

LINDA K. HARLLEE HARPER

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Social Justice Thought Leader | Committed Public Servant | Advocate | Reformer | Organizer | Juvenile Justice Senior Executive | Public Radio Show Co-Host | Devoted Wife, Mother, Sister & Daughter | Proud Native & Resident Washingtonian

SUMMARY BIO

Born and raised in DC with an unapologetic love for the city, its rich history and its residents. Youth, Criminal and Social Justice Reformer. Experienced advocate and champion of positive youth outcomes for court-involved youth and their families in the District of Columbia and nationally. An experienced proven leader and change agent in juvenile justice, criminal justice, public safety, and social services with over fifteen years of progressively growing experience shaping and managing public safety responses, restorative justice policies and youth development programs to improve the lives of our undervalued, underserved, and at-risk youth and their families. Linda has moved between the non-profit and for-profit sectors, and government - either organizing for social change from the outside or reforming institutions, policies and practices from the inside.

PROFESSIONAL BIO

Linda Harllee Harper is a visionary leader in social and criminal justice, currently serving as Senior Deputy Director to the Government of the District of Columbia's Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS)— the city's cabinet level agency serving youth impacted by the DC Juvenile Justice System.



Linda started her career with DC Public Schools as a Substance Abuse Prevention Intervention Coordinator at the former Oak Hill Youth Center. Realizing her passion for serving underserved youth, Linda continued the work at the Child Welfare League of America, under the leadership of Shay Bilchik, advocating on behalf of persons facing the death penalty for crimes committed under the age of 18 across the US and exploring the intersection between child maltreatment and delinquency. With a desire to return closer to direct care within the District's Juvenile Justice System, Linda worked as a Case Manager for a non-profit and progressed to managing and leading successful efforts to transform and positively impact the lives of the District's most vulnerable residents.

For over fifteen years, Linda has successfully led and supported reform efforts in the District's Juvenile Justice System. She is credited with launching a network of contracted local community-based providers designed to serve as an alternative to residential care or detention, and depopulating the former Oak Hill Youth Center under the leadership of Vinny Schiraldi; developing and implementing gender-specific programming for justice-impacted girls in detention and in the community; developing and supporting an Elders Advisory Council to guide and inform DYRS' community efforts; supporting the successful launch of the Credible Messenger Transformative Mentoring Movement; and leading the successful effort to transfer youth charged as adults from the DC Department of Corrections to the DYRS New Beginnings Youth Development Center, while ensuring that the District maintained compliance with newly implemented federal and local legislation.

Linda has been guiding for-profit, non-profit and government entities towards system reforms and policy improvements during high-growth, and high-change periods. She champions, supports and collaborates to advance justice and opportunity for vulnerable populations. She is known as an active listener, innovative problem-solver, compassionate coalition builder and a savvy strategic thinker. Her unique and vast career experience includes serving as the Executive Director for community-based alternative programs for a non-profit organization; a Regional Director of juvenile programs in DC, Pennsylvania and Ohio for a for-profit corporation; Director of the only local residential treatment center for young people in the District; Associate Deputy Director in the Family Branch of the DC Superior Court; and holding various leadership roles, with increasing responsibility, during her tenure with DC Government.

Linda is a co-host for “Led By Love”, a weekly public radio show created to reimagine justice in this country by discussing issues facing the country’s young people and their families impacted by the justice system. She has served on various Boards and Councils throughout her career including proudly serving as a founding Board Member for the impactful Peaceoholics organization. She, currently, is serving as a member and co-chair of the DC Taskforce on Jails and Justice which is tasked with evaluating the important elements of a new correctional plan for the city, making recommendations about who should and should not be held in local correctional facilities, and articulating our local community’s priorities.

In May of 2020, Mayor Muriel Bowser assigned Director Clinton Lacey (DYRS) as the lead on the Mayor’s COVID-19 Cross-agency Taskforce. At the direction of Director Lacey, Linda serves as the lead on the collaborative effort to manage a successful response to COVID in the city’s secure congregate care settings to include DYRS, the DC Department of Corrections and St. Elizabeth’s Hospital. (implementation). On February 17, 2021, Mayor Muriel Bowser announced Linda as the city’s first Gun Violence Prevention Director.

Linda is a proud alum of DC Public Schools - graduating from Wilson Senior High School. She holds an Undergraduate Degree in Business Administration from the University of the District of Columbia and a Master’s Degree in Counseling Psychology from Trinity Washington University. She has continued her learning at Harvard University and is a 2019 graduate of the Skinner Leadership Institute’s renowned *Masters Series For Distinguished Leaders*.

Linda and her husband work in their careers supporting the personal growth of young people, and they do the same in their personal lives. With their son having a love for basketball since birth, in 2014, they responded to the lack of quality youth basketball instruction in the city by launching The D School Elite Basketball Program. The Program operated for five years, and touched over 70 young people, ensuring that they all learned the fundamentals of the game of basketball while exposing the players to opportunities and experiences to enhance their positive youth development and preparing them to compete at the highest competitive levels of high school and beyond.

Linda lives in Ward 4 with her cool husband, their awesome 15 year old son, and their loving Old English Bulldog.

