

# *Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting*



**December 16, 2024  
Meeting Summary**

## **Members in Attendance:**

Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves, Chair, Department of Social Services (DSS)  
Commissioner Nancy Navarretta, Co-Chair, Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services  
Dr. Kari Adamsons, University of Connecticut, Human Development & Family Sciences  
Tanya Barrett, United Way of CT  
Michael Bartley, Department of Labor  
Rose Colon, Great Hartford Legal Aid  
Diana DiTunno, DSS Office of Organizational & Skill Development  
Eulalia Garcia (for DC Sharonda Carlos), Department of Correction  
Melvette Hill, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity  
Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly, Dept. of Children and Families  
Anthony (Tony) Judkins, DSS Office of Child Support Services (D5 Committee 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  
Lynn Reeves, DSS Office of Child Support Services  
Meghan Scanlon, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Commissioner Ronald Welch, Department of Veterans Affairs  
Jennifer Wilder (for Commissioner Beth Bye), Office of Early Childhood  
Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams, Dept. of Children and Families (D3 Committee Chair)  
Chairperson Jennifer Zaccagnini, Board of Pardons and Parole

## **Member Regrets:**

Katie Breslin, Office of Policy Management  
Commissioner Beth Bye, Office of Early Childhood  
Heriberto (Eddie) Cajigas, Department of Labor (D1 Committee Chair)  
Deputy Commissioner Sharonda Carlos, Department of Correction  
Joseph DiTunno, Judicial Court Support Services Division (D4 Committee Co-Chair)  
Douglas Edwards, Real Dads Forever  
John Frassinelli, State Department of Education  
Scott Gaul, Office of Policy Management  
Anthony Gay, Department of Children and Families (Domain 2 Committee Chair)  
Steven Hernandez, Esq., ConnCAN (CT Coalition for Achievement Now)  
Lesley Mara, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities  
Jackson Pierre-Louis, Department of Developmental Services  
Robert Pinnock, Career Resources (Provider Representative, Direct Service Level)  
Ariana Trotman, GBAPP (Provider Representative, Program Manager Level)  
Patricia Wilson-Pheanious, Consultant

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### **Welcome/Introductions**

Commissioner Barton Reeves opened the meeting and welcomed Members. She acknowledged a recent change to Council membership for the Department of Housing, stating Steve DiLella will be serving as Commissioner Mosquera-Bruno's designee. Steve was unable to attend today's meeting, but is an experienced, longstanding partner and will be an asset to the Council.

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

Commissioner Navarretta asked members to review minutes from the September 30 meeting. Members reviewed, a motion to accept the minutes was made by DC Michael Williams and seconded by Tony Judkins. Minutes were accepted as written.

### **Strategic Plan: Implementation Update**

#### **Domain Committee Chair Reports**

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

Commissioner Navarretta shared that D1 Chair Eddie Cajigas sent regrets for today's meeting; the Committee remains on hiatus so 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, who sent regrets for today's meeting. She reported the Committee did not meet during the last quarter. However, Anthony did share just yesterday that the survey the group had developed was re-disseminated to DCF adolescent unit social workers and this time they were successful in receiving a high number of responses. The results will be reviewed and analyzed, and Anthony will be able to share information at the next Council meeting.

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

Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams reported that the individual meetings with leadership from the agencies included in the Committee's synopsis document began in October, to discuss the identified recommendations and discuss other areas under each agency's programs where this work might fit. These meetings begin the conversation about not only the feasibility of implementing the Committee's recommendations, but also what a particular agency may need from the CFI Council and other partners to support young fathers and fathers-to-be.

# *Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI)*

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**December 16, 2024**  
**Meeting Summary**

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

Thus far he, Diana and two members of the DCF team who serve on the D3 Committee (Steven Smith and Anthony Gay) have met with leaders and their staff, including the representative from their D3 Committee, from the UConn Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence, GBAPP, Inc., Department of Public Health and CT State Colleges and Universities. He expressed that the conversations have been very positive and some great ideas have been shared as we seek to increase supports for young males as fathers or fathers-to-be, even for those who aren't yet in the role but interventions that may support them to be prepared for when they do become parents as adults. A meeting with the State Department of Education will be held after the New Year.

Dr. Kari Adamsons stated her Department Heads have begun to examine some of the ways to address recommendations. They have identified 10 curricula/evidence-based programs related to Intimate Partner Violence – some (but not all) specifically focus on boys/men, and not offered at UConn specifically. They are also looking at what is available to UConn students in the areas of healthy masculinity, domestic violence and/or violence prevention. She stated there is a general education requirement for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice at UConn, and the class she teaches on masculinity was re-approved under this area as a “topic of inquiry”, so it is not a required class but available as a choice.

