

**Children's Justice Act
Under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act**

**Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children
Three-Year Assessment
Task Force Member Agency Activities and Plans
Connecticut 2021**

Submitted by

**State of Connecticut
Department of Children and Families
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Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children
Three-Year Assessment
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Connecticut 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children (GTF, the Task Force, or the Governor's Task Force), established in 1998 and includes members who represent the specified disciplines as required in Section 107 (c) (1). Task Force Membership consists of representatives from the following agencies/entities:

- .. State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families
- .. Office of the Chief State's Attorney
- .. Office of the Chief Public Defender
- .. Office of the Attorney General
- .. Judicial Branch, Superior Court for Juvenile Matters
- .. Office of the Child Advocate
- .. Connecticut Children's Alliance
- .. Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center
- .. Court Appointed Special Advocates
- .. Civil/Criminal Court Judges
- .. Advocate for Children with Disabilities
- .. Office of Victim Services
- .. Office of the Victim Advocate
- .. Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Families
- .. Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- .. Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence
- .. State of Connecticut Department of Education
- .. State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- .. Law Enforcement Representatives
- .. Private Practice Clinicians
- .. Health Professionals
- .. Adult Survivor of Child Sexual Abuse
- .. Individual Experienced in Work with Homeless Children and Youth
- .. Parent Representatives
- .. Coordinator of the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children

During the Three-Year Assessment process, Task Force members participated in a survey to submit information regarding their agency's activities during 2018-2021 relative to the three categories contained in Section 107 (e) (1), as well as identify individual areas of focus for the next three years and their recommendations for priorities for the GTF for the coming three years. This document contains the responses submitted.

TASK FORCE MEMBER ACTIVITIES AND PLANS

During 2018-2021, members of the Governor's Task Force and the organizations they represent have focused on achieving best practices in their respective areas. This includes increasing outreach to underserved communities through training, capacity building, policy review, and service provision. The activities of these organizations are described on the following pages.

Department of Children and Families (DCF)

The DCF remains committed to partnering with our communities and families across the state. The department believes by empowering and strengthening families in their communities, children will grow up safe, happy, and successful. At the cornerstone of this belief is the departments' work toward racial justice.

(DCF, February 15, 2021)

The Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the Child Protective Services (CPS) agency in the state of Connecticut. Pursuant to legislative mandate, in addition to CPS, the Department is responsible for prevention, education under USD II, and children's behavioral health services.

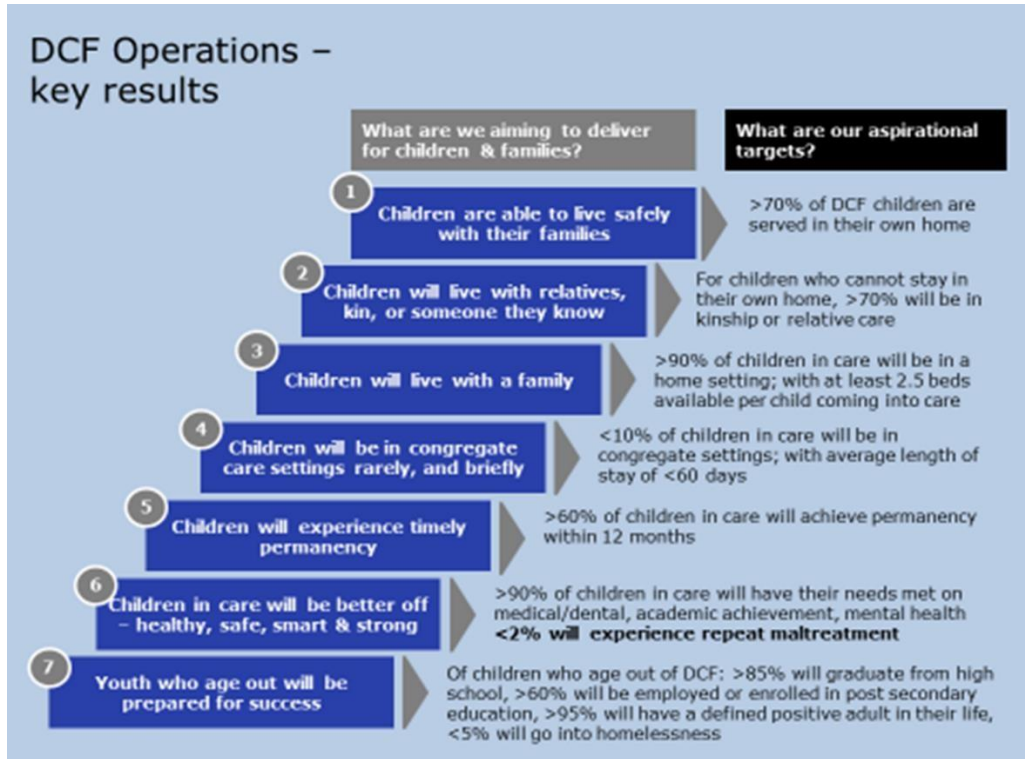
DCF's mission is: "Partnering with communities and empowering families in order to raise resilient children who thrive." The Department continues its efforts to sharpen the safety focus through prevention across the child welfare system. The mission is supported by the following five bold strategic goals (Figure 1) 1: Safety, 2: Permanency, 3: Racial Justice, 4: Well-being, and 5; Workforce. As part of the larger child welfare system, the Department works in partnership to ensure a holistic understanding of what children and families need. The 5 identified goals are compensatory, integrated, and support the overall mission of the Department.

Figure 1: Department of Children and Families Strategic Goals:



The mission is grounded in a core set of 7 Aspirational Targets (Figure 2) that drive the Department's Strategic Goals to meet the needs best and serve Connecticut's children and families. CTDCF believes that children do best when living safely at home with their family of origin. When living at home with a parent is not reasonably safe, the best alternative is to live with relatives, kin, or someone they know who can provide a safe and nurturing home. If no family member can provide a suitably safe home that meets the child's needs, the child should receive care and services in an appropriate foster home or a setting that can meet their need in a timely manner. If it's absolutely required, children who need to be in congregate care settings will have a brief stay. When and if a child is to enter the Department's care, the Department will work towards achieving timely permanency, ensure that their medical, dental, academic achievement and mental health needs are met, while at the same time ensuring that older youth are prepared to successfully transition out of the Department's care and assist in identifying a positive adult that will continue to provide support and guidance.

Figure 2: Department of Children and Families 7 Key Results/Outcomes:



Racial Justice:

CT DCF has been focused on the issue of racial justice for many years, with its formal journey beginning in 2005 as a participant in the national Breakthrough Series Collaborative focusing on disproportionality and disparities sponsored by Casey Family Services. After receiving technical assistance and undergoing a series of leadership and organizational changes, CTDCF renewed its focus on addressing issues related to Racial Justice in 2011. Today, with the support and leadership of Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes, along with her administration, achieving Racial Justice and the elimination of racial and ethnic disparate outcomes within the Department has been explicitly included as one of the five strategic agency goals, as noted above in Figure 1.

In 2020, with racial disparities illuminated in a global pandemic and our nation gripped in civil unrest, CTDCF reaffirmed our commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization whose beliefs, values, policies, and practices achieve racially just outcomes.

The overarching mission of anti-racist work is to examine and redesign the CTDCF as an authentically anti-racist agency that will be apparent in its structures, policies, practices, norms, and values. It is believed that becoming an anti-racist agency is a necessary interim step to achieve the strategic goals of Racial Justice. In furtherance of the agency mission, the Department has established 4 grounding principles, values, and foundations to guide us in achieving our goals of becoming an anti-racist organization. Figure 3 below outlines each guiding principle and how the Department is defining itself moving forward.

Figure 3:



Moving forward to become an Anti-Racist Organization is a crucial part of our identity. As an anti-racist organization, CTDCF will decisively identify, discuss and challenge issues of race and color and the impact(s) they have on our agency, our families, our community, and ourselves. We will challenge ourselves to identify and correct any inequities found within the agency and in the provision of our services. Moving beyond equity to justice is how we will get there.

In 2020, the Department committed to moving from Equity to Justice to ensure that services are individualized and based on a comprehensive assessment of a child's and a family's strengths and needs. CTDCF recognizes that these assessments must occur in partnership with providers, the family, youth, and children, in an age and developmentally

appropriate manner, shaped by clients' racial, cultural, and linguistic self-identification and needs. Striving for Institutional Transformation is our goal. We do not want to make small transactional changes but rather make the changes that fundamentally transform how we work with children, families, the communities we serve, and one another.

While external factors impact some aspects of disproportionality and disparity across CT's child welfare system and critical pathways, the Department is committed to ensuring that all areas and divisions within the Department work on reducing the racial disparities seen within the agency. As noted earlier, the overarching mission of CTDCF anti-racist work is to examine and redesign the Department as an authentically anti-racist agency. As this shift is taking place, outcomes for children, families, and staff of color will demonstrate decreases in disparities. CTDCF is mindful that this work is complex and often painful for some; therefore, CTDCF is committed to cultivating and sustaining an environment that is supported and grounded in the context of the Department's Culture of Safety, Safe, and Sound as referenced above. There are 5 main principles branded as the "5R's" (Figure 4) that will provide a framework for our work within a safety and racial justice culture.

Figure 4:

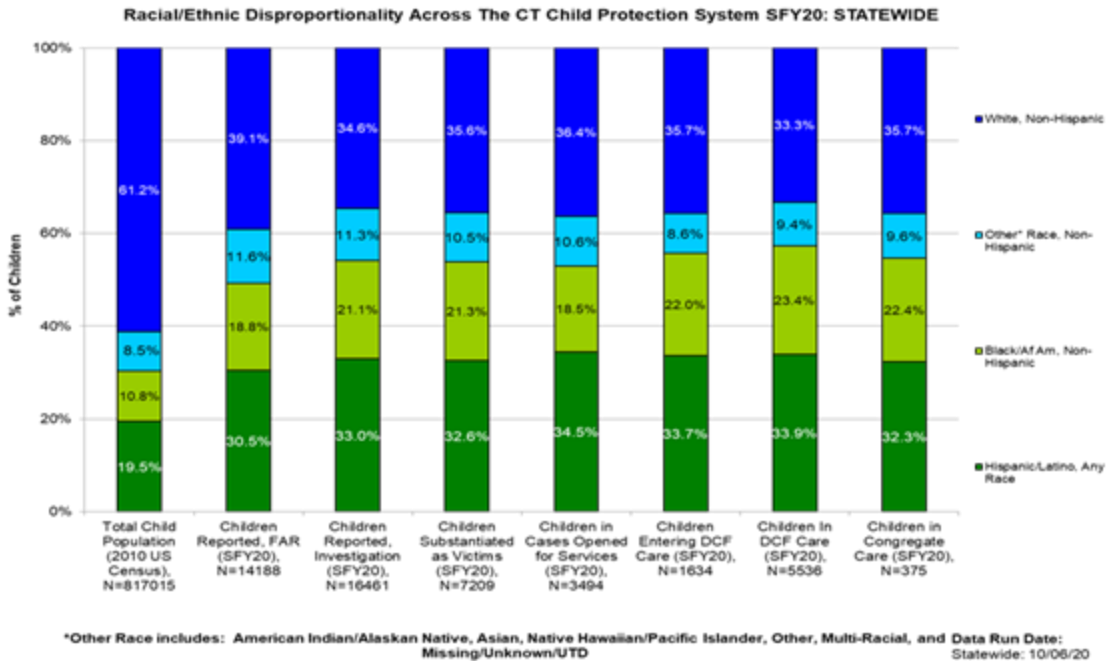


CTDCF continues to have a strong data infrastructure accessible to all staff, to support the evaluation of its' practices and outcomes through a racial justice lens. The Department has deliberately invested in capabilities that allows us to disaggregate most reports by race and ethnicity. This provides agency leaders the ability to observe trends that can be used for the consideration of strategies to eliminate the racial and ethnic disparate outcomes within CTDCF.

