

# PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP



## ◆ PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER DESCRIPTION

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is to keep children safe and help families thrive. The Prevention and Reunification Unit within DCFS works to strengthen families so that children may stay safely in their homes and prevent their placement into foster care.

We are recruiting to expand the Parent Advisory Council to work with the prevention and reunification unit. The council will help the unit to build partnerships between parents and staff, promote parent leadership development, and help expand the meaningful roles of parents throughout the system. The purpose of the council is to ensure strong parent voices are included in the shaping of programs, services, and strategies.

The council will include a diverse group of parents from across the state. We are recruiting parents who have had prior personal experiences within the child welfare system, or parents who have successfully used community supports to strengthen their own families and overcome challenges in their lives. Council members will serve as strategic partners with the unit and share their recommendations on ways to improve services. The parents will help to provide DCFS staff with a greater understanding of family needs and any gaps in services. Applicants must be nominated by a DCFS staff member, a community-based service provider, or another community stakeholder with professional connections to parents who have experienced the child welfare system.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## ◆ ROLE OF THE PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Serve as a representative voice for parents in promoting improvements in services and practices in the unit that strengthen families and help to keep them safely together.
- Actively advise the unit on developing meaningful parent roles in its various service areas of primary prevention, differential response, in-home services, reunification services, birth parent engagement and child welfare investigation services.
- Develop resources to assist the unit staff in developing supportive, strengths-based strategies in their work with parents.
- Promote and support implementation of the protective factors framework.
- Serve in various other roles based on the emerging needs of the unit, such as co-trainers, public speakers, reviewers of funding proposals, contributors to written materials, etc..
- Participate, if interested and your time permits, in the work of the Birth Parent National Network (BPNN), a diverse network of birth parents and organizations that promote policy and practice changes in the child welfare system.
- All work of the Council will be done in partnership with Unit staff and will further the mission and goals of the Unit.

## ◆ REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION

- Serve as a representative voice for parents in promoting improvements in services and practices in the unit that strengthen families and help to keep them safely together.
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## ◆ BONUS, BUT NOT REQUIRED

Experience on other advisory or planning councils or volunteering for community organizations that are working to improve the lives of children and families (e.g., Systems of Care Councils, school committees, church programs, Boys & Girl Scouts, other youth serving organizations, etc.)

## PREVENTION AND REUNIFICATION UNIT

The unit is partnering with the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds (Alliance) to assist in developing the council and providing initial training and support. The Alliance is the national membership organization for state Children's Trust and Prevention Funds (CTFs). Through its commitment to partnering with parents, the Alliance advocates for and supports strong parent voices related to strategies that ensure the safety and well-being of children throughout the country. The role of the Alliance is to help the unit best support the needs of council members, by promoting parent partnerships and practice change, and providing training, coaching, mentoring and one-on-one support.

## THE COUNCIL WILL BE ENGAGED IN:

- Primary Prevention strategies for families in the community before they interact with the child welfare system.
- Differential Response Services for families where there have been no true findings
- In-home services for parents with a true finding and the children are able to remain safely in the home
- Reunification services and supports to assist children in foster care in reuniting with their families
- Child Welfare Investigations
- Strategies for supporting and engaging parents using a strengths-based approach (e.g., Team decision-making).

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