Meaghan Scanlon added that one of the ideas that surfaced in the meeting she had with DC Williams is moving along, as Diana and she will be meeting after the New Year with a group of youth that works with CCADV on healthy relationships and violence prevention with peers in high schools across the state. We would like to get their input on messaging that works with youth, get them familiar with the CFI and ask if they have spoken with youth who are parents or parents-to-be about the impact of IPV on children, etc. DC Williams is pleased with the interest level from all leaders and the tangible changes that may be implemented as the ideas discussed come to fruition.

### **DOMAIN 4:**

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

Committee Co-Chair Aileen Keays reported as stated in previous meetings, the Judicial Court Support Services Division (CSSD) will be piloting the curriculum as a web-based training (WBT) session for their staff. CSSD includes Adult Probation, Juvenile Probation, Bail Services and Family Services Divisions.

# *Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting*



**December 16, 2024  
Meeting Summary**

## **DOMAIN 4:**

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

CSSD training staff have been assisting with converting the draft PowerPoint curriculum into WBT format, incorporating an AI (Artificial Intelligence) text-to-talk feature, so that individuals will not need to perform “voice-over” recordings for each of their respective sections. She stated Diana will be providing a brief demo of the training, sharing portions providing more explanation. Diana reminded Members the training session template will include four sections:

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 D4 Committee hopes most of the curriculum template can be utilized by any CT CJS agency for their staff training, with customization only needed for the agency leadership message and the final section reflecting their respective agency’s role within the criminal justice system.

Diana first shared the welcome message from Gary Roberge, Executive Director of CSSD. She also shared the CFI section, which includes the approved high-level overview slides approved by the Council at the last meeting. Members thought the AI voice was very realistic. Diana explained the next step will be to identify where in the training the slides can be made more interactive for learners, with things such as question-answer buttons to click, videos, etc. and they also intend to add “test your knowledge” questions as well. Members stated they liked the approach and expressed how versatile the CFI slides are for training staff at agencies other than for what this curriculum was developed to support in CJS agencies. Diana stated that each CJS agency will be provided the PowerPoint so they can decide what format works best for their staff; WBT like what CSSD will offer, instructor-led training (ILT) or even a hybrid delivery may be possible.

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

Tony Judkins, Committee Chair, reported the 2024 Fall/Winter issue of the CFI newsletter was released in November, highlighting the CT Department of Developmental Services and supports for fathers with disabilities. He noted the suggestion made at the September meeting to include a brief “who we are” statement has been added and will be in all issues moving forward. He reminded Members to share with their respective agency staff and partners.

# *Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI)*

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**December 16, 2024**  
**Meeting Summary**

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

Tony thanked Commissioner Barton Reeves for sending it to all DSS staff and mentioned after each electronic distribution he receives emails from DSS staff with positive feedback. Tony reported the Committee has not met recently and acknowledged the need to balance “meeting fatigue” and competing priorities with continuing the work that needs to be done under this Domain. He plans to meet with Melvette in the coming weeks to bring her up to speed as Co-Chair of the Committee. They will review the group’s work thus far as well as what tasks may be outstanding that the group has discussed in past meetings. From there, goals for 2025 will be identified with the full Committee at their next scheduled meeting.

### **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.

She noted UWCT is working with a group on the development of a possible “chatbot” for the website, to aid those searching for services. She will share more information as this project progresses.

### **Fatherhood MOU**

Commissioner Barton Reeves noted that several state agencies represented on this Council are parties to this agreement. Diana shared each Member has a copy in their meeting folder of the list of bulleted points to which all parties agree. She projected the section on the screens; the group reviewed and discussed suggested edits and/or additional bullet points. She explained the identified changes to this section will then be included in the draft document for each agency to review and accept as they review their respective sections. The revised MOU will be shared again with the Council at a future meeting, once it has been fully executed.

Tony then highlighted Section 1.4 of the MOU, which speaks to reporting. MOU states all parties to the agreement will develop a joint annual report to be presented to the CFI Council, with each agency’s submission due at the end of September. The report must provide information on expenditures and programmatic/statistical activities for each agency related to father engagement; DSS will compile information from each respective identified agency liaison and draft the report for review by all parties. The report will be presented to the full Council at the December meeting once reviewed/approved by parties.

# *Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Council Meeting*

**December 16, 2024  
Meeting Summary**



## **Fatherhood MOU, continued**

Tony reported that the CFI legislation passed in 2022 requires DSS to submit a report to the legislature each December on behalf of our collaborative; therefore, the information from these reports submitted by MOU parties will be included in that report also.

Diana shared that other agencies represented on the Council will also be asked to submit information for both reports, to ensure fatherhood work done by any of the partners is not omitted.

