



DCFS AT WORK

Investing in Los Angeles County families every day

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Project Administrator Linzie Starr III sees himself and his staff in the Program Development Office as change agents working to drive strategic thinking and innovation.

Linzie Starr III is used to going against the grain.

With a background in information technology portfolio management and strategic planning, he arrived at the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in late 2019, raring to incite change.

"I was really looking for an uplifting and encouraging work environment with purpose," said Linzie, a project administrator who oversees the Program Development Office (PDO).

"What drew me in the most was DCFS' core mission and commitment to supporting children and families, giving me the chance to really lean in, give back and effect change where it matters most."

As Linzie tells it, he joined DCFS at an optimal time, tapping into his extensive experience to assist the department with narrowing its focus, aligning its priorities and transforming into a system of child and family well-being.

Implementing a centralized program development function was a priority for Director Bobby Cagle since his arrival at DCFS in 2017. According to Linzie, this stemmed from the recognition that child welfare systems need formal, enterprisewide practices to effectively prioritize the important work of supporting vulnerable children and families.

"In public service, it is second nature to try to eat the elephant in one bite or boil the ocean, but that isn't sustainable," Linzie said. "At PDO, we want to take a deep look across the organization to really evaluate what our needs are and whether we are going in the right direction."

PDO's goal is to instill program and project management methodologies that will help DCFS invest resources in areas where they will have the greatest impact.

According to Linzie, the "small but mighty" five-person PDO team has its hands in many key efforts happening throughout the department, serving as thought partners for the organization. They act as consultants and facilitators, equipping teams with the tools for success.

PDO manages the Outcomes Driven Advisory Team, a cross-functional team of approximately 20 leaders from across the organization that meets every two weeks to determine what projects best align with DCFS' strategic priorities and establish corresponding benchmarks.

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-Linzie Starr III

The most challenging aspect of the work is demonstrating the value of project management in a human services environment, according to Linzie.

“In PDO, folks are busy and work extremely hard,” he said. “No day is ever the same and that’s what makes it so exciting. Our work is inherently disruptive. If we aren’t disrupting the norm, then we aren’t functioning optimally. We want to be passionate and intentional, drive innovation, and force people to think differently about how we serve children and families.”

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