

Influential Women Showcases Utica Renee Craig: Child Protective Investigations Supervisor I At Texas DFPS

AUSTIN, TX, UNITED STATES, June 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Protecting Children and Strengthening Families Through Compassionate, Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Leadership

Utica Renee Craig is a dedicated child welfare professional and Child Protective Investigations Supervisor I at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), where she has served full-time for more than five years. Her career reflects a rare combination of professional expertise, crisis response experience, and deeply personal commitment to protecting vulnerable children and supporting families in crisis.



Utica's path to child welfare was shaped by both lived experience and professional preparation. As a survivor of sexual abuse and emotional trauma, she has long been motivated by a desire to become the support she once needed as a child. That purpose continues to guide her leadership approach and daily work in one of the most challenging areas of public service.

After earning her Bachelor of Arts in Criminology from the University of South Florida, with minors in Psychology and Sociology, Utica began her career as a Digital Communications Dispatcher with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. For three years, she answered 911 calls and coordinated emergency responses with deputies and partner agencies. This early experience strengthened her ability to remain calm under pressure, communicate effectively during crises, and provide critical support to individuals during their most urgent moments.

Her transition into child welfare marked a defining moment in her professional journey. As a

newly appointed Child Protective Investigator, Utica's very first case involved the removal of children from a home situation that mirrored aspects of her own childhood experience. Rather than deterring her, the experience reinforced her sense of purpose and commitment to protecting children from harm while working toward family stabilization whenever possible.

After relocating to Texas, Utica continued her work as a Child Protective Investigator for five years, during which she also took on leadership responsibilities. She mentored new hires for two years, trained incoming investigators, and provided ongoing peer support to colleagues navigating complex caseloads. Her performance and dedication have been recognized through multiple honors, including the Caseworker of the Year Award (2022), a mentor recognition award, and a five-year service tenure award.

In her current role as Child Protective Investigations Supervisor I, Utica manages six active caseloads while providing direct mentorship and oversight to her team. She is responsible for ensuring investigative quality, supporting staff development, and maintaining compliance with state child welfare standards. Her leadership approach blends structure with empathy, using organized tracking systems, clear communication practices, and consistent support to help her team manage emotionally demanding work.

Despite the intensity of her responsibilities, Utica describes her role as both challenging and personally meaningful. She emphasizes that her work continues to contribute to her own healing journey, while allowing her to make a direct and lasting impact on the safety and well-being of children and families across Texas. Her guiding objective remains clear: protect children while supporting families in achieving long-term stability whenever possible.

Utica attributes her success to the unwavering support of her husband, who has been a consistent source of encouragement since their early adulthood. When she was in college, he reassured her that she did not need to work while they were both starting, offering stability and belief in her potential. Throughout her career, he has continued to serve as her anchor during difficult moments.

During periods of self-doubt—particularly after emotionally taxing cases—he reminds her of her competence, resilience, and impact. He also highlights her professional accomplishments, including awards and recognition, reinforcing her confidence in the value of her work. Utica credits this personal support system as essential to sustaining her in a demanding field, noting that without it, the emotional weight of child welfare work would be significantly harder to carry. She describes her husband as her “biggest cheerleader” and acknowledges that her career has also played a role in her personal healing and growth.

The best career advice Utica received came from her training supervisor in Tampa during an especially difficult period early in her career. While feeling overwhelmed and uncertain during a closely supervised training phase, she was reassured by her supervisor that she had also once struggled through remedial training before ultimately advancing into leadership. The message

was simple but powerful: keep going, keep asking questions, and remember that no question is insignificant.

She was also encouraged to do her best without fear of failure and to understand that setbacks do not define one's entire career. This perspective helped Utica move beyond a mindset of perfectionism and fear of failure, allowing her to grow with greater confidence. Today, she carries those lessons forward by mentoring others in the same way she was supported, reinforcing a culture of learning and resilience within her own team.

Utica encourages young women entering child welfare to fully understand both the emotional intensity and the purpose-driven nature of the field. She acknowledges that women often bring strong nurturing instincts to the work, which can be an asset when paired with emotional regulation and strong support systems.

She emphasizes that child welfare professionals must be prepared for situations that may be far outside their personal experiences. Resilience, self-awareness, and support networks are critical to long-term success. At the same time, Utica highlights the importance of staying grounded in the broader mission: protecting children while working to preserve and strengthen families whenever possible. Despite its challenges and public misconceptions, she describes the field as deeply rewarding, with meaningful opportunities for growth, specialization, and impact.

Utica identifies two major challenges in her field. The first is a shortage of resources within the state of Texas, which makes it difficult to connect families with appropriate services tailored to their unique needs. Because no two families are alike, finding effective interventions often requires significant time, coordination, and persistence.

The second challenge is her transition into a supervisory role, which has expanded her responsibility from managing one caseload to overseeing six. This shift has required her to quickly adapt her organizational systems and develop new tools, such as tracking logs and structured workflows, to ensure oversight and accountability across multiple cases. While still adjusting to the role, she continues to refine her leadership approach and strengthen her operational effectiveness.

Utica's core values center on integrity, ethics, honesty, and transparency—principles she views as inseparable in both her professional and personal life. In her work, these values are essential due to the high level of accountability required in child welfare practice. She emphasizes accurate documentation, ethical decision-making, and immediate correction of mistakes when they occur.

She also values open-mindedness, noting that both life and child welfare work require creativity, adaptability, and the ability to think critically in complex situations. Together, her values shape a leadership style rooted in accountability, compassion, and trust.

Through her service at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Utica Renee Craig continues to demonstrate how resilience, lived experience, and professional dedication can come together to create meaningful change for children, families, and communities across Texas.

Learn More about Utica Renee Craig:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/Utica-Craig>

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