

# *Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting*



**September 30, 2024  
Meeting Summary**

## **Members in Attendance:**

Commissioner Nancy Navarretta, Co-Chair, Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services  
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)  
Diana DiTunno, DSS Office of Organizational & Skill Development  
Joseph DiTunno, Judicial Court Support Services Division (D4 Committee Co-Chair)  
John Frassinelli, State Department of Education  
Eulalia Garcia (for DC Sharonda Carlos), Department of Correction  
Steven Hernandez, Esq., ConnCAN (CT Coalition for Achievement Now)  
Anthony (Tony) Judkins, DSS Office of Child Support Services (D5 Committee Co-Chair)  
Aileen Keays, UConn Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (D4 Committee Co-Chair)  
Nicole Kilduff, Family Strides Inc. (Provider Representative, Executive Level)  
Kevin Krusz, Department of Public Health  
Lesley Mara, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities  
Jackson Pierre-Louis, Department of Developmental Services  
Robert Pinnock, Career Resources (Provider Representative, Direct Service Level)  
Lynn Reeves, DSS Office of Child Support Services  
Meghan Scanlon, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Ariana Trotman, GBAPP (Provider Representative, Program Manager Level)  
Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams, Dept. of Children and Families (D3 Committee Chair)  
Patricia Wilson-Pheanious, Consultant  
Chairperson Jennifer Zaccagnini, Board of Pardons and Parole

## **Member Regrets:**

Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves, Chair, Department of Social Services (DSS)  
Dr. Kari Adamsons, University of Connecticut, Human Development & Family Sciences  
Katie Breslin, Office of Policy Management  
Commissioner Beth Bye, Office of Early Childhood  
Deputy Commissioner Sharonda Carlos, Department of Correction  
Melvette Hill, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity  
Scott Gaul, Office of Policy Management  
Anthony Gay, Department of Children and Families (Domain 2 Committee Chair)

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## **Welcome/Introductions**

Commissioner Navarretta opened the meeting and welcomed Members. She acknowledged recent changes to Council membership for the CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence, stating Meghan Scanlon, President and CEO will serve as the new CCADV representative. She asked Meghan to introduce herself. Meghan shared she is excited to join the Council and continue the longstanding partnership with the CFI for advocacy, outreach and education to prevent domestic violence and promote healthy relationships for families.

## **Review/Acceptance of June Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Navarretta asked members to review minutes from the June 24 meeting. Members reviewed, a motion to accept the minutes was made by DC Michael Williams and seconded by Nicole Kilduff. Minutes were accepted as written, with abstention from those members who were not in attendance.

## **Strategic Plan: Implementation Update**

### **Domain Committee Chair Reports**

#### **DOMAIN 1: Fathers economically stable**

Eddie Cajigas stated the Committee is on hiatus, therefore there was no report for this quarter.

#### **DOMAIN 2:**

##### **Fathers in healthy relationships with their children, co-parents, significant others**

Diana DiTunno provided the report on behalf of Committee Chair Anthony Gay. She reported the Committee did not meet during the last quarter. The survey disseminated to DCF social workers in the Adolescent Unit did not yield many responses. The Committee strategized ways to disseminate the survey a second time that will result in a higher number of responses. They are also finalizing their RFP review with recommendations for father-inclusiveness, with the goal of developing a “how-to” guide like the product they developed for state agency contract scopes of service. The next meeting is scheduled for October 2.

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## **Strategic Plan: Implementation Update, continued Domain Committee Chair Reports, continued**

### **DOMAIN 3: Young people prepared to be responsible parents**

Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams reported that the Committee completed its analysis and recommendations from the asset mapping process targeting the three priority areas. The synopsis document was shared at the June meeting and included at the end of the meeting minutes. He stated the next phase of the D3 work will be having meetings with leadership from the agencies included in the Committee’s synopsis, to discuss the recommendations made as well as potentially identify other efforts by a given agency where this work might fit. These meetings will determine not only the feasibility of implementation/participation, but also what a particular agency may need from the CFI Council and other partners to support young fathers and fathers-to-be.

