

The image features a white background with four decorative mosaic patterns in the corners. Each mosaic is composed of irregular, colorful triangles in shades of red, blue, green, orange, and purple, set against a light beige background. The top-left and bottom-right mosaics are larger and more prominent, while the top-right and bottom-left ones are smaller and partially cut off by the edges of the frame.

Showcasing Lived Experience from the Start



Niki Tartal

- ★ Parent Advocate at The Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel in West Palm Beach, FL since 2020
- ★ Masters in Social Work from Florida Atlantic University
- ★ Nationally Certified Peer Specialist
- ★ My lived experience is as a person in recovery from substance use and mental health issues since 2016
- ★ I also have lived experience with dependency, criminal justice systems
- ★ My research interests are in macro- and system level change with a focus on maternal-infant bond, dependency systems, and early interventions



Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel, Fourth District



Defending Liberty and Protecting Rights through Assertive, Client-Centered Representation

- ★ Social services unit comprised of Forensic Social Workers, Assistant Forensic Social Worker, Forensic Family Advocate, Parent Advocate and Unit Director
- ★ Multidisciplinary team including an SSU and attorney
- ★ Advocacy through engagement in community organizations and panels
- ★ Enhancing future social work profession by partnering with local universities for internship opportunities
- ★ SSU supports clients through each step in dependency system both in court and community
- ★ We provide direct linkage to services and concrete needs based on client-stated needs

Role and Model of the Agency



CONFIDENTIALITY

Covered under attorney client privilege, we do **NOT** testify, prepare status reports, etc.



DOCUMENTATION

Internal database included in attorney work product



REFERRALS

Appointed at shelter, SSU referrals by attorneys or SSU, self-referrals



Ashley Miller

- Parent advocate at the Office of Respondent Parent Counsel in Denver, Colorado
- Graduate Student for Clinical Behavioral Healthcare
- Patient Family Partner with Colorado Perinatal Care Quality Collaborative (CPCQC)
- Lived experience with substance use and mental health concerns while pregnant and parenting
- Lived experience with an open child welfare case
- My passion is working with pregnant and parenting moms that are struggling with substance use disorder. My voice is desperately needed for pregnant mothers struggling with addiction. The change I create by being in the helping profession will allow me to support women in recovery and watch them grow into their true selves. Their true, healthy selves will impact their circles of family, friends, and co-workers that they surround themselves with, creating waves of impact and waves of change in the world.



Office Of Respondent Parent Counsel

1. Parent Advocates help with resources, such as housing, transportation, advocating in team meeting, food banks, GED programs...
2. Protecting the fundamental Right to Parent: Advocating for justice in the child welfare system/dependency and neglect cases
3. Lawyers bring parent advocates on the case and we collaborate to work together for the client
4. Parent Advocates and lawyers attend court hearings and family meetings to best support the client
5. Parent advocates are covered under lawyer-client privilege/confidentiality
6. Parent advocates do not testify because we are apart of the lawyers legal team

Lindsey Shine- Parent Ally Team Lead



- ★ I received help from The Family Involvement Center during my own dependency. After the case closed in 2018 I was brought on with FIC, and as a small team we built the Parents for Parents program.
- ★ Today, we work collaboratively with families, attorneys and child-welfare specialists.
- ★ P4P is a grassroots movement. We are involved at various levels outside of direct support to families; including court improvement, DCS Office of Prevention, child-welfare policy changes, multidisciplinary teamwork, and community impact teams.
- ★ Our goal is for each family to feel hope and worthiness, and, to educate the community on other people's experiences.



Role Within The Agency

Parent Allies are people who've have journeyed through the child welfare system. We have diverse backgrounds and use our lived-life experiences to uplift others who are still striving to reunite with their loved ones.

We are a neutral party and do not offer legal advice. Instead we provide general system knowledge and encourage families to utilize their partnership with their attorney and DCS specialist.

Variety of support methods, all on the family's terms.

- Parenting classes, Dependency 101 and support groups.
- Peer support, 1:1 living skills, general system knowledge.
- Planning ahead for life events, increased communication, safety plans
- Concrete resources-food, clothing, bus passes, referrals to other agencies, making phone calls and submitting applications.
- Accompany to court, mediation, TDM, and other important family meetings.



The Program Model



Family Involvement Center- Child Welfare Initiative

GRANT FUNDED

While it's not always perfect, this gives us the flexibility to say 'YES!' more often.

PROVIDING SUPPORT

Can get involved at any junction. Families are referred by other parents/word of mouth, DCS, attorneys, and other service providers. An online case management system is utilized. Different levels of care based on family's needs.

FATHERHOOD ENGAGEMENT -DAD TOGETHER

This program is for men at any stage of their Fatherhood journey. We recognize that dads get left out and have specialized parenting classes and mentorship just for them.

