

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting

Meeting Summary * September 25, 2023



Members in Attendance:

Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves, Chair, Department of Social Services (DSS)

Tanya Barrett, United Way of CT

Michael Bartley, Department of Labor

Paul Bourdoulous, Judicial Branch Support Enforcement Services

Heriberto (Eddie) Cajigas, Department of Labor (Domain 1 Committee Chair)

Daniel Cargill, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Rose Colon, Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Diana DiTunno, DSS Office of Organizational & Skill Development

Joseph DiTunno, Judicial Court Support Services Division (Domain 4 Committee Co-Chair)

Doug Edwards, Real Dads Forever

Gerald Gore, Department of Developmental Services

Steven Hernández, CWCSEO (Domain 5 Committee Co-Chair)

Kevin Krusz, Department of Public Health

Lesley Mara, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

Deputy Commissioner Brandon McGee, Department of Housing

Senator Marilyn Moore, CT General Assembly

Deputy Commissioner William Mulligan (for Commissioner Quiros), DOC

Robert Pinnock, Career Resources (Provider Representative, Direct Service Level)

Lynn Reeves, DSS Office of Child Support Services

Sarju Shah (for Commissioner Navarretta), Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Ariana Trotman, GBAPP (Provider Representative, Program Manager Level)

Jennifer Wilder (for Commissioner Bye), Office of Early Childhood

Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams, Dept. of Children and Families (Domain 3 Committee Chair)

Commissioner Ronald Welch, Department of Veterans Affairs

Former Representative Patricia Wilson-Pheanious

Chairperson Jennifer Zaccagnini, Board of Pardons and Parole

Member Regrets:

Commissioner Nancy Navarretta, Co-Chair, Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Dr. Kari Adamsons, University of Connecticut, Human Development & Family Sciences

Katie Breslin, Office of Policy Management

Commissioner Beth Bye, Office of Early Childhood

John Frassinelli, State Department of Education

Anthony Gay, Department of Children and Families (Domain 2 Committee Chair)

Anthony (Tony) Judkins, DSS Office of Child Support Services (Domain 5 Committee Co-Chair)

Aileen Keys, UConn Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (Domain 4 Committee Co-Chair)

Nicole Kilduff, Family Strides Inc. (Provider Representative, Executive Level)

Commissioner Angel Quiros, DOC

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting

Meeting Summary * September 25, 2023



Welcome/Introductions

Commissioner Barton Reeves opened the meeting and welcomed all those in attendance, both in person and via Microsoft Teams. She announced that Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Commissioner Nancy Navarretta has accepted the invitation to serve as the next CFI Council Co-Chair. While unable to attend today's meeting, she will be in attendance at the next quarterly meeting in December. Commissioner Barton Reeves thanked Senator Moore for serving as Co-Chair for a past few years. Senator Moore said that this work is critical and she has enjoyed working with her fellow Council members. While she must step down due to her new legislative responsibilities, she asked that she be kept updated on CFI efforts and if there is any way she can be of assistance please do not hesitate to reach out. Members then proceeded with introductions.

Review/Acceptance of June Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Barton Reeves asked members to review minutes from the June meeting for approval. Members reviewed. A motion was made to accept the minutes by Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams and seconded by Sarju Shah. All in favor, none opposed. Minutes accepted by the Council as written.

CFI Overview Slides

Diana noted the language of the Fatherhood MOU that all parties agree to "recognize father engagement efforts within our agency and collaborative efforts with partners are under the umbrella of the CFI and acknowledge the CFI when sharing these efforts with state and federal representatives, the media, community partners and the general public" and reviewed the second draft of the CFI introduction slides, initially discussed at the June meeting, with the group.

Members expressed they were pleased with the edits made based on the June discussion. All agreed to use these slides within their agencies and with -instate and/or interstate partners for any father engagement activities such as presentations, training, conferences, informational sessions, etc. Along with the slides, members' agreed to disseminate the CFI Overview. Both the PowerPoint slides and the CFI Overview were attached to the email communication with these minutes.

Jennifer Wilder noted that the slide that shares CFI highlights is also good to include, as are some others, if agencies want to provide more in-depth information for a particular audience. Diana stated she will share a longer version of the CFI Introduction PowerPoint presentation with Council members at the December meeting.

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting

Meeting Summary * September 25, 2023



CFI Overview Slides continued

DC Williams noted that some agencies' fatherhood work, like DCF's, is also connected to federal requirements focused on their particular system. The group discussed the "issue briefs" that were raised as an idea by former Council member Carol Meredith, highlighting various areas of fatherhood efforts. The CFI newsletter has been topic-focused, but these one-pagers could be drafted by agencies and be additional handouts for when agencies are presenting the PowerPoint etc. Diana and Steve Hernandez agreed to bring this back to Domain 5 Committee to discuss a plan for getting these developed.

