

LAWRENCE WITHERSPOON

Director, Center
for Family Voice

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As Director of the Center for Family Voice, Lawrence leads the Center's work to elevate the voices of families with young children in early childhood policy and advocacy to achieve programmatic, policy, and practice changes at local, regional, and state levels.

Lawrence has over 14 years of unique child welfare experience, serving the Central Ohio community as a Parenting Education Consultant/Trainer and Support Service Supervisor for The Buckeye Ranch. Providing home-based intervention programming for families of infants, toddlers, or children with developmental disabilities or delays, Lawrence worked to keep family units together and sought out the necessary support to do so. His primary role was to develop strong relationships with families to provide service coordination, support, and training to assist in meeting the needs of their children and enhancing parents' role as the primary influence on their child's education and development.

Lawrence's portfolio also included working with families in identifying and achieving goals, promoting positive parent-child relationships and interactions, and providing child development education.

Lawrence also worked extensively in the DEI space at the Buckeye Ranch and served as Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council for more than three years. As such, he established organization-wide initiatives like the Development of the Employee Resource Group and Color Coated, created to provide a safe space for Black and Brown employees to discuss DEI concerns in the community and organization. Lawrence facilitated this group and provided solution-focused tools for conflict resolution.

Lawrence is a graduate of the Leadership Columbus Class of 2021, where he collaborated with the Community Impact Project Team and United Way to develop a financial literacy initiative for local school districts in Central Ohio.

Lawrence earned accreditations as a Qualified Mental Health Specialist and Emotional Intelligence Implement Strategist through the Institute for Health and Human Potential. Leveraging this experience, Lawrence has spent countless hours counseling children and families in crisis and facilitated therapeutic behavioral intervention groups with youth in residential and day treatment programs. He also facilitates Emotional Intelligence training for local and national ministries, focused on balancing emotions with logical thinking.

Lawrence is a licensed Minister and in 2018 established Greater Love Outreach Ministries, a non-denominational ministry with a central focus on outreach for the community. Lawrence is very passionate about working with families to support and build a foundation for success and continues to be involved in advocacy work in the Linden, Shepard, and Milo-Grogan communities.

Lawrence is a product of the North Linden community, where he grew up as a child. Lawrence attended Como Elementary and Crestview Middle School then graduated from Brookhaven High School, where he excelled in both arts and athletics. He attended Antonelli College and the University of Cincinnati, receiving Associate's and Bachelor's Degrees in Commercial Arts & Graphic Design. Lawrence later continued his education at Ashford University, majoring in Behavioral Science. He also received a National Trainer Certification in Parenting Education from the National Center for Growth & Development and a Fatherhood Practitioner certification through the Father's and Family Coalition of America.

As he continued to pursue education and spiritual development, Lawrence found the love of his life at age 19 in his now-wife of more than two decades, Barbara. Together they have been blessed with four wonderful children.

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