

Department of Children and Families: Division and policy leadership announced

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Contact: Thomas McCarthy or Gina Paige — 608-266-9000

DCF division and policy leadership announced

(MADISON) – Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary-designee Emilie Amundson appointed agency administrators and policy advisors today.

“The leaders serving the department bring with them a wealth of experience and knowledge,” said Secretary-designee Amundson. “They believe in our agency’s mission of protecting children, strengthening families, and building communities. I am confident that they will approach their work with a willingness to forge relationships and operate outside of siloes to better serve all Wisconsinites.”

Erin Arango-Escalante has been named the administrator for the Division of Early Care and Education. Erin previously served as the executive director of a child care

agency and as the early childhood special education consultant at the Department of Public Instruction. Erin developed a national program to support young multilingual learners and their families in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a number of states. Most recently, she was a leader at the largest national education consortium, focused on Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 multilingual learners.

Erin earned her Bachelor of Science in Cross-Categorical Special Education, a teaching certificate in English as a Second Language, and a Master of Science in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Although Erin is a Madisonian, she met her husband in New York City where she started her career as an early intervention therapist and director of an early childhood program within a hospital for terminally ill children with disabilities. Erin is committed to supporting and celebrating Wisconsin's diverse children and families. She believes high-quality programs involve community and child-focused perspectives to support cultural competence, family engagement, and social and emotional development. She and her family are actively involved in the Latino and Veteran communities in Dane County.

Fredi Bove will serve alongside Dianne Jenkins as a senior policy advisor to the secretary. Fredi previously served as the administrator for the Division of Safety and Permanence at the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families from 2011-2019. Prior to joining DCF, she worked at the Department of Health Services (DHS) for 16 years, where she served as the deputy administrator for the Division of Long Term Care and the budget and policy director. Fredi also worked for the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents for five years as the executive assistant. Before her service in Wisconsin state government, Fredi held a number of policy positions in the federal government.

Fredi completed her undergraduate degree in Political Science and Economics at Middlebury College in Vermont and her graduate work at Harvard University, where she earned a master's in Public Policy. Fredi is the mother of two adult children and relatively recent grandmother of one grandson. In her spare time, Fredi enjoys

traveling and reading and welcomes any travel destination or book recommendations.

Charmian Klyve will remain administrator for the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS). Charmian has extensive work experience in a number of Wisconsin counties responsible for both child protective services and juvenile justice programs. In addition to her direct child welfare, supervisory, and management roles, she served as director of a large Wisconsin County for over 16 years.

Charmian's education background includes a Master's degree in Social Work, Public Policy and Administration, as well as a law degree. While in private practice she represented families in various court matters, as well as serving in the role of Guardian ad Litem. She brings a unique skill set to the work of DMCPS and is passionate about providing quality services to the children and families of Milwaukee County.

Wendy Henderson has been named the administrator for the Division of Safety and Permanence. Wendy Henderson began her career over 20 years ago as an advocate and attorney representing low-income families in special education cases. She joined DCF in 2009 as a child protection performance analyst, working with counties to develop local strategic improvements in their child protection work. In 2013, Wendy became the first Director of Youth Services, a position she has held since then. Wendy has managed DCF's efforts to improve outcomes for youth and at-risk of system involvement in the areas of education, housing, employment, well-being, and permanent connections. In 2016, Wendy managed the assumption of the state supervision of the community-based youth justice system.

Wendy brings a collaborative approach to state policy work, rooted in a deep belief that partnership is the best way to improve outcomes for the children and families of Wisconsin. She is committed to ensuring that the voices of those effected by

state policies are incorporated into policy development. Wendy earned a Bachelor in Art with high honors from Wesleyan University and a law degree from Northeastern University School of Law.

Bob Nikolay will remain the administrator for the Division of Management Services (DMS). DMS oversees various support functions for the department, including budget, finance, information technology services, performance, regional operations, and facilities. Bob previously served as the budget director for DCF and for the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. He has also worked in the budget offices of the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and the former Department of Health and Social Services.

Bob has an undergraduate degree in Business with an Economics minor from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and a graduate degree in Public Policy and Administration from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Bob and his wife, Nancy, an administrator in the Hartland-Lakeside School District, are the proud parents of two young adult children, Kyle and Connor.

Connie Chesnik has been named the administrator for the Division of Family and Economic Security. Connie previously served as a staff attorney for DHS, DWD and most recently at DCF, focusing her area of practice on the state's child support and Wisconsin Works (W-2) programs. Connie has lectured frequently on child support related issues and has authored numerous articles. Connie also has extensive experience working with Wisconsin tribes on child support and W-2 issues.

Connie received her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is a member of the Wisconsin Bar Association and the National Child Support Enforcement Association. Connie married her college sweetheart, Kevin, and they have three grown daughters. Connie and Kevin enjoy traveling the world and are avid Badger and Brewers fans.