A foundational tool created in 2013 that the Department has consistently used is the "Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality Across the CT Child Protection System Data," often referred to as the "CTDCF Pathway Data." (see Figure 5 below). This data set graphically presents the distribution, by race/ethnicity, of children served across the Connecticut child protection system at key decision points. In addition, the data that is

included in the DCF pathways is compared to the child population in CT that stemmed from the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau. The Department is eager to receive the results from the 2020 U. S. Census Bureau (approx., April 2021) to have updated information on the demographics and population of the families and children served in CT.

Figure 5:



The pathway data are produced for every Region and Area office and then shared statewide. Ultimately these are "the needles" that we need to move. CTDCF has committed to consistently looking at the data set available related to child outcomes so that the strategies that are developed address areas of need while being intentional in becoming an anti-racist organization. As part of this commitment, conversations across the state are being held at a greater degree and in collaboration with the Office of Strategic Planning.

Figure 6: Disparity Index Trends: SFY 2013-2020:

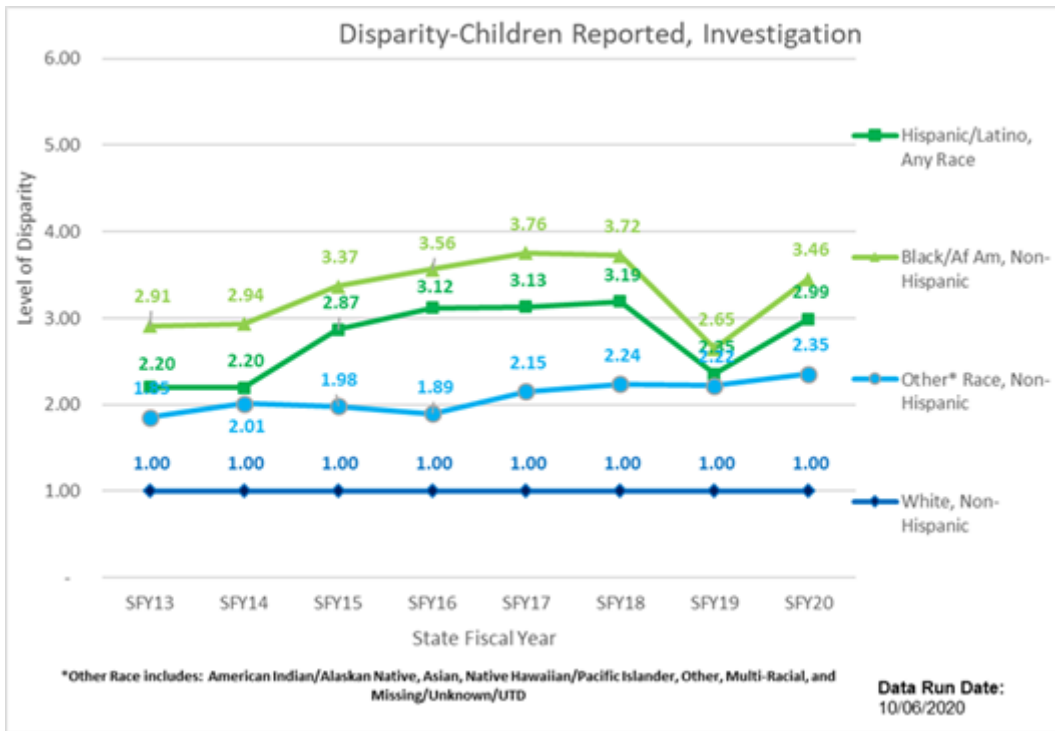
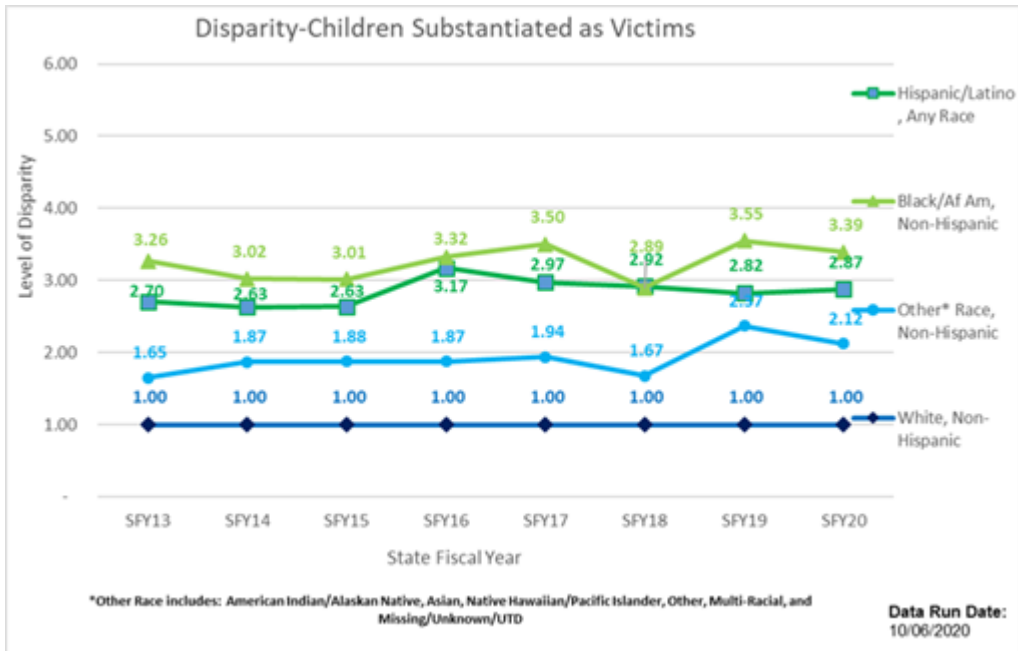


Figure 7: Disparity Index Trends: SFY 2013 – 2020:



Collectively, the Disproportionality and Disparity Index Trend data demonstrate that the Department must engage in further exploration of the specific sectors of the pathway to identify opportunities to reverse emerging trends of increased overrepresentation and disparity (two examples in Figures 6 and 7 above). Moreover, when coupled with other contextualizing data, these trends offer insights into some factors that may impact the experiences and outcomes for families and children of color. Our anti-racist work and racial justice initiatives are being constructed to address these ongoing trends and ensure all children and families are being served equitably and justly in all interactions with CTDCF.

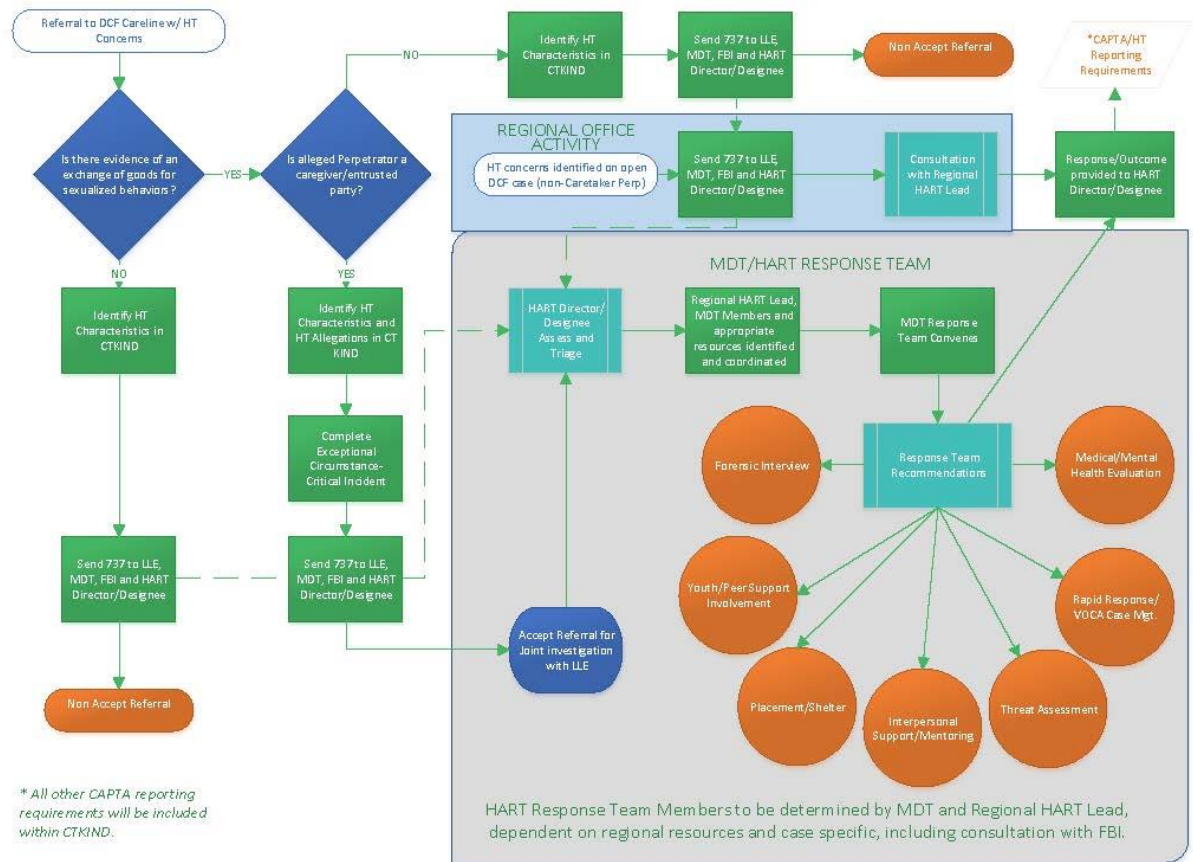
Over the next 3-years, the department will continue to learn with our data, ensuring we continue to move the needle. DCF will partner with the communities and families to ensure children are safe, happy, and meeting their fullest potential. In addition, the department’s efforts to move from

equity to justice will stay at the forefront, eliminating racial disparities and becoming an anti-racist organization.

Connecticut's Human Anti-trafficking Response Team (HART):

HART is coordinated by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Over the last 3-years, the department's policy and practice on child trafficking cases continued to evolve. DCF includes child trafficking under its mandated reporting guidelines requiring all cases be called into the DCF Careline (Figure 8 below). In the most recent policy update (September 2020), the state's system of Multidisciplinary Teams in partnership with DCF reviews and responds to all cases of child trafficking, ensuring a community approach that provides services and law enforcement actions for every case. This structure uniquely affords all child victims of trafficking the resources needed to ensure safety and service provision.

Figure 8:

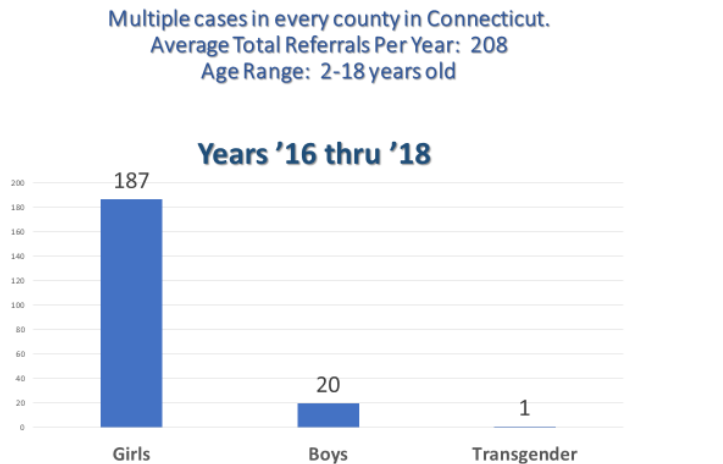


In addition, the department's screening instrument has been updated with lessons learned over the last several years. [Child Trafficking Decision Map](#)

Public Awareness is a crucial component of the work conducted through HART. Over the past year, we have provided 196 trainings and reached over 7,873 individuals. Thus, the total number of training for the last 6-years is 896 reaching 23,873 individuals. In addition, over the previous year, we offered 14 TOTs in our various curriculums resulting in over 182 new trainers in the State. Currently, there are 432 certified trainers in Connecticut offering 13 specialized training curricula for professionals, youth, and community members.

