources that are appropriate, and within the proximity of their clients' homes, which will help families move faster toward reunification.

After completing his bachelors degree in psychology, Mr. Motley worked in a myriad of roles in a residential treatment facility for youth. He shared, from a provider's standpoint, his frustration with youth not being properly matched up with the facilities that would best be able to meet their needs. He is passionate about ensuring youth receive appropriate treatment from the onset. He hopes that caseworkers utilize the SPD to more precisely identify the appropriate service provider for their

youths, thereby limiting the need for them to cycle through multiple inappropriate or ineffective services before the appropriate resource is found.

Information on each provider is updated every six months to ensure address, phone number, types of services and language capacity information is correct. They also count on frontline workers to alert them if the information listed is inaccurate. If caseworkers find any of the information on the site is inaccurate or discover a resource that is not listed, please e-mail the information to Susan. Pinto@illinois.gov or Darnell.Motley@illinois.gov. The Statewide Provider Database is available to all caseworkers at www.illinoisoutcomes.dcf.illinois.gov/spd. A user name and password can be obtained by contacting the DCFS Help Desk at 1-800-610-2089.

Upcoming Latino Events

The Office of Latino Services/Office of Affirmative Action invites you to volunteer and represent your agency! For more information, please contact Jose Lopez at 312-808-5298 or Jose.J.Lopez@illinois.gov.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT and LOCATION</u>
October 3-13	Bi-National Health Week, Chicago Metro
October 9	Senior Information Fair, 2036 N. Avers, Chicago
October 12	Chicago Bilingual Nurse Consortium Fund-Raiser Decima Musa, Chicago
October 21	Rochelle Health Fair, Location TBA, Rochelle
October 22	College Fair, St Augustine College, North Chicago
October 29 & 30	21st Annual DCFS Latino Family Institute Day, Westin Hotel, Itasca
November 14	Hispano Care Gala Dinner and Dance, Marriott Hotel, Chicago
November 21	Senior Fair, 2210 W Pershing, Chicago
December 3	7th Annual ILLCF Conference, Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont



Noticias is brought to you by the Latino Advisory Committee 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. In this endeavor, we are looking 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 upcoming events, or news to:

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If you would like more information or would like to participate in one of the LAC subcommittees, contact Evelyn Martinez @Evelyn.Martinez@illinois.gov.



Special thanks to the Newsletter Committee Members:

Maria Calderon, Carol Kline, Carmen Alvarez and Madeline Gonzalez-Garcia

Thanks to:

Jenny Florent, DCFS Division of Communications; and Jose Lopez, DCFS Office of Latino Services

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