

Families and Youth: We Have a Voice!



NJ Child Placement Advisory Council (NJ CPAC)
and **embrella**

Live Webinar
May 20, 2021

WELCOME LETTER FROM THE NJ CPAC CHAIR

Dear Attendee,

On behalf of the NJ CPAC Executive Board, welcome to today's webinar. NJ CPAC is proud to provide trainings to New Jersey child advocacy groups and stakeholders in the child welfare system. Our goal is to offer current information, practices and procedures on issues that impact the well-being of children.

Around the country, child welfare systems are rethinking their approaches to servicing families and children, and New Jersey is no exception. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the first in the nation to establish an Office of Family Voice. The Office of Family Voice (OFV) invites youth and fathers to provide DCF with suggestions on revising policy and procedures based on their lived experiences. To help the DCF reduce the number of children being removed from their homes, the Administrative Office of the Courts and the DCF is assessing the impact of systemic racism. Our esteemed co-host, **embrella**, is expanding its traditional offerings for resource and adoptive families to include kinship care families.

As you participate in today's webinar, we invite you to think about new ways you can also engage and elevate the voices and perspectives of your stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Lorene S. Wilkerson

Lorene S. Wilkerson
Chair, NJ Child Placement Advisory Council
Member, Children in Court Improvement Committee and Race Equity Subcommittee
Member, New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect and Protection Subcommittee



ABOUT

New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council (NJ CPAC)

NJ CPAC is a statewide council comprised of citizen volunteers from all 21 New Jersey Counties who, as members of their own county's Child Placement Review Board (CPRB), review the cases of children placed outside their homes by the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), the state's child welfare agency. Operating under the auspices of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), each CPRB works to ensure that the best interests of these children are served.

Established in 1978 by the Child Placement Review Act, NJ CPAC has specific legal mandates including:

- Advising the New Jersey Supreme Court of the effectiveness of this Act
- Reviewing the policies, practices and procedures of the DCP&P
- Developing and delivering training for CPR Board members and other organizations in the child welfare system.

NJ CPAC produces an annual report that is distributed to the Supreme Court, the Governor and the Legislature, as well as to the various child advocacy organizations in the state and others interested and involved in child welfare.

For more information, and to view recordings of prior webinars, please check our website www.njcpac.org.

NJ CPAC is planning a full-day training on racial equity to be held in Fall 2021; date TBD.

Contacts:

Lorene S. Wilkerson, Chair, pisces315@msn.com
Eunice I. Salton, Vice-Chair, eunsalton@gmail.com
Barbara McClurken, Coordinator (mailing list and notices), barbara.mcclurken@njcourts.gov



WELCOME LETTER FROM TODAY'S EVENT CO-HOST

Welcome!

embrella is excited to take part in today's webinar in collaboration with NJ CPAC and DCF.

embrella is a nonprofit that embraces and empowers families throughout New Jersey. Our mission is to provide advocacy and enriching programs and services to empower families and youth to thrive.

We offer caregiver support and education through our contract with the state. We also administer the New Jersey Foster Care (NJFC) Scholars Program, and in select counties, the Pathways to Academic and Career Exploration to Success (PACES) program for adolescents.

Through the generosity of our donors, we provide children and youth with opportunities to make their dreams come true. Whether it's learning to ride a horse at camp, attending college, or joining the soccer team, **embrella** offers young people in kinship and resource care the chance to build resiliency and self-esteem, learn new skills, and make positive memories to last a lifetime.

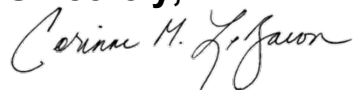
As members of the child welfare community and as responsible citizens, all of us at **embrella** are working to address systemic racism. Our DEI Committee is taking a hard look at our policies, protocols, and offerings to make our organization a fairer and better place for all we serve and employ.

embrella lends a listening ear and a helping hand to our kinship caregivers, who open their homes to the young relatives who need them, even as their own hearts may be breaking. We continue to support our resource parents, as we've done for more than 45 years. They give a soft place to land to children with complex needs and provide a warm place to sleep for siblings who want - and need - to stay together during one of the most challenging times of their lives. We also recognize the importance of offering in-home supports to struggling families so they can stay safe, stay intact, and thrive.