TEAM-BASED PARENT REPRESENTATION PROGRAM

Multidisciplinary legal team consisting of a social worker and a peer parent navigator assembles around a parent and their attorney. The parent ally role is no longer neutral. Social workers have confidentiality,, PPN's do not. 72.6% vs. less than half R. (2021)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Court teams; Parent Advisory Collaborative; child-welfare improvement workgroups; outreach to disproportionately impacted communities; pre-dependency. Incoming DCS cm's; Race and Social Justice; Incarcerated parents.

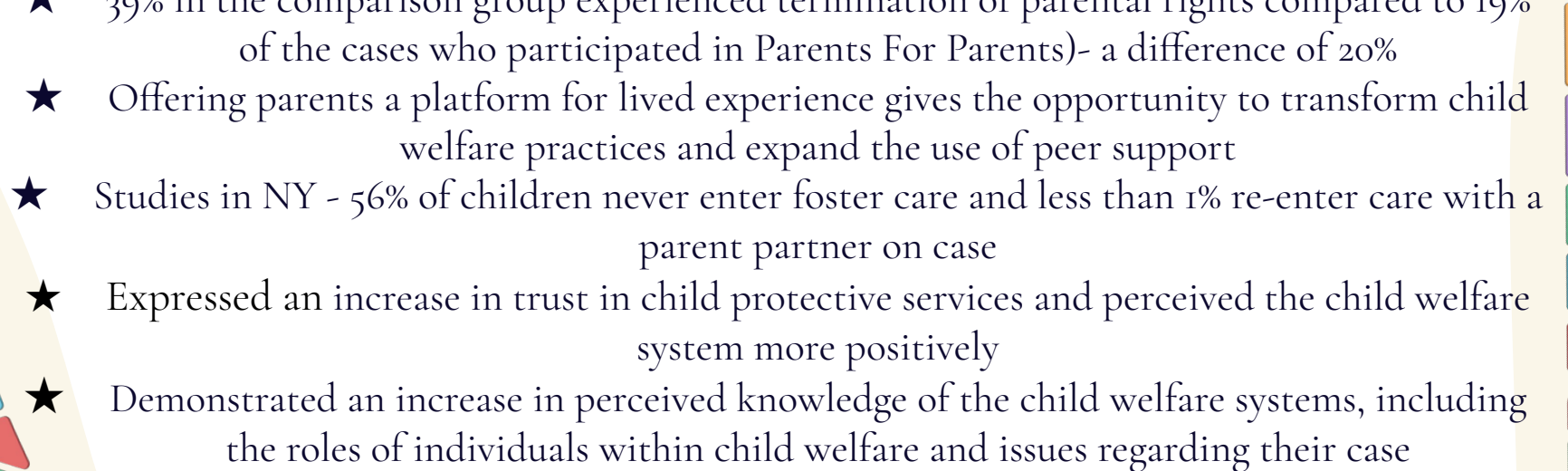
THE STUDENT COHORT

Partnership with local community college. Parents impacted by addiction and child systems take foundational social work classes. Leads into an internship, apprenticeship, and a new career that supports them in their recovery.




It's Evidence-Based!

People who participated in peer-parent programs:

- ★ Were more likely to reunify with their children when compared to parents who did not.
 - ★ 79% of the cases with parents who participated in the Parents for Parents program reunified compared to the comparison group of 53%)- a difference of 26%
 - ★ 39% in the comparison group experienced termination of parental rights compared to 19% of the cases who participated in Parents For Parents)- a difference of 20%
 - ★ Offering parents a platform for lived experience gives the opportunity to transform child welfare practices and expand the use of peer support
 - ★ Studies in NY - 56% of children never enter foster care and less than 1% re-enter care with a parent partner on case
 - ★ Expressed an increase in trust in child protective services and perceived the child welfare system more positively
 - ★ Demonstrated an increase in perceived knowledge of the child welfare systems, including the roles of individuals within child welfare and issues regarding their case
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Lived Experience from the Beginning

- ☀ Having a parent advocate as early on as possible elevates the person's voice and creates a more trusting environment.
 - ♡ Less missed opportunities to have made a lasting impact.
 - 😊 Fosters a collaborative relationship with the attorney.
 - ☀ Ability to locate more relevant and appropriate services early on.
 - ♡ The person has an opportunity to feel seen and heard, especially in challenging situations.
 - 😊 The ally acts as a buffer/interpreter between the parent and other professionals to create a culture of mutual understanding.
 - ☀ Person-centered approach that can identify supports that might otherwise have been overlooked.
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Questions
and
Discussion



When do YOU get involved?



- ★ When a family is seeking help
- ★ Child welfare investigation
 - ★ Initial court hearings
- ★ After someone makes a referral

What is working well? What needs to improve?





Discussion

- ★ What are your experiences being brought on in the beginning vs. later on in the dependency?
 - ★ What were the benefits?
 - ★ How do you strategize system changes in your state if you're not being brought on in the beginning?
 - ★ What else do you think is important?
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Thanks For Joining Us!

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(Bohannon et al., 2016; National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare, 2018; National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2013; Summers, et al., 2012; Trescher & Summers, 2020; Wulczyn, n.d.)

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