### **DOMAIN 4:**

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

Committee Co-Chair Aileen Keays reported the group continues their development of a training curriculum template for criminal justice system agency staff. The template will include four parts:

1. an opening message from the leadership of the CJS agency
2. the impact of CJS involvement on children and fathers
3. a high-level overview of the CFI and work of the Strategic Plan’s Domain 4 Committee
4. and ways staff can support men who are fathers in their daily work, and incorporate information on available agencies, programs, and support for fathers, as well as industry-specific information

The first three parts may include pre-recorded videos, covering the problem, issues, and available support. The last section will include a facilitated dialogue or their own component of what they do currently containing policies and practices.

Co-Chair Joe DiTunno stated the idea is to create a curriculum template that any CJS agency can use with their staff, with customization only needed for the agency leadership message and the final section to their respective agency’s role within the criminal justice system. Once the draft curriculum is finalized, they will share with the Council. The first agency that will be piloting the training is the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division.

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## **Strategic Plan: Implementation Update, continued Domain Committee Chair Reports, continued**

### **DOMAIN 5: Public Policy and Awareness**

Tony Judkins, Committee Chair, reported that he, Diana and the Communications Subcommittee met and finalized a plan for content development and timelines for future newsletter editions. He noted that the 2024 Fall/Winter will be released at the end of November and will highlight the CT Department of Developmental Services and supports for fathers with disabilities. The publication continues to receive positive feedback from various members of the CFI listserv.

Lesley Mara suggested that each issue should include a statement about the CFI, to reiterate to staff from the numerous partner agencies, the primary audience of the publication, that they are part of the CFI. Members agreed this was a good idea.

### **211 Workgroup Chair Report**

Chair Tanya Barrett reported the group has met twice in the last quarter. The primary task they are currently working on is the review and updating of e-library papers related to fatherhood. Members are revising the e-papers for user-friendly, plain language, confirming and/or updating links to websites/resources and once the current list is complete, they plan to identify additional papers that may be helpful for fathers and those serving them.

The electronic referral pilot with the DSS-certified fatherhood programs is up and running. This feature on the 2-1-1 CT website allows the general public to indicate they would like an agency to contact them about services and allows the program staff to make interagency referrals when a father has contacted a program looking for assistance but lives outside that agency's geographic service area.

Eddie Cajigas asked whether the American Job Centers would be appropriate for electronic referrals. Tanya explained there needs to be a contact person identified at each program site to manage the referrals; she is happy to discuss with Eddie and Mike Bartley further, to see if it is something the DOL may want to offer through their AJC listings in the 2-1-1 CT database.

### **CFI Introduction Slides and Materials**

Diana reported the edits suggested by Members during past meetings have been incorporated into the slide deck. To support CFI branding and messaging, Members had discussed and agreed that all CFI partner agencies will include these slides for any internal/external training and/or presentations related to an agency's fatherhood efforts that have already been developed as well as anything developed/delivered moving forward.

# ***Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting***



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## ***CFI Introduction Slides and Materials, continued***

Diana shared the final draft of the six high-level CFI introduction slides and supplementary materials. She stated that notes were added that include some suggested “script” content and which supplemental document can be referenced/handed out during the display of a particular slide. The supplemental documents include the CFI Overview, CFI legislation passed in 2022 (Public Act 22-138) and the CFI Strategic Plan Overview.

Members suggested that contact information for 2-1-1 CT be added to the final slide. Diana will add this information. Members agreed the presentation and supplemental materials will be useful for their respective agency’s use.

Commissioner Navarretta asked for motion to approve the CFI High-level Intro slide deck (6 slides) with the suggested edit and three supplemental presentation documents. Member Lesley Mara made the motion to approve, and Member Eddie Cajigas seconded. The slide deck and materials were approved by the full Council. Diana stated she would send the slide deck and materials along with these minutes.

Members asked if slides that were included in the first draft, namely those that show CFI highlights and the CFI Strategic Plan diagram, could be shared so if agencies would like to include them they can. A second PowerPoint file that includes these slides will be sent as an option for agency use. Diana mentioned any agency partner who feels that one of these two high-level versions is not sufficient to deliver to a particular audience can reach out to Tony or her to request additional information or slides as they deem would be helpful.

## ***Provider Coalition Report***

Tony reported that DSS Office of Community Services identified and provided funding for the purchase of items for the eight DSS-certified fatherhood programs, including facilitator’s guides and participant workbooks that are part of the National Fatherhood Initiative’s 24:7 Dad® curriculum, which all DSS-certified program sites use. He stated given staff turnover, several staff had not yet received the required 24:7 Dad® Certification Training that those staff who serve as group facilitators delivering the curriculum must complete. Therefore, some of the funding was used to schedule a virtual session to be delivered by NFI on October 8 for those staff.