Members discussed data development continuing as a major focus for MOU partners and all agencies represented on the Council. Commissioner Hill-Lilly noted that P20Win supports state agencies with data collection and data sharing strategies and supports data requests across state agencies. She confirmed Katie Breslin is involved with this effort. Diana stated Katie serves on the Data Development Subcommittee for the D5 Committee and attends Council meetings as she is able. She will reach out to Katie, who was unable to attend today.

## **Provider Coalition Report**

Nicole Kilduff stated several staff completed required training from the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) to be certified as group facilitators for NFI's 24/7 Dad curriculum. DSS paid for the training as there was a lot of staff turnover at the 8 DSS-certified fatherhood programs. The programs have been busy with direct service provision and holiday-related tasks such as preparing activities for the fathers and their children, working with local partners on toy drives, soliciting contributions from local agencies, etc.

She reported staff are excited about the New England Fathering Conference next March, and they have already begun registering program staff and dads. She thanked the Commissioner and Tony on behalf of the coalition for supporting the staff and program dads' attendance, as educational events like this are an integral part of the work.

She also thanked Commissioner Navarretta for the partnership DMHAS has built with the fatherhood programs. The fatherhood program staff recently participated in the Sustainability Summit and while there, met with Captain Chris Jones from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), who seemed to be very interested in the infrastructure our state has established for fatherhood in general, and the more recent work we have done with DMHAS mental health supports/substance use prevention. One of the programs brought some of the dads they have been working with and it was very impactful to hear from them about how the information, support and services they have received helped them and their children.

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Meeting Summary**



**Other Business**

**Membership List: November 2024**

A revised Membership list was provided and can be found at the end of these minutes.

**New England Fathering Conference (NEFC)**

Tony shared registration is open for the 2025 NEFC. He thanked CFI partner agencies who have committed to being Sponsors. The \$3,500.00 contribution provides five slots for staff to attend. Once DSS has been provided with the names/email addresses for the 5 designees for these Sponsor slots, Diana will send them a special registration code and instructions.

**2025 Meeting Dates**

The 2025 meeting dates have been scheduled. The location for all meetings will be DSS Central Office in Hartford and the timeframe will remain as 1:30-3:30pm.

- Monday, March 30, 2025
- Monday, June 30, 2025
- September 29, 2025
- December 15, 2025

Outlook invites will be sent by Commissioner Barton Reeves' office to Members in the coming weeks.

*Meeting Adjourned.*

**Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Council Membership  
November 2024**

<b>MEMBER NAME</b>	<b>AGENCY</b>
Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves (Council Chair)	Department of Social Services
Commissioner Nancy Navarretta (Council Co-Chair)	Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Dr. Kari Adamsons	UConn Human Development & Family Sciences
Tanya Barrett (CFI-211 Workgroup Chair)	United Way of CT
Michael Bartley	Department of Labor
Paul Bourdoulous	Judicial Branch Support Enforcement Services
Commissioner Beth Bye (Jennifer Wilder)	Office of Early Childhood
Heriberto (Eddie) Cajigas (Domain 1 Committee Chair)	Department of Labor
Deputy Commissioner Sharonda Carlos	Department of Correction
Rose Colon	Greater Hartford Legal Aid
Steve DiLella	Department of Housing
Joseph DiTunno (Domain 4 Committee Co-Chair)	Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division
Douglas Edwards	Real Dads Forever
Hon. Michael Ferguson	Judicial Branch Family Support Magistrate Division
John Frassinelli	State Department of Education
Anthony Gay (Domain 2 Committee Chair)	Department of Children and Families (DCF)
Dr. Derrick Gordon	The Consultation Center at Yale University
Steven Hernández, Esq.	ConnCAN (The Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now)
Melvette Hill	Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity
Anthony Judkins (Domain 5 Committee Chair)	Department of Social Services, Office of Child Support Services
Aileen Keays (Domain 4 Committee Co-Chair)	UConn Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy
Nicole Kilduff (Provider Coalition Rep: Executive level)	Family Strides, Inc.
Kevin Krusz	Department of Public Health
Lesley Mara	CT State Colleges and Universities
Jackson Pierre-Louis	Department of Developmental Services
Robert Pinnock (Provider Coalition Rep: Direct Svc level)	Career Resources, Inc.
Wizdom Powell, PhD	UHC Health Disparities Institute
Lynn Reeves	Department of Social Services, Office of Child Support Services
Meghan Scanlon	CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Ariana Trotman (Provider Coalition Rep: Prog Manager level)	GBAPP, Inc.
Commissioner Ronald Welch	Department of Veterans Affairs
Deputy Commissioner Michael Williams	Dept. of Children and Families
Former Rep. Patricia Wilson Pheanious	Consultant
Chairperson Jennifer Zaccagnini	Board of Pardons and Paroles