The number of referrals to the department of suspected child victims of trafficking have fluctuated over the last two years due to policy change, position changes, data entry challenges, and the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020 there were 149 referrals, and in 2019 there were 129 referrals. The data over the last quarter has increased dramatically, with 62 referrals, indicating the reporting issues have been resolved. Before the identified challenges, the average number of referrals has remained steady (Figure 9 below).

Figure 9:



The HART team has a four-chair structure which includes the HART Director, one DCF HART Lead, the CCA Chapter Director, and a service provider. HART membership consists of the HART Leads and Liaisons, MDT Coordinators and membership, all levels of law enforcement, medical and mental health providers, service providers, states attorneys, public defenders, legal services, and the faith-based community. In all, HART has over 900 member partners with over 500 active participants at various meetings.

Our HART webpage continues to ensure state and national sharing of information and direct connections to the teams doing this work on a daily basis.

HART Portal: <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/HART/Home>

Over the next 3-years, HART will continue to increase partnerships across the state focused on a statewide response to all types of human trafficking. In addition, training opportunities will continue with new curricula development and/or enhancement to meet the needs of the state. Finally, research projects are being explored with state agencies and the provider community, allowing Connecticut to evaluate outcomes and best practices.

DCF Careline:

As indicated above in Figure 8 above, as part of the new policy and practice guide (September 2020) on child sex trafficking cases, the Careline is the receiver of all child trafficking-related cases of children under the age of 18. Careline sends all referrals indicating child trafficking to the HART director, appropriate MDT(s), US Attorneys Office, States Attorney's designee, Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), and local law enforcement.

In addition, Careline has developed a timely Interstate Compact on Juveniles (ICJ) communication process and improved partnerships with ICJ. The process now allows for timely transfers of any youth who lives out of the state and is found in Connecticut or Connecticut youth found who have been missing and located in other states.

DCF Academy for Workforce Development:

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) operates an internal Academy for Workforce Development with the primary responsibility of offering pre-service training, in-service training/coaching, and other professional development activities to DCF employees; and, as appropriate and within available resources, to its community partner agencies. The Academy provides competency-based, culturally responsive training in accordance with national standards for practice in public child welfare; and encourages staff and its community partners to pursue professional education and to utilize learning opportunities to improve work with children and families. The summary below highlights trainings offered during 2018-2021 related to the Children's Justice Act and is a fraction of the total trainings offered by the DCF Academy.

Pre-service Training

- Mandatory training program for new social workers hired to conduct child welfare work in area offices
- Involves 24 unique courses offered during a period of five months
- Within the program, a two-day course on Sexual Abuse
 - o *Course content involves: common components of childhood sexual abuse; normative sexual development; staff responsibilities in the minimal facts gathering process; preventing the re-traumatization of children and/or damaging the evidence gathering process; how to work with adult offenders, non-offending*

parents, child victims, and juvenile sex offenders; referral process for specialized services; SDM Safety Assessments and case planning

- May 2018-May 2021: 284 employees participated in the course

In-service Training

Child Trafficking: What is it, How to see it, and How to respond to it

- Stand-alone in-service elective course open to all employees
- *Course content involves fundamentals of both understanding the issue of child trafficking and best practices in working with a youth and family affected by it. This course has something for all levels of knowledge and experience. Participants will be able to identify potential child trafficking issues with existing families, will understand when to contact the DCF Careline, and know how to manage the complexities of a case involving a child trafficking survivor. Participants will practice engagement techniques, including the use of case scenarios that will bring this work to life. Participants will also have an opportunity to hear from a panel of experts in the field.*

Differential Response System Training Series

- Mandatory training program for new social workers transitioning into Intake / Investigations
- Involves 13 unique courses offered during a period of three months
- Within the program, two specific relevant classes:
 - o DRS Sexual Abuse: Minimal Facts for 1st Responders
 - *Course content involves investigation of childhood sexual abuse; defining "minimal facts;" dynamics of childhood sexual abuse; collaboration with law enforcement and others; interviewing*
 - May 2018-May 2021: 165 employees participated in the course
 - o DRS Child Trafficking
 - *Course content involves fundamentals of child trafficking; best practices in working with a youth and family; identification of child trafficking issues with existing families; engagement techniques; when and how to make appropriate notifications.*
 - May 2018-May 2021: 165 employees participated in the course

Transitional Aged Youth Training Series

- Training program for employees working with transitional-aged youth (adolescents)
- Involves nine unique courses offered during a period of three months
- Within the program, two specific relevant classes:
 - o Child Trafficking

- *Course content involves fundamentals of child trafficking; best practices in working with a youth and family; identification of child trafficking issues with existing families; engagement techniques; when and how to make appropriate notifications.*
 - Trauma and Risk-Taking
 - *Course content involves adolescent brain development; healthy & unhealthy risk behaviors; childhood trauma and impact on brain and adolescent behavior; risk behaviors that are influenced by peers; data of the Suicide Prevent Program; adolescent with suicidal ideation; runaway behaviors; the role of Protective Factors and Positive Youth Development strategies*

Sexual Abuse and Ongoing Services

- Custom-designed course for ongoing services staff in 1 local DCF Area Office (Waterbury)
- *Course content involves common features of the cycle of sexual abuse; the "Discoverer's responsibilities" who may receive a disclosure of sexual abuse; ways to work with recantations as a predictable part of the disclosure process.*
- May 2018-May 2021: 106 employees participated in the course

Legislation:

The 2019 Legislative Session

Public Act 19-120 - S.B. 929 - ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF ADDITIONAL MANDATED REPORTERS, THE DURATION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT INVESTIGATIONS AND THE REPEAL OF CERTAIN REPORTING REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Sections 3 - 5 —These sections expand requirements for DCF operated and licensed facilities to check the state child abuse and neglect registry for individuals employed by such facilities. The act specifies that all employees of DCF vendors and contractors are required to have a background check to the state child abuse and neglect registry. The act also requires DCF to (1) check the child abuse and neglect registry in any state in which individuals resided in the previous five years and (2) comply with any request from a child welfare agency of another state to check the child abuse and neglect registry. The act requires DCF to check any person applying for licensure or approval to accept placement of a child for foster care or adoption, and for any person 16 or older living in the applicant's household, the child abuse and neglect registry in any state in which the applicant or person resided in the previous five years. The act specifies that any person a licensed child-placing

agency approves to adopt is subject to the same requirements as those approved to provide foster care. The act also extends this requirement to employees age 18 or older of DCF-licensed childcare facilities. The act additionally requires DCF to check, for any such person, the child abuse and neglect registry in any state in which the person resided in the previous five years.

Public Act 19-187 - H.B. 7389 - AN ACT CONCERNING CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CASE OF A DISCRETIONARY TRANSFER OF A JUVENILE'S CASE TO THE REGULAR CRIMINAL DOCKET AND IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The act requires the DOC commissioner and the CSSD executive director, by July 1, 2020, and in consultation with the DCF commissioner, to develop a best practices policy in juvenile detention centers and correctional facilities where individuals age 17 and under are detained. The practices must address:

1. suicidal and self-harming behaviors, including developing a screening tool to determine which detained individuals are at risk for those behaviors;
2. negative impacts of solitary confinement;
3. harmful effects of using chemical agents and prone restraints on detained individuals, including limiting and documenting the use of such agents and limiting the use of prone restraints; and
4. programming and services for detained individuals, including (a) implementing behavior intervention plans for those whose behavior, interferes with other detained individuals' safety or rehabilitation and (b) providing trauma-responsive rehabilitative, pro-social, and clinical services in their schedule.

The policy must additionally provide developmentally healthy and appropriate activities and recreational opportunities for the detained individuals and their families during visitation periods that are designed to strengthen family bonds and minimize separation trauma. The visitations must include contact visits unless such a visit creates a risk of harm to anyone.

The act also requires the DOC commissioner and CSSD executive director to ensure that independent ombudsperson services are provided and available at any juvenile detention center or correctional facility they operate or oversee where individuals age 17 and younger are detained.

The act adds to the list of professionals who are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect the above ombudspersons, and any person who (1) is employed or contracted at juvenile detention facilities or other facilities where children younger than age 18 are detained and (2) has direct contact with children as part of such employment. As mandated reporters, they must report to DCF when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to believe or suspect that a child younger than age 18 has been abused, neglected, or placed in imminent risk of serious harm.

Public Act 19-117 - H.B. 7424 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR, AND IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS OF THE BUDGET This act implements the biennium budget from July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2021.

The budget authorizes an improved model for providing treatment services to the voluntarily served population and intensive case coordination (ICC) services to families that come to the attention of the child welfare system. These two changes in service provision will allow families to work directly with a provider having expertise in targeted case management and care coordination. Funding is proposed to procure targeted case management services for families involved with the voluntary services program. Structurally, it eliminates the need for families to come through a child protection door. Inquiries for voluntary services would be made directly to a provider to work collaboratively through a family-centered, community-based approach. The family would have the benefit of a care coordinator to help navigate Connecticut's system of care for both formal and informal supports customized to meet the needs of the child and their family. The budget also affords DCF the opportunity to add another track for differential response for families needing ICC services but not necessarily continued DCF involvement. This has been found to improve outcomes for families and will result in net savings in the second year of the biennium.

The 2020 Legislative Session was abruptly shortened due to COVID-19.

The 2021 Legislative Session

This unprecedented legislative session began on Wednesday, January 6th, with the members of the General Assembly being sworn in and the Governor offering his State of the State address virtually. The General Assembly also adopted the rules for the biennial session. Due to the pandemic, the rules reflect changes in the procedures of the General Assembly to accommodate virtual meetings and public hearings. Testimony must be submitted online to the committee clerks, and committees will develop procedures for the public to sign up to testify.

HB 6113 - AN ACT REQUIRING THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION CONCERNING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Requires the Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children to develop and make available online instructional guidelines for youth coaches on best practices for:

- 1) appropriate interaction with youth athletes, and
- 2) ways to identify possible child sexual abuse and grooming and how to contact the appropriate authorities.

HB 6417 - AN ACT REQUIRING BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF YOUTH CAMPS.

HB 6511 - AN ACT REQUIRING BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR YOUTH SPORTS COACHES, TRAINERS AND INSTRUCTORS.

Both bills will require extensive background checks for employees of youth camps, youth sport coaches, trainers and instructors. The background check will include a check of the state child abuse and neglect registry.

HB 6657 AN ACT CONCERNING HUMAN TRAFFICKING. SUMMARY

This bill makes various changes to laws affecting human trafficking crime and victims, including:

1. the court to compel certain witnesses to testify and produce evidence in delinquency proceedings;
2. establishes an affirmative defense for a trafficking victim who is a minor charged with trafficking in persons;
3. narrows the elements of the trafficking in persons crime by including only actions a person commits knowingly;
4. broadens the crimes of "sex trafficking," "patronizing a prostitute," and "commercial sexual abuse of a minor" to include taking these actions in exchange for anything of value, instead of only for paying a fee;
5. extends the refresher training in human trafficking awareness for certain professions to emergency medical services personnel; and
6. extends vacatur relief to a person who committed certain human trafficking crimes if the person did so due to being a human trafficking victim.

DCF reports of note during this reporting period:

Immigration Resources: Family Preparedness Plan

To assist families who have concerns about immigration enforcement, particularly regarding the possibility of the deportation or detainment of guardians and the impact that it could have on their children, the Connecticut Governor's Office has developed a useful toolkit that people can utilize. There is no cost to use any of the documents contained in the toolkit, and neither attorneys nor court action is needed. This plan was updated in 2019. Download the Connecticut Family Preparedness Plan:

[Arabic](#)

[English](#)

[French](#)

[Haitian Creole](#)

[Mandarin](#)

[Polish](#)

[Portuguese](#)

[Spanish](#)
[Vietnamese](#)

DCF Substantiations

The Department compiled a summary of substantiations for ten years; the report can be found here: [Summary of Substantiation Decisions](#) (2000 to December 2020)

The Department compiled a summary of the number of allegations and substantiations by town in Connecticut:

[Town Pages](#) (2020)

[Town Pages](#) (2019)

Division of Criminal Justice

The Division of Criminal Justice (Division) is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of all criminal matters in the State of Connecticut. It is an independent agency of the executive branch of state government, established under the Constitution of the State of Connecticut. The Office of the Chief State's Attorney is the head of the administration of the Division in addition to handling various criminal and civil investigations and cases.

