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CONNECTICUT  
FATHERHOOD  
INITIATIVE

# **Strategic Plan**

## ***Implementation Update***

**December 2019**

*Implementation Update: Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Strategic Plan*  
December 2019

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## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Executive Summary**

The CFI Strategic Plan (Plan) was launched at the December 2015 CFI Council meeting. The initial steps taken involved activities outlined under Section V of the Plan, Service Delivery System Design (see pages 31-35 of this document). This included the reconstitution of the CFI Council membership, identification of members for the CFI Council Executive Team, identification of a Co-chair for the Council and Executive Team, and the review of action steps and implementation levels to begin the work. Pages 36-40 describe these service delivery systems activities.

The Plan outlined recommendations for short- and long-term strategies to address program, policy and system barriers to dads' engagement with their children, expand promising practices already being implemented, and establish new and strengthen existing partnerships at the state and local levels to support the result statements: "Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy and ready to lead successful lives" and, "All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children." The result statements were supported by a set of population indicators that quantified the various conditions of wellbeing associated with the results. The indicators presented the most relevant population data currently available when the Plan was written. A major focus of the work ahead is the need to collect uniform data on dads and their relationships with their children. Obtaining these new data will lead to new or more focused indicators. Further, in advancing its work, the CFI System recognizes the challenges faced by fathers who most need support, including but not limited to those who are low-income, men of color, ex-offenders, and veterans. The CFI System carries on its work with cultural and gender responsiveness.

The first meeting of the reconstructed CFI Council was held September 2016. The focus of the meeting included outlining of the steps that have been taken to re-form the Council and continued confirmation needed for representatives as outlined in the Plan, discussion about areas where DSS as lead for the CFI was asking for support and areas that may need to be modified in the Plan and identification of next steps in preparation for the December CFI Council meeting. The Plan was developed to be a fluid document, just like the work partners do with dads, moms and families. After its first meeting in December 2016, the CFI Council's Executive Team recommended, and all CFI Council members agreed, the standing Committees noted in the Plan were expansive and therefore the initial Committees formed to implement the Plan's strategies should relate to the Plan's identified Domains, namely: *fathers economically stable; fathers in healthy relationships with their children, co-parents, significant others; young people prepared to be responsible parents; men involved in the criminal justice system supported in being responsible fathers; policy/public awareness*. Domain Committee Chairs and members were confirmed, and Committees began meeting in the Spring of 2017. Updates for each Committee can be found on pages 40-57 of this document.

A cross-Domain workgroup was formed as a result of the Committee work, to strengthen the connection of the CFI to CT 2-1-1 Infoline. Information about that Workgroup's efforts thus far can be found on pages 58-60.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **I. Introduction**

#### ***Overview***

*Fathers Count* was chosen as the title for the *Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative's* (herein after referred to as *CFI*) strategic plan (herein after referred to as the Plan) both because fathers are essential to the wellbeing of their children and because in Connecticut and most of the rest of the country fathers are not always counted in a way that acknowledges their critical contributions. While the field of fatherhood has made strides over the past decade, fathers, especially those who do not live in the same household as their children, are often not included in discussions about how to support parents, children and families.

Fathers have historically been viewed as important to financial support, but not necessarily to other critical areas in a child's life. A growing body of research debunks that myth, but many research and programming efforts still focus on the mother as primary caregiver. Yet the research shows that when fathers also have a role in caregiving, children achieve better outcomes and enjoy a better quality of life than children who are deprived of their fathers' positive presence. Despite this research, dads are often invisible to family-serving programs, and dads' potential contributions, as well as their own needs for support to be better dads, are ignored. *CFI* partners have long recognized that noncustodial fathers look a lot like the custodial mothers who access services through our systems; they have similar social service, educational, and employment needs.

The focus of our efforts is the wellbeing of children. Our attention to supporting the active engagement of fathers is not to suggest that they play a more important role than mothers and is not intended to deny the irreplaceable parenting that mothers do. Providing supports to both parents directly benefits children. Based on the research showing the potential impact of men in children's lives, our definition of "father" is expansive; it includes any man with biological, foster or adoptive ties, stepfathers, fathers-to-be, and men who have a paternal role in a child's life (boyfriends, fiancés, family friends, and so on).

