

BIANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 9, Fall/Winter 2024



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CONNECTICUT
FATHERHOOD
INITIATIVE

Jacob and his Dad



Fall/Winter Edition

This Issue's focus:

Proud Parents Council

Healthy Relationships

STEP Initiative

DDS Vision

Welcome to the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Biannual Newsletter!

Message from Our Network

Commissioner Jordan Scheff

Department of Developmental Services

The mission of the Department of Developmental Services is to partner with the individuals we support and their families, to support lifelong planning, and to join with others to create and promote meaningful opportunities for individuals to participate as valued members of their communities fully.

DDS is one of the founding members of the CT Fatherhood Initiative. Along with our sister agencies, we have worked to get fathers involved in supporting their children. For DDS, this has two prongs: fathers engaged with supporting their children with intellectual disability and fathers with intellectual disability who are supporting their children in a nurturing environment. Through our case management, Help Line, and specialized services, we coordinate and collaborate with other state and community agencies to support fathers across our service sector.

CT Fatherhood Initiative: Who Are We?

If you are a part of a system serving fathers and families in Connecticut, *we are you!* The CT Fatherhood Initiative (CFI), is a statewide multi-agency collaboration, led by the Department of Social Services, working toward a common goal: *to support children, mothers and fathers by focusing on the important influence of men who are or will be in fathering roles.* CFI partners do this through systems change efforts as well as supporting direct services and programming for fathers, with a commitment to racial equity, gender equity and safe engagement of fathers with their children.

Dad and his Son



Benjamin Carmichael Jr is the father of 6-year-old Benjamin Carmichael III. Benji resides with his father and mom, Jessica. Benjamin is a loving, devoted father and Christian with strong faith who is doing his best. He receives in-home support to enhance his parenting skills. He loves to spend time with Benji, his “little man.” Benji is an active young man who loves sports, music, and moonwalking when Thriller comes on.

Greg & Michael Deschamps

Greg and his son Michael, who reside in a DDS - operated facility receiving 24-hour care for many years, continue to maintain a good relationship and strong bond. They visit each other at least weekly for lunch, shopping, and various outings. Michael is an excellent drummer and enjoys music. He enjoys going to concerts with his father, Greg, and even took up the opportunity to play in a band. Greg’s relationship with the DDS team that coordinates the supports for Michael is strengthened by active communication, supporting advocacy, and acknowledging all hopes and desires. Greg also serves as a great mentor for other fathers supporting their children with intellectual disabilities. Greg has previously attended a New England Fathering Conference and was moved by the “Dad Stories” and used that experience to benefit others.

Healthy Relationships

Our DDS Vision promotes all individuals to “Have safe, meaningful and empowering relationships .”

- *Everyone has the right to start a family if they choose.*

The Department of Developmental Services is committed to promoting the respect and dignity of individuals who receive services from the department or its providers. We want to ensure that all individuals have the right and are supported to have relationships of their choice, are given the privacy and opportunity to express their sexuality and are educated and helped to have healthy and meaningful relationships.

The Healthy Relationship Series is held 3 times a year and hosted by our Self Advocate Coordinators and Planned Parenthood.

If you would like more information on the Healthy Relationship Series, Please visit <https://portal.ct.gov/advocatescorner/healthy-relationships/healthy-relationships/healthy-relationships>

The Circles program is focused on appropriate levels of intimacy within the relationships we hold in our lives. If you wish to learn more about the Circles program, please get in touch with Samantha.Crees@ct.gov



STEP Initiative

Supporting Transformation to Empower People

STEP is at the heart of DDS's work to help individuals experience the DDS mission and live the most inclusive, independent lives possible. DDS has a variety of services to help meet someone's support needs. These supports can help you or your family members reach your goals.

The supports highlighted in this initiative are:

- Self-Directed Supports
- Community Companion Homes
- Supportive Housing
- Individualized Home Supports
- Assistive Technology
- Remote Supports
- Employment

Assistive Technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, software, or product used to increase, maintain, or improve your ability to live more independently, including at school, work, home, and community. Assistive Technology ranges from low-tech to high-tech devices or equipment. AT is intended to complement, not replace, staff.

Enabling people to take more control of their lives and ensuring they feel valued and respected in the process is a critical first STEP toward this goal. Many of the core STEP supports are newer and may be less familiar to some, so STEP is helping to highlight and expand them.

Proud Parents Council

The Proud Parents' Council is a group of parents from all over the State of Connecticut that have formed an alliance, supporting parents with disabilities to ensure they are not discriminated against, ensuring families can stay together, and children can grow up in loving homes with their parents.

This group offers resources for parenting support, advocacy, crisis intervention, and for fathers. To learn more about the Proud Parent Council, Please visit <https://www.proudparents.info/>

Jacob and his Dad

Jacob's goal was to live independently after living with his father since birth. His father thought that Jacob would live with him forever, but with assistive technology and the support of DDS, Jacob is able to fulfill his dream and maintain this bond with his father.

DDS Video on AT Featuring Jacob
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkPHaLtxNU>

Meet Chauntel and family! Chauntel's dad, Cres, also a Regional Director at DDS, expressed his overwhelming support and appreciation for the work DDS has done to enhance his daughter's life. Under the STEP program, Chauntel has her own apartment and is the happiest her parents have seen her. She invites her parents over for dinner, and she just celebrated her birthday at her apartment with guests of her choosing, where she had a blast. Chauntel is naturally a happy person. She is an active member of her community, volunteers at local venues, and is well-known by her neighbors and local shops.



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

Our Vision at the Department of Developmental Services is that all citizens supported by the Department are valued contributors to their communities as family members, friends, neighbors, students, employees, volunteers, members of civic and religious associations, voters, and advocates.

These individuals:

- Live, learn, work, and enjoy community life in places where they can use their strengths, talents, and passions.
- Have safe, meaningful, and empowering relationships.
- Have families who feel supported from the earliest years and throughout their lifetimes.
- Have lifelong opportunities and the assistance to learn things that matter to them.
- Make informed choices, take responsibility for their lives, and experience the dignity of risk.
- Earn money to facilitate personal choices.
- Know their rights and responsibilities and pursue opportunities to live the life they choose.

Quality and Systems Improvement Division Director, Jackson Pierre-Louis, serves as the DDS representative for the CT Fatherhood Initiative. If you are interested in learning more about this initiative, please contact: Jackson.Pierre-Louis@ct.gov

Those interested in learning more about STEP, please talk with your DDS Case Manager.

There are creative ways to use your funding to get you the support you desire.

More information on the STEP initiative can be found at this website: <https://portal.ct.gov/dds-step>

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, 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. 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.