Tony then asked the provider coalition representatives to report on additional items they would like to share.

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## ***Provider Coalition Report, continued***

Nicole Kilduff stated the staff have been integrating substance use prevention in activities and groups with fathers and connecting with the local Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations. They are thankful for the partnership with DMHAS and the Governor's Prevention Partnership as it has allowed staff to make different connections in their communities around substance use prevention, opportunities for training, the dispersing of med lock boxes and the availability of SAMHSA materials to enhance discussions during groups and individual meetings with program participants. The prevention work they are doing is critical for supporting the dads they serve with employment and with access to their children and helping them gain skills in talking with their children about substance use etc.

Nicole reported that DSS held a mandatory Domestic Violence Awareness training for staff September 17, and the second part is scheduled for October 30. Staff feedback after the first part of the training was very positive. They shared they learned a lot about the impact on children, and the various types of abuse beyond physical/emotional/sexual abuse. Staff say they see how this knowledge can not only help them as they work with fathers, but also how they can help the dads in programming with both increasing their understanding of domestic violence and coercive control for their relationships with significant others and by teaching their children about and modeling the qualities of healthy relationships.

Further, staff from the different programs have seen building their relationships and worked as a team to brainstorm different recruitment ideas, sharing what some agencies have found to be successful, etc. and fatherhood program staff are maintaining a presence in child support court and some also have gone to family court as well, to be available to parents who may be interested in their services.

## ***August Conference Reports***

The DCF Fatherhood Conference was held August 8 and 9 at Central CT State University, with a focus on mental health and men of color. DC Williams reported it was well attended and feedback has been positive. He said it is hoped that consciousness-raising through events like this will affect practice. Members who were in attendance shared they enjoyed the keynote speakers, the music was invigorating, saw a lot of new faces and the workshop presentations they attended were powerful and relevant to our work.

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## ***August Conference Reports, continued***

Diana DiTunno attended and presented a workshop session entitled “Strategies for Growing & Sustaining a Statewide Fatherhood Initiative” at the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration of Children and Families 2024 National Fatherhood Summit, which was held in Atlanta, Georgia from August 13-15, 2024. Regarding the event itself, she reported there were over 800 in attendance, and it was a very organized, well-executed event. Workshops seemed to primarily be targeted at direct service providers; however, there were a few sessions on state-level approaches, and a session or two delivered by federal representatives. Some federal leaders who provided remarks included Anne Flagg, Director of the ACF Office of Family Assistance (OFA); Seth Chamberlain, Division Director of the Family & Economic Stability Demonstration (FED) and Innovation Division at OFA; Antrell Tyson, US DHHS Region IV Director and Jeff Hild, Principal Deputy Asst. Secretary for ACF. Diana highlighted one of the speakers who was very engaging and inspiring, Gary Barker, PhD, CEO and Founder of Equimundo (<https://www.equimundo.org/>).

Her workshop presentation was scheduled for the final morning of the Summit. Council Members were given a copy of the presentation slides. They can be found at the end of these minutes. Diana estimated about 45-47 in attendance, primarily representatives from state agencies across the nation. Participants were very engaged and several approached at the end to request follow-up meetings/discussions. It was a great opportunity to share the efforts of our collaborative.

## ***Other Business***

Commissioner Navarretta asked members to share news/updates regarding fatherhood efforts.

Eddie Cajigas handed out a flyer to Members for upcoming job recruitment fairs and workshops. It can be found at the end of these minutes. He asked if this could be sent to the CFI email listserv. Diana asked Eddie to email it to her, and Eddie agreed.

## ***OWS Transportation Solutions Initiative***

Mike Bartley informed the group that the Office for Workforce Strategies has contracted with a vendor named RSG that is charged with developing 3-5 pilot programs which involve car-based solutions for clients with transportation challenges. Mike questioned whether there was interest in having some of the dads being served participate as focus group members for this initiative. Mike indicated he would let the group know if the vendor was interested in bringing dads into the process as stakeholders.



# ***Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting***



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## **Other Business, continued**

### *DCF Legislative Proposal: Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC)*

DC Williams reported that DCF is submitting a legislative proposal for changes to the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC). This proposal seeks to include noncustodial dads as one of the “exempt” groups within all participating states.

