

## Commissioner's March 2025 Message



**Happy Social Worker Appreciation Month** with the national theme of **"Social Work: Compassion + Action"**.

Described as **"heartwork,"** a **"calling,"** or **"mission,"** Social Work is **not what** we do, it is **who we are!**

Social Workers change lives with each and every action they take. I am **incredibly proud** of our staff for the work we do!

A huge **THANK You** to **Social Workers Lorraine Perez from Meriden, Deana Spero from Milford and Morgan Bell from Waterbury** promoted the work of DCF via **social media posts** created by our partners at the **Department of Administrative Services**.



March is also **National Women's History Month**. We remain grateful for the leadership and support of **Governor Ned Lamont and Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz** for their efforts to empower women in leadership roles across the state.



I was honored to speak during CREC's **"Leadership in Action. Women Changing Communities"**, lunchtime discussion.



The following week, I took part in a panel discussion at the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO) annual Women's History Celebration with year's theme, **"Moving Forward Together!**

**Women, Educating & Inspiring Generations,"** that is all about building solidarity and mutual

support, especially among women of color.

Lastly, I was on another panel organized by Jendayi (Jen-Day) Scott-Miller, Founding Executive Director & CEO **Angel of Edgewood**.



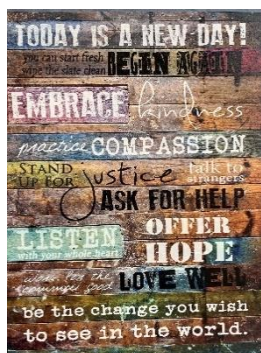
A **shout out** one more time to the **February Employees of the Month!** Who has been nominated to receive the **March Award?** Read to see who is described as "down to earth," instrumental," and "tireless."

Read in this month's "Spotlight" about **Miguel Santos from Solnit South Hospital**. Miguel is affectionately called "**Child whisperer**," for his calm demeanor while providing trauma informed care. He is a leader on campus as "**Miguel Monday**" is now an important Unit ritual as he guides and engages with our youth.



**Shaneka Hernandez** recently won the 2025 **Janet. E. Williams Humanitarian Award**. "My testimony becomes the piece of work that allows for other people in similar situations to **feel empowered**. So, I feel like that was the aspect of what set me aside [for the award] because I stood up in front of that room for four years training and **sharing pieces of me**," Shaneka stated. Read more about her in the newsletter.

A **Commissioner's Monthly Video** will now be provided to keep you updated on Agency operations. Watch **March's** again here: [Commissioner's March 2025 Video](#)



**Urgent Crisis Centers (UCCs)** are a critical support for families to divert children experiencing a behavioral health crisis from being taken to an emergency department. Watch **Fox 61's story** on the UCC at The Village for Families and Children and the impact the program made for one family: [FOX 61 UCC](#)

We very much appreciate our collaboration with **Law Enforcement** personnel across Connecticut. Thank you to the **CT Police Chief's Association** for the opportunity to come and speak about the UCCs and the work of DCF.

Our partnership with the **Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (JB-CSSD)** is also critical to support our youth. Thanks to the efforts of Deputy Commissioner of Operations Michael Williams, this month we held a first of its kind statewide forum between **DCF staff and CSSD Probation and Parole staff** to enhance our collaborative efforts.



Congratulations to **Deputy Commissioner Joyce Taylor and Family and Community Services Director Jon Jacaruso** for organizing an excellent **Program Lead Training**. A talented group of staff are supporting and managing our contracted providers!

**Prom time** is approaching! The **Olive Branch "Prom shop"** is here to help by offering **FREE** prom gowns, suits and accessories for high school teens who are receiving or have received DCF support. Contact [Jacqueline.Ford@ct.gov](mailto:Jacqueline.Ford@ct.gov) for more information. Watch **NBC 30's coverage** of the shop here: [Olive Branch Prom Shop](#)



**Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams** and **Director of Fatherhood Services Anthony Gay** attended the **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the New England Fathering Conference!** We brought our innovative Fatherhood work to jurisdictions across the country.

Once again, this month I had the honor of speaking with staff at **Town Halls** across the state. From the **Behavioral Health and Wellness** team to the **Area Offices** in **Willimantic** and **Middletown**, it was great to celebrate our successes and hear directly from all of you!

This month, we also lost not just a colleague, but dear friend in **Eric Nixon**. His calm demeanor, always willingness to help and sense of humor will be truly missed. Of course, during the and IT and **CT-KIND Town Hall**



discussion, the **Fire Alarm** went off right in the middle of the meeting. Was that Eric playing one of his notorious jokes?

At Eric's service, we had the inaugural **DCF Honor Guard and Pinning Ceremony** to honor a member of the DCF family who has left us. **Thank you** to **Melanie Mercado**, **Yvette O'Brien** and **Karina Klemm** for this beautiful idea and for the successful implementation.



It was truly a moving experience to **present Eric's wife, Andrea, roses**, for the DCF staff to **wear ribbons** and **dress in blue** to honor Eric's memory. Andrea was beyond grateful for this tribute.

Let me leave you this month with a quote read by Eric's brother. **"Blessed are those who plant trees under whose shade they will never sit."**

Thank you everyone.

