



FSSA News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FSSA names agency's first chief health equity and ADA officer

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration announced today that Breanca Merritt, Ph.D., will serve as the agency's first chief health equity and ADA officer, beginning January 4. Merritt is the founding director of the Center for Research on Inclusion and Social Policy at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, as well as a clinical assistant professor in IUPUI's O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and adjunct faculty for the Africana Studies program.

FSSA recently created the chief health equity and ADA officer position to provide leadership in the evaluation of policy decisions that affect race equity, to build metrics for agency accountability, ensuring agency adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act, and to serve at the executive level working to build a culture of equity across the agency. The position will report directly to the FSSA secretary and also be responsible for leading FSSA's Office of Healthy Opportunities.

"Dr. Merritt has a long history as an academic and practitioner with real-world experience working among marginalized populations to understand racial and ethnic disparities and encouraging policies that promote equity," said Jennifer Sullivan, M.D., M.P.H., FSSA secretary.

Dr. Merritt earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma's Gaylord College of Journalism before a master's degree in political science from Texas A&M University. She then earned a Ph.D. in health promotion sciences from the University of Oklahoma's Hudson College of Public Health with a specialty in health disparities.

"My career has always been dedicated to informing government efforts to improve outcomes for local communities, especially the populations served by FSSA," said Dr. Merritt. "I look forward to working collectively to address racial and social equity for Hoosiers who receive services and interact with the agency."

Dr. Merritt resides in Indianapolis with her husband. A photo of Dr. Merritt can be downloaded [here](#).

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