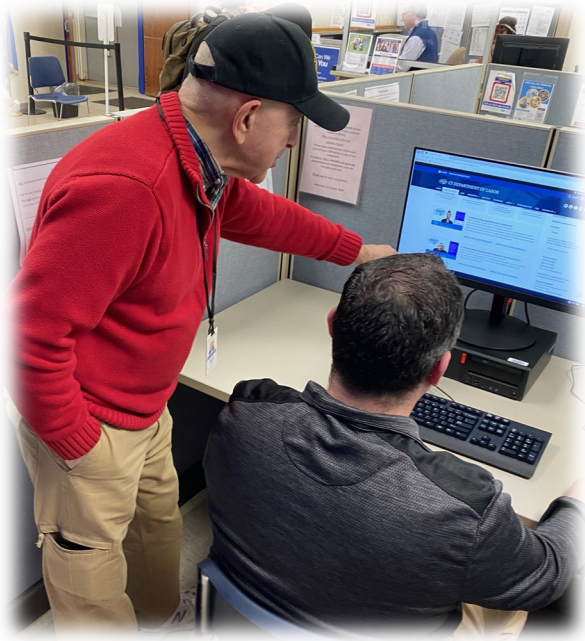


# BIANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 8, Spring/Summer 2024



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INITIATIVE



**DOL's American Job Center**

## Spring/Summer Edition

### **This Issue's focus:**

Employment and Training

Celebrating Father's Day

A Dad's Success Story

Noncustodial Parent Program

**Welcome to the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Biannual Newsletter!**

### **Message from Our Network**

**Commissioner Danté Bartolomeo**

*Department of Labor*

"The Connecticut Department of Labor is honored to partner with the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative to support confident, successful, healthy fathers. Building family economic security is essential for all parents, and the Labor Department can help. Whether you're new to the workforce, looking for a different career, or have your eye on a specific job, American Job Centers across the state are available to provide skills training and interview preparation, help you find a career fair, or even explore new opportunities in registered apprenticeships. The right path to the right job builds job security and financial stability, and that's good for all kids—and the adults who raise them."

Contact CT Department of Labor at: <https://portal.ct.gov/dol>

## Fathers in the Workforce

This issue highlights DOL's leadership and partnership with others to impact the lives of fathers and parents throughout Connecticut positively. DOL has undertaken some exciting collaborations with other state agencies and community organizations, including some that people may only sometimes associate with the Department of Labor. The Non-Custodial Parent and Golden Ticket programs highlight our partnerships with DSS, the Judicial Department, and the Workforce Development Boards. The American Job Centers (AJCs) are the primary vehicle we use to provide these programs to dads throughout Connecticut.

### CFI Celebrates Father's Day



"Do the best you can until you know better.  
Then when you know better, do better."

*Maya Angelou*

## A Dad's Success Story

### *The Non-Custodial Parent Program*

My journey with the Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) Program began in November 2021. I was referred to the program by the court because I was delinquent in making child support payments.

Earl, my employment navigator, introduced me to the program. My essential goals were employment and being able to resume my child support payments.

After being enrolled in the NCP Program, my mother passed away, and as one can imagine, it was difficult to think about searching for employment. So, Earl would check in on me. Earl would suggest adjusting my search and the importance of following up after an interview. During my time in the program, I have been able to secure employment.

One thing that I appreciate about the NCP Program is that my Employment Navigator has always been there. His coaching style is always positive, encouraging me to stay focused and keep moving forward. When I needed support services for work clothing or a bus pass, that was available, too.

*by D. Smith*

## Connecting Parents Involved with the Child Support System to Employment Services

In January 2020, the Department of Labor, the Department of Social Services Office of Child Support Services, and the Judicial Branch Support Enforcement Services came together to create a new and improved process for connecting clients in the Child Support system with employment services at the American Job Centers. This new process aimed to create a "warm handoff" of parents to the AJC. When COVID hit in March of 2020, the process stopped. Then, beginning February 1, 2023, the process was re-launched. All Judicial Support Enforcement Services (SES) and Department of Social Services (DSS) Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) staff recommend that the Family Support Magistrates include the American Job Center (AJC) as a requirement for any job search order. SES and DSS OCSS staff use a yellow referral form (sometimes referred to as the "golden ticket") for child support clients whom the Family Support Magistrates order during court proceedings, connecting them to job search activities and employment services. Staff also provide this referral form to clients seen prior to court dates when employment services needs are identified.

## Non-Custodial Parent Program

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) received Social Service Block Grant (SSBG) Funds in October 2020 to provide employment services to job seekers who were negatively impacted by the economic downturn that resulted from COVID-19 and the gaps in service created by COVID-19. CTDOL pursued an employment services program to serve non-custodial parents connected to the Judicial system over child support-related matters. Referrals to the program came from the Connecticut Department of Social Service's Office of Child Support Services (CTDSS OCSS) and the Judicial Department's Support Enforcement Services (SES). It would come to be known as the Non-Custodial Parent Pilot Program (NCP).

