

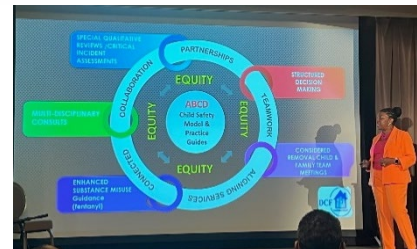


February is Black History Month. "**Black Resistance**" is the national theme for 2023 which highlights the historic and ongoing disadvantage and oppression experienced by African Americans throughout history.

Over the past four weeks, many events and opportunities drew attention to the Department's commitment to addressing disproportionate outcomes and disparity experienced by those we serve.

We will continue to hold ourselves accountable as we strive to become an anti-racist organization.

Please read our [2023 Racial Justice Data, Activities and Strategies Report](#) recently submitted to the Connecticut Legislature. Thank you once again to Monica Rams, Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs/Office of Diversity and Equity for compiling the great work across DCF offices, divisions and facilities!



Leslie Mayes and NBC 30 featured DCF's Racial Justice work in their [Color of Connecticut segment](#).

Our work is known nationally. I was honored to provide a keynote address at the Mahoning County Division of Children's Services Diversity Committee conference in Ohio! See the media coverage here: [Mahoning County Keynote](#)



This month we had our 25<sup>th</sup> annual Black History Month celebration! Lead by Master of Ceremonies Toni Ligon, we honored African American history, heard beautiful music from our youth and Deputy Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly provided us a phenomenal rendition of Amazing Grace - over Microsoft Teams!

Thank you to our panel members - leaders inside and outside of the Department - who recited stories of their own struggles in life, those who inspired them and their visions for the future.

"No matter what you got, not matter what you have, make the most of it," said Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams during his remarks to the over 100 participants. "Look at what we've done with this month."

Congratulations to Yolanda Chapman-Smith, Office Director for Norwalk, on being named the 2023 recipient of the Janet E. Williams Humanitarian Award! Read more about Dr. Williams in our Spotlight story.

Lastly, it is with gratitude and pride I begin a second term as CT DCF's first Black Commissioner. We cannot be in these seats unless we leverage our power and privilege for the good.

Being the first means nothing if you are the last.

