



DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: ADOLESCENT FACT SHEET

Overview

The Department of Children and Families values families and believes children are best served safely in their own homes. A strength of the system is a fundamental belief that the wellbeing of children and families is a shared responsibility amongst all members of the community.

Annually, the Department provides supports to approximately 32,000 unique families. By empowering and supporting parents and caregivers, children can safely remain at home while being provided a comprehensive array of community-based services.

Safety

Safety of children remains the #1 priority.

How "safety" is defined, the components of safety assessments and tools used by all child serving systems must be in concert with each other. The Department has implemented an ABCD Safety Practice Model which maps out how agency employees, families, and stakeholders conduct their work together in an environment that focuses on keeping children safe from child maltreatment. The model guides the daily interactions of employees, families, and community members in their work.

Connecticut is also one of 22 jurisdictions across the country participating in The National Partnership for Child Safety. Deputy Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly is a co-leader of this innovative project.

Connecticut's Family First Prevention Plan was recently submitted to the Children's Bureau and is awaiting federal approval. The plan was written in response to the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) signed into law as part of the U.S. Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. This legislation represents a major shift in federal policy leading to families having greater access to mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home skill-based parenting supports intended to stabilize families and keep them safely together. This prevention plan is designed to enhance the well-being of all of Connecticut's children, youth, and families and builds upon our already existing strong array of community-based supports.

Safety and Risk Factors

The criteria utilized to accept a report of abuse or neglect, substantiate or unsubstantiate an investigation or to determine if imminent risk of physical harm is present - requiring a court order for removal - is assessed according to a number of safety and risk factors. They include but are not limited to; the nature of abuse or neglect, impact on the child, severity and chronicity, age, characteristics of the child and others.

Children found to be abandoned, sexually abused, suffering from serious physical abuse or whose well-being is extremely compromised due to exposure to adverse circumstances are examples of children who enter care. Other examples, in particular with adolescents, may be when parents request DCF placement due to behaviors of their children beyond their control including engaging in delinquency related activities.

Adolescents and Transitional Age Youth (16+) in the Care and Custody of the Department

Of the 3,481 children in the care and custody of the Department on 1/1/2022, including youth receiving services post majority given they are at least 18 years old, 1,331 are aged 12 years and older.

For calendar year 2021, a total of 1,197 children and youth were placed into the care of custody of the Department of which 268 were aged 13-17 years old. This represents 22.4% of all admissions. Please see the chart below:

CY21 Entry Month	Total Entries <18	# Ages 0 - 12	% Ages 0 - 12	# Ages 13 - 17	% Ages 13 - 17	Re-Entries >=18
Jan	118	90	76.3%	28	23.7%	0
Feb	100	80	80.0%	20	20.0%	4
Mar	101	77	76.2%	24	23.8%	6
Apr	92	66	71.7%	26	28.3%	11
May	102	80	78.4%	22	21.6%	3
Jun	102	82	80.4%	20	19.6%	4
Jul	77	60	77.9%	17	22.1%	5
Aug	108	86	79.6%	22	20.4%	5
Sep	80	60	75.0%	20	25.0%	1
Oct	132	108	81.8%	24	18.2%	4
Nov	98	76	77.6%	22	22.4%	1
Dec	87	63	72.4%	23	26.4%	0
Total	1197	928	77.5%	268	22.4%	44

Re-Entry Program

Young adults who left DCF's care may be eligible to voluntarily return for services through the Re-Entry Program. Youth must be between the ages of 18 and 21 years old to be eligible and the process commences with a call to the DCF Careline. Transitional Support and Services (TSS) staff will assist the youth returning to care by connecting them to a Regional Office.

In the calendar year 2021, a total of 44 children, ages 18 years and over, re-entered the Department's care. This number is lower than in previous calendar years, perhaps due to the federal moratorium on adolescent exits from care beginning in 2020.

Practice Approach and Supports for Adolescents and Transitional Age Youth (16+)

Connecticut is viewed as a leader across the country for the way we provide supports to adolescents. Youth in the care and custody of the Department have an [Adolescents in Care Bills of Rights and Expectations](#).

Youth who enter DCF care are eligible to receive supports up through 23 years of age if particular criteria are met.

