



Recognizing the Special Role of Dads in Child Development and Services

Fatherhood and the Family at Center of Two-Day Summit

(NEW BRITAIN, CT) – The Department of Social Services’ **Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative**, Department of Children and Families’ **Dads Matter Too!** and Central Connecticut State University’s **Healthy Fellows/Man Enough Support Initiative** are hosting federal, state and local stakeholders for a two-day event entitled, *Achieving a Positive Family Legacy: A Statewide Summit on Fatherhood*, on August 8 and 9, 2019, at CCSU’s Alumni Hall.

This event will convene service providers, advocates, legislators, policymakers and other stakeholders to share information about current father engagement efforts, highlight fathers as critical forces in their children’s lives, and focus on how state systems can assist with the important role they play.

Participants will also demonstrate the importance of collaboration, identify action steps to further the work Connecticut is doing to support fathers and families, and celebrate 20 years of father engagement efforts in Connecticut.

“Traditionally, support programs and policies have served the needs of parents and children who live together in the home, which many times means mother and children,” said **Department of Social Services Commissioner Deidre S. Gifford**. “We have come to understand that even if the father is not living full-time in the same home as the child, the whole family benefits when he is considered along with the custodial parents receiving services. The needs are similar and the importance of recognizing the special role of dads can make a huge difference for children. That’s the bottom line in fatherhood initiative partnerships. Children benefit as both parents are valued in human services ranging from child support to health care.”

Department of Children and Families Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes said the effort to improve the engagement of fathers needs to be sustained and ongoing.

“Research shows – and it confirms experience and common sense – that children with two involved parents benefit from enhanced outcomes, including better physical and emotional health, improved academic performance, and better social, family and community relationships,” Commissioner Dorantes said. “We must ensure that the entire government and private-sector service system are contributing in a collaborative and comprehensive manner toward the ability of fathers to get and remain strongly involved in their children’s lives.”

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“Children are and have always been at the center of our efforts,” said **Anthony Judkins, Program Manager for the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative**. “However, for children to reach their full potential, we need to recognize that both parents must be considered at the center of public policy and services. This is at the center of the Fatherhood Initiative, our advocacy and our services.”

“Over the past five years, the Department of Children and Families, Department of Social Services, and Central Connecticut State University have forged a collaborative partnership that focuses on eliminating disparities, while improving health and wellness outcomes for Connecticut’s men and fathers,” said **William Fothergill, a Counselor at CCSU** who founded the Man Enough Support Initiative at the University 10 years ago. “This summit is a true demonstration of resource-sharing, interagency collaboration, and the ability to intersect individual goals for a common good. We look forward to this year’s event and our ability to promote health equity in a broad and inclusive manner.”

The summit will also feature a public awareness video project produced by the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative called the **Dear Dad Tour**. This campaign shares compelling fatherhood stories of men, women and children throughout the state to bring attention to the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative as people explain what fatherhood means to them and how we can be affected by the presence or absence of our fathers. More information can be found on the *Dear Dad Tour* website at www.deardadtour.org

Invited participants include representatives from federal Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families’ Office of Child Support Enforcement, all three branches of state government, local nonprofit agencies serving fathers and families, and fathers involved with services across Connecticut.

Currently celebrating its 20th year, the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative is a broad-based, multi-agency, statewide effort led by the Department of Social Services and focused on changing the systems that can improve fathers’ ability to be fully and positively involved in the lives of their children. For more information about the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative, and the August 8-9 Statewide Summit on Fatherhood, please visit www.ct.gov/fatherhood.

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