We're happy to share our efforts with you today, and we're looking forward to hearing your thoughts and concerns, as well.

You DO have a voice, so please, speak up! We're listening - and learning.

Sincerely,



Corinne LeBaron, CEO

ABOUT

embrella

embrella was founded in 1972 and incorporated in 1974, and is the leading statewide advocacy agency for foster, adoptive and kinship caregivers in NJ. Our Mission is to provide advocacy and enriching programs and services to empower families and youth to thrive. We provide services, support and training opportunities for foster, adoptive and kinship families, and others having the responsibility for and/or the interest in the well-being of children. We help children in care by offering programs to support them from childhood to young adulthood while also providing them access to reach their dreams. Our vision is a future where all youth and families thrive in safe, stable and nurturing homes.

We strive to ensure that we are supporting all kinship caregivers. Due to this, we are hosting our first annual Kinship Conference for kinship caregivers throughout New Jersey on Friday, June 11th, 2021. Our Kinship Conference will provide numerous educational workshops and networking experiences to those in attendance. Please go to <https://tinyurl.com/KinCon2021> for more information about our conference.

Este evento se ofrecerá en inglés y español. Si quiere hacer la conferencia en español, asegúrese de que el idioma de su navegador se cambia al español. Puede cambiar el idioma en la configuración del navegador.

**Please note- registration for this event is only open to kinship caregivers throughout NJ.*



MAY 20, 2021 PROGRAM



Families and Youth: We Have a Voice!

9:45 A.M. CHECK-IN

10:00 A.M. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS:

**Eunice Salton, NJ CPAC Vice-Chair, NJ CPAC Program Chair and
Corissa Kazar, embrella Director of Family Support**

10:05 A.M. PANEL 1: EVERY VOICE MATTERS

Parents and children with lived experience provide an authentic perspective that contributes to a deeper and richer understanding of the needs and service gaps. They use their voice to transform systems to better serve children and families. Blake Connor, the Executive Assistant of the NJ Department of Children and Family (DCF) Office of Family Voice (OFV), will highlight how those who have lived experiences are helping to ensure DCF policy and practice are infused with authentic voices. Kaysie Getty and Kareem Lovelace-Crump will discuss key issues with services, policies and practices affecting youth and fathers and their recommendations to help transform New Jersey's child welfare system. We will also hear from a father and youth with lived experience who will advise and inform attendees about the impact child welfare has had on their families and communities and what it means to have their voices heard.

***Blake Connor, OFV Executive Assistant (Panel Chair)
Kaysie Getty, OFV Youth Programming Advisor
Kareem Lovelace-Crump, OFV Father Engagement Advisor
Earl Clark Jr, Member of the OFV Youth Council
Adrian Wright, Father with Lived Experience***

11:05 A.M. PANEL 2: RACIAL DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE MATTER

The goal of this panel is to improve understanding that all of us live and work in systems that systematically disadvantage specific racial and ethnic groups. Chaired by Lorene S. Wilkerson, it will provide a brief overview of how the DCF and the Family Practice Division of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) are applying a racial equity lens and other strategies to better understand the extent of disparate outcomes in our child welfare system, strengthen families, and to reduce the inequities and biases that affect disparate outcomes for Black families, youth and children. The panel will discuss the collaborative efforts underway to reduce racial inequities in policies, practices and procedures. Dr. Denise Williams Johnson will speak to the issues of trauma and distrust in our Black communities and address the ways in which an inadequate understanding of the impact of racism can affect the quality of evaluations and mental health treatment.

Lorene S. Wilkerson, Children in Court Improvement Committee (Panel Chair)
Florence Racine, DCF Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director
Kathy Haggerty, AOC Family Practice Division Administrative Specialist
Dr. Denise Williams Johnson, Licensed Clinical Psychologist

11:35 A.M. PANEL 3: PRIORITIZING KINSHIP CARE

For several years, New Jersey's Department of Children and Families (DCF) has been shifting its focus to kinship care when children and youth enter the care of New Jersey's Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P). This shift to kinship care and the subsequent passage of the 2018 Family First Prevention Services Act has significantly impacted the services and programs available to New Jersey's families, children, and youth. We will hear from DCF's Office of Resource Families Administrator, Dawn Marlow; DCF's Deputy Director of Adoption, Resource Families and Resource Licensing, Darlene Fusco; and embrella's Director of Family Support, Corissa Kazar, about how the shift to kinship care has affected their goals and programs and how programs are moving to encompass kinship while also continuing to support traditional resource parents.

