



New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

2023 BIENNIAL CONFERENCE



THE INTERSECTION OF
**RACE, POVERTY,
& NEGLECT**
IN CHILD WELFARE

October 19, 2023
9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Hyatt Regency Princeton | 102 Carnegie Center Drive | Princeton, N.J.

The National Conference of State Legislatures noted that in 2020, more than 480,000 children came to the attention of child welfare systems throughout the country as a result of neglect.

Two out of every three children entering foster care that same year were separated from their family, with neglect being a primary or contributing factor in the decision to move to out-of-home placement.

Historically, in child welfare circles, all too often, allegations of “neglect” are a coded way of saying that a family is dealing with the effects of poverty. The issue isn’t that a parent is withholding some physical or emotional need from their child, but that the family has an unmet material need resulting from having little to no income.

Additionally, we know that a major contributing factor in the nation’s poverty epidemic is systemic and institutional racism. Black families are denied opportunities that are freely available to white families through red-lining, disinvestment in public education in urban communities, over-policing and so much more.

As a result, families are often caught in a vicious cycle. Families of color face systemic barriers to economic sufficiency, they get reported to child welfare for “neglect,” and they face the trauma and stigma associated with child welfare involvement. Black families are disproportionately represented in child welfare throughout the country, and our system is structured such that they experience higher rates of family separation, with unrealistic expectations around reunification.

This intersection – of race, poverty, and neglect in child protective services in the U.S. – has to be explored and examined to achieve social justice and ensure that the child welfare system doesn’t continue to be a tool for further systemic oppression. The intention of child welfare is to uplift the child, youth, and the entire family. In New Jersey, we’re looking for ways to do that in a healing-centered, trauma-informed way.

Join us for a conversation about race, poverty, and neglect as it pertains to the child welfare system, in New Jersey and throughout the country. We’ll hear from national experts as well as leaders on the ground in our home state, hoping to achieve a fairer, more equitable system for all families.

Thank you for joining us today to be a part of an important dialogue as we imagine a better way forward for child welfare in New Jersey.



AGENDA

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.	REGISTRATION
9:30 – 9:50 a.m.	WELCOME Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW, Commissioner New Jersey Department of Children and Families
9:50 – 10:30 a.m.	LEARN TO QUILT: A FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE Aysha E. Schomburg, JD, Associate Commissioner Children’s Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families
10:30 – 10:45 a.m.	BREAK
10:45 a.m. – 12 p.m.	EVIDENCE AT THE INTERSECTION OF CHILD WELFARE & ECONOMIC AND CONCRETE SUPPORTS Clare Anderson, MSW, Senior Policy Fellow Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
12 – 1:15 p.m.	LUNCH
1:15 – 1:45 p.m.	ANTI-RACISM IN CHILD WELFARE: MOVING FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION Lisa Mishraky-Javier, LMSW, Senior Associate Center for the Study of Social Policy
1:45 – 2:15 p.m.	WHY NJ DATA IS IMPORTANT: SUPPORTING THE NEED FOR REFORM Mary E. Coogan, Esq, President & CEO Advocates for Children of New Jersey
2:15 – 3:15 p.m.	INTRODUCTION TO THE 4 BRANCHES & CALL TO ACTION Katherine Stoehr, First Deputy Commissioner NJ Department of Children and Families
3:15 – 3:30 p.m.	Closing Mary Coogan

Guest Speakers



CLARE ANDERSON, MSW

Senior Policy Fellow, [Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago](#)

Clare Anderson, MSW, is a Senior Policy Fellow at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. She is a national expert and thought leader in child welfare and family strengthening policy and practice. She partners with states and jurisdictions to transform systems through capacity building and the implementation of policies, programs, and services that make a difference for children and families.



MARY E. COOGAN, ESQ.

President & CEO, [Advocates for Children of New Jersey](#)

Mary became President and CEO of Advocates for Children of New Jersey at the start of 2023 after becoming the vice president in 2003. She joined the organization in 1993 to head what is now known as ACNJ's KidLaw Resource Center, which provides information on laws and legal processes affecting New Jersey children.

Mary's primary policy areas include foster care, kinship care, children's health, and more recently, juvenile justice. She has authored guides and articles on child welfare-related topics, including the Kinship Legal Guardianship Guide, and has represented ACNJ as amicus curiae before the NJ Supreme Court in several cases. Mary is a member of the New Jersey Children in Court Improvement Committee, the NJ Medical Assistance Advisory Council, the New Jersey Council for Juvenile Justice System Improvement and its School/Justice Partnership Subcommittee. Recently, she was appointed Acting Co-Chair for the NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. She previously chaired the Child Welfare Section and the Pro Bono Committee of the New Jersey State Bar Association.

Prior to joining ACNJ in 1993, Mary practiced family law in New Jersey. She received both her J.D. and B.A. from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.



AYSHA E. SCHOMBURG, J.D.

Associate Commissioner, [Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families](#)

Aysha E. Schomburg joined the Biden Administration in March 2021 as the Associate Commissioner of the United States Children's Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In this role, she advises the Administration on matters related to child welfare, including child abuse and neglect, child protective services, family preservation and support, adoption, foster care, and independent living. The Children's Bureau recommends legislative and budgetary proposals, operational planning system objectives and initiatives, and projects and issue areas for evaluation, research, and demonstration activities.