Key components of the revised ICPC include updates to the legal framework that address health and human service needs and infrastructure for servicing children and families in the 21st Century; increases in timely placements in other states; clarification on the applicability of ICPC to noncustodial parents; opportunity/availability of an administrative review of denials in the receiving state; enforcement strengthening and flexibility for the rules to be changed more frequently and easily, so the Compact can remain current.

This revised ICPC language is not yet adopted and requires 35 states to do so before rulemaking begins. Sixteen states have adopted it thus far.

DCF believes this aligns with the goal of the CFI and is a good way to promote our collaborative. He asked if those agencies represented on the Council would endorse or perhaps co-sponsor the proposal.

The following questions were asked during the discussion:

- Can non-state agencies who are CFI partners, and serving on the Council, can be named as co-sponsors or as agencies that “approve” the legislative proposal?
- Can Commissioner Barton Reeves, as the head of the named lead agency for the CFI, co-sponsor and/or endorse the proposal on behalf of the CFI Council?
- The proposal due date is October 4, but endorsements/co-sponsors can be added at a later date, correct?

Council members said they support the concept but asked DC Williams to send the draft proposal for their review, to confirm there wouldn’t be a reason why a particular agency could not endorse it or be named as a co-sponsor. He agreed to do so.

## ***Next Meeting***

Monday, December 16, 2024

1:30-3:30pm

DSS Central Office, 55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford

*Meeting Adjourned.*



# Strategies for Growing & Sustaining a Statewide Fatherhood Initiative

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Diana DiTunno, *Senior Educational Program Administrator*  
*Connecticut Department of Social Services*



Atlanta, Georgia | August 13 - 15, 2024



Does your state have a statewide fatherhood initiative that is led by a state agency/agencies?



# Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI)



- A multi-agency, public-private collaborative led by the CT Department of Social Services
- The CFI serves as the umbrella under which all fatherhood efforts within and across agencies fall



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# *The CFI began in 1999...*

- **Legislation passage in 1999 established Connecticut's statewide Fatherhood Initiative**
  - CT was the first state to pass legislation requiring a collaborative fatherhood effort, ensuring sustainability through leadership changes
  - bipartisan support
  - Comprehensive and instructive
- **Department of Social Services named as lead agency**
  - CT DSS is lead agency for TANF and Child Support
- **Numerous state agency & local partners identified for participation**



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# ***New legislation reflects the current CFI***



- **In 2022, the 1999 legislation was repealed and replaced with CT Public Act 22-138 to reflect current structure/partners/goal**
  - outlines our robust, active public-private partnership & collaborative spirit
- **Overarching CFI Goal:** *to support children, mothers and fathers by focusing on the important influence of men who are/will be in fathering roles*
- **CFI partners do this with**
  - A commitment to racial and gender equity and safe engagement
  - Systems change efforts within and across agencies
  - Support of direct services/programming for fathers



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# CFI Council

- **Chaired by DSS Commissioner**
- **Co-chaired by another state agency leader (rotation)**
  - Current Co-Chair: Commissioner of Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- **Membership outlined in P.A. 22-138**
- **Meets quarterly**
- **Oversees the work of the Strategic Plan and identifies opportunities to move fatherhood work forward within and across agencies/networks**



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# CFI Partners



- Dept. of Social Services
- Dept. of Children & Families
- Dept. of Correction
- Dept. of Developmental Services
- Dept. of Housing
- Dept. of Labor
- Dept. of Mental Health & Addition Svcs
- Dept. of Public Health
- Dept. of Veterans Affairs
- Office of Early Childhood
- State Dept. of Education
- Judicial Court Support Svcs Division
- Judicial FSM Division
- Judicial Support Enforcement Services
- Board of Pardons and Parole
- CWCSEO (legislative commission)
- Real Dads Forever
- CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Greater Hartford Legal Aid
- Community Organizations Serving Fathers and Families
- CT State Colleges & Universities
- UConn Health Disparities Institute
- UConn HDFS Department
- United Way of CT - 211
- Consultation Center, Yale University



FROM FOUNDATIONS  
TO THE FUTURE

2024 NATIONAL FATHERHOOD SUMMIT

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# CT's Strategies: Sustain and Grow



