



DCFS AT WORK

Investing in Los Angeles County families every day

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LaDaria Long is a human services aide in the Vermont Corridor Regional Office of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services.

Human Services Aide (HSA) LaDaria Long is living her purpose. Spending her days around children and families and working to help them connect and strengthen relationships is what LaDaria believes she is meant to do

"I absolutely love my job," said LaDaria, who works at the Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Vermont Corridor Regional Office. "I've always been great with kids and I love being out in the field. I tell myself every day that God had a plan for me, and this is exactly where I am supposed to be."

HSAs support the work of the Department's social workers by assisting with a variety of tasks, including monitoring supervised visits, coordinating logistics, transporting children and generally cultivating a supportive environment for children and families. The

nature of their job means that they can often interact with families more frequently than case-carrying social workers.

LaDaria came to the Department in 2017 after working for 20 years as a special assistant with the Los Angeles Unified School District. As an HSA, she draws heavily on her experience working with kids, such as when she monitors supervised visits between children and parents, providing coaching or guidance to families as needed.

A significant portion of her time is also spent driving children and youth to visits with family or other locations such as court or medical appointments. HSAs often travel long distances to make sure visits happen, even taking children to visit parents in prison and flying them to other states to facilitate time with family.

True to her jovial spirit, LaDaria acknowledges that the long distances mean that sometimes the most challenging aspect of her job is finding a suitable restroom while transporting a child. Despite this, she appreciates this uninterrupted time to connect with them, get to know them and really listen to what they have to say.

"Kids are always happy to see me, and I love that about this work," she said. "It's incredibly rewarding when I pick a child up and see this huge smile on their face because they know they're going to see their parents."

Her primary goal is to build relationships with children and families so that they are more receptive to guidance. She maintains a judgment-free approach that families find comforting and frequently works overtime and on holidays to ensure that families have a chance to visit and spend time together, regardless of their situation.

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LADARIA LONG
HUMAN SERVICES AIDE

“I walk into every case with an open mind,” LaDaria said. “I believe in second chances, and this job is all about helping parents chart a new beginning for their family.”

With a willingness to listen and an ability to look beyond a family’s circumstances, LaDaria is able to connect on a human level which has, at times, engendered such strong relationships that families request her participation in their Child and Family Team meetings. These gatherings bring together a family’s network of support, including extended family, friends and advocates, to help them develop their vision for their future and assist them in creating a plan to achieve their family goals.

“To do this type of work, you have to have a compassionate heart and you have to have customer service skills — there’s just no way around it,” LaDaria said. “We wear many hats — therapist, counselor, teacher, parent, consoler — and we’re happy to do it! I know the children look forward to seeing us, and that right there means a lot to those of us in this position.”

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