

## **Darcey Merritt, Ph.D.**

Darcey Merritt, Professor at the University of Chicago, Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice has extensive experience as a practitioner in private and public child welfare systems, and her empirical scholarship is meaningfully informed by the lived experiences of those impacted by child welfare systems. Her research portfolio centers on child maltreatment prevention, specifically neglect, and parenting in socio-economic context, considering the impact of working memory on parental decision-making. She is dedicated to elevating the voices of systems-impacted families in the discussion of systems surveillance related to racialized poverty.

Her work focuses on child welfare service-impacted families and their perceived experiences while receiving services, contextual indicators of well-being outcomes, the structural and systemic impact of child welfare oversight on parenting, ways in which systemic racism manifests within child welfare system service delivery, and child and well-being outcomes in the context of socio-behavioral, relational and neighborhood level factors.

Her most innovative scope of research, *An Elicitation Analysis of Parental Perspectives Regarding Child Neglect*, (funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NICHD) is a study designed to elicit the parental decision-making processes that result in behaviors typically deemed neglectful by child welfare service providers. This work laid the groundwork for subsequent studies that include systems-impacted parents at every step of the research design process to reimagine and inform practitioners and policymakers of the traumatic impact of child and family oversight surveillance, a primary component of the child protection system. Her work centers families of color who have experienced racialized poverty throughout service receipt to advance the discussion about reimagining the purpose of child welfare systems and mitigating the traumatic impact and myriad poor long-term outcomes on family well-being.