The Division of Criminal Justice is composed of the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, located in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, and the Offices of the State's Attorneys for each of the thirteen Judicial Districts in the State of Connecticut. Each local state's attorney office is headed by its own state's attorney, who is the head law enforcement officer for that judicial district.

The Division provides substantial assistance to the Task Force in the form of personnel.

GTF Designee – Kevin Lawlor, Deputy Chief State's Attorney for Operations

Co-Chair, Finding Words subcommittee – Michelle Manning, Assistant State's Attorney, Judicial District of Stamford/Norwalk.

Co-Chair, Training Committee – Elizabeth Leaming, Supervisory Assistant State's Attorney, Judicial District of Windham.

Member, MDT Evaluation Committee – Colleen Zingaro, Assistant State's Attorney, Judicial District of Fairfield.

Co-Chair, MDT/CAC Workgroup – Maureen Platt, State's Attorney, Judicial District of Waterbury.

Member, Victim Services Workgroup – Cathy Austin, Senior Assistant State's Attorney, Judicial District of Waterbury.

Faculty, Finding Words – Connecticut – State's Attorney Stephen Sedensky, Supervisory Asst. State's Attorney Neil Kelly, Supervisory Asst. State's Attorney Elizabeth Leaming.

Continued Involvement in Finding Words – Connecticut

Initially introduced in the 2006 assessment, the Division of Criminal Justice has, over the past decade, continued to work to bring about a coordinated system of child interviewing and investigation to the state through the Finding Words – Connecticut program.

The Division, through a number of its child abuse prosecutors, recognized a need for all those involved in forensically interviewing children to be similarly trained. Under the prior system, Connecticut trained its social workers and law enforcement personnel on various models by sending people out-of-state for training, bringing out-of-state trainers into the state, or provided minimal training opportunities to field staff. Recognizing the need for change and a consistent approach, the Office of the Chief State's Attorney approached the Task Force. CSAO encouraged the Task Force to bring the nationally recognized child-interviewing program Finding Words, Interviewing Children, and Preparing for Court to the state. Fifteen other states had already adopted the program with good results. After an options review by a Task Force sub-committee, Connecticut's 2006 application to become a Finding Words state was accepted. In October 2007, after having gone through a year of training and putting the course under the supervision of the national Finding Words, Connecticut became certified and had trained over 880 child abuse professionals since its first course in 2007. The Division of Criminal Justice provides several current and former prosecutors as faculty members to the course at no charge.

Legislation

By way of legislation, the Division continues to annually put forth bills and testimony to benefit and protect children before the legislature.

In addition to continuing to participate in Task Force activities, over the next three years, the Division of Criminal Justice will be:

- 1) Continuing its work on the Finding Words – Connecticut program by providing faculty and other personnel;
- 2) Continuing to participate in the multidisciplinary team evaluation process that has shown favorable results since its inception in 2002;

- 3) Continuing to participate on multidisciplinary teams throughout the state;
- 4) Continue to propose and support legislation as the need arises; and
- 5) Continue to participate and support Child Advocacy Centers throughout the state.

The Division continues to sponsor or co-sponsor trainings on infant death investigations, child sexual assault investigations, and human trafficking involving children. These trainings provide law enforcement officers with an overview of the medical trauma process, legal updates and best practices, and the steps that should be taken to investigate these child abuse cases. Speakers included medical doctors and prosecutors.

Human Trafficking

The Division provided a prosecutor assigned to coordinate human trafficking investigations and prosecutions involving violations of state law. This prosecutor also serves as a liaison to our Federal partners in the US Attorney's Office. This prosecutor also serves on several boards related to human trafficking. Supervisory Asst. State's Attorney Lisa D'Angelo of the New Haven Judicial District currently serves in this role.

Multidisciplinary teams (MDT)

Each judicial district has at least one multidisciplinary team created under the authority of C.G.S. Sec. 17a-106a, with the Department of Children and Families and the Office of the State's Attorney for that Judicial District being the lead agencies. Each State's Attorney's Office provides prosecutors to work on the MDT, and many state's attorneys are members of advisory committees made up of the heads of the agencies that make up the MDTs. These advisory committees support the MDTs who handle the individual child abuse cases by addressing the big picture needs of the MDT, such as interagency conflict resolution.

Sec. 17a-106a. Multidisciplinary teams. Purpose. Composition. Confidentiality. Records of meetings. (a) For purposes of this section, "children's advocacy center" means an entity accredited or granted associate or developing status by the National Children's Alliance that provides a child-focused, trauma-informed, facility-based program that fosters collaboration among members of a multidisciplinary team established pursuant to subsection (b) of this section for the purpose of interviewing or meeting with children and children's parents, guardians or other caregivers, in order to obtain information and provide such information to personnel charged with making decisions regarding the investigation and prosecution of allegations of child abuse or neglect or trafficking, as defined in section 46a-170, of children and the safety, treatment, and provision of services to alleged victims of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children.

(b) The Commissioner of Children and Families, as department head of the lead agency, and the appropriate state's attorney may establish multidisciplinary teams for the purposes of (1) reviewing particular cases or particular types of cases, (2) coordinating the intervention in and prevention of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children and the treatment of abused, neglected or trafficked children in each judicial district, (3) reviewing selected cases of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children, (4) advancing and coordinating the prompt investigation of suspected cases of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children, (5) reducing the trauma experienced by alleged victims of such abuse or neglect or trafficking and, (6) ensuring the treatment of abused, neglected or trafficked children and the protection of such children and their families. The head of the local law enforcement agency or such head's designee may request the assistance of the Division of State Police within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection in order to accomplish such purposes.

(c) Each multidisciplinary team shall consist of at least one representative of each of the following: (1) The state's attorney of the judicial district of the multidisciplinary team, or such state's attorney's designee; (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee; (3) the heads of the local or state law enforcement agencies, or such heads' designees; (4) a health care professional with substantial experience in the diagnosis and treatment of abused or neglected children, who shall be designated by the multidisciplinary team members; (5) a member, where appropriate, of a youth service bureau; (6) a mental health professional with substantial experience in the treatment of abused or neglected children, who shall be designated by the multidisciplinary team members; (7) a forensic interviewer, who shall be designated by the multidisciplinary team members; (8) a victim advocate, who shall be designated by the multidisciplinary team members; and (9) any other appropriate individual with expertise in the welfare of children that the members of the multidisciplinary team deem necessary. Each multidisciplinary team shall select a chairperson. Each multidisciplinary team may invite experts to participate in the review of any case and may invite any other individual with particular information germane to the case to participate in such review, provided the expert or individual shall have the same protections and obligations under subsections (h) to (j), inclusive, of this section as members of the multidisciplinary team.

(d) The Governor's task force for justice for abused children, through the subcommittee comprised of individuals with expertise in the investigation of child abuse and neglect, shall: (1) Establish and modify standards to be observed by multidisciplinary teams; (2) review protocols of the multidisciplinary teams; and (3) monitor and evaluate multidisciplinary teams and make recommendations for modifications to the system of multidisciplinary teams.

(e) Children's advocacy centers may assist multidisciplinary teams by (1) providing safe, child and family-friendly settings that maintain the privacy of children and their families; (2) establishing policies and procedures that are culturally competent; (3) aiding in the development of written protocols for an interdisciplinary and coordinated approach to such investigations; (4) providing forensic interviews of children that (A) are conducted by a trained forensic interviewer, (B) are recorded, (C) solicit information in an unbiased, fact-finding manner that is culturally sensitive and appropriate for each child's developmental stage, and (D) may be observed by

members of the multidisciplinary teams involved in such investigations whenever possible; (5) providing specialized medical evaluation and treatment, mental health services and support and advocacy services to children at such centers or through coordination with and referral to other appropriate providers of such services; (6) providing regular case review for the purpose of aiding in decision-making, problem solving, systems coordination and information sharing concerning the status of cases and the services required by children and their families; and (7) providing a tracking system for monitoring the progress and outcomes of cases.

(f) The state chapter of the National Children's Alliance and multidisciplinary teams may (1) coordinate and facilitate the exchange of information among children's advocacy centers; (2) provide technical assistance to municipalities in order to support the establishment, growth, and accreditation of children's advocacy centers; (3) educate the public and the General Assembly on the needs of victims of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children; (4) provide or coordinate multidisciplinary training opportunities that support a comprehensive response to allegations of child abuse, or neglect or trafficking of children; and (5) submit a report annually to the Governor's task force on justice for abused children and the General Assembly concerning outcomes from each children's advocacy center.

(g) All criminal investigative work of multidisciplinary teams shall be undertaken by members of such multidisciplinary teams who are law enforcement officers, and all child protection investigative work of such multidisciplinary teams shall be undertaken by members of such multidisciplinary teams who represent the Department of Children and Families, provided such representatives may coordinate investigative work with such multidisciplinary teams and rely upon information generated by such multidisciplinary teams in the course of such Department's investigations. The protocols, procedures, and standards of such multidisciplinary teams shall not supersede the protocols, procedures, and standards of the agencies who are represented by members of such multidisciplinary teams.

(h) Each multidisciplinary team shall have access to and may copy any record, transcript, document, photograph, or other data pertaining to an alleged child victim within the possession of the Department of Children and Families, any public or private medical facility, or any public or private health professional provided, in the case of confidential information, the coordinator of the multidisciplinary team, or such coordinator's designee, shall identify the record in writing and certify, under oath, that the record sought is necessary to investigate child abuse or neglect and that the multidisciplinary team will maintain the record as confidential. No person who provides access to or copies of a record upon delivery of certification under this section shall be liable to any third party for such action. No multidisciplinary team shall be deemed a public agency as defined in section 1-200, for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act.

(i) No person shall disclose information obtained from a meeting of a multidisciplinary team without the consent of the participant of the meeting who provided such information unless disclosure is ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction or is necessary to comply with the provisions of the Constitution of the state of Connecticut.

(j) Each multidisciplinary team shall maintain records of meetings that include, but are not limited to, the name of the alleged victim and perpetrator, the names of the members of the

multidisciplinary team and such members' positions, the decision or recommendation of the multidisciplinary team and information regarding support services provided. In any proceeding to gain access to such records or testimony concerning matters discussed at such meetings, the privileges from disclosure applicable to the information provided by each of the participants at such meetings shall apply to all participants.

Office of the Chief Public Defender

The Division of Public Defender Services provides representation for indigent accused adults and juveniles throughout Connecticut at thirty-eight (38) combined field offices and six (6) specialized units and branches of the Office of Chief Public Defender. Pursuant to Sec. 51-296, C.G.S., public defenders may be appointed to represent individuals in any criminal action, any habeas corpus proceeding arising from a criminal matter, any extradition proceeding, or in any delinquency matter. In addition, representation is provided to clients in both adult and juvenile misdemeanor and felony cases, including appeals and other post-conviction matters, as well as to children and indigent parties in child protection matters, children from indigent families in contested family court custody, and dissolution cases and indigent contemnors in family support matters.

Assigned Counsel provides most of the parent and child representation in child abuse and neglect cases in juvenile court under contract with our Division. The contracts require compliance with our detailed Performance Guidelines for Counsel in Child Protection (CP) Matters, which include, but are not limited to, regularly visiting with child clients, speaking with their caregivers and family, reviewing all DCF, medical, educational, and service provider records, and advocating zealously for clients at all court proceedings and DCF treatment plan meetings. We have approximately 275 CP Assigned Counsel and represent approximately 13,500 individual CP clients annually.

