



# *Celebrating* Vernita Thompson



Vernita Thompson, MSW, attended the University at Buffalo and was a National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI) stipend recipient. While attending grad school, Vernita hosted the Child Welfare Chronicles podcast, which led to her hosting the Workforce Recognition Day with NCWWI. She has been working with Erie County for six years and was promoted from caseworker to senior worker after graduating with her master's degree in social work in 2021.

Family, life experiences, and the opportunity to help others motivates and inspires Vernita to keep going in her career. Throughout Vernita's educational and professional career, she is most proud of having opportunities to learn ways to reduce recidivism for families of color within the child welfare system and networking with other professionals to imagine a better child welfare system.

Vernita has learned to respect clients in spite of their shortcomings, to be respectful to all, and to remember that people can change. She realized early on that the child welfare system is operating using outdated practices that no longer served the community and change is needed. Her advice to new child welfare professionals is to understand that the child welfare system is complex and change is slow. She urges all new child welfare practitioners to contemplate how they can help create change and to be patient with the process.

Vernita looks forward to moving into management and leadership roles to help to make equitable changes for children and families. Vernita also plans to continue to share and express her enthusiasm and hopeful wishes to better the child welfare system by starting a new podcast to educate parents of color of their rights, how child welfare works, and how to navigate the child welfare system.