- Legislation Outlining Foundation of Collaboration
- Systems Change Approach
  - Culture, Policy/Procedures, Interagency Projects/Processes
- Commitment to Racial and Gender Equity and Safe Engagement
  - CWCSEO, Domestic Violence Partners, CT DCF
- Interagency Fatherhood Memorandum of Understanding
- CFI Strategic Plan



# ***Systems Change Example: CT DSS Fatherhood Program Certification***

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- DSS commitment to enhancing the capacity of community-based fatherhood programs to provide quality services to fathers and families
- As a result, the DSS Fatherhood Program Certification Process was developed in 2004 in partnership with the NPNFF
- Offered every four years\* and involves CFI partner agency staff
- DSS-Certified Fatherhood Programs may offer the *CT Arrearage Adjustment Program* to enrolled participants



# ***Systems Change Example: CT DSS Arrearage Adjustment Program***

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- **The CT AAP was established through legislation**
  - Managed by the DSS Office of Child Support Services (OCSS)
  - DSS-certified fatherhood programs can offer to their enrolled program participants to determine eligibility for AAP
- **AAP offers adjustments to state-owed child support debt to obligors for any eligible cases**
  - Initial adjustment made after completion of DSS-certified Fatherhood Program
  - Quarterly adjustments made if NCP continues to meet AAP requirements



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# CT DSS Interagency MOU on Fatherhood



- Ongoing structural movement within State Government
- Provides a blueprint for Commissioners to keep agencies moving in same positive direction regardless of changes in top leadership
- Provides on-going legitimacy for collaborative intent of legislation
- Demonstrates how the CFI can be supported by various agencies with limited cost



