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Children's Social Worker Davina Hill uses her lived experience as a former foster youth to shape how she approaches her practice, striving to provide hope to the children, youth and families she serves.

As a former foster youth, Davina Hill recognizes the lasting footprint her social worker had on her life. When she emancipated from the foster system at age 21, she knew that she was destined to spend her life working to give other youth the same level of support.

"I was blessed to have an amazing social worker and a good experience with the system, but I know that's not necessarily always the case," says Davina, who has been with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) since 2007, working her way up from human services aide to children's social worker with the Glendora regional office after earning her master's degree in 2017.

"Davina has always been regarded as an excellent worker and very much dedicated to her job," notes Regional Administrator Jorge Garay.

"I want to make a difference and show children and families that you can have a positive experience, you can trust your social worker, and truly your social worker can be your best advocate," Davina adds.

Davina had entered foster care as a teenager and distinctly remembers how it felt to be vulnerable because so much is dependent on the level of support that the adults around you are able to provide.

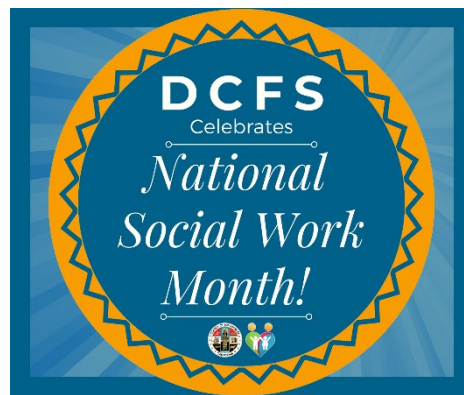
Despite being a busy single mother of three, Davina puts her heart and soul into her work, striving to be a beacon of hope for the children, youth and families on her caseload. She models herself on the example set during her own time as a foster youth.

"When I was in foster care, my caseworker always took the time to listen to me and reminded me how important it was to stay motivated, even when things seemed to be stacked against me," Davina says. "She put so much effort into advocating for what I wanted and felt I needed, which I strongly believe is ultimately why I was able to do well as an adult."

Today, Davina works to impress upon her families the importance of advocating for themselves and being open about what they need, advice she took to heart during her own journey in the care of DCFS. She is honest and forthright with clients, an approach that serves to build trust with the families she supports.

As the department recognizes National Social Work Month, Davina hopes to expand awareness of the strength and dedication that social workers consistently bring to their practice. Being on the other side now, she openly admits that she has a renewed appreciation for the effort her own caseworker had brought to their relationship years ago, especially knowing that caseloads were even higher in the past.

"I truly admire how much effort and passion it took for her to give me the time and energy that she did," Davina says. "Despite the perception, foster youth are not broken and can absolutely succeed. But they do need support, and that's the role that social workers play. Connection, engagement and a simple display of compassion can make a world of difference to a foster youth, just as it did for me."



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