

## Commissioner Dorantes Assigned to Lead the Governor's Kid Cabinet



At a roundtable to highlight his administration's cross system efforts around Children's Behavioral Health, Governor Ned Lamont announced the formation of a "Kids Cabinet" led by DCF's own Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes. The Cabinet will serve as an advisory panel made up of state agency leaders responsible for collaborating on a multi-agency approach toward positive outcomes related to the well-being of children and young people in Connecticut.

In addition to recommending policies and strategy, Commissioner Dorantes said the Cabinet will offer the Governor a "report card" on the progress of children and youth statewide.

"Whenever the Governor sees me, he asks 'how are the kids?'" said Commissioner Dorantes. "[The Cabinet] will be an advisory body to the Governor to make sure that he knows how the kids are doing. It will be the opportunity for us to elevate those topical areas like children's behavioral health, like juvenile justice, like housing for kids."

Now in his second term, Governor Lamont reflected on overlapping themes that demonstrate his administration's attention to collaboration across agencies and with partners outside of the Executive branch. At the top of the list is a focus on the well-being of children and youth three years out of the height of the pandemic.

Many of the agency heads represented on the Cabinet have already been innovating and problem solving together on key health and human services issues specific to children and families. The Cabinet will bring together under one umbrella all of that work across systems in order to have a more coordinated approach to optimize their respective agencies' overlapping responsibilities and functions.



"Connecticut is an amazing place for families, and protecting the health and well-being of children is a priority for our administration," Governor Lamont said. "I want to ensure that all parts of the child well-being system in state government are innovating and problem solving together. This group will enhance communication and partnership among these stakeholders and promote equitable policies to ensure children's safety and well-being and encourage their preparedness to thrive into young adulthood."

Governor Lamont specifically is asking the Cabinet to focus their efforts on several child well-being indicators, such as behavioral health, social determinants of health, and housing stability.

This includes improving partnerships across the child well-being system, and also developing policy proposals to better improve these areas.

“We want to make sure that the state continues to remain a place where families can raise their children and they will thrive,” said Commissioner Dorantes. “And in order for that to happen, their families need to be OK, and we need to make sure that our systems are working in conjunction with each other.”



With Commissioner Dorantes assigned to serve as its chairperson, in addition to DCF, members of the Governor’s Kids Cabinet will include the heads of the following state agencies:

- The Office of Early Childhood
- The State Department of Education
- The Department of Social Services
- The Department of Public Health
- The Department of Developmental Services
- The Department of Housing
- The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- The Office of Health Strategy
- The Office of Policy and Management

The first meeting of the full Kids Cabinet will take place in October.