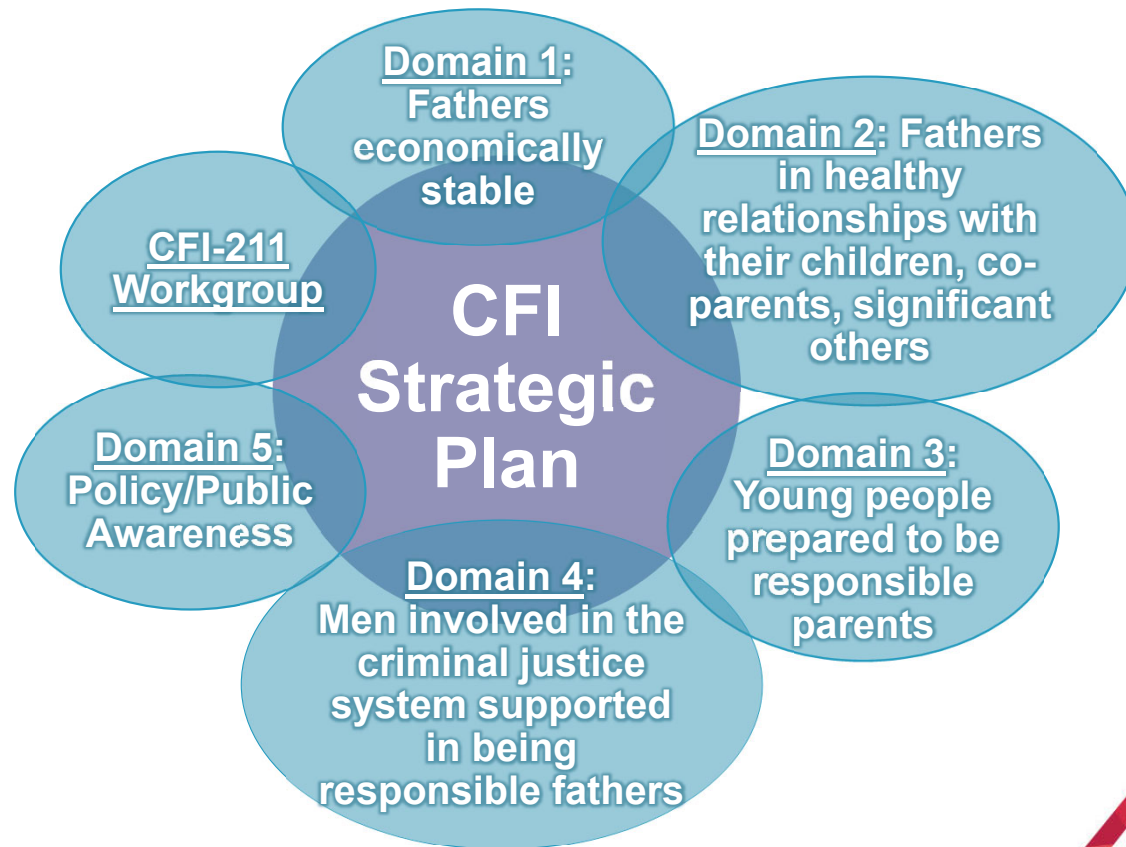
# CFI Strategic Plan

- **Developed with participation from over 50 agencies; included findings from focus groups conducted with fathers and mothers**
- **Recommendations for services delivery system and short- and long-term strategies to**
  - address program, policy and system barriers to dads' engagement with their children
  - expand promising practices already being implemented
  - establish new and strengthen existing partnerships at the state and local levels to support Plan's result statements



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# CFI Strategic Plan, continued

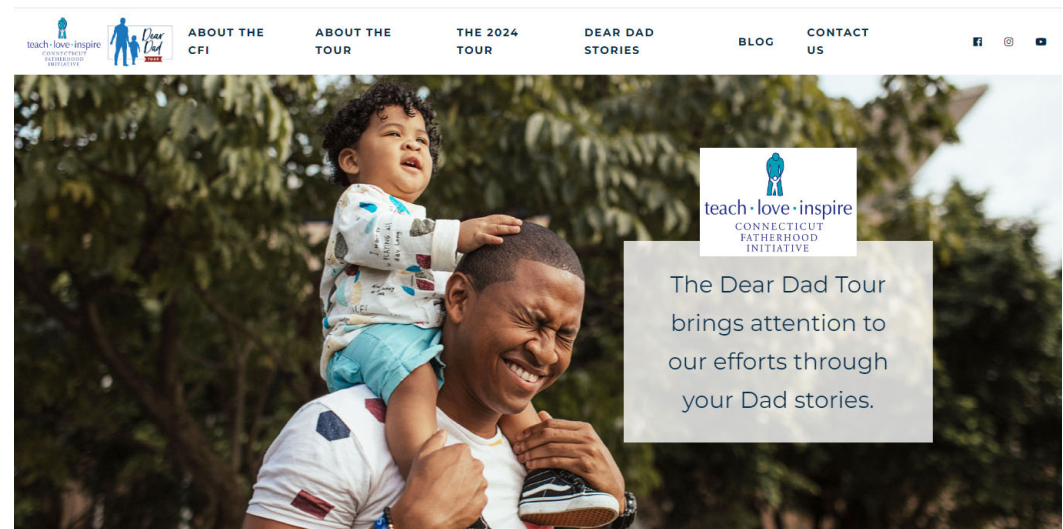




# CFI Strategic Plan, cont'd

## CFI Dear Dad Tour

The CFI Dear Dad Tour is the annual public awareness campaign for the CFI, run as a video booth tour collecting anecdotal “dad stories” from Connecticut residents.



## 2024 CFI Tour Recap:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1PpbodsrYQ>



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# Lessons Learned

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- Gov't has a critical leadership role to play in fatherhood arena
- Many agencies can affect their processes w/out much additional \$\$\$\$
- Children are at the center of our work – make this clear!
- Work with what you've got and what you can get initially
- Be thoughtful and specific in language used/define “neutral” terms

# *Lessons Learned, continued*

- Don't be distracted by what may seem like limited support – keep the work moving – this is relational work!
- When a clear vision is articulated, folks can and will help each other to achieve respective (often mutual) objectives – WIIFMs
- By engaging top level folks, systems change is more easily made
- Culture change can be slow, but actively engaging & assisting staff in a consistent way increases buy-in for change

Can you see the possibility of a similar model - or parts of it - being implemented in your state?

If yes - where will you start...or how will you enhance your current infrastructure?

If no - why not?



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# CFI Website and Contact Information



## Website:

<https://portal.ct.gov/fatherhood>

## CT DSS Contacts:

**Anthony Judkins**

*Social Services Program Manager*  
DSS Office of Child Support Services  
[anthony.judkins@ct.gov](mailto:anthony.judkins@ct.gov)

**Diana DiTunno**

*Senior Educational Program Administrator*  
DSS Office of Organizational & Skill Development  
[diana.ditunno@ct.gov](mailto:diana.ditunno@ct.gov)