Several critical considerations guide all of our work. Safe engagement of fathers with their children is a priority. We are promoting responsible fatherhood and recognize that not all men are ready for that role. For this reason, the issue of domestic violence must always be considered in our efforts. The *CFI* partners continue to recognize the importance of open communication between those seeking to prevent domestic violence and fatherhood practitioners. Since the inception of the Fatherhood Initiative in 1999, the state's domestic violence experts have been partners in the provision of staff training, technical assistance, development of surveys for stakeholders, and facilitation of a cross-discipline stakeholders' forum to create dialogue and gather information regarding the intersection of fatherhood and domestic violence. These experts continue to be critical partners, participating in the development of this Plan and the implementation work ahead of us, with a common commitment to eradicate violence in Connecticut's families.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **I. Introduction, continued**

We are especially committed to engaging parents as active participants and leaders in the *CFI*. We recognize the diverse populations affected by our work and our responsibility to be culturally responsive in both policy and practice. Of particular concern are immigrant families and the special hardships faced by undocumented dads.

### ***Major Themes of Our Plan***

As we began our investigation of the current system, we recognized that an overarching challenge in this area is the lack of data about dads and their relationship with their children. As a consequence, we have very little data at a population level to help drive policy, and agencies do not know which of their male clients are dads. We thus cannot provide an accurate picture of the status and wellbeing of dads and their children, and we do not have an effective way to target services to dads who need them. We believe that the old saying is true: What matters gets measured, and what gets measured gets done. For that reason, the systematic and universal collection of data on dads and their children by all agencies and programs is a cross-cutting theme and strategy throughout this plan.

We spent much of our time examining what it would take to encourage and facilitate dads' positive engagement with their children. We discovered that public policy and agency practice create barriers to dads' involvement. In response to this finding, key strategies in our plan revolve around system-wide changes to child support to ensure that it fosters strong emotional bonds between dads and their children, not just the fulfillment of financial obligations. We focused specifically on accessible approaches within the child support system to establish and enforce visitation rights that build on current promising practices here in Connecticut.

We also recognized the profound effect that every aspect of the criminal justice system -- from arrest to final discharge -- has on dads and their children. Our strategies recognize the unique needs of incarcerated dads, young dads in the juvenile justice system, and undocumented dads. We also recognize the need to mitigate the effects of incarceration on families and children.



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **I. Introduction, continued**

All dads need to be financially responsible for their children. However, for many dads, lack of a job at a living wages makes meeting that responsibility impossible and often leads to dads' disengagement from their children. To address this critical issue, we propose partnering with existing systems and programs to focus on the specific employment and training needs of dads, including education.

As much as we need to attend to the needs of current dads and their children, we must also ensure that youth become responsible adults and parents. To this end, we call for implementing a universal K-12 sexual health curriculum that promotes the social, mental and physical health and well-being of all students. We also call for addressing the special needs of teen dads for age-appropriate support in being responsible parents and in not fathering additional children until they are in a position to support them both emotionally and financially.

To accomplish this ambitious agenda, we must build a system that has the capacity to meet the needs of dads and their children and in which people have the skills and knowledge to deliver effective services. The partners will work together to develop a public awareness campaign, as well as curricula, standards, training and professional development opportunities for agencies and programs serving fathers, children, and families. We want to ensure that staff in these agencies recognize what they need to do with regard to fatherhood issues and have the knowledge and skills to do it well.

### ***Development of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) Strategic Plan***

In September 2013, under the leadership of Commissioner Bremby and his staff at the Department of Social Services, *CFI* partners began the development of a statewide strategic plan to strengthen the *Initiative's* infrastructure and enhance its sustainability.

