

Dept. of Children and Families: Secretary Amundson makes leadership team appointments

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MADISON – Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Emilie Amundson today announced new appointments to her leadership team.

Priya Bhatia has been named the administrator of the Division of Early Care and Education. Bhatia has served as the policy initiatives advisor in DCF's Division of Early Care and Education since 2020. Since joining DCF, she has played a key role in furthering the division's vision of expanding access to affordable, quality early care and education that meets the needs of all Wisconsin families. She also has led policy and programs for numerous initiatives funded through pandemic relief dollars, including the monthly Child Care Counts payment program

Prior to joining DCF, Bhatia was part of the leadership team at a housing nonprofit to promote homeownership for Milwaukee families. She is an attorney by training and has practiced commercial litigation and immigration law, advocating for survivors of domestic violence and other immigrant families.

Bhatia earned a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Political Science from Northwestern University and a law degree from The University of Chicago. She has lived in Wisconsin for over a decade and is passionate about creating stronger and more equitable communities in her adopted home state. Priya is the proud mom of two children and a pandemic puppy.

Brenda Rodriguez has been named the urban liaison. Rodriguez has worked in the education field for 11 years, most recently as an enrollment coordinator at St. Joseph Academy where she worked with the Choice and Wisconsin Shares programs

to facilitate enrollment for their elementary school and child care center.

Prior to St. Joseph Academy, she worked in the nonprofit sector for nine years serving as the director of family programs and later as development director for Casa Romero Renewal Center, an urban, multicultural, and bilingual spirituality center offering youth development, family enrichment, spiritual formation, and social justice services in Southeastern.

Although very proud of her performance in the workforce, Rodriguez's greatest accomplishment and most important role is that of being a mother to her four children. In 2016, she fostered a beautiful baby girl who has now been part of her family under subsidized guardianship for six years.

Ragen Shapiro has been named the legislative advisor. Shapiro has been with DCF since 2016, and most recently served as the section manager for the Bureau of Youth Services. In that role, she supervised staff in their provision of services for youth who are involved in or at risk of involvement in the child welfare and youth justice systems. This included oversight of the community-based youth justice system, as well as independent living programs for youth aging out of out-of-home care, runaway and homeless youth programs, prevention programs targeted at adolescents, and services for survivors of child sex trafficking.

Prior to DCF, Shapiro worked as a program and policy analyst in the Department of Correction's Division of Juvenile Corrections where she supervised the division's federal education grants and helped develop the programming and curriculum for the Grow Academy, an experiential educational program for young men. She also worked for 12 years as an assistant district attorney in Dane County managing and prosecuting both misdemeanor and felony caseloads before discovering her passion for working in service to young people as a juvenile delinquency prosecutor.

Shapiro holds a bachelor's degree in Spanish Literature and Fine Arts from Macalester College and a law degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School. She lives in Madison with her husband, two teenage children and their two terrier-mix rescue pups.

Bhatia, Rodriguez and Shapiro will join Deputy Secretary Jeff Pertl; Assistant Secretary Nadya Perez-Reyes; Margaret McMahon, senior manager; Therese Durkin, general counsel; Wendy Henderson, administrator of the Division of Safety and Permanence; Connie Chesnik, administrator for the Division of Family and Economic

Security; Sarah Henery, administrator for the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services; and Hope Koprowski, administrator for the Division of Management Services who were appointed under the first term of the Evers Administration and will continue to serve in their current positions.

To learn more about DCF, visit www.dcf.wisconsin.gov and follow @WisDCF on Twitter and Facebook.

This press release is also available in [PDF format](#).