

FACES BEHIND THE FILES:

LIVED EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

MAY 16, 2024
12 - 1 PM

REGISTER: VIRTUAL CLE/CEU
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The directives that states are receiving from the federal Children's Bureau emphasize engaging persons who have lived experience with a Child in Need of Care case including parents and children or youth. Persons who have first-hand contact with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the legal system can and should help guide and direct efforts to improve our child welfare system. Parents and children bring clarity to the broader implications of our actions, allowing us to improve our approach to individuals and their cases. Samantha Morrison and Jarvis Spearman will share about their experiences in the Louisiana child welfare system. Former assistant district attorney Sarah Hood will give her perspective as well.



Learning Objectives:

- Learn about the impact of Child in Need of Care cases and court experiences on individuals and families.
- Understand the broader implications of child welfare stakeholder actions on parents and children.

AGENDA & SCHEDULE

12:00-12:40 pm	Lived Experience Within the Child Welfare System
12:40-12:50 pm	A Prosecutor's Perspective
12:50-1:00 pm	Questions & Discussion



SPEAKERS



Samantha M. Morrison, Peer and Equity Specialist, Pelican Center for Children and Families

Samantha M. Morrison is the Peer and Equity Specialist for the Pelican Center's Court Improvement Program in which she has been working for the past six months in this position. Ms. Morrison is a certified Peer Support Specialist (with lived experience) and a previous background as a Peer Support Coordinator with East Baton Rouge Parish Family Preservation Court under Judge Adam Haney. Faced with substance abuse challenges, her 3 daughters were removed from her home and placed in the care of her parents until she decided to change her life. Ms. Morrison has been clean and sober for almost 4 years. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, spending time with her children, helping people and reading. She is currently working on her Bachelor's Degree in Education with aspirations to gain her Doctorate Degree in History and attend Law School.



Jarvis Spearman, MSW, LMSW, Board Director, Pelican Center for Children and Families; Honorary Member, Louisiana Elite Advocacy Force (LEAF)

Jarvis Spearman, LMSW, is a Grambling State University graduate and is currently working on his "Doctorate in Social Work" while working towards his LCSW (clinical social work license). He serves as a Mental Health Professional at Swanson Center for Youth, counseling boys in a secure juvenile setting, and is also a "Certified Foster Parent" fostering teen boys. He served as a Bereavement Coordinator with Heart of Hospice in Monroe for three years, and during that time, he helped families and patients before and after the death of a loved one. Jarvis served as an assistant counselor at Johnny Robinson Boys Home, working under the licensed clinical social worker for two years, providing individual, group, and family sessions to clients and families. Being raised in the foster care system for 12 years with his siblings, he dedicated his time and passion to working at Louisiana Methodist Children's Home, giving back to the life he came from. There, Jarvis worked in the Life Skills Program in Ruston, LA, for 6.5 years as a Peer Support Specialist and Advocate for the Louisiana Foster Care System. He held the title of President for the State of Louisiana Youth Advocacy group known as LEAF (Louisiana Elite Advocacy Force) for many years, serving as a voice for former and current foster (continued on next page)

(continued) Jarvis Spearman, MSW, LMSW, Board Director, Pelican Center for Children and Families; Honorary Member, Louisiana Elite Advocacy Force (LEAF)

youth advocating to ensure the betterment of the foster care system. Jarvis has served as a speaker and panelist at multiple conferences throughout Louisiana, such as the QPI (Quality Parenting Initiative) Conference held in New Orleans, the Together We Can Conference in Lafayette, LA, and the Foster Parent Conference. He has also participated actively in a Task Force dealing with youth aging out of foster care in Louisiana. In 2017, Jarvis participated in the Foster Youth Intern Program at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, LA. There, he gave a wonderful testimony that touched everyone in attendance. From this internship experience, he was a part of the force that pushed Senate Bill 109 into place, which extended foster care to age 21 for all youth in care on their 18th birthday. This voluntary program allows the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to provide intensive services to aid youths' transition to adulthood. As President of the LEAF board, Jarvis and his peers got the opportunity to create Louisiana's first Foster Youth Bill of Rights. Jarvis has gained many awards for his hard work. Jarvis has traveled out of the country on mission trips to serve and be a beacon of happiness to others. Through it all, he strives to be a better individual by giving back to the community and being a light in the lives of vulnerable populations.



Sarah Hood, J.D., Deputy Judicial Administrator and Hearing Officer, Caddo Parish Juvenile Court

Sarah Midboe Hood was raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and graduated from McKinley Senior High School in 1997. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Louisiana Tech University in 2001 and her Juris Doctorate and Bachelor of Civil Law degrees from the Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center in 2004. Upon graduation, Sarah served as the judicial law clerk for the Thirtieth Judicial District Court, located in Leesville, Louisiana. In 2006, she joined the Caddo Parish District Attorney's Office and served in many roles during her sixteen-year tenure as an Assistant District Attorney. Some of her work included serving as the Section Chief of the Criminal Drug Section and Section Chief of Criminal Offenses (Section 3), where she prosecuted major felonies, death penalty cases, homicides and aggravated sexual offenses. Her last six years in the District Attorney's Office, she was the sole prosecutor of Child in Need of Care ("CINC") cases for Caddo Parish. In 2022, Sarah accepted the position of, and currently serves, as the Deputy Judicial Administrator and a Hearing Officer for the Caddo Parish Juvenile Court. Sarah is married to Michael Hood, who is the Assistant Chief over Investigations and the Bomb Squad Commander for the Shreveport Fire Department and they have two children, Hunter (8) and Elizabeth (4). They attend Cypress Baptist Church and reside in Benton, Louisiana.



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