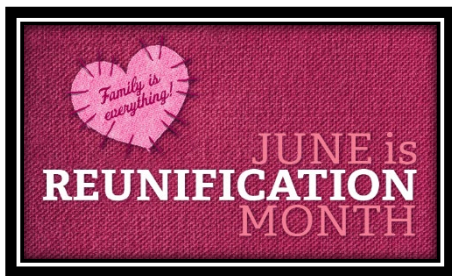




Thank you to DCF staff at our 24/7 Careline and Facilities as the State of Connecticut observed Juneteenth Independence Day for the first time in the state's history on Monday, June 19, 2023.

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, is the oldest known celebration commemorating the end of slavery in the United States. While the Emancipation Proclamation became effective on January 1, 1863, the news took time to make its way around the country. As such, it was not until **June 19, 1865**, when the Union army brought word of the proclamation to enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, making them among the last to be freed.

"For far too long, Juneteenth and the end of slavery have not been truly appreciated as a major part of United States history to the extent that they should," Governor Lamont said. "Embracing this history is an important component of educating everyone about how our nation was built and the significance of what this day means. When we ignore the impact of slavery, we ignore who we are as Americans and the extraordinary injustice that it created..."



The month of June also gives us opportunity to reinforce the expectation of **Reunification** as a core value guiding our work. Foster Care is intended to be brief and only used to help mitigate child safety concerns with concurrent planning from everyone toward family reunification.

Over 2,800 children have been reunified since 2019 with almost 200 so far in 2023! As we continue to strengthen our system to prevent separating children from their parents, it is important to acknowledge the collective efforts of the entire child & family well-being system. Click [here](#) to learn more about how we are **all** striving to become **QPI CHAMPIONS!** Thank you to our foster parents, contracted providers, community partners and DCF staff for a job well done!

In this month's "*Spotlight on What's Right*" read the inspiring story of Vanessa Hernandez. "I made it" describes her journey to leave an abusive and coercive partner after being forced to live in abandoned buildings, walk 2.5 miles to and from work, having her money taken and struggling to eat each day. She now lives safely after being reunified with her son, Camden - living a life at one point she could not imagine.



In June 1969, the Stonewall Uprising was the result of a courageous group of individuals protesting the violence and oppression they faced as identifying as gay and lesbian in our society. Their strength and courage resulted in a movement shaped by empowerment and changed the way we celebrate the differences among us. Their efforts also brought us **June as Pride** month. Read the [President's Proclamation](#) about the importance of this time of the year.

"This is who I am," is the story of Alexander Lopes, a 17-year-old youth in the care and custody of the Department. Alexander is in the process of fully transitioning from female to male and provides us his unique perspective on being part of the LGBTQ+ community. "Be proud of who you are," is his message for youth across Connecticut.

CT DCF will always stand for inclusion, belonging and love.



This past week, I was on faculty for Casey Family Program's **Leadership Academy** in Seattle, Washington. Kicking off my presentation was a quick clip from Gov Lamont ([link](#))helping me to highlight the importance of stakeholder relationships in support of our work.

Join us in welcoming the next class of Child Welfare jurisdictional leaders from across the country.

Special thank you to **Vinny Russo** our Chief Administrator of Government Relations and Policy for his outstanding efforts during the 2023 legislative session. I also want to acknowledge the support provided by Assistant Legal Director **Kate Dwyer** and the quick and comprehensive work of Chief Fiscal Officer **Melanie Sparks**! I am proud of our DCF Team & you all should be too!



School is out for the summer! **Congratulations** to all parents and guardians for the support provided to children enabling them to have another successful year as they grow and thrive! And as a TK (= teacher's kid) myself, THANK YOU to all of CT's educators!

Did you enjoy visiting CT museums last summer??? Well museums across the state are again offering **Connecticut residents ages 18 and under, along with one adult caregiver, FREE admission between July 1 and Sept. 4!** CLICK here for a press release highlighting other fun activities as we safely get outside and PLAY!!! [Summer Season Kick Off!](#)