The target audience was unemployed or underemployed adults who were connected to these two agencies because of having child support obligations. Non-custodial parents have historically struggled to connect to services in **American Job Centers (AJCs)** around the state. The program's goal WAS to provide case management services, job search assistance, and educational and vocational training opportunities to these adults to get them back to work and in a position to pay down their child support obligations. Supports such as transportation, internet access, and Chrome books were also made available. The program began receiving referrals in June 2021. One hundred fifty-six non-custodial parents were referred to the program between June 2021 and the program's end on September 30, 2023.

**In total, 70 clients were enrolled in the program.**

- 26 clients became employed or improved their employment situation
- 12 completed deckbuilding or forklift operator training
- 27 completed a resume
- 19 received transportation assistance
- 8 received Chrome books
- 26 received other support such as work attire, job interview attire, equipment, housing support, etc.

The collaboration between three state agencies—DOL, DSS OCSS—and the Judicial Department's SES Division, Capital Workforce Partners, and their vendor EDSI exemplifies how positive outcomes for Dads can be produced when agencies work together.

### ***Did you know?***

**CTDOL has been an active supporter and sponsor of the annual New England Fathering Conference for several years.** On the first day of the conference, when the state agency roundtable discussions are held, CTDOL staff lead the Employment roundtable discussion every year by addressing multiple topics impacting dads: what employment readiness supports are available to job seekers in the AJCs, the types of training available and the funding available to pay for those training, questions around hours and wages, the legality of questions on job applications and much more. DOL Deputy Commissioner Mark Polzella also represented the agency at the New England state leaders convening during the 2023 New England Fathering Conference in Newport, Rhode Island. Collaborating with Judicial Magistrates

**DOL has been strengthening its partnership with the CT Judicial Branch Family Support Magistrate Division.** Unit Directors Mike Bartley and Sandy Reis, along with Samantha Staffin from Capital Workforce Partners, provided Chief Family Support Magistrate Michael Ferguson with a tour of the Hartford AJC. Chief Ferguson, in turn, invited Mike, Sandy, and Samantha to give presentations to the Family Support Magistrates around the state, enhancing their awareness of all the various resources available to dads at the AJCs. In addition, Magistrates around the state receive regular notices of AJC Employer recruitment and DOL - sponsored Job Fairs.

## CFI Partners

### CT Departments of:

- Social Services
- Children and Families
- Correction
- Developmental Services
- Education
- Housing
- Labor
- Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Public Health
- Veterans Affairs

### also

- Office of Early Childhood
- Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division, Support Enforcement Services, and Family Support Magistrate Division
- Board of Pardons and Parole
- Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity
- CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- CT State Colleges and Universities
- United Way of CT
- Legal services, researchers, and numerous community-based, family, and youth-serving providers

## The Power of Collaboration - A Memorandum of Understanding

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) has been a partner of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) since its inception by recognizing that employment services afford fathers to become emotionally and financially responsible, as described in Public Act 99-193, "services that increase the ability of fathers to meet the financial and medical needs of their children through employment services."

In 2007, CTDOL was a founding member supporting **CTDSS' vision of an MOU structure of system partners** to ensure fathers are connected to essential services. CTDOL's MOU description is as follows: "WHEREAS, a collaborative effort to help fathers secure and retain employment increases the likelihood that their families can become self-sufficient."

Through the robust MOU framework, CTDOL was asked to support the implementation of the CFI Strategic Plan (Plan) to ensure fathers are connected to employment services opportunities.

CTDOL was invited to Chair the Plan's Domain 1 Committee: Fathers Economically Stable, which addresses the need for employment, education, early childhood, disabilities, mental health, housing, transportation, and corrections.

CTDOL supports the New England Fathering Conference each year by presenting at the State System Roundtable on workforce development and attending state leadership discussions on fatherhood. The MOU framework has since been used as a bridge to support new legislation, such as Public Act No. 22-138, which describes CTDOL leadership involvement.

The MOU provided the foundation for how state agencies support fathers and has become a practical document that CTDOL has embraced over the years through our partnership with the CTDSS. Since its establishment, the MOU partnership has expanded to fourteen state agencies with similar shared values.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) programs are available to all applicants and recipients without regard to race, color, religious creed, age, sex (including pregnancy and sexual harassment), marital status (including civil union status), national origin, ancestry, intellectual disability, physical disability, (including blindness), past or present history of mental disability, learning disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, workplace hazards to reproductive systems, veteran status, prior conviction of a crime or other factors which cannot lawfully be the basis for employment actions or licensing, retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion or unless the provisions of sec. 46a-80(b) or 46a-81 (b) of the Connecticut General Statutes are controlling or there are bona fide occupational qualifications excluding persons in one of the above protected groups and status as a victim of domestic violence. DSS has a TDD/TTY line for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired and have a TDD/TTY: 1-800-842-4524, or dial 7-1-1. Auxiliary aids are also available for blind or visually impaired persons. The DSS is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer.

## We Want to Hear From You!!!

Let us know what you would like to see in upcoming newsletters!

Email us at: [anthony.judkins@ct.gov](mailto:anthony.judkins@ct.gov)