

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 1, SUMMER 2022



teach · love · inspire

CONNECTICUT
FATHERHOOD
INITIATIVE

Inaugural Edition

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Message from Our Network

Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford

Department of Social Services

Welcome to the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Quarterly Newsletter!

In this inaugural issue, we celebrate our longevity and the recent passage of Senate Bill 289. [AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT AND FUNDING OF THE CONNECTICUT FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE.](#) which reaffirms the work that's been done over the last 23 years to support the important role that fathers can play in the lives of their children. We have come a long way in the last two decades. I am proud to join former DSS Commissioners Patricia Wilson-Coker, Michael Starkowski and Roderick Bremby and all of our partners through the years in support of our efforts to expand and coordinate our services across agencies. Collectively, our work has begun to improve how fathers are recognized, included and supported in their roles within the multiple agencies that serve them. This work in service of strong children is critical. Join us! Every quarter we plan a newsletter to keep you interested, excited about progress and connected to the growing network of well-informed practitioners working so kids can have dads who are in the best possible position to "teach, love and inspire!"

Who Are We?

If you are a part of a system serving fathers and families in CT, we are YOU! The Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI), is a statewide multi-agency collaboration, led by the Department of Social Services, working toward a common goal: to support children, mothers and fathers by focusing on the important influence of men who are or will be in fathering roles. CFI partners do this through systems change efforts as well as supporting direct services and programming for fathers, with a commitment to racial equity, gender equity and safe engagement of fathers with their children.

Our Story

Children develop best when parents — whether they live with their children or not — are positively and proactively involved in their upbringing. Since the 1960s, rises in divorces, single-parent households and births to unmarried parents have shifted the landscape of many families beyond a single household. These dynamics impact how parents engage as their children grow. Policies and funding for services and resources that focus on households may leave parents who are not primary or custodial caregivers — most often fathers — without the support they may need to parent fully and effectively.

As key leaders at the local and state levels continued to see children who had been impacted by father-absence, they recognized this as a nonpartisan issue and the CT Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) formally began with the passage of legislation in 1999.

CFI promotes responsibility in fatherhood at multiple levels. It supports fathers in their personal responsibilities through programs and interventions. At the same time, the Initiative advocates for responsibility on the system level, working to identify and address barriers in policies and practices that hinder full involvement of fathers in all aspects of their children's lives.

CFI is also supported by the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO) which informs and engages policy makers about constituent needs for women, children and their families, seniors and the African American, Asian Pacific-American, Latino and Puerto Rican populations in Connecticut.

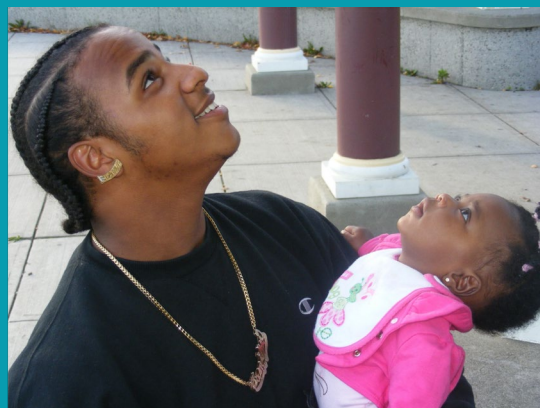
To learn more about our story click [HERE](#)

Visit <http://www.211ct.org> and search “fatherhood” in your area for programs/resources around the state or dial 2-1-1 from any phone to speak with Call Center representative

Milestones!

CFI has already celebrated many milestones of collaboration and systems change, including:

- CFI Strategic Plan
- Legislation for creation of CT
- Arrearage Adjustment Program
- Implementation of the DSS Fatherhood Program Certification Process
- Administrative modifications to child support orders for incarcerated parents
- Fatherhood Interagency Memorandum of Understanding among 15 state agency partners from both Executive and Judicial Branches



CFI Case Composite

The following case composite illustrates an example of how the different state systems work together to help fathers and families in Connecticut.

SAM & MARY

Sam is 20 years old and the father of a **two-year old that has recently been diagnosed with Autism**. He has a decent relationship with the child's mother, Mary who became pregnant while they were both still in high school. Because of this, Sam decided to drop out of high school to look for work in order to support his family and got married shortly after the baby was born. The couple are currently living together in her mother's basement but may soon be separating because of the discord created by the child's special needs.

Sam is currently unemployed. Due to not finding anything secure, **he has become depressed.** He has a clean record, but limited education. Mary is working full time at a grocery store and is struggling to find effective childcare. Sam has had trouble motivating himself lately since he is trying to find a job "that has a future". He does not provide care for his child since he was once "too rough" with his son and was **reported to protected services** by his mother-in-law. Afterwards he decided to go live with relatives close by.

In part because of this incident, Sam has become estranged from his wife and her parents. He admits to being baffled by his child's behavior making him **feel "disconnected" from the baby's progress** and unable to provide competent care. Mary's family views him as "just lazy" and focuses on his "apparent inability" to fully shoulder the **expectations of his role to support his family.**

The CT Department of Children & Families are equipped with many resources for fathers and families and can refer outside resources if needed.

The CFI Network & certified programs can assist Sam to work through his emotions and connect him to services that help him build a connection with his son.

CFI connects 15 state systems through an MOU

The CT Department of Labor can help Sam with his employment needs, resume building, interviewing skills, and more.

Birth to Three and Early Childhood Education can assist Sam and Mary with their son's Autism needs which could include finding childcare.

CFI Partners include

CT Departments of:

- Children and Families
- Correction
- Developmental Services
- Education
- Housing
- Labor
- Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Public Health
- Veterans Affairs

also

- Office of Early Childhood
- Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division, Support Enforcement Services, & Family Support Magistrate Division
- Board of Pardons & Parole
- Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity
- CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- CT State Colleges and Universities
- United Way of CT
- legal services; researchers; numerous community based, family- and youth serving providers

We want to hear from you!

Let us know what you would like to see in upcoming newsletters!

Email us at fatherhood@ct.gov

The Department of Social Services' (DSS) programs are available to all applicants and recipients without regard to race, color, religious creed, age, sex (including pregnancy and sexual harassment), marital status (including civil union status), national origin, ancestry, intellectual disability, physical disability, (including blindness), past or present history of mental disability, learning disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, workplace hazards to reproductive systems, veteran status, prior conviction of a crime or other factors which cannot lawfully be the basis for employment actions or licensing, retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion.

DSS has a TDD/TTY line for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired and have a TDD/TTY: 1-800-842-4524, or dial 7-1-1. Auxiliary aids are also available for blind or visually impaired persons. The DSS is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer.

CFI is Expanding Our Network! Check out our website: Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative

In future editions, this section will show upcoming events for the public that are centered around families, education, and awareness from different sponsors around the state.

Through this newsletter, we strive to

- Spread the word about Connecticut's best kept secret!
- Distribute digitally each season with relevant information for families in CT and the staff in our partner agencies.
- Spread the awareness of the CT Fatherhood Initiative to all families in the state with the understanding that we care and advocate for their well-being and successful futures.
- Build professional and communal relationships that will bring together all those involved in family engagement and policy – from fathers to agency staff to politicians.
- Show data and research from Connecticut and national sources to highlight the importance of fatherhood presence and involvement is in a child's life.
- Involve our network and those we serve through human interest stories and media