Corissa Kazar, embrella Director of Family Support (Panel Chair)
Dawn Marlow, DCF Administrator Office of Resource Families
Darlene Fusco, DCF Deputy Director of Adoption, Resource Families and Resource Licensing

11:35 P.M. Q&A**11:55 P.M. CLOSING REMARKS**

Eunice Salton and Corissa Kazar

BIOGRAPHIES

PANEL 1: EVERY VOICE MATTERS



BLAKE CONNOR (panel chair) is the Executive Assistant for the Department of Children and Family's Office of Family Voice (OFV). Blake brings a well-rounded perspective to OFV that combines years of field practice experience as well as the ability to integrate and apply quantitative and qualitative analysis to organize and elevate the voice of constituents.

Blake is in his 17th year with the Department of Children and Families. He began with the Division of Children Protection and Permanency as a case worker for the Camden North Local Office where he worked in permanency, intake, and adoption units and as a Case Practice Specialist for the Gloucester West Local Office. In 2011, Blake joined the Office of Performance Management and Accountability (OPMA) and worked as Executive Directed Reviewer, in the Office of Quality, a Data Analyst in the Office of Research, Evaluation and Reporting and as the Executive Assistant for OPMA. In these roles he conducted qualitative reviews of high-profile cases and other critical incidents; produced statistical reports and presentations for DCF leadership that supported improving case practice efficiency and was a member of multiple committees tasked with planning and developing new systems and implementing effective and sustainable initiatives that improved policy and practice throughout DCF. In 2018 Blake was tapped to become the Executive Assistant for the Commissioner Beyer's new Office of Family Voice and has been with OFV since its inception.

Blake graduated from Rutgers University in New Brunswick NJ where he majored in Psychology as well as Administration of Justice. Blake is a father of two beautiful children and is very much looking forward to the return to full school days.



KAYSIE GETTY is a New Jersey native and child welfare expert of the foster care system. She is currently working at the DCF OFV as the Youth Programming Advisor. Kaysie has utilized her former foster care experience to reform and impact system and change work within the foster care system in NJ and nationally in hopes to better the child welfare system.

Kaysie is currently a national consultant and is a Support Coach for National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Reviewers through JBS International Inc. and a Youth Thrive Ambassador/ Trainer for the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Youth Thrive Initiative. She formerly served as a Board Member for Foster Care Alumni of America. She also formerly worked in DC helping young people with lived experience advocate for child welfare reform.

Kaysie has tailored and presented numerous speaking engagements where she blends best practice models of youth engagement with her personal life story to support at-risk youth, on their paths in life.

Kaysie has her Master's in Social Work (MSW) from Rutgers University School of Social Work. She is also the founder of Sew EdUcated LLC a company that provides blue handmade stoles to young people and adults in and from foster care that graduate from college.

EARL CLARK JR is a 22-year-old psychology major at Rowan University who has lived experienced. Earl is a current member of the DCF Youth Council. He works on the Aging Out and Communications Subcommittee in efforts to connect youth with the resources needed as they transition out of the foster care system. Earl aspires to work with young black men to help them achieve opportunities for success.



KAREEM LOVELACE-CRUMP is the Fatherhood Engagement Advisor with the DCF OFV. As Fatherhood Engagement Advisor, Kareem has supported the OFV in the recruitment, engagement, and retention of lived experience fathers, while facilitating solution-based dialogue with DCF's Fatherhood Engagement Committee.

Prior to joining DCF, Kareem began "Fathers Matter", a DCF funded program. As Fatherhood Coordinator and Facilitator of the southern and central regions of New Jersey, he's been able to engage fathers and guardians of all demographics. During the program Kareem was able to interact with urban communities in eight counties through classes, workshops, and presentations with community and state agencies. The program was a success helping adolescent and adult fathers with parenting and life skills.

