

The Best of 2022!

We have many successes to celebrate across our Department!

Our community partners, the children, and families we serve make CT DCF one of the best child welfare jurisdictions in the country! How do we know this to be true?

Check out this list of just some of our accomplishments during 2022:

- Exited the Juan F. Consent Decree after 30 years of federal oversight (that's 11,782 days but who's counting 😊)
- CT DCF was featured on NBC's Today show and was referred to as "*a model for the nation.*"
- Commissioner Dorantes serves as the Chair of the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators.
- Along with our provider, foster parents and court partners established permanency for over 1,500 children in 2022 which includes more than 450 Reunifications, 350 Transfers of Guardianship and almost 500 Adoptions.
 - During the Dorantes Administration thus far, reduced the number of children in care by 30% and permanency was established for 5,789 children resulting in 2,402 Reunifications, 1,495 Transfers of Guardianship and 1,892 Adoptions.
- Developed succession planning in anticipation of retirements across the Department leading to seamless transitions in many areas. (We know it hasn't all been smooth --- we continue to work thru an unprecedented number of staffing refills and vacancies --- THANK YOU Human Resources --- even in the midst of your own staff turnovers!)
- Speaking of our workforce, the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities has approved DCF's Affirmative Action plan for the 4th consecutive year! Shout out to our EOO Div!
- Commissioner Dorantes received the CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS Excellence for Children Leadership Award, St Joseph Parenting Center IMAGINE Award and The Alyssiah Wiley MAKING a DIFFERENCE in the COMMUNITY Award in 2022.
- Deputy Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly was the sole Child Welfare representative selected as a CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS Leadership Fellow in 2022.
- Our Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup championed the implementation of the Department's anti-racist framework leading to becoming a racially just organization. Division of Multi-Cultural Affairs published our annual RJ legislative report --- Stay tuned ... the new one is on deck to be submitted soon.
- Speaking of legislative reports--- our Program Dir of Legislative Affairs embarked on a project and was successful in streamlining the number of reports required by our agency to reduce duplication and redundancy.



- Re-aligned leadership structure in the Area Offices resulting in Administrative Program Directors overseeing functions/practice resulting in great consistency across the state. Child Welfare Bureau on the move and getting it done!
- The Legal Division turned around 5683 record requests to attorneys, courts, families, and other parties who are entitled to receive them.
- Promoted and hired a new leadership team in the Fiscal Department and expanded their roles given the significant increase in Federal money to support programs during post pandemic recovery.
- Increased the percentage of children under the age of 18 years placed with kinship families to 50%. Kudos to FASU staff for supporting core and kin homes and to TEAM CT; a leader in the QPI national network!
- Continued to collaborate and shared best practices in our work with the Governor's Office, sister state agencies, child welfare jurisdictions across the country, community partners and families with lived expertise.
- CARELINE stood-up a fully established on-line portal for all mandated reporters to make non-emergent reports of child maltreatment. Why is this significant? Because they also took over 65,000 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect last year!!! The new Five9 system is getting A LOT of use from our fantastic CARELINE crew!
- More phones ringing in the Bureau of External Affairs. Not only did they stand up a TEXT chat line for young people in care last year! They also answered over 900 inquiries and over 600 informational calls!! "Hello --- Can you hear me now???"
- CT DCF Senior leaders have presented nationally regarding topics such as: Connecticut's Quality Parenting Initiative, Communications Strategies, Child Safety, Strategic Planning, Racial Justice, and more.
- Also, Team CT, which included parents with lived expertise, represented the Department at the New England Association of Child Welfare Commissioners and Directors' *Pathways to Partnership* New England Regional convening to learn more about how our system can ensure parents feel more included, heard, and respected.
- CT DCF was solicited to host a group of congressional staffers to share highlights of how federal funding is put into use here in our state.
- Actively participated in the National Governor's Association (NGA) Children and Family Learning Cohort leading to sharing our best-case practices with other states across the country.
- Engaged in regular communication with key legislators, Juvenile Court Administration, Attorney General's Office, Public Defenders Office, and Office of the Child Advocate to provide Department updates and resolve issues brought to their attention.
- Legal management collaborated with the Attorney General's Office on all stages of child protection appeals, including providing feedback on briefs and participating in moot arguments.
- Commissioner Dorantes serves as Vice-Chair of the Governor's Council on Women and Girls with Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz.

