



PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

The Advocacy Institute Is Pleased to Present

Office of Family Voice: A Constituent-Informed Approach to Child Protection Litigation

May 6, 2024

10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**N.J. Forensic Science & Technology Center
1200 Negron Drive
Hamilton, New Jersey**

Program Summary

In 2018, New Jersey's Department of Children and Families (DCF) established the Office of Family Voice (OFV) to amplify the voices of parents, youth, and all DCF constituents and ensure their active involvement to transform the state's child - and family-serving system. This program will provide an overview of OFV services, which will enable DCF deputies to take a holistic, constituent-informed approach when representing their clients. The presenters will discuss the history and mission of OFV. They will also discuss the future of OFV, including the launch of DCF's Lived Experience Expert Partnership (L.E.E.P.). Finally, the presenters will discuss how fathers, specifically non-residential fathers, can be engaged throughout a child's time in placement.

Eligibility

This program is only open to Deputy and Assistant Attorneys General in the DCF practice group and DCF agency attorneys invited to attend.

Faculty

Katie Bourgault is the Executive Director of the Office of Family Voice (OFV) at the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF). Ms. Bourgault has worked to improve child and family-serving systems for over 20 years. She served as a case manager advocating for youth in foster care and their families, developed and supervised community-based support programs for parents and adolescents, and facilitated training and coaching for front-line staff and supervisors in case practice and family team meetings. Prior to joining DCF, she worked for the Capacity Building Center for States at ICF. Ms. Bourgault earned her Bachelor's Degree from Rutgers

University and her Master's Degree from Teacher's College at Columbia University.

Sherry Clark is the Family Leadership Manager for OFV. As a member of the leadership team, Ms. Clark supports the Executive Director in incorporating the voice of constituents with lived experience in service design, delivery, training, policy development and operations within DCF. Previously, Ms. Clark worked with the Division of Family and Community Partnership, where she supported and monitored evidence-based home visiting programs in the Office of Early Childhood Services. She received her Bachelor's degree from Rutgers University and her Master's degree in Human Services, specializing in marriage and families from Liberty University.

Asia Panzino is the Youth Engagement Advisor for OFV. In that role, they lead the work of the NJ DCF Youth Council. They provide support, skill-building, and advocacy, for young people within child welfare services. They integrate personal and professional experience to be a bridge for young people wanting to advance change in policy, procedures, programs, and in their own lives. Asia Panzino is a graduate of Rider University with a Master of Arts degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and a secondary certification for Life and Career Coaching.

Blake Connor is the Executive Assistant for OFV. Mr. Connor has been instrumental in building OFV since its inception in 2018. He supervises and supports the Youth and Father Engagement Advisors who lead the Youth and Father Councils. As acting director, Mr. Connor saw several accomplishments come to fruition including the launch of a youth resource website and roll out of EnlightenMENT, a peer-to-peer mentoring program.

Tamia Govan is the community coordinator at OFV. Ms. Govan is child welfare reform advocate. Prior to OFV, Ms. Govan served on New Jersey's Four Branch Institute as a constituent representative utilizing her lived expertise to provide professional and personal insight and recommendations. She is also a member of DCF's Race Equity Steering Committee and the Policy and Practice Subcommittee.

Kareem Lovelace is the Fatherhood Engagement Advisor within OFV. As lead for the NJ DCF Fatherhood Initiative, Mr. Lovelace is responsible for strengthening the Department's work with fathers through authentic interaction and shared decision-making.

CLE Credit

NJ CLE Credit: This program has been approved by the Board on Continuing Legal Education of the Supreme Court of New Jersey for 1.5 hours of total CLE credit. Of these, 0.0 qualify as hours of credit for ethics/professionalism.

PA CLE Credit: 1.0 credits (\$1.50 mandatory registration fee required).

Registration

Attorneys who are eligible to attend this program should fill out the registration form accessed through the registration email hyperlink.