John Frassinelli stated one way he envisions these slides being utilized by his Department is for the Young Parents Program – it is an unfunded legislative line item; the slides can be included in presentations/asks for funding. And curricula on financial literacy is not just for employment but for families – these slides are appropriate for many efforts with which state agencies are involved.

Annual CFI Dear Dad Tour Campaign: 2024 and Beyond

Diana reviewed the revised proposal submitted by American View Productions (AVP) for the CFI Dear Dad Tour (DDT) annual campaign. She reminded members that the DDT will run during the weeks after Mother's Day up until Father's Day (roughly mid-May to mid-June). DSS would enter into contract with AVP for this campaign.

This revised proposal has incorporated the following deliverables, which were Council members' suggestions from the June meeting,:

1. AVP will enhance promotions to make a stronger connection of the DDT to the CFI; AVP will accomplish this by, in part, changing marketing materials to the name "Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative's Dear Dad Tour".
2. AVP will provide release forms for all who participate.
3. AVP will distribute the CFI Overview one-pager, which will be provided by the Department of Social Services, at every stop on the annual tour/where the booth is set up.
4. CFI partners can have the booth come to events throughout a given year. This would be based on AVP availability/capacity and would incur additional costs as reflected in the budget proposal.
5. AVP will include referrals to resources on the CFI DDT website.
6. AVP will continue to include stories of incarcerated fathers, CFI success stories, both individual stories of fathers who were involved in local fatherhood programs, and state agency collaborations that created systems change in the stories gathered at events to be included on the DDT website.

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting

Meeting Summary * September 25, 2023



Annual CFI Dear Dad Tour Campaign: 2024 and Beyond continued

7. AVP will, whenever possible through the DDT, serve as a conduit of back-and-forth feedback to learn how others feel about CFI. Since, however, the audiences will be general knowledge audiences CFI partners, including staff for and participants in fatherhood programs, will be asked to participate and share such feedback during the various stops of the annual DDT. Once CFI has sufficient feedback on what will hopefully be assessed as a successful effort, CFI can consider at a future time the development of additional funding for the collaborative through outside funding sources such as foundations, contributors, and private sources. The return on investment, however, cannot be quantified as this would be the first effort.

Members asked the following questions:

1. Is there a cost advantage to a multi-year contract, and if yes, what would that look like?
2. Are there measurable outcomes for the DDT to illustrate the effectiveness of the campaign? Are outcomes anecdotal? Could there be a brief pre/post survey perhaps, for those visiting the booth – ask individuals did they know about the CFI before they came to the booth; what did they know about it or think it was before they read the overview or talked with AVP staff, etc.; could program track referral source as the DDT?

Members asked if DSS would be the agency to contract with AVP; Diana confirmed yes, DSS would be the contractor for the CFI DTT as proposed. Agencies that seek to use the CFI booth at fatherhood events they are hosting at other times during the year would enter into their own contract with AVP for that specific purpose. The dads stories recorded at those additional events could be posted to the CFI DDT website.

Commissioner Barton Reeves asked Diana to follow up with AVP regarding the above two questions. The information will be shared at the December meeting and a final vote taken.

Strategic Plan: Implementation Update

Domain Committee Chair Reports

DOMAIN 1 (D1): Fathers economically stable

D1 Committee Chair Eddies Cajigas reported the group is finalizing the D1 “Resource Checklist” for use by fatherhood program providers, with links to quickly connect providers/program participants to resources related to the D1 focus of fathers’ economic stability, such as employment, education, mental health, housing and other available supports. He will share the final product at the December meeting.

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting

Meeting Summary * September 25, 2023



Strategic Plan: Implementation Update continued

Domain Committee Chair Reports *continued*

DOMAIN 2 (D2): Fathers in healthy relationships with their children, co-parents, significant others

Diana reported on behalf of D2 Committee Chair Anthony Gay, who was unable to attend the meeting. The Committee continues their review of a DCF Request for Proposal (RFP), compiling suggestions on how state agency RFP templates can be drafted to be more inclusive of fathers in their parenting role. A short survey for DCF workers in the adolescent unit regarding post-secondary education opportunities for male youth in the human services/social work field is also currently under development.

DOMAIN 3 (D3): Young people prepared to be responsible parents

Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams shared the D3 Committee's Asset Map analysis continues for Focus Area 1, Healthy Masculinity/Healthy Relationships/Violence Prevention. The group has experienced scheduling conflicts so is hoping to finalize soon so they can move to the analysis for the other two focus areas; namely, Identification of/Services for Male Youth Who May Be Fathers/Expectant Fathers and Quality Education and Support for Teen Male Parenting (includes examination of young parents' program models).

