

## A Message from Commissioner Dorantes

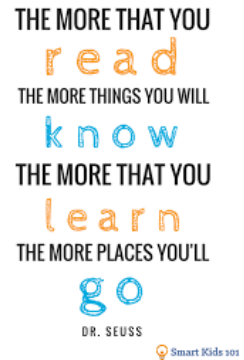


The month of August means the end of summer vacations and back to school!

Children and families are better served when we all work together. We are grateful for our relationships with CT State Department of Education Commissioner Charlene M. Russell -Tucker, our own USD II leadership & staff, the DCF JJ Education Oversight Division and educational professionals across the state as they prepare for the year ahead.

Whether it's handing off a timid kindergartener to their first all-day teacher or packing up a T.A.Y. as they nervously venture onto college (...and all our students in between) we appreciate the support our DCF foster parents and guardians give to all children in care as they start a new school year.

The journey through post-secondary education for youth in care can be tough. National statistics show that only **3-7%** of youth in foster care across the country will graduate from college as compared to 30% of all Americans. Read this month's "*Spotlight on What's Right*" newsletter for the list of over **50 programs** - as far away as Virginia and California - where our transitional aged youth will be attending this Fall!



*"I was sick and tired of being sick and tired."*

This is how Tyler DiChichio describes the point in his life when he realized his decades long addiction to drugs needed to end. His motivation? His son, Tyler Jr. Read Tyler's story as he openly discusses his years of substance abuse, the extensive efforts he put forth to reunify with his little boy and the life he is currently living.

Click here for more information sponsored by our partners at the State of CT Dept of Mental Health and Addiction Services: [DMHAS Programs and Services.](#)



*The opening of Hartford's first Urgent Crisis Center --Pictured with DCF Cmsr Dorantes are Gov Ned Lamont , Htfd Mayor Luke Bronin, Representing CGA Children's Cmte Sen Ceci Maher & Rep Tammy Exum & cutting the UCC ribbon is CEO Galo Rodriguez of the Village for Families and Children*

## **From Vision to Fruition**

The pandemic exposed gaps in an otherwise strong children's behavioral health continuum in our state. DCF Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams challenged the brain trust of stakeholders gathered in a *2021 Children's Behavioral Health Summit* to envision something different that gives the same depth of attention as given to physical health care. Read more about that prompting and subsequent planning that birthed **The Urgent Crisis Centers (UCCs)**. The UCCs are licensed and funded by DCF. They are aimed at diverting parents of children in behavioral health crisis from making visits to hospital emergency rooms. This *Spotlight* highlights some early feedback from the short time they have been open!



WATERBURY, CT 082223JS05 Dignitaries officially cut the ribbon during a ceremony for the opening of the state first Urgent Crisis Center for Youth Tuesday at Wellmore Behavioral Health in Waterbury. Jim Shannon Republican-American

**"I couldn't be happier to work myself out of a job."** This is what I said standing alongside



Governor Lamont, CT State Treasurer Erick Russell, BPRC Chair Senator Pat Billie Miller, local Stamford leaders, and families to highlight [CT Baby Bonds](#). I shared that poverty is often conflated with neglect giving rise to over representation of people with low income more often surveilled and reported to the child welfare system. Economic and concrete supports are proving to be a catalyst to lift families out of poverty. Beginning July of 2023, this program set aside \$3,200 for each baby born

in Connecticut whose birth was covered by HUSKY. There is a financial literacy component built in to increase parental capacity in that area. When the child reaches adulthood, the bond can produce between \$11,000 - \$30,000 dollars for that child. Read more about this **first in the nation** innovation and how the funds can be used in the embedded hyperlink above.





# Sibling Camp 2023



**State Comptroller Sean Scanlon** rolled up his sleeves, painted birdhouses and jewelry boxes then fed farm animals during this month's edition of *COMP TIME* on location at **Kelly's Kids Farm** in Prospect, CT for DCF's Annual Sibling Camp. Despite a devastating fire, earlier this year that claimed the lives of many of the large animals who called this farm home, owner **Kelly Cronin** rallied her staff together when she heard DCF was looking for a new host site.

For children and youth in care, siblings are a connection to their identity and sense of belonging. We make every effort to place and keep siblings together. When that can't happen, opportunities like these make memories that can last a lifetime. Kelly's Kids provided a camp filled with wonderful

activities, arts, and crafts, and an interactive petting zoo. There is nothing more special than the bond between siblings.

**\*BONUS KUDOS\*** *The Comptroller's office continued its tradition of collecting back packs and school supplies just in time to be personally delivered to DCF's **OLIVE BRANCH** at its new permanent location! Social workers can contact [Jacqueline.Ford@ct.gov](mailto:Jacqueline.Ford@ct.gov) to schedule an appointment for parents to pick up needed items for their children free of charge! Thank You Jackie!*

I am so grateful for others to experience **the DCF I know** and the work you all do to enhance the lives of children and families every day!