Our V.I.T.A.L. consolidated practice approach was launched in May 2021 - inspired by data and literature reviews, and youth voice and input. An overview of the approach is abbreviated through the following:

- ***Voice and Choice***: Individuals most impacted by a system are the drivers of change and transformation. Youth voice and choice must be encouraged at individual, policy, and system levels.
- ***Innovate***: With creative work and flexible planning young adults pursue their life dreams.
- ***Thorough and Accountable***: We strive to be fiscally responsible, agile, and committed to quality. We maximize the use of resources and data to evaluate performance to make informed decisions and improve results.
- ***Authentic Youth Engagement***: We attempt to decrease disconnection by authentically engaging with youth. We partner with youth to create possibilities and carry hope.
- ***Life Launch***: We focus on helping youth develop mastery in the concrete skills and "soft skills" associated with adult success. We help launch youth towards opportunities.

A comprehensive package of materials, links, and guidance for staff and for youth and caregivers are available through our website: [V.I.T.A.L. Resources for Youth and their Caregivers](#).

Our [Adolescent and Transitional Age Supports Policy](#) was updated effective 8/21/21.

During the pandemic, the Department operationalized a moratorium on youth exiting our care beginning on 4/21/20, with multiple extensions extending it to 9/30/21. This was aligned with federal recommendations. During this period, all services to DCF involved youth were expected to continue, including services for youth who would normally be aging out of their respective Services Post Majority (SPM) programs. Furthermore, the expectation was to maintain contact with our youth at least twice a week with the focus on the following areas:

- Maintaining connections to others
- Basic needs assessment
- Check on physical health, mental health, and overall wellbeing
- If enrolled in Post-Secondary Education, ensure they have connected virtually to maintain their casework

Post-Secondary Education

During the academic year 2021-2022, transitional aged youth (TAY) are attending over 75 colleges and universities across the country - as far away as Utah and Florida. Some are staying local and are enrolled in one of 14 community colleges. Our youth will also take part in vocational, technical and job training programs leading to careers as electricians, cosmetologists, phlebotomists, welders, and many other trades.

To assist youth in foster care, and youth who were adopted to be successful in post-secondary education, the Department has contracted with Sun Scholars to provide academic tutoring and coaching, career coaching, advocacy, and life skills support for this population. The program also helps students find internships and other professional development opportunities.

Collaboration with Sister State Agencies and Private Organizations Has Been Ongoing and Has Included:

- Developed a partnership with Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to pay young adults in environmental conservation service at the Wilderness School this past summer.
- Wrote a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) that streamlines the process for youth to obtain non-driver's identification and driver's licenses. This will include adding a mobile serve that visits area offices, adding a pre-check of documents, creating a designated day for youth in DCF care to obtain a license, and streamlining an interagency exchange of funds, etc.
- Met with the Banking Commission and compiled a list of banks that offer financial literacy programs through schools.
- Recruited private providers to offer life skill courses at Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities serving young adults.
- Jordan's Furniture donated \$1,000 vouchers to for 20 Transition Aged Youth (TAY) to be used for furniture.
- Partnering with two community agencies to provide enhanced mentoring service for LGBTQIA+ youth. This increased the catchment area to cover the entire state, and structure the mentoring to focus on housing and vocational challenges.
- Started a consortium of paid young adults to work in tandem with providers serving TAY to develop a manual that embeds V.I.T.A.L. values and principles into the work.

The Adolescent Certification process was launched in partnership with the Academy for Workforce Development leading to a greater set of knowledge and expertise for Adolescent Workers.

A team developed a Health and Wellness Curriculum for adolescents.

The Department brought LifeSet to Connecticut with two in-state providers. This is a community-based program that assists young adults as they transition into adulthood. The program model entails LifeSet specialists meeting with youth at least once each week and customize a support plan. As needed, texting, e-mails, phone calls and visits occur to assist young adults to develop healthy relationships, obtain safe housing, learn life skills, continue in their education, and gain employment.

Please watch this fantastic wellness event arranged for our TAY youth at a local spa: [Willow Salon Wellness Event](#)

For questions regarding our adolescent work, please contact Program Director Latosha Johnson at Latosha.Johnson@ct.gov.