Aysha previously served as the Senior Administrator for Program Oversight for New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS). There she worked collaboratively with agency leaders to develop and implement plans for the operational infrastructure of ACS. During the COVID-19 public health crisis, she worked closely with New York City's Department of Education and Department of Homeless Services to create and coordinate guidance for frontline staff. She also provided recommendations to ACS's Office of Equity Strategies regarding addressing inequities and racism in child welfare. In October, the Aspen Institute named Aysha a 2021 Ascend Fellow, joining

a network of visionary leaders who are transforming the trajectory of children and families across the country. Aysha received her B.A. from the University of Virginia, M.A. from New York University and J.D. from New York Law School.



KATHERINE STOEHR

First Deputy Commissioner, [NJ Department of Children and Families](#)

Katherine Stoehr is the First Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families. Her career has spanned two decades of work on child welfare reform across multiple U.S. jurisdictions. Katherine began her career in support of children and families at the Association to Benefit Children in East Harlem; since then, she has served in diverse leadership roles in public and private child and family serving agencies in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and has provided consulting services nationally. Throughout her career, Katie has held executive responsibility for management of direct services, strategic planning, reform initiatives, performance monitoring, implementation of evidence-based programming, and revenue maximization strategies in both government and non-profit agencies. Katherine earned a Master of Public Administration from the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, and a B.A. in Politics and Philosophy from the University of Pittsburgh. She is a proud Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.

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LISA MISHRAKY-JAVIER, LMSW

Senior Associate, [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#)

Lisa Mishraky-Javier, LMSW, is a Senior Associate working to advance the Center of the Study of Social Policy’s public system reform efforts, focusing on the use of data and research to inform equity-focused policy, decision making and best practices. Lisa has expertise in child welfare, positive youth development, protective factors, leveraging data to advance equity, and authentic partnership with lived experience experts. She has managed national, cross-system and multidisciplinary learning and innovation networks and has experience providing capacity building, and technical assistance to multi-site initiatives. Lisa co-developed the Youth Thrive Survey, an instrument used by public systems and community organizations to measure positive indicators of youth well-being. She is part of the team that developed CSSP’s inSIGHT: A Workshop on Implicit Racial Bias for Child Protection Workers, and leads CSSP’s Data for Equity and Action Initiative. Prior to working at CSSP, Lisa served as Director of a Family Homeless Shelter and as Director of a Preventive Program in New York City. She is a graduate of Columbia University’s School of Social Work.

Facilitators



KERRY-ANN HENRY, LSW

Assistant Director, [DCF Office of Housing \(OOH\)](#)

Ms. Henry and her team works in concert with system partners to improve the social and well-being outcomes of youth and families by leveraging housing as a foundation. She has two decades of experience and expertise in serving children, youth and families across community-level and state/public systems. Ms. Henry earned her Master in Social Work, and a B.S, from Rutgers University.



BENITA R. MILLER, ESQ.

Executive Director, [Powerful Families, Powerful Communities](#)

Benita Miller was recently named Executive Director of Powerful Families, Powerful Communities as an Executive on Loan to the Department of Children and Families in New Jersey. She will be working closely with coalition and community members to advance this revolutionary initiative. Ms. Miller has been working in and around social activism, social services and children's services for 25 years.



FLORENCE RACINE, MSW, LSW

Director, [DCF Office of Diversity, Equity & Belonging](#)

Florence Racine, MSW, LSW, directs the DCF Office of Diversity, Equity & Belonging where she coordinates the work of the department's Race Equity Steering Committee, develops and implements initiatives that promote equitable outcomes for children and families of color, builds the capacity of staff to respond effectively to structural racism, individual and implicit bias, and promotes culturally competent policy and practice within DCF and among our contracted services.

Continuing Education Information:

The 2023 Biennial Conference will offer 4.5 Ethical or Cultural Competency Contact Hours of Continuing Education (CE) for Social Workers, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and Licensed Professional Counselors.

Stockton University is authorized to offer continuing education credits for social workers in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Connecticut, and Massachusetts for licensure and certification renewal by the licensure boards in those states. Stockton's undergraduate and graduate programs in social work are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

Stockton University, Office of Continuing Studies & Adult Education is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Social Work as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers #SW-0635.

NJ Department of Children and Families employees will receive 4.5 Training Credits and have their attendance recorded in the DCF LMS.

Certificates will be available at the conclusion of today's event and available for pick up at the Registration tables.

Conference Host Agencies



The [New Jersey Department of Children and Families](#) is the state's first Cabinet-level agency devoted exclusively to serving and supporting at-risk children and families. It is made up of about 6,600 staff who are focused on and committed to assisting and empowering residents to be safe, healthy and connected.




The purpose of the [New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect](#) is to study and develop recommendations regarding the most effective means of improving the quality and scope of child protective and preventative services provided or supported by State government.



CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION INSTITUTE

[The Child Welfare Education Institute \(CWEI\) at Stockton University](#) is facilitating logistics for this event. The mission of CWEI is to support the ongoing transformation of the public child welfare system through social work education and professional training. Our vision is safety and well-being for the children and families of New Jersey.

Presented in Partnership with:  **Children's Bureau**
An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

Conference Evaluation



Please take a moment to evaluate today's conference. Your feedback is important in helping us shape the future NJTF CAN events. An email will be sent with a link to the conference evaluation as well for those who prefer to complete it at a later time.