

A MESSAGE FROM Alicia Smith FOSTER TOGETHER NETWORK



Dear DCFS Friends & Colleagues,

As a Black former foster youth and a fellow DCFS social worker in training, I invite you to embrace the opportunities we each have to better support Black youth. As part of our commitment to children's safety, permanency and well-being, and in addressing the racial disproportionality within this system, it is essential that we prioritize the cultural identity of young Black boys and girls.

Speaking from my own experience and those of my Black and Brown foster youth peers, sometimes the simple things can be profoundly meaningful. When we are not provided with the appropriate care and products for our hair and skin, we suffer additional trauma and blows to our identity that may be hard for others to understand.

This brings me to **Opportunity #1**: Do not just take it from me — to gain a deeper understanding, **check out this short video** (in [English](#) and with [Spanish subtitles](#)). Incredible right?

This brings me to **Opportunity #2**: There are **more tools available at the [California Alliance of Caregivers website](#)** for hair care and supporting youth and families' cultural identities.

These *Courageous Actions* resources were compiled by the Foster Together Network (FTN) in response to a study called [Courageous Conversations](#) conducted by the FTN and the UCLA Pritzker Center. The study sheds light on the experiences of Black youth in foster care and provides valuable insights for systemic change. I encourage you to explore these tools (such as virtual hands-on hair care webinars and cultural icebreakers) and this research study.

Within my role at FTN, I have had the opportunity and honor not only to help gather these resources but also to work on a broader campaign to improve care for Black youth. It includes trainings that will roll out in July, cultural coaching for resource families, and partnerships with hair stylists and salons that provide Black youth with proper hair care

and knowledge. I invite you and your team to actively participate in *Courageous Conversations* and *Courageous Actions* by utilizing the provided resources. Together, I know we can create an inclusive and healing environment for Black youth in our child welfare system.

In Community,

Alicia Smith, MSW

Foster Together Network | An Initiative of the Center for Strategic Partnerships

STAFF NOTE: Celebrate with Pride at the Park!



The poster for 'Pride at the Park' 2023 features a rainbow and transgender flag background. At the top, it lists staff members: Hilda L. Solis, Holly J. Mitchell, Lindsey Horvath, Janice Hahn, and Kathryn Barger. The main title is 'Pride at the Park' with '2023' below it. Activities listed include Mini Pride Festivals, Drag Story Hour, Celebratory Performances, Legacy of LGBTQ+ History, and Health & Wellness Activities. The dates are June 1-30. A small text block states: 'LA County Parks values ourselves on being a safe space for all people. This June, join us at 57 parks for our inaugural Pride at the Park events, done in partnership with LGBTQIA+ community-based organizations. Enjoy artist experiences, performances, speakers and more! For full line up of activities, call your local LA County park for more information or visit parks.lacounty.gov/pride.' Logos for AWBW, GET LIT, LA MOVE, and the LA LGBT Center are visible. A thank you note mentions partners: Pride Support Systems, PFLAG Santa Clara Valley, Outreach Center - AV, AltMed, Gay Men's Chorus Of Los Angeles and the LA LGBT Center. The URL parks.lacounty.gov/pride is at the bottom.

Happy Pride Month! Join in the celebration at one of the inaugural Pride at the Park events throughout June, hosted by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation!

In collaboration with LGBTQ+ community-based organizations, each of the county's 56 parks will host a fun event during the month that promotes inclusivity. Festivities will feature a variety of activities such as music, art, dance, food, competitions and more.

Visit the [Parks and Recreation website](https://parks.lacounty.gov/pride) to explore dates and locations and to find a park near you.