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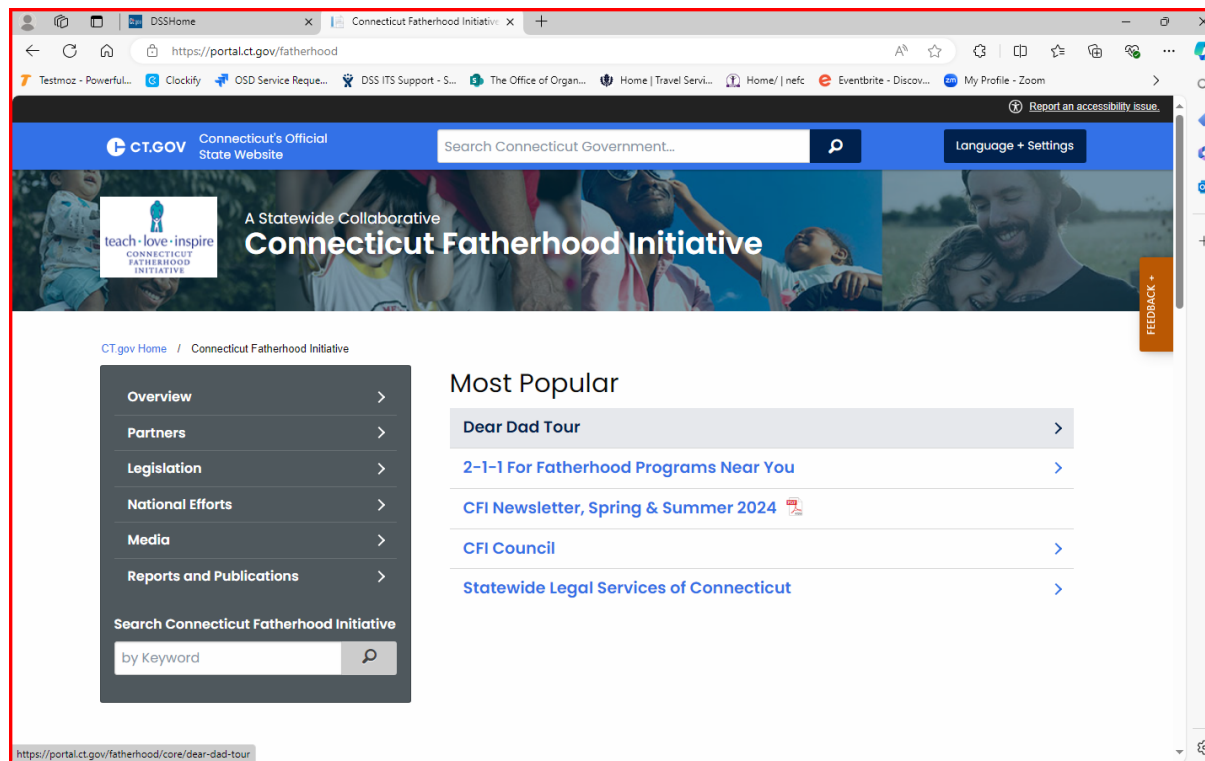
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# CFI Website



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TO THE FUTURE**

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# Upcoming Job Fairs & Recruitment Events



Explore new career paths - View more upcoming recruitment events, job fairs, and employment opportunities. Check back weekly as new recruitment opportunities are posted periodically.

Follow [@cthires\\_official](#) for job postings. Recruitment and hiring event information delivered to your inbox when you [sign up](#) for email alerts.

## All Upcoming Events

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- [October 2, Hiring Event, Montville American Job Center](#)
- [October 3, Career Fair, Chelsea Groton](#)
- [October 30, Middlesex County Job Fair, Marriott - Cromwell](#)

### **CDDOL page for Job Fairs & Recruitment Events:**

[https://portal.ct.gov/dol/divisions/american-job-centers/recruitment-events?language=en\\_US](https://portal.ct.gov/dol/divisions/american-job-centers/recruitment-events?language=en_US)

### **To subscribe to email alerts on upcoming hiring events and job openings:**

[Get the latest recruitment information from the CT Department of Labor \(confirmsubscription.com\)](#)

### **State Workforce Programs:**

[State Programs \(ct.gov\)](#)

### **Connecticut Youth Employment Programs:**

[https://portal.ct.gov/dol/divisions/workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act-wioa-administration-unit/ct-youth-employment-information?language=en\\_US](https://portal.ct.gov/dol/divisions/workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act-wioa-administration-unit/ct-youth-employment-information?language=en_US)