



DCF COVID-19 Daily Update Supporting Children, Families and Staff April 29, 2020

DEPARTMENT OFFERS EXPERTISE IN TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE TO CT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Many of the children and families served by the Department have experienced trauma and its negative consequences. In recognition of this fact, the Department has made substantial strides in establishing responsive services -- so much so that Department staff are recognized as experts in the area and are sought out to spread their knowledge to other professionals.

Mary Painter, the Department's director of the Office of Intimate Partner Violence and Substance Use Treatment and Recovery, serves as a member of the editorial board for an online publication called "Trauma Matters," which is dedicated to educating professionals on best practices in trauma-informed care. The publication is the creation of the Women's Consortium, which serves as Connecticut's leading educational resource on trauma-informed and gender-responsive care and offers both advocacy and training for behavioral health professionals.

The Spring 2020 edition of Trauma Matters, is available [here](#) and we encourage staff to review the information in the articles, two of which feature DCF staff!

The Spring edition provides a far-ranging and informative Q and A interview with Commissioner Dorantes, who talks about how her personal circumstances growing up with the support of her family network and community inspired her choice of a career in social work. The Commissioner also speaks to the personal challenges that a career in social work engenders, the Family First Prevention Services Act, and the importance of using a "trauma lens" when trying to understand the challenges faced by both the families we serve and the staff who serve them.

A comprehensive article is also included on Circle of Security Parenting written by the Department's Charlie Slaughter, who is an Early Prevention Specialist. The article explores the Circle of Security Parenting program and how it gives parents tools to address attachment issues and improve relationships with their children.

Although the interviews in this newsletter were conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health stability and trauma impact awareness are key to crisis resilience. Ms. Painter said that this trauma-informed lens "is particularly important during what is one of the most challenging times families and children are experiencing right now."

The nature of our work has changed including the manner in which we may implement a particular service. For example, Charlie Slaughter outlines the benefits of strengthening attachments in the *Circle of Security* model. Parents and children who now have been restricted to virtual visits during this time will need attention to maintaining connections when physical touch is hampered by social distancing constraints.

Understanding the importance of attachments, trauma-informed practice considerations and mental health assessments are essential building blocks for child welfare system post pandemic recovery.

"The trauma newsletter highlights all the possibilities for managing the trauma that occurs in life -- especially with our most vulnerable populations," she said.

For those interested in contributing to a future newsletter, please email Ms. Painter at mary.painter@ct.gov.