

A Message from Commissioner Dorantes



"It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" And boy do we have a lot to celebrate!

Leading you, these past 5 years, has been the absolute pinnacle of my professional career. *In 1992 as a 'baby' Social Worker*, would I ever have imagined capping off a 30+ year journey in public child welfare sitting in the Commissioner's seat. It has been an honor and privilege to hold you all in my head and heart in what has been called *"...one of the toughest jobs in state government."*

Over the next month, we will have opportunities to reflect on our time together before I transition into my next phase of Servant Leadership.

I would often humbly refer to my leadership experience as *"... pouring into the development of the NextUps."* Now I can proudly proclaim that I am passing the baton to the **BestUp!** Deputy Commissioner **Jodi Hill-Lilly** has exceptional prowess in workforce development, leadership coaching, strategic planning and embodies the components of the **Implementation Science* model in her approach to field. She has accepted the nomination by Governor Ned Lamont to be the next DCF Commissioner! The press conference announcing her appointment had an amazing turnout of family, friends DCF staff, community leaders and the media!



our



<https://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=22416> DCF Press Conference 12/13/23

This season also highlights our collective diversity and the unique ways if we choose to celebrate. A few examples are: **Hanukkah** is the Festival of Lights, **Christmas** is represented as the birth of Christ, **El Dia de los Reyes** (Three Kings Day) occurs on the 12th day of Christmas, the African American experience is reflected during **Kwanzaa** and members of the Orthodox Church celebrate Jesus' birth the week *after* December 25th and **Winter Solstice** marks the first day of winter & it is also the shortest day of the year.



Thank you, **Governor Lamont**, for hosting members of our Youth Advisory Board (**YAB**) for a holiday celebration. Some very talented, dapper-dressed young people completed the evening by playing pool, ping-pong, and foosball along with a few piano tunes!

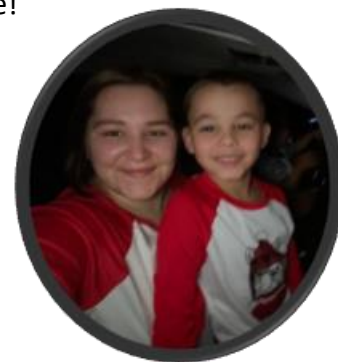
Implementation Science developed in the health care field, as researchers realized that proven treatments often failed to be implemented strategically or sustained... human services are applying its concepts in a quest for sustained efforts and better outcomes. **Implementation drivers — such as policies, procedures, leadership, resources, coaching and training — that help ensure effective strategies are implemented well enough to achieve their intended outcomes.*
AECF, 2017

"Home for the Holidays" is the theme of this month's *Spotlight on What's Right*. Because of your tireless efforts and the collaboration with our community partners, foster parents, the Judicial Branch, and Attorneys, we have achieved permanency for 1,216 children including **459 reunifications** this year.

Since 2019, we have reunified over 3,217 children!

Families we work with have had to overcome many challenges. **Kelsey Murphy** described herself as "*very bad at the time*" while pregnant and using drugs. Read about the special relationship she developed with her Social Worker which led to three-year-old Gio now celebrating his birthday and Christmas with his mom for the first time!

"*Men don't cry... I cried*" is a powerful story of **Ron** - who spent over half his life in prison - and his remarkable journey to be reunified with Kayla. He has a long history with DCF and describes the department today as "*transformed*" compared to his experience in years past. Read his insights and about that day when he created a very special memory with his daughter just before her Homecoming dance.



The **DCF Olive Branch Shop** is a community space which extends goodwill to children, teens and families receiving support from DCF. So far in 2023, approximately 130 families have received items such as toys, clothes, household items and gift cards for a variety of occasions all year long. An estimated 300 overall families and approximately 1,000+ children over the course of three years have received support. Watch coverage here: [The Olive Branch Sunday Spotlight](#) or visit the website: [Olive Branch](#)

Holiday time is not always happy or merry for everyone. It also brings added stress. Seeking support is a sign of strength. **Deer Oaks** is the Employee Assistance Program for Connecticut State Employees. Confidential Deer Oaks EAP Services can be contacted via telephone at 1-888-993-7650 or via e-mail at eap@deeroaks.com

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