Kareem has spoken at the CIC Conference 2021, Rutgers University School of Social Work (New Brunswick) 2019, NJ Parent Linking Program Conference 2017, OAH Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF) Grantee Conference 2017, NJ DCF Fatherhood Conference 2016, School Based Youth Services, and NJ courts & probation throughout various counties.

Kareem is a huge supporter of family & fatherhood education and the opportunities it provides. He looks forward to connecting with more professionals and fatherhood groups to spread the message of fatherhood engagement.

ADRIAN WRIGHT is from Trenton, NJ and is a father of six. He has participated in DCF funded fatherhood programs and is a current member of the DCF Lived Experience Fathers Subcommittee. He has spoken at the Children in Court Conference 2021 and looks forward to continuing shared leadership work with DCF as well as other state departments.

PANEL 2: RACIAL DISPARITIES IN CHILD WELFARE MATTER



LORENE S. WILKERSON (panel chair) is the chair of the New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council (CPAC), having served in this capacity since June 2013. She is also a member of the Middlesex County Child Placement Review Board that reviews the placement of children out of their homes. As the CPAC Chair Lorene sits on the Children in Court Improvement Committee and its Race Equity Subcommittee. As a member of the Governor's New Jersey Task on Child Abuse and Neglect, she sits on its Protection Subcommittee. She is a retired DCP&P employee, with almost 35 years of service.

Lorene has a B. A. in psychology from Adelphi University, New York; a Personnel and Human Resource Certificate; and various certificates in child welfare and substance abuse.



FLORENCE RACINE, MSW, LSW is the Director of the new Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Florence has been an advocate for children and their families and involved with public systems for more than 25 years. Her career began in community-based mental health, working with chronic mentally ill adults and seriously mentally ill children. Her work since has ranged from direct practice and supervision in investigations and permanency, to case practice model implementation. Florence also consulted in numerous states, including Washington DC, Utah, Michigan, Illinois and Maryland. Prior to her current position, she was the Assistant Director of the DCF Office of Quality, responsible for staff who plan, conduct, analyze on a range of qualitative reviews across the state..

Florence earned her MSW from Rutgers (New Brunswick) and her BS from William Patterson University.



KATHY HAGGERTY began working for the AOC Family Practice Division's Court Improvement Program in March of 2016. She is lead staff to the Children in Court Improvement Committee's Race Equity Subcommittee, and the regional Race Equity Leadership Teams, chaired by the Hon. Bernadette DeCastro, Hudson; the statewide Race Equity Leadership Team, chaired by the Hon. Deborah Venezia, Middlesex and Chair of the CICIC; and also lead staff to the newly formed Youth, Family and Community Voice Subcommittee, chaired by the Hon. Michael Wright, Morris.

In the 16 years prior to working for the AOC, Kathy held various leadership positions in courts. Her experiences include Executive Director at the District of Columbia's Office of Administrative Hearings; serving concurrently as the Programs Administrator and Reclaiming Futures Project Director at Snohomish County Superior Court; and Residential Supervisor at a crisis center for adolescents at Snohomish County Juvenile Court. She also has extensive experience leading adjudicated youth in wilderness expeditions in several programs.

Kathy holds master's degrees in Clinical Psychology and Public Administration.



DR. DENISE M. WILLIAMS JOHNSON earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Emory University in Atlanta Georgia. She is a New Jersey Licensed Psychologist who has been in private practice for over 28 years. Her office is currently located in West Orange, NJ.

Some of Dr. Johnson's professional experiences include: psychological services to the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), the Law Guardian's Office, and the Office of Parental Representation; providing expert testimony in child protective service cases and in other forensic cases; psychological services, including psychotherapy, to a primarily inner-city, African descent population; supervision, consultation, and presentations about cultural and spiritual issues in evaluations and treatment; trauma-specific treatment in the form of EMDR and Acupressure Desensitization; and performance consultation to professional sports organizations, high school and college athletes, and business executives.

In March 2020 Dr. Johnson co-authored a chapter on the role of contextual, personal, and racial trauma in child protection forensic evaluations.

