

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI)

Council Meeting



June 29, 2026
Meeting Summary

Members in Attendance:

Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves, Chair, Department of Social Services
Commissioner Nancy Navarretta, Co-Chair, Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services
Dr. Kari Adamsons, University of Connecticut, Human Development & Family Sciences
Chlo-Anne Bobrowski (for John Frassinelli), State Department of Education
Tanya Barrett, United Way of CT
Michael Bartley, Department of Labor
Paul Bourdoulous, Judicial Branch Support Enforcement Services
Heriberto (Eddie) Cajigas, Department of Labor (D1 Committee Chair)
Deputy Commissioner John Carragher, Department of Veterans Affairs
Douglas Edwards, Real Dads Forever
Anthony Gay, Department of Children and Families (D2 Committee Chair)
Melvette Hill, CWCSEO (D5 Committee Co-Chair)
Deputy Commissioner Tina Jefferson, Department of Children and Families
Anthony (Tony) Judkins, DSS Office of Child Support Services (D5 Committee Co-Chair)
Hon. Jacquelyn Kercelius (for Hon. Michael Ferguson), Judicial Branch Family Support Magistrate Division
Nicole Kilduff, Family Strides Inc. (Provider Representative, Executive Level)
Darleen Klase (for Diana DiTunno), DSS Office of Organizational and Skill Development
Kevin Krusz, Department of Public Health
Lesley Mara, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
Deputy Commissioner David Morgan, Office of Early Childhood (for Commissioner Elean Truworthy)
Jackson Pierre-Louis, Department of Developmental Services
Lynn Reeves, DSS Office of Child Support Services
Danielle Sanquedolce (for Joe DiTunno), Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division
Commissioner Mark Polzella, Department of Labor
Meghan Scanlon, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Deputy Commissioner Cres Secchiaroli (for Commissioner Carlos), Department of Correction
Commissioner Ron Welch, Department of Veterans Affairs
Jennifer Wilder, Office of Early Childhood
Chairperson Jennifer Zaccagnini, Board of Pardons and Parole

Member Regrets:

Katie Breslin, Office of Policy and Management
Diana DiTunno, DSS Office of Organizational & Skill Development
Joseph DiTunno, Judicial Court Support Services Division (D4 Committee Co-Chair)
Hon. Michael Ferguson, Judicial Branch Family Magistrate Division
John Frassinelli, State Department of Education
Eulalia Garcia, Department of Correction

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Member Regrets:

Commissioner Susan Hamilton, Department of Children and Families
Steven Hernandez, CT Coalition for Achievement Now
Commissioner Manisha Juthani, Department of Public Health
Christina Morales, Office of Early Childhood
Abdul-Rahmaan I. Muhammad, My People Clinical and Community Services
Commissioner Elena Trueworthy, Office of Early Childhood

Guests in Attendance:

Aaron Alexandre, Father, participating in Catholic Charities *Responsible Fatherhood Program*
Frank Borres, American View Productions
Joseph Brown, Father, participating in Family Strides, Inc. *Nurturing Fathers Program*
Michael Carlson, DSS Office of Organizational and Skill Development
Alvin Collins, Father, participating in Career Resources Inc. *Fathers for Life Program*
Rian Drenzek, Saint Joseph Parenting Center
Kelley Edwards, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Matt Grant, Career Resources Inc.
Robert Hebert, Career Resources Inc.
Ryan Jackman, Family Strides Inc.
Kenneth Jackson, Career Resources Inc.
Victor Jarvis, Father, participating in Community Renewal Team Inc. *Real Fathers, Real Men Program*
Marcus Johnson, Community Renewal Team Inc.
Aileen Keays, Board of Pardons and Parole
Maria Lopez, DSS Office of Child Support Services
David Macharelli, DSS Office of Organizational and Skill Development
Jason Malcolm, Madonna Place, Inc.
Hermينو Morales, Father, participating in Career Resources Inc. *Fathers for Life Program*
Nathan Munro, New Opportunities Inc.
Pawel Polak, Father, participating in Family Strides Inc. *Nurturing Fathers Program*
Deputy Commissioner Mark Polzella, Department of Labor
Laura Robidoux, United Way of Connecticut
Maribel Sandalo, Saint Joseph Parenting Center
Sarju Shah, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Justin Torres, Department of Labor
Edgar Young, DSS Office of Child Support Services

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Meeting Overview

The June quarterly CFI Council meeting did not follow its usual format. At the March quarterly meeting, Members agreed that June, anchored by Father's Day on the 21st, is a fitting time to pause and celebrate - both the 20-year milestone of the *Interagency Fatherhood Memorandum of Understanding* (Fatherhood MOU) and the tireless work of state and local partners united around our common goal: *to support children, mothers and fathers by focusing on the important influence of men who are or will be in fathering roles*. Therefore, additional leaders and staff from state and local agencies, and fathers participating in programming across the state, joined Council Members for this special celebration and recognition of our statewide collaborative.

Welcome/Opening Remarks

Commissioner Barton Reeves welcomed Council Members and guests and provided reflections on the incredible collaborative work that has been done and partnerships developed over the last twenty-seven years.

Connecticut's Landmark Fatherhood Interagency MOU: Celebrating 20 Years

Tony Judkins presented reflections on the 20-year milestone of the *Interagency Memorandum of Understanding on Fatherhood* (Fatherhood MOU), emphasizing its longstanding value and collaborative impact.

