

**Gabriella Celeste, Esq.**  
**Biography - 2009**

Working in the non-profit and public sectors as an attorney and advocate, as well as serving as an administrator, research consultant and program evaluator, Gabriella Celeste has committed her career to improving opportunities and outcomes for children, from early childhood through adolescence and young adulthood. Gabriella's focus on children and youth began over twenty years ago working with families in crisis in Chicago. After volunteering to serve severely malnourished infants and children in Calcutta, India, Gabriella moved to California and worked as a group home counselor for emotionally disturbed children and a coordinator of a newly-created court diversion, community mediation program based on a restorative justice model for delinquent youth. After a year-long Coro public policy fellowship, she worked as a research associate with a San Francisco consulting firm specializing in applied social research for foundations, governmental agencies and non-profit organizations. Her research focused primarily on evaluating pediatric AIDS projects and programs aimed at serving at-risk teenagers.

After law school, Gabriella co-founded the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana (JJPL) in 1997, a nonprofit law practice dedicated to transforming the juvenile justice system and improving legal representation and treatment opportunities for young people. JJPL became a premier state-wide advocacy and legal reform agency successfully pushing for effective and sustainable alternatives to institutionalization for youth. In addition to serving as legal counsel on federal, state and local litigation, Gabriella has engaged in various child-related advocacy efforts, both at the local and state level, organizing tactical and multifaceted social change campaigns, combining community education, stakeholder mobilizing, coalition-building, public policy development, media advocacy and impact litigation. She also helped to create and spin-off new initiatives, including a family advocacy group and an aftercare youth reentry program in New Orleans.

Upon returning to her hometown in Ohio, Gabriella has continued consulting and serving in various positions promoting the well-being of children and families, including Director of Cuyahoga County's Office of Early Childhood and Director of the Alliance of Child Caring Service Providers. The Alliance is an organization of non-profit, child-serving agencies who collectively focus on public-private partnership building and public policy advocacy in the child welfare and behavioral health care systems in order to enhance their ability to effectively serve children and families in Cuyahoga County. In this capacity she worked with partners in the county's health and human services departments, including the behavioral health boards and the juvenile court, as well as partners at the state level, to improve policy and practice within various children's services.

Gabriella received her Bachelor of Science from Northwestern University in 1984 and her Juris Doctorate from the University of Michigan Law School in 1996. Gabriella is married with two young sons and lives in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.