In addition, all-new CP Assigned Counsel are required to complete three days of comprehensive training before representing CP clients and are also paired with an experienced mentor to provide ongoing support and consultation. The contract also requires mandatory annual in-service training and adherence to all applicable Rules of Professional Conduct. These trainings have included Minimal Facts for Discoverers, Educational Advocacy, Trial Skills, Mental Health, Domestic Violence, Collateral Consequences, Immigration Issues, Trafficking, Sexual Abuse, Representing Clients with Intellectual Disabilities, Substance Abuse, Motivational Interviewing, and Appellate Advocacy, among others.

The attorneys (AMCs) and guardians ad litem (GALs) that represent children in contested family court matters are also required to complete a mandatory 20-hour training program, along with ongoing training requirements, in order to be deemed eligible for court appointments. Our Division administers that training in collaboration with the Standing Committee on GAL/AMCs and contracts with those GAL/AMCs who are willing to represent children from indigent families

at state rates.

The Assigned Counsel is paid a flat rate per client. Still, the contract also allows them to bill hourly for certain activities integral to elevating practice and improving client outcomes. These include, but are not limited to, client visits, trial time, Considered Removal meetings, and treatment plan/permanency team meetings in DCF cases to ensure clients are receiving the services necessary to prevent removal and promote timely permanency for children in DCF custody.

We also conduct ongoing contract management and quality assurance activities to ensure high-quality representation for parent and child clients. This includes regular monitoring of client visits, case consultation, tracking of all case inquiries, and ongoing updates regarding legal, policy, and practice changes pertaining to child welfare matters.

During the legislative session, the Division plays an active role in proposing and monitoring legislation that impacts our clients, including providing testimony and educating legislators about how the proposed changes would promote or impede better client outcomes.

During the next three years (2021 – 2024), the Division will continue the above activities to monitor and ensure high-quality representation of our clients, including our accused offender clients as well as the parents and children represented by both our Assigned counsel and juvenile public defenders in child abuse and neglect cases. Notably, this will also include securing additional federal IV-E matching funds in collaboration with DCF that will be specifically targeted at improving the quality of legal advocacy in child welfare cases.

Office of the Attorney General

The Office of the Attorney General's Child Protection Section is responsible for representing the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) in state and federal court proceedings brought in the interest of abused and neglected children. DCF's most prominent mandate is to investigate reports of child abuse or neglect and, based on the outcome of the investigations, to provide the proper protection for children and to assist families in retaining or regaining the care and custody of their children by enhancing the safety of children's family environments and improving parenting skills. DCF's interventions in serious cases of abuse or neglect are often the subject of petitions in Superior Court for Juvenile Matters. The vast majority of civil child protection cases before Juvenile Matters are initiated by DCF through neglect petitions, applications for orders of temporary custody, review of permanency plans, petitions for termination of parental rights, adoptions, and other civil proceedings. Attorneys in the Child Protection Section represent DCF in all twelve juvenile courts statewide and in federal court and handle a large number of appeals to the state Appellate and Supreme Courts. In addition, this

Department defends DCF in all administrative appeals dealing with substantiations of neglect and abuse and placement on the registry of perpetrators of child abuse and neglect who pose a risk to children.

This Section prosecutes thousands of neglect petitions in juvenile court each year. Between January 1, 2018, and April 30, 2021, the Section has handled 415 new neglect petitions that also include allegations of physical and/or sexual abuse by a parent or caretaker. These cases typically require this section to prosecute orders of temporary custody on an emergency basis to ensure that the abused child or children and his or her siblings are protected through continued placement with DCF and/or court orders to address the safety of the child(ren) and the causes of the abuse. These Assistant Attorney Generals in the Child Protection Section work with the MDT's throughout the state and prosecutors on cases involving criminal charges.

Appellate Advocacy:

This section is also responsible for one of the largest appellate caseloads in the Attorney General's office. The following are some of the results that specifically enhance this state's ability to protect abused children:

- *In re Riley B.*, 203 Conn. App. 627 (2021) involved a respondent parent's challenge to a trial court's decision to grant DCF's petition to terminate her parental rights in a case initiated due to severe physical abuse of her child. The Appellate Court agreed with our office's legal arguments and upheld the termination of parental rights.
- *In re Marcquan C.*, 202 Conn. App. 520 (2021) involved a respondent parent's appeal of a trial court order for her to undergo a psychological evaluation in a case where she injured her child while she claimed she was physically disciplining him. The Appellate Court ruled that the order of a psychological evaluation was not a final judgment for purposes of appeal, thus preventing a parent from filing piecemeal appeals in the midst of child custody proceedings and efforts of DCF and the court to address the abuse and render informed custody decisions.
- *In re Lilyana L.*, 186 Conn. App. 96 (2018) (Ground F) the trial court granted a petition to terminate parental rights on behalf of the sibling of an abused child, finding that "[the respondent] and [W.] . . . engaged in a course of conduct that makes them both the direct cause for Avah's serious bodily injuries." The Appellate Court upheld the termination in spite of the respondent's claim that there was an insufficient basis to find that she had committed the acts of abuse against Lilyana's sibling, concluding "that the trial court properly applied the law, and that its legal conclusion that the petitioner established the elements of § 17a-112 (j) (3) (F) is supported by clear and convincing evidence."

Training:

Since 2018, the Child Protection Section, with support from the Court Improvement Training Grant administered by the Judicial Branch and our new administration under Attorney General William Tong, has continued and expanded its training efforts to ensure its attorneys can effectively handle the most complex and serious cases of abuse. The section holds an annual two-day retreat of intensive training, including trial skills and substantive subject matter areas involving legal and child welfare issues. Last year the section also initiated a Lunch and Learn series on a bi-weekly basis to cover emerging topics and stay up to date on the latest developments in child protection advocacy. The training topics have included Forensic Interviewing, the Minimal Facts Protocols, Dealing with Defense Experts in Abuse Cases, Abusive Head Trauma, PTSD and its Effects on Functioning, among others.

Connecticut Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch (the Branch) has continued to work collaboratively with the state's child welfare agency, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), to enhance how child abuse and neglect cases are handled in court. The Judicial Branch continues to develop and refine its ability to capture data and report permanency outcomes for children. The Judicial Branch has identified the following areas of investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation:

- In October 2012, a legislative change took effect that provides the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters to handle adoptions for children whose parental rights have been terminated in Juvenile Matters. The intent of the legislation is to expedite permanency by the finalization of adoptions for children under the Court's jurisdiction. Since then, the SCJM court has teamed with DCF to process hundreds of adoptions, including participation in National Adoption Day. (See C.G.S. § 46b-129b).
- In 2018, the Judicial Branch rolled out electronic filing (e-filing) in child protection matters. This system allows DCF to initiate new neglect and OTC petitions, as well as efile permanency plans and termination of parental rights petitions on all cases. Attorneys also can access their cases and efile motions. Improvements continue to be made in cooperation with DCF.
- In October 2013, a legislative change took effect that allows an 18-year-old youth committed to DCF may remain in DCF care by consent until turning age 21, with provision for the Court to have continuing jurisdiction to review the permanency plan for the youth. The intent of the legislation is to provide the youth with placement stability and support when the youth is attending a post-secondary educational program, job training, or other approved program. (See C.G.S. §46b-129(j) (5) & (k)(1)). In 2020, the Judicial Branch was able to make the findings for the continuation in care available to DCF electronically.

The Judicial Branch has identified the following areas of experimental, model, and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative actions in child abuse and neglect cases, particularly child sexual abuse cases and exploitation cases, including the enhancement of performance of court-appointed attorneys and guardian ad litem for children and which ensure procedural fairness to the accused:

- The Recovery Specialist Voluntary Program is now operational in all court locations. Parents whose children have been removed because of parental substance abuse received recovery coaches and case management. The court has enhanced its oversight of these cases by increasing the frequency of case status conferences.
- From 2011-Present, The State Court Improvement Program (SCIP) provides funds to The Office of the Chief Public Defender, Juvenile Delinquency Defense, and Child Protection Attorney Unit for ongoing training for assigned counsel in child protection cases. In addition, the e-filing system allows attorneys instant electronic access to documents on the case and the ability to file motions electronically. This initiative has improved Quality Legal Representation for parents and children involved in the child protection system.
- In 2012, the Judicial Branch implemented new policies related, including Peer Review and Quality Assurance, focused on improving the use of psychological evaluations in child protection proceedings and using data to measure safety, permanency, and quality of representation outcomes for children under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. This program continues.

Over the next three years, the Judicial Branch has several priorities. Some of the major priorities include addressing the needs of "cross-over" children, defined as children with cases on both the delinquency and child protection dockets in the Juvenile Matters court, and addressing the educational needs of children.

Connecticut Judicial Branch-Office of Victim Services

During the past three years, the Office of Victim Services (OVS) has continued to assist children who have been victims of physical and sexual assault and their non-offending family members in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. OVS does this by providing victim advocacy services and compensation for eligible out-of-pocket medical and counseling expenses, processing payments for the Forensic Evidence Collection program, and providing grant funding to non-profit child guidance agencies and hospitals. OVS also continues to assist and support this population by drafting and monitoring legislation relating to crime victims. Additionally, OVS participates in MDT meetings and training at the state and local levels.

OVS court-based victim services advocates (VSAs) primarily provide personal injury, sexual assault, homicide victims, and their family members with information and advice about the criminal justice system, notification of victims' rights, and specific case updates. Court-based VSAs also coordinates meetings for victims and family members with prosecutors to discuss their cases, assist with preparing and delivering victim impact statements, and provide court escorts. VSAs also assist child sexual assault victims and their families with applying for or obtaining Civil Protection Orders. The VSAs are also encouraged to participate in their local MDTs and attend any training sponsored by the teams.

As of January 2018, 32 adult court VSAs provided services to crime victims, and services were provided in 4 Juvenile Matters courts during this reporting period.

- FY 2017/2018: court based VSAs assisted 715 child sexual assault victims and their non-offending family members.
- FY 2018/2019: court based VSAs assisted 828 child sexual assault victims and their non-offending family members.
- FY 2019/2020: court based VSAs assisted 611 child sexual assault victims and their non-offending family members.

OVS operates a Helpline that gives callers information on the criminal, juvenile, and civil justice process, victim notification, victim rights, and referrals to community and state agencies. The victim services advocates who answer the Helpline assist personal injury crime victims, including callers that are victims or family members of child sexual assault. These VSAs also provide support at Sentence Review Hearings.

OVS offers confidential notification on changes in the status of inmates at a Department of Correction prison. CT SAVIN provides confidential notification in English, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish on criminal court cases for an offender, changes to an offender's custody status with the Department of Correction, and when a court order of protection is issued, changed, or ends. Victims use the information they receive from victim notification to exercise their rights under the Connecticut Constitution. Some victims also use this information to create a safety plan if the offender is going to be released from prison or if an order of protection is changed or ended.

Since 2008, two VSAs have been assigned to the Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP) to assist at hearings to victims and family members of inmates who are being considered for parole release or a pardon. Victims and/or family members may attend the hearing and provide a victim impact statement to the Board.

- FY 2017/2018: BOPP VSAs assisted 222 child sexual assault victims and their non-offending family members.
- FY 2018/2019: BOPP VSAs assisted 233 child sexual assault victims and their non-offending family members.
- FY 2019/2020: BOPP VSAs assisted 145 child sexual assault victims and their non-offending family members.

OVS continues to compensate child abuse victims and their non-offending family members for reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses for medical bills and counseling services.

- FY 2017/2018: 238 compensation claims for child abuse were paid for a total of \$197,437.
- FY 2018/2019: 304 compensation claims for child abuse were paid for a total of \$319,825.

- FY 2019/2020: 254 compensation claims for child abuse were paid for a total of \$189,256.

Since November 2009, OVS assumed responsibility for processing payments for the Forensic Evidence Collection program. This program reimburses hospitals for expenses related to collecting forensic evidence and medical treatment for victims of sexual assault.