DOMAIN 4 (D4):

Men involved in the criminal justice system supported in being responsible fathers

Co-Chair Joseph DiTunno reported the group is holding their event for criminal system agency leaders and their training staff this coming Friday, September 29 at Central CT State University. There are 73 individuals registered representing the Department of Correction, Division of Criminal Justice, Division of Public Defender Services, Judicial Court Support Services Division, Board of Pardons and Parole and others. Ann Adalist-Estrin, an expert in the field, and currently the Director of the *National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated* at Rutgers University in Camden, New Jersey, will serve as keynote. Nicholas Aponte-Rodriguez, a father with lived experience, is the featured speaker. The Committee hopes this is a first step to continued work with the agencies to better support men who are fathers throughout all aspects of the criminal justice system.

DOMAIN 5 (D5): Policy/Public Awareness

Steve Hernandez reported the Fall 2023 issue of the CFI Newsletter was electronically disseminated to the CFI network on September 9. He reminded members to please forward the email they received with newsletter attached throughout their respective agencies and partner/contractor networks. This CFI product is helping to memorialize how we tell the story of our collaborative.

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting

Meeting Summary * September 25, 2023



Strategic Plan: Implementation Update continued

Domain Committee Chair Reports *continued*

DOMAIN 5 (D5): Policy/Public Awareness continued

Steve expressed thanks to the partners that have contributed content thus far, and there are several partner agencies/topic areas to be highlighted including Department of Correction, Judicial Branch agencies, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence and others. He noted beginning in 2024 the publication will be disseminated twice per year, as “Spring/Summer and “Fall/Winter” issues. Lesley Mara suggested perhaps once all CFI agency partners have been highlighted, the group could put forth a “call for articles” which could be stored and used as the group deemed appropriate for future issues.

CFI-211 Workgroup Chair Report

Tanya Barrett reported the following efforts of this group:

- a training, outlining information about the 2-1-1 Contact Center and a demonstration of 2-1-1 website and tools available to providers and the fathers they serve, was delivered to 37 fatherhood program providers on September 15; the training was part of a full-day session that also included presentations from the DSS Office of Child Support Services, Judicial Support Enforcement Services and Judicial CSSD Family Services
- an overview and “demo” of 211CT website’s electronic referral feature will be delivered at the DSS-certified fatherhood program coalition’s October 24 meeting with the goal of having it piloted with the programs. This feature for programs is one that UWCT hopes staff will find useful and they look forward to the discussion.
- 2-1-1 CT is offering the “Ride United” Program, which is a partnership between United Way Worldwide and Lyft – it provides free transportation for adults 18 years+ who indicate a need when speaking with a Contact Center Specialist; those adults who meet the parameters for the program can be given up to 4 one-way or 2 round-trip rides per week, when used for appointments related to healthcare, food, education, employment or housing.
 - based on the Workgroup’s discussions about fathers’ needs, UWCT expanded the eligibility criteria this year to include rides for legal purposes (court, appointments with agencies for which they are required to meet for their case such as DSS, DCF, Family Services, etc.

Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting

Meeting Summary * September 25, 2023



DSS-certified Fatherhood Program Providers Report: Coalition Updates

Arian Trotman provided the following report on behalf of the coalition:

- All DSS-certified fatherhood program staff are meeting bi-monthly; certification has been the primary focus for the past few meetings; the group will also be having staff from CT 2-1-1 attend a future meeting to share a demonstration of the electronic referral feature for potential use by providers as part of a pilot project with United Way of CT
- Staff have been working toward attending child support court on a more regular basis as a result of their discussion with Family Support Magistrates
- agencies are participating in the 2023 round of DSS certification, and hope to be awarded recertification of their programs – they are currently preparing for their respective 2-day onsite reviews, which will take place October through early November

Other Business

DC Michael Williams reported that DCF has been conducting interviews for their Statewide Fatherhood Director position, whose primary responsibilities will be to monitor DCF's fatherhood practices for child welfare as they relate to their federal review, but also to support the CFI and our collaborative efforts. They recently identified their chosen candidate, and it is Anthony Gay. Members expressed congratulations and they look forward to continued work with Anthony, who currently serves as the CFI Strategic Plan Domain 2 Committee Chair. As well as a member of both Domain 5 Committee and the CFI 211 Workgroup.

Commissioner Barton Reeves noted the final meeting of 2023 is confirmed as follows:

- **December 18, 2023, 1:30-3:30pm, DSS Central Office, 1st floor, Room 1008-1011**

Diana noted that the December meeting will include a recognition ceremony for fatherhood programs that successfully completed the 2023 certification process.

Commissioner reported proposed 2024 meeting dates are as follows:

- Monday, March 25, 2024; 1:30-3:30pm
- Monday, June 24, 2024; 1:30-3:30pm
- Monday, September 30, 2024; 1:30-3:30pm
- Monday, December 16, 2024; 1:30-3:30pm

All will be held in-person, at DSS Central Office, 55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford.

Once confirmed with Council Co-Chairs, Outlook invites will be forwarded by Commissioner Barton Reeves' Executive Assistant.

Meeting Adjourned.