

"It is beautiful to see. DCF staff are incredible."



Back home in Texas, Lenisa Mathew was given the nickname "Leni Brown Sunshine." This is not surprising given her engaging personality and the enthusiasm she brings each day to those around her.

Within the Department of Children and Families, Lenisa is known as the Director of Organizational Development. She is called upon to lead the Safe & Sound culture and assist in the standardization of grants. She is also the lead to coordinate workforce supports after a critical incident with a child, an employee experiencing a traumatic event, or to speak with a staff member who is seeking guidance to address personal or work-related

issues.

"Active listening is key for me," Lenisa stated.

Work in Child Welfare can be intense and emotional - believed to be one of the toughest jobs in state government and around the country amongst all professions.

"Opportunities," is how Lenisa describes her actions to assess the health and well-being of those who work for the Agency. "Connect the dots to keep the work moving forward," is one aspect of her efforts.



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She is also the lead in making the connection between staff at all levels of the Department to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Lenisa recognizes that she is working against past perceptions about the EAP program. She wants to help educate our staff that EAP is multi-faceted and so much more than just counseling. EAP has a wide variety of resources that are available for our DCF staff and their families. She hopes that we continue to lift the negative stigma of asking for help.

Her overall vision is to build "sustained systems of support" resulting in staff receiving predictable and structured assistance even without asking.

"Early on in this Administration, we were crystal clear that the support and development of our workforce would be critical to our work as evidenced in our strategic goals. To that end, we sought to pay particular attention to ensuring that an organizational infrastructure was in place to ensure sustainability of that support," stated Deputy Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly.



"I am fortunate to be in this role," Lenisa stated.

Hired during the COVID-19 pandemic, forming relationships was difficult for Lenisa given the virtual environment. She made it work. "Respect is earned," Lenisa stated. "I love getting to know people and the holistic approach."

Lenisa has an interesting work/life balance. "Beautiful chaos" is how she describes her own family which consists of her husband and two children with the youngest being four years old. Long days at work and long days at home.

Serving others is at the core of Lenisa Mathew. "I believe in God's work," she stated.

Lenisa came to DCF with a master's degree in Organizational Leadership and background in the non-profit sector including providing resources to schools to connect families to early intervention services. Her efforts also found her working with incarcerated students to achieve higher education credits. "Your past does not define who you are," she stated.

Lenisa believes in the "greater good" and how "collectively" it is all our responsibility to lift each other which aligns with the foundations of the safe & sound culture rooted in respect, trust, candor, equity & racial justice.

These values started within her own family upbringing.

"I am where I am because of the sacrifices of my family," Lenisa stated. Her family is from South India, and she speaks an Indian dialect. Lenisa is first generation born in the United States. She saw her family work through poverty and receive supports from the community to meet their daily needs.



She has taken these values and imparted them to others throughout her personal and career journey.

What has Lenisa seen as strengths in our employees?

She describes the DCF staff and leaders as going "above and beyond." Despite their ever-increasing demands, they do not stop "being there for each other." While each office may do things a little differently, they are all working towards the common goal.

"Communication is key to our success and with each intervention and sign of support, leaders build trust with those around them. This is evident in the work we already do with our safe & sound culture, but also an opportunity to deepen our work in safety culture and as a learning organization," Lenisa stated.

"Hungry to change the world," is how Lenisa refers to the new staff she encounters.

"I have never grown so much in one year in my life," Lenisa stated as she reflected on her time with the Department.

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Deputy Commissioner Hill-Lilly further commented. "Lenisa joined our team during a global pandemic, a staffing crisis, economic uncertainty and racial unrest. Her compassion and even keeled demeanor coupled with her incredible acumen for organizational development was exactly what our Department needed. She is a trustworthy and dependable leader who has already left an indelible impact on our workforce. We are beyond grateful to have her."

We are fortunate to have Lenisa and her personable ways to support us!