- 2017-2018: 0-12 yrs. of age 708 kits/exams \$374,858; 13-17 yrs. of age 476 kits/exams \$272,866
- 2018-2019: 0-12 yrs. of age 409 kits/exams \$253,404; 13-17 yrs. of age 289 kits/exams \$200,712
- 2019-2020: 0-12 yrs. of age 416 kits/exams \$263,231; 13-17 yrs. of age 308 kits/exams \$214,269

OVS provides federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding to child guidance centers and hospitals for the following programs:

- Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, Charlotte's Place, Torrington
- Child Guidance Center of Southern Connecticut, Inc., Child and Adolescent Crime Victims Assistance Project, Stamford
- Clifford W. Beers Clinic, Inc., Project CATCH (Collaboration, Advocacy, and Treatment for Children), New Haven
- Community Child Guidance Clinic, Inc., Victim Assistance Project, Manchester
- Community Health Resources, North Central MDT Coordination Project, Windsor
- Connecticut Children's Medical Center - Medical Services for Northern CT, Hartford
- Human Services Council, Recovery Services for Child Abuse Victims and Their Families, Norwalk
- Klingberg Family Centers, Inc., Child Abuse Treatment Services, Hartford
- Klingberg Family Centers, Klingberg Child Advocacy Center, Hartford
- Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance Center, Mid-Fairfield VOCA Program, Norwalk
- Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Community Based Family Advocacy Program, Hartford
- Village for Families and Children, Child First Victim Assistance Program, Hartford
- Waterbury Youth Services, Child Abuse Interdisciplinary Team (CAIT) Enhancement Project, Waterbury
- Wellmore, Inc., Child Victims Services Project, Waterbury
- Yale University School of Medicine, Yale Child Sexual Abuse Clinic, New Haven

Over the next three years, OVS will continue to provide victim advocacy, notification, compensation to eligible families of child abuse, the processing of payments for the Forensic Evidence Collection program, and grant funding for child guidance centers.

Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) established the Regional Children's Advocacy Centers (RCACs) in 1995 to provide technical assistance and training resources for communities establishing or strengthening CACs. The Northeast Regional CAC offers such services to the nine northeast states, inclusive of Connecticut. The four Regional CACs work collaboratively to further the development of CACs across the country. The primary goal of the collaborative partners is to make sure that every child has access to a Children's Advocacy Center.

The Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center (NRCAC) promotes the use of Child Advocacy Centers and a multi-disciplinary approach to child abuse investigation, intervention, response, and prevention. NRCAC supports Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) and Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) through training, technical assistance, support, and outreach.

Activities:

The NRCAC plays a supportive role in response to child abuse throughout the states of the Northeast. Our activities are limited to training, technical assistance, and the promotion of best practices. NRCAC continues to provide such services in CT in three main areas of focus:

Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children – NRCAC has been an active member of Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children since 2004. NRCAC offers a national perspective on best practices in the field of child abuse investigation and response. The NRCAC aims to support established CAC's throughout the state and promote the expansion and growth of new teams, assuring that every child in Connecticut has access to the benefit of a multidisciplinary response.

State Chapter of the National Children's Alliance - CT Children's Alliance (CCA):

NRCAC works closely with the CT Children's Alliance to provide its members with training, technical assistance, and support to enhance services to children and families impacted by abuse throughout the state. An NRCAC staff member assigned to CT works in collaborative partnership with the CCA to assess and respond to training needs throughout the state. Such training includes but are not limited to: Multidisciplinary Team Training, NCA Accreditation Boot Camp, Team Facilitator Training, Victim Advocacy Training, and multiple custom trainings designed to meet the needs of specific centers and teams.

Individual MDTs/CACs - NRCAC provides technical assistance, support, consultation, and outreach to MDT team coordinators, team members, CAC directors and their staff, and CAC steering committees. Topics covered included CAC development and sustainability, the NCA

accreditation process, team building, and cultural competency. NRCAC also provides consultation and support on meeting the NCA Accreditation Standards and securing NCA grant funding. NRCAC financially sponsors attendance at regional conferences, trainings, and National Training Academies to individual MDT/CAC members. Examples of such trainings include NRCAC's Leadership Exchange Program, NCAC -Forensic Interviewing Training, National Medical Academy, Leadership Management Training, and Accreditation Bootcamp.

Priorities

NRCAC's is committed to providing training, technical assistance, and support to local communities and state organizations working to establish and strengthen local Children's Advocacy Centers and multidisciplinary teams in Connecticut. NRCAC will continue to serve as a member of the Governor's Task Force and provide support and services to the CT Children's Alliance and the individual CACs and MDTs to ensure the best possible services to children and families impacted by abuse. The expressed hope of NRCAC is to see an accredited Child Advocacy Center in each region of the state. NRCAC will promote the adoption and usage of CAC's throughout the state and support said CAC's as key components of a well-functioning MDT.

GTF Priorities

It is the position of the NRCAC to support the application of best practice methods and policy in the field of child abuse with respect and deference to the individual and unique circumstances that exist within the states we serve. As such, we support the GTF in exploring those priorities to ensure the most effective response to child abuse for victims and families. We strongly encourage the GTF to continue its support of the CAC's across the state. We hope to see the expanded use of CAC's as critical partners in the investigation, response, and coordination of child abuse cases.

Office of the Victim Advocate

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) was statutorily established in 1998 as an independent state agency charged with the promotion and protection of the constitutional and statutory rights of crime victims in Connecticut (C.G.S. §46a-13b). Among its many responsibilities, the OVA provides oversight of state and private agencies that provide crime victims and advocacy services to crime victims when a violation of their state constitutional and statutory rights is at issue.

During the reporting period, the OVA staff accompanied clients to multiple court hearings. In some cases, the OVA filed limited appearances to address rights violations on behalf of clients. In other cases, the OVA attended for moral support and to educate clients about the criminal justice process. To address systemic issues raised by victims, the OVA has worked with the Judicial Branch and several local law enforcement agencies to address recurring issues, such as restitution, retrieval of property, and information requests. The OVA collaborated with the Hartford Judicial District State's Attorney to ensure that the parents of minor victims receive procedural due process in cases

that warranted a Guardian Ad Litem appointment. The OVA collaborated with the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch to develop new policies and procedures regarding restitution and legislative language to ensure those crime victims have access to records and information in juvenile matters. The OVA staff participated in the Melanie Ilene Rieger Annual Symposium and the VOICES Program at correctional institutions. During the reporting period, the OVA also monitored juvenile offender parole eligibility cases impacted by U.S. Supreme Court decisions *Graham v. Florida* (2010) and *Miller v. Alabama* (2012) and maintained a webpage of said information for crime victims to access the information. The OVA also hosted a Victims' Rights Symposium during National Crime Victims' Rights Week in April 2019 and hosted a Virtual Symposium during April 2021. The symposiums sought to provide attorneys, law enforcement, and service providers with information and tools to assist the crime victim community.

During the reporting period, the State Victim Advocate met with legislators and testified before the Legislature on key bills that address crime victims' rights. The OVA monitored bills and submitted testimony on bills before several legislative Committees. Below is a synopsis of new laws that will directly impact crime victims.

PUBLIC ACT NO.18-128, AN ACT CONCERNING VICTIM'S RIGHTS AND RESTITUTION (HB 5471) Effective October 1, 2018, the court shall inquire on the record whether or not the victim is requesting restitution.

PUBLIC ACT NO. 18-5, AN ACT CONCERNING DUAL ARRESTS AND THE TRAINING REQUIRED OF LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL WITH RESPECT TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (SB 466) Effective January 1, 2019, defines "dominant aggressor" for purposes of crimes involving family violence. Modifies the current mandatory arrest law and allows police officers to depart from the mandatory arrest law when the police have identified the dominant aggressor in the incident.

PUBLIC ACT NO. 18-83, AN ACT CONCERNING PROCEDURES RELATED TO COLLECTING AND PROCESSING SEXUAL ASSAULT EVIDENCE COLLECTION KITS (SB 17) Effective July 1, 2018, develop policies to ensure a victim has access to information regarding the victim's sexual assault evidence collection kit. Implements a tracking system for sexual assault evidence collection kits. Ensures that a sexual assault counselor is contacted when a victim presents at a health care facility.

PUBLIC ACT NO. 18-75, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT OPERATIONS (SB 215) Effective October 1, 2018, Extends the confidentiality protections to victims of aggravated sexual assault of a minor.

PUBLIC ACT NO. 19-64, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT OPERATIONS (IN PART) Adds

victim services advocates employed by the Judicial Branch to the list of professionals who the law designates as mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Allows the Office of Victims Services or a victim compensation commissioner to order compensation for pecuniary loss to an injured victim or the relatives or dependents of an injured or deceased victim for attendance at juvenile proceedings and Board of Pardons and Parole hearings.

PUBLIC ACT NO. 19-84, AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO SPECIAL PAROLE AND PAROLE DISCHARGE STATUTES Requires the Judicial Branch's Office of Victim Services (OVS) to notify certain victims that the Board of Pardons and Paroles intends to consider terminating a person's special parole period. It allows any victim to submit a statement to the board about such special parole termination. The bill makes various changes to the parole and special parole review processes, including establishing a panel and process for special parole that is separate and distinct from the regular parole review process.

PUBLIC ACT NO. 19-43, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT RECORDS CONCERNING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT, AND FAMILY VIOLENCE Expands the disclosure exemption to the Freedom of Information Act to include identifying information of victims of family violence.

PUBLIC ACT NO. 19-146, AN ACT REQUIRING THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES AND RESOURCES TO STUDENTS, PARENTS AND GUARDIANS Requires the Office of Victim Services, in consultation with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, to compile information on domestic violence victim services and resources and provide such information to the State Department of Education. Requires the State Department of Education to publish the information on its website. Requires the State Department of Education to disseminate the above information to local and regional school boards. Requires each school board to provide the information to any student, parent, or guardian who expresses to a school employee that they do not feel safe in the home because of domestic violence.

PUBLIC ACT NO. 19-43, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT RECORDS CONCERNING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND FAMILY VIOLENCE Expands the disclosure exemption to the Freedom of Information Act to include identifying information of victims of sexual assault and related crimes.

PUBLIC ACT NO. 19-114, AN ACT CONCERNING SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC EXAMINERS Makes various changes to the Office of Victim Services' (OVS) Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) program.

Lastly, the OVA testified in opposition to **PUBLIC ACT NO. 19-187, AN ACT CONCERNING CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE CASE OF A DISCRETIONARY TRANSFER OF A JUVENILE'S**

CASE TO THE REGULAR CRIMINAL DOCKET AND IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (IN PART) which makes the proceedings and records of cases transferred from juvenile to adult court confidential, thereby violating crime victims' constitutional rights to be notified, attend and be heard in adult criminal proceedings.

With regard to the Office of the Victim Advocate's priorities concerning policy and training over the next three years, the OVA will continue to meet with legislators to provide testimony on matters pertaining to crime victim rights and services and will continue to meet with victim advocacy groups, community organizations, and other public agency officials to provide outreach and education in targeted areas throughout the state.

Office of the Child Advocate

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) was established by PA 95-242 in 1995 to serve as an independent office to monitor and evaluate the public and private agencies that are charged with the protection of children and to review state agency policies and procedures to ensure they protect children's rights and promote their best interest. The intent of the legislators and the Governor was to create an independent state agency of oversight. Through that oversight, the Office of the Child Advocate ensures the protection of the civil, legal, and special rights of children. The OCA reviews and monitors public and private agencies that care for and protect children. The OCA also evaluates state agency policies and procedures to ensure they protect children's rights and promote their best interest. The mission of the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is to oversee the care and protection of children and to advocate for their well-being. In 2011, the OCA was consolidated into the office of General Accountability.

The Child Advocate and staff also participate in many relevant committees and advisory groups. This participation enhanced collaboration with other agencies to improve various systems responsible for the care and protection of children. They established and nurtured partnerships toward promoting a continuum of care approach for children, toward legal action when necessary, toward legislative advocacy, and toward increasing staff competencies.