Parties to the Fatherhood MOU include:

1. Department of Social Services
2. Department of Children and Families (DCF)
3. Department of Correction (DOC)
4. Department of Developmental Services (DDS)
5. Department of Housing (DOH)
6. Department of Labor (DOL)
7. Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)
8. Department of Public Health (DPH)
9. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)
10. Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP)
11. Office of Early Childhood (OEC)
12. State Department of Education (SDE)
13. Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division (CSSD)
14. Judicial Branch, Support Enforcement Services (SES)
15. Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU)

A few leaders whose agencies are parties to the MOU shared brief remarks, offering insight into their respective agency's contributions to the partnership and their commitment to ongoing interagency coordination. Speakers included DMHAS Commissioner Nancy Navarretta, DCF Deputy Commissioner Tina Jefferson, and SES Director Paul Bourdoulous.

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To commemorate the occasion, Tony Judkins presented awards to the MOU parties in recognition of this groundbreaking collaboration in support of fathers, children and families and a group photo was taken:



CFI Council Members' Reflections:

Our Collaborative Approach to Supporting Fathers, Children and Families

The following CFI Council Members provided reflections on their work and connections to the CFI mission:

1. Doug Edwards, Director, Real Dads Forever
2. Meghan Scanlon, Executive Director, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence
3. Michael Bartley, JFES Unit Director, Department of Labor
4. Melvette Hill, Executive Director, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

Their remarks reinforced the importance of community partnership and cross-system support for fathers.

Impact of Fatherhood Program Participation: Testimonials from Dads

Tony showed three prerecorded videos featuring fathers who participate in DSS-certified fatherhood programs located in Torrington and New Haven: David Ballou and Trey Murphy, with the Family Strides Inc. *Nurturing Fathers Program*, and Ernesto Chacon, with Catholic Charities *Responsible Fatherhood Program*. Two additional fathers enrolled in a DSS-certified fatherhood program in Bridgeport were in attendance. Hermino Morales and Alvin Collins, with Career Resources Inc. *Fathers for Life Program*, shared their experiences navigating systems and the support they have received. All of these fathers stories underscored the direct, personal and positive impact CFI partners' efforts can have on fathers and their families.

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CFI Dear Dad Tour: Revamped Logo, Website & Recap of the First 2026 Tour Stop

Frank Borres, CEO and Founder of American View Productions, LLC, presented the “refreshed” *CFI Dear Dad Tour* (CFI DDT) branding, unveiling the updated logo, website and the newly developed one-page informational sheet about the project. He also showed the highlights video from the first 2026 CFI DDT stop held on June 6 at the Hartford Taste Festival.

The new CFI DDT logo is:



The link to view the draft landing page of the refreshed website is:

<https://www.figma.com/proto/XV7lYAD46pZkaHNeFG5jjN/Dear-Dad-Tour-%E2%80%94-Cinema-Concept-D?node-id=7-2&t=TjqOCCo0zp4h56Ml-1&scaling=min-zoom&content-scaling=fixed&page-id=0%3A1&starting-point-node-id=7%3A2>

The link to the CFI DDT highlights video from June 6, 2026 at the Hartford Taste Festival is:

<https://youtu.be/gIQniz9LC1A>

The draft CFI DDT one-page informational sheet can be found on the next page.

Closing Remarks

Tony formally concluded the program at 3:15 PM, thanking participants and inviting them to stay for refreshments, networking, and additional photos at the CFI photo backdrop.

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teach • love • inspire
CONNECTICUT
FATHERHOOD
INITIATIVE
Dear Dad
TOUR

BUILDING STRONGER FATHERS.

Building Stronger Communities.

The Dear Dad Tour is a statewide campaign that celebrates the power of fatherhood and equips dads with the tools, resources, and support they need to thrive—at home, in their communities, and for their children.



OUR MISSION

To promote and support positive father involvement by inspiring, educating, and empowering fathers and father figures across Connecticut.

OUR APPROACH

Through community events, conversations, and resources, the Dear Dad Tour:

- Inspires dads to lead, love, and thrive
- Equips dads with practical skills and knowledge
- Connects dads to local and statewide resources
- Empowers communities to support and uplift fathers
- Create Fatherhood videos for social and traditional media

WHO WE REACH

Fathers and father figures of all backgrounds, including:

- Expectant and new dads
- Grandfathers and mentors
- Non-custodial dads
- Community leaders and allies
- Organizations that serve families
- General Festival Attendees

CONNECTICUT FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE STRATEGIES:

-  **Educational reform** — Increasing statewide awareness of fatherhood, financial and emotional responsibilities through campaigns, training, and outreach.
-  **Legal and policy development** — Helping men prepare for the legal, financial, and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood, and advocating for policies that support father involvement.
-  **Family establishment systems** — Promoting paternity/parentage establishment at childbirth so fathers can be legally recognized early.
-  **Cross-agency integration** — Coordinating services across multiple state agencies, partner organizations, and community stakeholders to create father-friendly systems.
-  **Support mechanisms for fathers** — Ensuring fathers have access to supports regardless of marital or financial status (e.g., child support navigation, employment readiness, parenting skills).
-  **Barrier-reduction strategies** — Addressing systemic barriers such as unemployment, housing instability, child support debt, transportation, criminal history, and mental health/substance use challenges.

THE DEAR DAD TOUR

The Dear Dad Tour travels across Connecticut, bringing people together for:

-  Inspiring keynotes and panel discussions
-  Community conversations and networking
-  Resources and support for fathers
-  Celebrating fathers and strengthening communities.

VISIT. CONNECT. GET INSPIRED.

POTENTIAL VENUES / THEMES

- Beardsley Zoo
- Yard Goats
- Father's Day
- Back To School
- Hartford Taste Festival
- Wolf Pack
- Movie Night



Scan To Learn More!
Scan the QR code to visit deardadtour.org and learn more about the Dear Dad Tour.



Join Us!

Be a part of the movement to uplift fathers and build a stronger Connecticut.
Attend a tour stop. Partner with us. Spread the word.