

Keishawna A. Smith

Keishawna A. Smith is a graduate of Jackson State University, a Jackson native and currently works at University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies as the Parent Coordinator of the Mississippi Family to Family Health Information and Education Center (MS F2F), the state's Family-to-Family Health and Information Center (F2FHIC).

Keishawna is the mother of two, Trinitee' and De 'Shawn, and wife to retired disabled veteran Sheldon H. Smith. Her children are both living with Sickle Cell Disease, type SS.

Keishawna began her work in the disability community when her first child was born in Texas. She started a parent support group in the community where she lived because she saw so many parents going to doctor's visits and not understanding what sickle cell was and how it was affecting their children. She decided to gather as much information on the subject as she could since this was all new to her also. At each group meeting, the parents talked about their experiences and solutions or what resource they had found.

After moving to Florida, Keishawna continued her work with the Children's Cancer Society and volunteered with the established sickle cell support group. When Keishawna's family moved back home to Mississippi, she became involved with the Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center (MS PTI) as the Executive Assistant to the Director and added on the responsibility and position of Parent Educator/Advocate where she educated parents about their rights and responsibilities under IDEA/ADA. She has worked with and served various agencies and organization such as the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi Department of Health (CMP), the Mississippi disAbility Mega Conference, LIFE of Mississippi, Hinds County Human Resource Agency (Head Start), The ARC of Mississippi, Families as Allies, Early Intervention and, the Statewide Head Start Association, Parents for Public Schools, and many others.

Keishawna's goal is to help parents become better advocates for their children within their schools and communities by helping families educate themselves on how to better navigate systems and access resources. She advocates daily for families, health care professionals and educators to develop partnerships to better care for children with special health care needs. Her ideal outcome is for parents to feel empowered as the decision maker in their child(ren)'s health, education and over all well-being.