

Kara J. Coleman, M.A.



Since 1996, Kara Coleman has successfully guided the creation and management of numerous collaborative initiatives designed to improve outcomes for children and families. With experience that spans the grassroots, human services, and philanthropic arenas, Kara is accomplished in leading strategic planning and capacity building efforts that promote mutual learning and innovation, strengthened community partnerships, and resident engagement. Notable areas of expertise include organizational development, peer networking, event planning and meeting facilitation, grant writing, qualitative documentation, program evaluation, and personal coaching.

Beginning her career as the Coordinator for a start-up Family Support Services Program in her hometown of Somerset, New Jersey, Kara worked in partnership with at-risk parents and children to engage local providers in developing a comprehensive system of coordinated services. She then went on to obtain a Master's Degree in Social Service Administration from the University of Chicago.

As the recipient of the University's Brink Family Support Fellowship, Kara worked with the Ounce of Prevention Fund's Kids Public Education and Policy Project, Family Support America, Mary McDowell Settlement House, and the Blue Gargoyle Community Center's Adult Literacy Program over the course of two years. Accomplishments include developing and managing an afterschool program for girls ages 6-12, tracking the impact of Illinois welfare reform legislation, developing policy papers on increasing the quality of regional child care resources, and co-authoring a parent education curriculum.

Upon completing her graduate studies, she joined the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) in Washington, DC. Through CSSP, Kara traveled the country extensively from as a member of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's technical assistance team responsible for supporting *Making Connections*, a Family Development/Neighborhood Transformation initiative established in 22 cities. On behalf of the Foundation, she provided consultation to community collaboratives, facilitated cross-site peer exchanges, and wrote resulting publications on topics that included *Building Communities through Community Schools*, *Connecting Residents to Integrated Neighborhood Services*, and *Creating and Sustaining Community-based Cultural Arts Centers of Color*. She also helped launch the *Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education* initiative as part of a working group that led a national Doris Duke Foundation study to identify exemplary programs that incorporate strengths-based practices linked to reducing child abuse and neglect.

Following her tenure with CSSP, Kara served as the Program Director for the Civic League of Greater New Brunswick (New Jersey) and the Executive Director of the Alliance for the Revitalization of Camden City. She then went on to work as Deputy Director for Free Arts NYC, a nonprofit organization that provides under-served children and families with a unique combination of arts education and mentoring programs offered throughout the city in partnership with social service agencies and schools. For the past three years, she served as a Capacity Building Consultant for First 5 LA's Partnerships For Families initiative to assist grantees with devising successful parent engagement strategies and integrating the *Strengthening Families* Protective Factors framework. As a result, she co-authored the resource guide *Growing and Sustaining Parent Engagement: A Toolkit for Parents and Community Partners*. In addition, she led a comprehensive 18-month case study that documented best practices and implications for the field in a publication entitled *Partnerships For Families: Stories and Lessons from Los Angeles Communities*.

Kara also holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Hampton University and a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Organizations Management from Seton Hall University, where she was awarded a Center for Public Service Scholarship. Having become a permanent resident of Los Angeles in 2010, she is excited to now call the city home and very much enjoys the year-round sunshine.