



DATE: October 5, 2016
TO: Search Committee for the Director of the Rhode Island of the Department of
Children Youth and Families (DCYF)
RE: Testimony Regarding Qualifications for the Director of DCYF

“When we tug on a single thing in nature, we find it attached to everything else.”
~John Muir ~

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.
~ Anne Frank ~

I believe the most critical skill areas for the position of DCYF Director should include the following priorities:

- A Safety First Construct. (Protect Rhode Island Children, the Public and DCYF Staff.)
- The ability to enforce ethical guidance throughout the Department.
- The ability to work with diverse groups politically, administratively and with labor representatives.
- A strong focus on training and staff support.
- A clear focus and understanding of the processes of the Budget.
- Responsibility and accountability to the public and public funds.
- An expertise of public relations and communication to the public.
- An ability to communicate with the Press.
- An ability to maintain an effective strong leadership team around the position of the Director.
- An ability to effectively carry out Legislative and State mandates while having an equal ability to effectively disagree with the same bodies when appropriate.
- A process orientation and strengths based perspective whenever possible.

- An an ability to understand the Rhode Island community from a systems perspective and to understand the clinical aspects of the individual plight of those in need of the services provided by and required of DCYF.

And perhaps the last two most important ingredients.....

- To have a thorough understanding of the cultural diversity of ***all*** those who live within our borders.
- To have a thorough understanding of what it is like to live with what Charles Dickens referred to as the “Dragon of Pauperism”, meaning extreme poverty, and the lack of **Hope** that so often comes with Dragon!

Now we come to the last of the main qualifications we recommend, a Masters Degree in Social Work. Social Work is the only professional degree that covers all the listed qualifications previously stated. In addition, the basic Masters curriculum includes :

- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Theory and Practice
- Child and Family Abuse Laws and Regulations
- Trauma Resulting from Abuse including but not limited to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Systems Theory
- Social Policy Analysis
- Community Organizing
- Civil Rights
- Economic and Social Justice
- High Ethical Standards
- Social Work and the Law
- Clinical Practice Standards
- DSM V Diagnostic Course Work
- Budgeting/Administration/Personnel (Administration Track)

The creation of Child Welfare came out of Social Work. Not hiring a Professional Social Worker to be in charge of DCYF would be like not hiring a trained educator to run the Department of Education or not hiring a trained lawyer to serve on the Rhode Island Supreme Court. The trick is to find a professional social worker who has all of the above skills. Social Workers of this caliber and expertise do exist and they do exist in this state. Historically, I would like to remind this committee that Social Workers were the architects of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid (Wilbur Cohen), the Minimum Wage, the 40 hour work week (Frances Perkins) and many other important federal and state programs we now take for granted because of the unique micro and macro training skill areas I listed above.

If you have any questions regarding this testimony please feel free to contact me at rhodeislandnasw@gmail.com or 401-274-4940 .

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard N. Harris, LICSW
Executive Director