System and Facility Investigations:

News Brief: [OCA Investigation of Conditions of Confinement for Youth in Department of Corrections Summary \(November 17, 2020\)](#)

Investigative Report: [OCA Investigation of Conditions of Confinement for Youth in Department of Corrections Report \(November 17, 2020\)](#)

News Brief: [OCA Investigation of Waterbury Public Schools Report Summary \(September 1, 2020\)](#)

Investigative Report: [OCA Investigation of Waterbury Public Schools Report \(September 1, 2020\)](#)

OCA Memo: [Homeschooling \(April 26, 2018\)](#)

Policy Brief: [Setting Young Children Up for Success Policy Brief \(Feb 2018\)](#)

Children with Disabilities:

The Child Advocate has committed considerable resources to work on behalf of children with special health care needs. There have been numerous trainings in this area, and this dialogue set the stage to develop strategies for improving systems of support for all Connecticut children. Ultimately, there are two initiative goals:

To develop a public education and awareness campaign on valuing and understanding children who have disabilities and complex medical conditions.

To develop a policy agenda which outlines how the State of Connecticut can better support children to meet their fullest potential with an emphasis on doing so in their own homes with their families, including enhancing public systems of care and financing of care as well as nurturing a workforce to support the children.

Child Fatality Review:

Pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46a-131 the Child Fatality Review Panel shall review the circumstances of the death of a child placed in out-of-home care or whose death was due to unexpected or unexplained causes to facilitate the development of prevention strategies to address identified trends and patterns of risk and to improve coordination of services for children and families in the state, and that upon request ... or at the Child Advocate's discretions, the Child Advocate shall conduct an in-depth investigation and review and issue a report with recommendations on the death or critical incident of a child.

The State of Connecticut has established a Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP), which is charged with reviewing unexplained or unexpected circumstances of the death of any child under the age of 18 who has received services from a state department or agency addressing child welfare, social or human services or juvenile justice. They also are an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of state agencies and community programs as safety nets to child welfare—the findings of child fatality review fuel advocacy for systems improvement and prevention strategies.

Although the Panel is a separate entity, its day-to-day operations are coordinated through the Child Advocate's Office. The Child Advocate serves as a Co-Chair of the Panel effective 3/1/2012.

CFRP Membership: * Denotes members who also sit on GTF**

Office of the Child Advocate	Sarah Healy Eagan, JD (Co-Chair)***
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Office of the Chief State's Attorney	Bret Salafia, JD
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner	Gregory Vincent, M.D.
Emergency Services and Public Protection	Lt. Seth Mancini, Esq.***
Department of Children and Families	Ken Mysogland, MSW
Department of Public Health	Angela Jimenez
Pediatrician	Kirsten Bechtel, M.D. (Co-Chair)
Community Service Representative	Pina Violano, Ph.D.
Neonatal-Perinatal Practitioner	Ted Rosenkrantz, M.D.
Domestic Violence Representative	Tonya Johnson, MPA
Injury Prevention	Steven Rogers, M.D.
Psychologist	<i>Vacant</i>
Child Abuse Physician	Michael Soltis, M.D.
Attorney	Andrea Barton Reeves, J.D.
Social Work Professional	Thomas C. Michalski, Jr., LCSW
Law Enforcement	<i>Vacant</i>

The CFRP is staffed by an Assistant Child Advocate who conducts the day-to-day work of the CFRP, including: screening all Medical Examiner reports of unexpected/unexplained deaths of children; scanning news media for other deaths not reported by the Medical Examiner; leading investigations of child deaths; preparing reports of fatality reviews; and representing the Child Advocate at national, regional, and state child death review committees.

While all child deaths reported to the OCA are reviewed, thorough investigations are conducted only into those situations where there was, or should have been, involvement of state agencies. Access to all information about the child and the services provide results in a comprehensive picture of the circumstances of the child's life and death. The purpose of these investigations is to determine whether there are opportunities to improve the effectiveness of public agencies and/or professional practice as a prevention strategy. A comprehensive review of a child's circumstances allows that level of assessment of both a child's needs and the quality and quantity of services

provided. Specific recommendations are made in each investigation according to relevant findings.

The Child Fatality Review Panel's reports of its investigations of child fatalities are public documents. They can be obtained from the Office of the Child Advocate upon request or viewed on this website using the following link:

http://www.ct.gov/oca/lib/oca/Ten_Report_III_in_Publisher_Format_III.pdf

Connecticut State Department of Education

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is not a criminal justice or child protection agency. Therefore, the investigation and prosecution of physical and sexual abuse of children do not have a direct relationship to our primary mission and focus. However, some initiatives bearing on the work of this agency come from partner agencies such as the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Office of the Child Advocate, the Department of Developmental Disabilities, the Office of Protection and Advocacy, and others. CSDE uses various channels in a well-organized, ongoing effort to educate parents and the professional field. CSDE partners regularly with the State Education Resource Center (SERC), a quasi-public organization funded by the CSDE, to provide professional development and technical assistance on educational topics. These vary from the annual back-to-school presentation for special education directors to monthly meetings that provide training for education hearing officers in areas as varied as special education, school accommodations, and expulsion matters. CSDE is also staffed with education consultants who present to and field questions from parents and district staff.

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services: Young Adult Services

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) Young Adult Services (YAS) Division has continued to partner with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) around the early identification of adolescents with behavioral health disorders. A Memorandum of Agreement was also implemented in 2021 between DMHAS, DCF, and Beacon Health Options to ensure that non-DCF involved youth who require mental health services and are involved with Beacon are also identified and referred to DMHAS as early as age 16, although young adults are not eligible for admission to a YAS program until age 18. DMHAS and DCF have continued to partner to provide specific assessments as needed in the areas of Autism Spectrum Disorders, Problem Sexual Behaviors, Positive Behavioral Support Plans, Risk Management, Forensics, and Neuropsychological evaluations. These assessments aid in developing appropriate treatment options for these transitioning youth. The individualized transition plan is developed between both agencies and the identified youth. This process focuses on specific elements that must be met prior to the completion of a transition plan and an admission to the YAS system of care. This agreement contains language around life skills preparation and training. Both agencies continue

to prioritize and plan care for a group of diagnostically complex individuals, a majority with a trauma history, accompanied by significant behavioral and social challenges. In addition to serving referrals from DCF and Beacon, YAS also accepts referrals from CSSD and other community sources.

The current population served by YAS includes the most acute, high-risk cohort of young adults in the state of Connecticut between the ages of 18 and 25. Young adults admitted to DMHAS YAS receive transition services that focus on skill development and treatment to promote successful community living. The service system includes 18 state-operated and private non-profit providers across the state of Connecticut, community-based residential programs for specialized cohorts of young adults, and a 17-bed inpatient unit at CVH. Each year, DMHAS has requested additional funding through the legislative process in order to support case growth for this specialized population.

In 2017, YAS conducted the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study and found that adversity experienced by YAS clients is significantly higher than found in the general population. As concluded in prior studies, the imprint of such high levels of prolonged childhood adversity is significant. YAS clients present with an exceedingly high frequency and severity of relational, behavioral, and affective disorders. The ACE is currently completed on all DCF referrals at the time of referral to more effectively anticipate and plan for the specialized needs of this cohort. Data analysis is underway with the goal of informing efforts to understand better and mediate the effects of early childhood trauma on behavioral challenges in young adulthood.

Over the past several years, DMHAS YAS has trained direct care and clinical staff in the trauma-based Attachment, Regulation, and Competency (ARC) Model. This model is applied across all levels of care and offered to all YAS staff. The ARC Model builds staff competencies required to assist individuals with ameliorating their traumatic experiences' debilitating physiological, behavioral, and psychological effects. In addition, this model has been adapted to a virtual platform in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In collaboration with the DMHAS Medical Director and Statewide Services Division, YAS planned and conducted statewide trainings and consultations from nationally known experts to understand and treat severe self-injury over the past year. Trainings emphasized evidence-based current research practices for individuals whose symptoms resulted from severe childhood maltreatment and trauma. Ongoing training and supervision in the Cognitive Restructuring for PTSD approach will be provided to selected YAS clinicians. Case and programmatic consultations continue to be offered to YAS teams at statewide YAS program sites.

DMHAS YAS staff continue to collaborate with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to facilitate the Introduction to Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) in CT for statewide

DMHAS YAS staff. Five separate trainings have occurred to date, including a virtual training that occurred in November in collaboration with the CT Women's Consortium to train additional statewide YAS staff as trainers.

DMHAS YAS staff also actively collaborate with local service providers to prioritize skills trainings for young adults focused on three areas: self-care and home management skills, community living skills, and vocational preparedness. Outcomes of skill-based services are measured using the Learning Inventory of Skills Training (LIST) or the Daily Living Activities (DLA)-20 assessment tools. DMHAS YAS is working with researchers at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work to measure skill improvements in the YAS client cohort. Additionally, YAS has also partnered with DCF to provide support and consultation related to the LIST implementation and co-facilitated LIST training with DCF for providers.

Employment and supported educational services continue to remain a prominent focus for our young adult population with a data collection instrument that is implemented across all community programs to evaluate outcomes in this area. Collaboration with Street Smart Ventures and the development of YAZ BIZ, an entrepreneurial youth-led initiative, has continued to be successful. In 2019, YAS conducted a study that analyzed predictors of young adult engagement in education and employment activities over a 12-month period at a single YAS program. The results showed a strong positive relationship between symptom reduction and engagement in these activities. Symptom management increased over the course of the yearlong study. Additionally, substance use in this cohort was negatively associated with symptom reduction and interfered with employment or educational activities. YAS plans to replicate this study at other program sites.

DMHAS YAS staff continues to collaborate with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to facilitate the Introduction to Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) in CT for statewide DMHAS YAS staff. Five separate trainings have occurred to date, including a virtual training that occurred in November in collaboration with the CT Women's Consortium to train additional statewide YAS staff as trainers.

To address the prevalent substance use challenges faced by this population, YAS initiated a Statewide Substance Use Work Group that developed and piloted a training program for YAS staff that focuses on increasing skills and knowledge of trauma, harm reduction, and motivational interviewing in the context of young adult development for statewide implementation. This training program is being adapted to a virtual platform to train statewide YAS program sites.

Several years ago, YAS developed and implemented a Utilization Management (UM) Tool to ensure effective utilization of 14 supervised community-based living programs statewide with 16-24 hours of on-site staff support (approximately 100 beds). Initial pre/post-test analysis of housing outcomes in this program suggests declines in high-risk behaviors from admission to

discharge and very high rates of discharge to stable housing in the community. Follow-up analysis at six months and one year post-discharge indicate housing stability is maintained.

In collaboration with DPH, DMHAS YAS continues to implement a Perinatal Support Program to provide prenatal, labor, and delivery Doula supports and in-home parenting support services to all pregnant and parenting young adults through Birth, Support, Education and Beyond, LLC (BSEB). The team of Perinatal Support Specialists has remained connected with clients during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing continuous support and educational services. The team has continued to stay up-to-date with the practices and protocols recommended by the American Academy of Obstetricians & Gynecologists, Pediatrics, Doula's, Home-Visiting Programs, Department of Public Health, and Center for Disease Control. The Founder/Director of BSEB is a member of The State of CT Women and Children's Health Committee Work Group on Maternity, Postpartum & Well-Baby Care during COVID-19, which is examining the impact that COVID-19 is having on women and children during and after pregnancy. In particular, this committee is working to identify gaps in care and determine short and long-term policy changes throughout the state.

DMHAS YAS continues to fund Advocacy Unlimited (AU) to hire young adult peers through the Join Rise Be (JRB) peer-led recovery initiative. In addition, AU continues to partner with DMHAS YAS leadership to establish and enhance young adult-led advisory boards to inform local and statewide YAS policies and procedures, staff a warm line for young people, develop and facilitate leadership training and an annual summit for young adults, facilitate young adult-specific Recovery University trainings, and offer activities to support and engage young people. YAS is incredibly proud of our young adults who have become Certified Recovery Support Specialists (RSS). We were also excited to hire an RSS position this year through Positive Directions to enhance our recovery support services in YAS statewide. This position will support efforts to enhance the TurningPointCT.org project, including offering online live RSS support as well as strengthening recovery-oriented resources for young people. TurningPointCT.org is a website developed by young adults for young adults.