For the past 6 years, Dr. Johnson has also had her own syndicated radio show that integrates spirituality, cultural issues, and emotional wellness.

PANEL 3: PRIORITIZING KINSHIP CARE



CORISSA KAZAR is the Director of Family Support at **embrella**. Through her work at **embrella** and previously New Jersey's Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), she has worked in child welfare for over a decade by advocating, supporting and educating families, state workers and outside agencies throughout the state. She also serves on New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse & Neglect as a member due to her expertise of child welfare.



DAWN M. MARLOW, MSW has over 27 years of experience in the field of child welfare working in non-profit as well as for the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Dawn is currently the Administrator for the Office of Resource Families where she oversees the practice, policies and procedures aimed at ensuring that children requiring out of home placement and their resource family caregivers are supported and remain safe, healthy and connected. Dawn has held many roles within DCF over the last 24 years beginning as a frontline worker under the Division of Child Protection & Permanency. Prior to her current role, she was the Federal Reporting Coordinator under the Office of Strategic Development where she organized DCF's implementation of practice and quality improvement of services, to include partnerships with other state child welfare agencies, to ensure that NJ's child welfare system conforms with federal child welfare requirements and enhance capacity to achieve positive outcomes for children and families. Dawn holds a B.A. from Georgian Court University in Psychology and a MSW from the Rutgers University School of Social Work.



DARLENE FUSCO has served in the capacity of the DCF Deputy Director of Adoption Operations, Resource Families and Resource Family Licensing since 2018. In this role, she provides oversight of all statewide operations involving adoption, resource and resource family licensing. Darlene is responsible for evaluating and supporting statewide resource family initiatives, recruitment, and retention efforts, as well as all areas of adoption including oversight of the subsidy program, adoption exchange and registry. In addition, Darlene oversees state resource family licensing regulations to ensure conformance with DCF policy, federal and state laws, and regulations.

Darlene has 33 years of comprehensive experience in the field of child welfare. She began her career with CP&P in 1988 as a Family Service Specialist and has served in various positions during her tenure with DCF. Darlene has held a multitude of leadership roles including Supervisor, Casework Supervisor, Local Office Manager, Assistant Area Director and served as the Area Director of the Bergen/Hudson Area Office prior to her role as Deputy Director.

Darlene earned her B.S. in Psychology from St. Peter's College and a Certified Social Work Manager Certificate from the Academy of Certified Social Work Managers. She is a graduate of the DCF-National Child Welfare Workforce Institute- Leadership Academy for Middle Managers.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY

All of us at the New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council (NJ CPAC) would like to thank speakers: Blake Connor, Kareem Lovelace-Crump, Kaysie Getty, Lorene S. Wilkerson, Dr. Denise Williams Johnson, Kathy Haggerty, Florence Racine, Corissa Kazar, Dawn Marlow and Darlene Fusco. A very special thanks to Adrian Wright and Earl Clark Jr.

We also want to express our sincere appreciation to the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) and **embrella**, our co-host, for their support and voices. And for sharing your voice, we thank all of you who have joined us today

Today's program was recorded and will be posted on the NJ CPAC and **embrella** websites:

www.njcpac.org.

Contact: Eunice I. Salton, Vice Chair for further information at eunsalton@gmail.com.

www.embrella.org.

Contact: Corissa Kazar, Director of Family Support for further information at ckazar@embrella.org.

embrella information line for caregivers: (800) 222-0047



If your child is in crisis, GET HELP!

Social distancing can create a feeling of isolation from friends and support systems.

For children and youth with behavior disorders or mental health diagnoses, COVID-19 may heighten their anxiety and distress.

NJ's free Mobile Response services provide safe, real-time emergency counseling and therapies, 24/7/365.

Don't wait! Call the Children's System of Care at 1-877-652-7624.



Key Facts about COVID-19 Vaccination



Getting vaccinated can help prevent getting sick with COVID-19



COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you COVID-19



People who have already gotten sick with COVID-19 may still benefit from getting vaccinated



COVID-19 vaccines will not cause you to test positive on COVID-19 viral tests



You
Are
Essential.