

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 3, Winter 2022



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CONNECTICUT
FATHERHOOD
INITIATIVE

Winter Edition

This Issue's Focus:

Fathers and Child Welfare
Good Family Function
Healthy Relationships
Tools for Conflict Resolution
Community Efforts for Fathers



Message from Our Network

Comissioner Vanessa Dorantes

Department of Children and Families

"Children will experience greater outcomes emotionally, educationally, psychologically, and within personal relationships when they have an active father figure. Engaging fathers starts with believing they are equal partners in parenting and recognizing the unique dynamics present in their interactions with others. Across systems, we must continue to look at opportunities to lift and empower fathers, including addressing the stigma attached to seeking support. The future of our families depends on what we do today, and each successful father leads to a more successful child."

For more information about DCF programs and services, visit <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/1-DCF/About-DCF>

Healthy Relationships Through Co-Parenting

Raising children can arguably be one of the most rewarding yet challenging experiences a parent may encounter. Through the ups and downs and twists and turns, this journey also has the potential to create many bonding and memorable moments for the adults involved. For some families, the accumulating responsibility of parenting can create stress, resentment, and division.

There are many reasons why parents may separate or become detached from their relationship – finances, lack of quality time, infidelity, etc. – many of which are not the fault of the child. Although children may not be the primary reason for the strained relationship, they are often the ones who experience the biggest impact.

Using effective co-parenting skills can have the potential to influence the family relationship in many ways. They can help to establish guidelines and strategies intended to promote the healthy growth and development of their children. When parenting is the focal point of both parents, it can reduce instances of conflict, disruption, and unwanted behaviors.

To do so, both parents must be committed to identifying indicators that things are not going well, acknowledge that shared parenting is a collaboration, and create a sense of balance with healthy and appropriate boundaries. When co-parenting, there must be an openness to communicate and operate from a child-centered approach. When this does not happen, children often struggle with loyalty conflicts, confusion, and doubt.



There is a misconception that co-parenting skills are only required for divorced, non-custodial, and separated individuals. The reality is that all adults who are responsible for the safety and well-being of children benefit from having a progressive parenting approach that is intentional and unified with action. Children have an astute way of picking up on conflict and can use that as a means of self-service or manipulation.

By incorporating sound co-parenting tools and strategies into their lives, parents can work together to identify ways to provide their children with the psychological safety and emotional support they need during times of uncertainty and transition. Like many things- this requires practice, repetition, and preparation for minor setbacks. Research has shown that when healthy parent functioning is in place, children experience a stronger sense of safety and attachment.

Submitted by Marcus Stallworth, LMSW: President and CEO of Stallworth Counseling, LLC. Portions of this article are extracted from his published and nationally recognized curriculum: *The Building Blocks for Effective Co-Parenting*. Mr. Stallworth is co-owner of Welcome 2 Reality, LLC, Director of Training and Implementation for the Child Welfare League of America, and adjunct professor at the Graduate School of Social Work at Fordham University. For more information, please visit www.stallworthcounseling.com.

Ty Thurgood Story:

How Connecticut's foster care system is setting a new standard

With some fundamental changes, Connecticut's foster care system has become a model for the nation, reuniting nearly 2,400 children with their families since 2019. NBC's Cynthia McFadden reports for TODAY, introducing the system's pioneering new leader and some of the families she's helping.



Link to Article:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/connecticut-reduced-foster-care-population-third-2019-rcna51876>

Fatherhood Manologues:

The Fatherhood Manologues highlight the importance, value, and contributions of fathers through their involvement and presence in their children's lives

Stories provide a unique point of view on being a father or being fathered. All the stories will take you on an emotional roller coaster that reminds the audience of the important role fathers plays in the lives of their children. The significance of having an involved father or the impact of father absenteeism is felt in each of the personally delivered stories. With the societal stereotypes and social expectations wrapped tightly around the term "fatherhood," the Fatherhood "Manologues" is a much-needed artistic expression of men creating their narratives. Funny, entertaining, serious, and sad, these stories will have you wanting to reconnect and repair broken relationships, as well as reflect on the bond with your father.



The performance of Fatherhood Manologues is an exhilarating collection of short stories about fatherhood. Each story provides a unique point of view on being a father or being fathered. All the stories will take you on an emotional roller coaster that reminds the audience of the important role fathers plays in the lives of their children. The Fatherhood Manologues also focuses on the significance of having involved fathers or the impact of father absenteeism as it pertains to an individual's manhood journey.

Follow this link to view the Manologues:

<https://www.themanhoodtree.com/fatherhood-manologues.html>

CFI Partners

CT Departments of:

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

and

- 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

We Want to Hear From You!!!

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

Email us at: fatherhood@ct.gov

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.

Community Resource Highlights

Wellmore Behavioral Health

Wellmore Behavioral Health has provided Fatherhood Engagement Services (FES) to Region 5 for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) since 2018. The FES program provides intensive outreach, case management, and 24/7Dad© group programming to fathers referred by DCF. FES assists fathers with increasing positive parenting skills to improve their relationships with their children, supporting their work with DCF, and making connections to other services that will help them address needs related to fatherhood.

Emil Renzullo, one of the Fatherhood Facilitators at Wellmore, has worked with hundreds of dads in CT for 20 years and has many success stories. Emil always makes it a point to ask the question of who and what is a nurturing father. Out of all the many answers he received over the years, it was most simply broken down into the following: "We want the best for our children. We have discovered that 'quality time' is the most important thing we can give them. It cannot be replaced, and as a father, we must instill characteristics and qualities that let our kids grow into responsible adults. We must be aware that they do as we do, and because of this, we must be aware of our actions. If we as fathers want our children to have morals and values, we must love, nurture, work hard, be dedicated, have compassion, and fully accept this job for a lifetime. We will strive as a dad to be someone our children will be proud of.

The Fatherhood Engagement Program means something different to all of us, but we stand together believing that Fatherhood is a journey that we are not charged with. It is one that we are blessed with."



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