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- To enhance our Children's Behavioral Health mandate CT DCF established the Director of Community Mental Health. Continued implementation of Children's Behavioral Health Plan and created the structures for innovative programming, with community partners, in response to an increase in the behavioral health needs of children.
- Oversaw the creation of new behavioral health programs for children including Enhanced Care Coordination, expansion of Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services, increases to Access Mental Health, the establishment of the Urban Trauma Network, and began planning to develop Urgent Crisis Centers, and Sub-Acute Stabilization Centers.
- Fully implemented a policy and practice to review, on an emergency basis, Central Registry decisions that were barriers to placement of children with relatives and fictive kin. When appropriate, reversed Registry placement, leading to an increase in safely placing children in a home with someone they know.
- Engaged with Legislators throughout the year providing invitations to key Department activities, DCF materials and responding to constituent questions.
- Hired a Director of Organizational Wellness. Reinforced with CTDCF personnel the importance of establishing a healthy work/life balance and the utilization of internal supports including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).



- Monitored services to vulnerable populations such as children with specialized needs, and children and families in disproportionately impacted communities.
- Creatively provided uninterrupted treatment to youth with complex needs on our Solnit North and Solnit South campuses while mitigating virus transmission. Both facilities welcomed new Superintendents in 2022!
- Produced "*DCF News*" highlighting positive efforts of the workforce and information regarding supports available for children, families, and staff.
- Published a "*Spotlight on What's Right*" monthly newsletter highlighting the collaborative work of the Department and community partners leading to successful outcomes for families.
- Established the unit of Educational Administration for Juvenile Justice Services.

- Answered questions and clarified operational procedures on a routine basis with leadership from 8 different state employee labor unions for staff throughout the department.
- Maintained consistent meeting cadence with Children's League of Connecticut (CLOC) and Non-Profit Alliance to ensure information sharing and problem solving with their member providers.
- Conducted virtual and in-person listening tours with the DCF Area Offices and Facilities.
- Held a "Connecticut Adoption Day" where over 45 children achieved formal permanency both during in-person and remote hearings thanks to collaboration with Judicial Partners.
- Coordinated the Leadership Academy for Social Work Supervisors, Leadership Academy for Middle Managers, and the Mentoring program to develop staff in preparation for succession planning.

- Completed the first Executive Fellowship Program for senior leaders within DCF including two administrators from the Office of Early Childhood.
- Included Attorney General's Office in particularly complex cases including Critical Incident Case Conferences.
- Commissioner Dorantes serves with DMHAS Commissioner Navaretta as Co-Chairs of Connecticut's Alcohol and Drug Policy Council.
- CT DCF established interim guidelines where fentanyl use is suspected or known in families where children are present.
- Opened the DCF "Olive Branch" Toy Shop, where families came to pick out holiday gifts for their own children year-round.
- Implemented the third round of the ChildStat process in each Regional Office leading to enhanced knowledge of data, trends, and case practices towards successful outcomes.
- The Bureau conducted over 1,800 Quality Case Reviews and 9,400 Administrative Case Reviews, processed FOIA requests w the Legal Div, produced data sharing agreements, research projects with UCONN, ACR tool redesign, self-assessment tool and much much more!
- Did you know the CT DCF HelpDesk responded to over 27,000 tickets last year? That's how we keep all of our amazing work going!
- CT DCF developed and implemented the ABCD Child Safety Practice Model



- The crafting of the V.I.T.A.L. Practice Model is just one of the many ways the Transitional Supports and Success Division supports programming for older youth in care. By September of 2022, over \$450,000 had been dispersed to assist Transitional Age Youth (TAY) with daily living expenses and other emergent costs. Along with Adolescent services units in our area offices, over \$75,000 in expenditures were allocated to young people for car maintenance, repairs and insurance.
- Milestone activities are fun rites of passage. Critical to youth in care. So much so that another \$140, 465.53 was spent on 101 milestone activities!
- Along with majority representation on the New England Youth Coalition, CT DCF will be well represented this year at the *Think of Us* conference in Washington DC where they were invited to attend by the US Administration for Children and Families Associate Commissioner Aisha Schomburg.
- And if ALL that wasn't enough, the TSS Division also launched the TAYTalk newsletter last year. Preparing youth in care to AGE-INTO young adulthood with a little extra support.
- TSS unit continued follow up with over 100 young adults who had transitioned from care following the pandemic moratorium to ensure their needs were met and they were connected to resources.
- Moved the Meriden Area office to a new location and worked with Department of Transportation to ensure families who need to get to the office can do so safely through public transit.
- Successfully opened the Waterbury Office Annex to reduce overcrowded conditions in that office.

- Expanded the Special Qualitative Review process to include the Safe System Improvement Tool (SSIT) under the National Partnership for Child Safety as an important part of our Safe and sound Practice Model.

This list is not at all exhaustive of the tremendous work happening across the Department. Do you have a fun fact or stat you'd like to highlight not mentioned here? We are always looking for new Spotlight stories to illuminate the great things you do every day ... Contact Jacqueline.Ford@ct.gov or Ken Mysogland@ct.gov