DMHAS YAS was awarded a five million dollar five-year federal Healthy Transitions SAMHSA grant - CT Stay Strong - to identify, engage, and connect transition-age youth and young adults (ages 16-25) who present with or are at risk for serious behavioral health disorders with services needed to improve outcomes related to housing stability, health and mental health, and education and employment. DMHAS YAS and DCF, in collaboration with Advance Behavioral Health (ABH), will administer the grant. The University of Connecticut (UConn) will conduct the evaluation of services provided by Community Mental Health Affiliates (CMHA) in New Britain and in the Community in East Hartford, which has hired key project implementation staff (young adult peer, family advocate, clinician, and educational/employment specialist) to implement the wrap-around approach to assist young adults with achieving identified goals.

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc

The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc. ("CCADV") was founded in 1978 and is a membership organization that works together to improve social conditions and lead Connecticut's domestic violence response through policy advocacy and public awareness technical assistance and training. CCADV envisions being the state's leading authority and key agent of change for member agencies and systems that serve victims of domestic violence.

CCADV works at a state and national level to identify and offer strong policy and best practice models that strengthen Connecticut's response to domestic violence. As a statewide leader, CCADV initiates collaboration across multiple disciplines, is chiefly responsible for comprehensive standards and supports to member programs delivered through trauma-informed and victim center practices, and is the central force behind a systematic and comprehensive approach to victim services and offender accountability. CCADV writes letters of support or provides testimony where these activities/action/policy changes relate to victims of domestic violence and their families. CCADV training over the next three years includes a more informative approach for advocates and contracted providers such as CSSD, including:

Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA)/Plan for Safe Care
The Co-Occurrence of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

To achieve these core principles, CCADV:

- Provides technical assistance, comprehensive training, and standards monitoring to its membership which reflect evidence-based practice models and a trauma-informed response;
- Positions its organization and membership to justify a compelling need for financial investments from state, federal, and private funders to increase our capacity to help victims and survivors;
- Delivers powerful strategic messaging and a communications and public awareness initiative annually to inform and assist victims in accessing help 24/7;
- Ensures the advancement of prevention strategies through national and in-state leadership with an eye toward fortified collaboration and strategic planning to decrease instances of intimate partner violence;
- Identifies and maintains strong and productive partnerships with Connecticut stakeholders to ensure an effective, collaborative and supportive statewide system for victims and survivors; and
- Spearheads thoughtful and deliberate policy measures on a state and national platform and collaborates with others to achieve approval.

CCADV Reports:

Statewide Stats: http://www.ctcadv.org/files/3016/2005/8854/FY20_service_stats_4.21.pdf

Updated Fatality Review Report: <http://www.ctcadv.org/files/9616/1056/7568/2019-2020FatalityReviewReport1.21.pdf>

Through The Eyes of the Child Report:

http://www.ctcadv.org/files/2116/1418/0340/Through_the_Eyes2020.pdf

Intimate Partner Violence on Campus The Response of Connecticut Colleges & Universities-2018- http://www.ctcadv.org/files/2515/3624/0005/2018_Campus_Report_9.18.pdf

Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families, Inc.

Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families, Inc. (CAFAP, the Alliance) is a non-profit organization committed to strengthening foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers through partnerships with the Department of Children and Families, child welfare professionals, and the community.

The Alliance provides professional services to improve the quality of family care for children in care through advocacy, support, and specialized training. Accomplishments over the past three years that help families reduce further trauma to children and/or assist them in addressing at-risk behavior are:

- § 3,952 participants attended CAFAP annual conferences and post-license trainings during the 3-year assessment period developing and/or enhancing existing skills in the areas of building self-esteem in children, effective discipline, managing the foster experience, understanding the effects of chemical dependency, responding to signs and symptoms of sexual abuse, addressing development issues related to sexuality, supporting relationships between children and their biological parents, working as a professional team member, promoting permanency outcomes, pediatric health, sibling relationships in adoption, crisis intervention, CPR and oppositional defiance;
- § supported 2,374 newly licensed families through our mentoring (BUDDY) program;
- § provided 24/7 helpline services to families;
- § advocated and/or provided in-home support for 2,009 caregivers, i.e., foster, adoptive and relative caregivers;
- § provided legal counsel to more than 507 families considering open adoptions;
- § testified at legislative hearings; provided an electronic summary of proposed legislation of issues pertaining to foster care /adoption, families and children; and
- § responded to 4,936 queries regarding prospective parenting and mentoring.

Additionally, the Alliance continues to be involved in advocacy efforts on various local, state, and

federal committees; provides community outreach through its quarterly newsletter, revised and expanded website, special community events, and Children's Hope Fund. CAFAP had an average of 9,800 subscribers to its electronic communications.

CAFAP will join DCF in a Quality Parenting Initiative(QPI), a Caregiver Practice Model, improving the Alliance's internal database, and our quarterly newsletter for the upcoming three-year period.

The Yale Programs for Safety, Advocacy & Healing

The Yale Programs for Safety, Advocacy & Healing include the Yale Child Abuse Clinic, the Yale DART Consultation Service, and the Yale Bridging Program. The Yale Child Abuse Clinic provides expert evaluation of children suspected of having been maltreated, including forensic interviewing and subspecialty medical care. In addition to its primary location at One Long Wharf in New Haven, The Yale Child Abuse Clinic has a satellite presence in Bridgeport, Greenwich, and New London. The Clinic supports the work of the Multidisciplinary Teams in New Haven, Milford/Ansonia, Middletown, Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stamford, and New London. The Yale DART Consultation service provides expert evaluation of child physical abuse and neglect for the Department of Children and Families and across all Yale New Haven Health System Hospitals. The Yale Bridging Program provides immediate mental health services for sexually abused children and their caregivers and tailored efforts to engage these needy families.

Yale is one of two Child Abuse Centers of Excellence in Connecticut.

A recent focus of the Yale Programs for Safety, Advocacy & Healing is the prioritization of the delivery of expert medical care to sexually abuse children across the state of Connecticut. This effort has taken two primary forms:

- With the support of funding from the Office for Victims of Crime, we have opened satellite medical clinics across the state with particular attention to those MDT areas previously underserved by medical providers with expertise in child abuse.
- We have provided significant education across the state about the role of medical evaluation and care in the setting of suspected child abuse. Specifically, we have worked to ease fears (even among MDT members) that the medical examination is traumatizing to children and help MDT members understand that the care we provide goes beyond the physical examination. We also hear about and address worries about children's bodies, assess for post-traumatic symptoms, and provide sexual health care for adolescents who are sexually active by choice.

Future priorities include 1) the standardization of the evaluation of children for suspected physical abuse to minimize racial and socioeconomic bias in this setting and 2) increasing the rate at which families engage with medical providers via telehealth.

Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Accomplishments from 2018-2021:

The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence is a statewide coalition of nine community-based sexual assault crisis service centers whose mission is to create communities free of sexual violence while providing culturally affirming trauma-informed advocacy and prevention centered on the voices of survivors. The Alliance and its member centers offer awareness, prevention, advocacy, public policy, training, and support on issues regarding sexual violence. They have dedicated staff who focus on creating space for justice-impacted survivors, prevention education in our schools, child sexual abuse prevention and response, sexual violence in higher education settings. Advocates from The Alliance's member centers also provide support for child victims of sexual abuse and their families throughout the process of the child's case being reviewed and investigated by Multidisciplinary Teams or Child Advocacy Centers.

The Alliance's legal team, the Victims Rights Center of Connecticut, is dedicated to serving the needs of victims of violent crime, including victims of child sexual abuse and their families, with an understanding of the effects of trauma on victims. The Alliance's Post-Conviction Victim Services team is part of a collaborative model that assists victims and survivors, including children and their families. It supports community safety by creating conditions for offenders not to re-offend. This team of skilled advocates works with victims and their families to navigate the post-sentencing process.

The Alliance supports prevention programming and awareness-raising of child sexual abuse (CSA) and policy and advocacy efforts to bolster the rights of child survivors of sexual violence. The Alliance has a long history of implementing prevention and awareness campaigns, including two with coaches across the state in recent years. One was a primary prevention intervention implemented in collaboration with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) called Coaching Boys into Men. The other is an awareness campaign with the Connecticut Association of School's Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference called We've Got Your Back. In the past year, an Alliance staff member was also trained by Prevent Child Abuse Vermont to deliver a series of trainings on preventing child sexual abuse and provided them to Connecticut parents, advocates, and community partners. Additionally, the Training & Technical Assistance Coordinator provided regular trainings on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking to Connecticut Court Support Services Division juvenile justice staff.

In 2019, The Alliance successfully eliminated the criminal statute of limitations for those under age 18. It extended the statute of limitations for those between the ages of 18-21 to 30 years after their 21st birthday. Additionally, the civil statute of limitations was extended to 30 years for anyone who was assaulted before their 21st birthday. Most recently, The Alliance supported multiple pieces of legislation focused on children and preventing and responding to child sexual abuse, including legislation to increase collection of data on child sexual abuse and adverse childhood experiences; to increase the response to the needs of children, or adults, who were sexually assaulted as children; to require background checks for camp counselors and coaches who are over age 18; and to increase awareness of coaches, parents, and children on the signs of grooming and how to intervene.

Additionally, The Alliance supported housing legislation to protect tenants who receive a civil protection order or restraining order by allowing them to change the locks to their apartments and sealing eviction records. In many cases, an illegal eviction is not removed from a person's history and making it difficult for parents (primarily mothers) and their children to find another place to live. The Alliance also supported a right to housing.

The Alliance sits on the Trafficking in Persons Council. As an active member, the Alliance supported legislation that allows the Connecticut Court to vacate the criminal records by those who committed a crime while being trafficked. Increased training for public awareness and including more stakeholders in the Council was also supported.

Over the last year, the Alliance's Campus Services coordinator has significantly increased the coalition's understanding of the changes to Title IX through the Department of Education's final Title IX regulations. She developed training programs, including a half-day roundtable event with several panels. She also provided technical assistance to campus partners and advocates related to this topic pertaining to higher education and K-12 settings. As these campus partners and advocates worked through their first year of cases, during the 2020/2021 school year, under the new regulations, they regularly turned to the Campus Services Coordinator for support, expertise, and technical assistance.

Priorities for 2021-2024:

More data is needed to provide a thorough population-level understanding of the true extent of sexual violence experienced in childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood in Connecticut. There is a clear need for increasing statewide capacity to prevent and respond to cases of sexual violence among youth. In the coming years, The Alliance is expanding its focus on enhancing and strengthening its knowledge, confidence, and capacity and that of its member centers to deliver evidence-based prevention programming and victim services focused on children and youth aged 11 to 24. As part of this effort, our Campus Services Coordinator is now our Education and Youth Services Coordinator and will be expanding her work beyond higher education to increase our

attention to and build partnerships with K-12 communities. In addition, our Justice-Involved Advocacy Coordinator is leading the coalition in building our capacity to serve victims/survivors who have also been involved in the juvenile justice system.

Moving forward, The Alliance is leading a coalition of organizations and survivors to eliminate the current civil statute of limitations for victims of sexual assault under age 21. Many survivors do not disclose until later, sometimes citing a reason for disclosing as seeing the person who caused them harm in childhood repeating the same dangerous grooming behavior with someone else. Allowing a civil case to move forward is a way to alert communities of the harmful behavior.

Additionally, we have been asked by a legislator to work on a more comprehensive version of the legislation requiring school health and safety education in Connecticut schools next year. As coordinators of a response to a request for similar legislation, we have been working with DPH and SDE to conduct a statewide survey of all superintendents and principals of Connecticut's schools to assess their needs for successfully implementing sexual violence awareness response and prevention education. The survey was intended for the end of March 2020, which was halted due to the pandemic. We will be working with the state agencies to resume this effort in the coming year. And we will continue to work with the state agencies, schools, and our member centers to identify education and prevention needs and intended outcomes for any school-based programs.