The Plan, adopted by the *CFI* Strategic Planning Workgroup contains recommendations for short- and long-term strategies to address program, policy and system barriers, expand promising practices already being implemented, and establish new and strengthen existing partnerships at the state and local levels to support the result statements: "Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy and ready to lead successful lives" and "All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children."

At the Plan kickoff, our system partners were given an overview of the planning process and an explanation of their roles and responsibilities. The partners recognized the importance of their participation in this process. DSS contracted with the Charter Oak Group to support the Plan's development using a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework and assembled a Strategic Planning Workgroup and various committees to carry out the work. (Our RBA framework is presented in Section II.) These groups were comprised of members of the *CFI's* numerous partners, including state and local agencies serving fathers and families, advocates for women, men and children, and new partners such as the CT Data Collaborative and other research

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **I. Introduction, continued**

institutions. The charge was to work in six identified domains to identify gaps and critical missing partners, develop strategies, and present recommendations to the Connecticut Fatherhood Advisory Council's Executive Team. Over 80 individuals participated in the Plan's development, representing over 50 state and local agencies. The complete list can be found in Appendix B.

From the beginning of this work, we recognized the value of the existing Fatherhood Initiative created within the Department of Social Services by legislation passed in 1999. The work of the Initiative has been focused on four proven strategies for change: capacity building in existing programs; infusing father-friendly principles and practices into existing systems; media and advocacy to promote fatherhood; and a social policy agenda to address potential barriers to father involvement. The Committees and Workgroup for the current Plan included representatives from the ten DSS-certified fatherhood programs, and the strategies presented here deliberately build on the effective work of these programs and of our state partners. A history of the original Fatherhood Initiative is presented in Appendix D.

During committee meetings held in the fall of 2013 and at the Workgroup meetings held through September 2014, partners emphasized the importance of providing parents, both dads and moms, the opportunity to voice their thoughts related to the areas the groups had been examining for inclusion in the draft Plan. Community-based partners serving fathers and families conducted focus groups in order to gather this critical input from their respective program's current or past participants, their significant others, or their co-parents. A protocol and template for summarizing the discussion were provided to ensure consistency in the information gathered and to allow the facilitators to manage the sessions in the time allotted.

Eight providers submitted information from a total of 62 parents. Some participants reported positive experiences with the child welfare and child support systems; however, the need for continued reform of these systems also surfaced. Another general theme was the need for increased efforts in the correctional system to recognize men in their fathering role, both during incarceration and when preparing for reentry into their families and communities. Unemployment and underemployment and the need for services to support obtaining and sustaining employment were a third major theme identified. Specific suggestions made by focus group participants were also raised by the numerous partners during the Committee meetings, and the majority of participants' recommendations are reflected in the strategies. The focus group details are outlined in Appendix C.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **I. Introduction, continued**

#### ***Plan Elements***

Strategies are recommended in these five domains of the result, “All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children”:

1. Fathers economically stable
2. Fathers in healthy relationships
3. Young people prepared to be responsible parents
4. Men involved in the criminal justice system supported in being responsible fathers
5. Policy and Public Awareness

In addition, our data committee has analyzed the existing indicators and has developed a Data Development Agenda to create additional indicators that are essential for describing the condition of children and their fathers in Connecticut and for guiding the work of the *CFI* as we go forward under this Plan.

The key strategies are presented in Section III. The full strategies for each domain, along with issues that the committees identified as needing further investigation, are presented in Appendix A. It is important to bear in mind that the Plan is intended as a blueprint. Although major action steps for many of the key strategies are identified, a full implementation plan will be developed by the Initiative over the coming year.

Section IV discusses the need for better data at the population, system, and program levels. A newly created Data Committee will help us implement our system-wide strategy of collecting uniform data on dads and will facilitate the development of new performance measures for the *CFI* as a whole and for our provider programs.

Also included in the Plan in Section V is the partners’ design for a new *CFI* Service Delivery System. The System design covers such areas as governance, sustainability, accountability and performance measures (for programs and common measures for the system), connecting with partner systems, capacity-building for father-serving programs, public awareness, the implementation of the proposed strategies and the data development agenda, and a process for regularly updating the Results-Based Accountability model and Plan.





## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **II. Results-Based Accountability Planning Framework**

The schematic on the following page provides an overview of the RBA model that shapes and drives the Plan's content. The primary and secondary results statements define the conditions of wellbeing that we aspire to. The primary result matches the Children's Report Card of the Connecticut legislature's Committee on Children: "Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy and ready to lead successful lives." We made this the primary result because engaging fathers is critical for ensuring that all children grow up in a stable environment. The secondary result, "All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children," speaks specifically to the concern of the *CFI* and makes clear how the Initiative contributes to the primary result.

The result statements are supported by a set of headline population indicators that quantify the various conditions of wellbeing associated with the results. There are also secondary indicators that are presented for some of the domains. The indicators present the most relevant population data currently available. To the extent possible, the indicators speak to different dimensions of the result. As set forth in the Introduction and in Section IV, a major focus of our work is the need to collect uniform data on dads and their relationships with their children. Obtaining these new data will lead to new or more focused indicators.

The strategies represented in the model are those described in the Plan to achieve the result, "All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children." These are not all of the strategies that will be needed to achieve the result for all fathers in Connecticut, but they are the ones that the *CFI* has identified as being most important and most feasible to address over the next five years. They are presented in the section of the schematic that shows the Fatherhood Service Delivery System because they will require the coordinated efforts of all of our system partners.

Below the system level, the model presents an array of state agency and local provider programs that are part of the service delivery system, many of whom participated in the Plan's development and can be found in Appendix B. Performance measures for the system and these programs will be developed. The system measures will include measures of system effectiveness, as well as common measures that will be used across a variety of programs that serve similar client groups or provide similar services.

The schematic is followed by the primary indicators in graphic form, along with a narrative that explains the data in regard to: 1) fatherhood and the result statements; 2) the causes and forces behind the data presented; and 3) the projected trend for each indicator, identifying the indicator's future direction if nothing changes. The indicators and complete Data Development Agendas are also included in each of the domain discussions in Appendix A. The elements of data collection and development are presented in detail in Section IV.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### Fatherhood Initiative: RBA Model Schematic

**Primary Quality of Life Result:** Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe healthy and ready to lead successful lives.

*Population  
Accountability*

**Secondary Quality of Life Result:** All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children.

**Indicator 1:** Percent of Female-headed households living in poverty.

**Indicator 2:** Percent of men 20 to 24 who are unemployed

**Indicator 3:** Percent of renter households paying 30% or more of income to rent.

**Indicator 4:** Percent of students graduating on time

**Indicator 5:** Maltreatment of Children under 18 years of age

**Indicator 6:** Births to teenage girls under 18

**Indicator 7:** Probationer 24- month re-arrest rate

**Sample Indicator for Data Development Agenda:** Common way of identifying fathers from other men.

### Fatherhood Service Delivery System

*System/Program  
Performance  
Accountability*

#### Key Strategies

Strategy 1:  
Make sure dads count

Strategy 2: Encourage dad's engagement with their children

Strategy 3: Ensure criminal justice system treats fatherhood as a priority

Strategy 4: Enable dads to be financially responsible

Strategy 5: Ensure youth become responsible adults and parents

**System Measure 1:**  
Successful completion of program

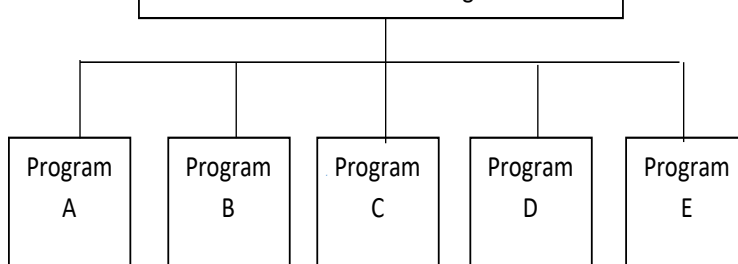
**System Measure 2:**  
Satisfaction with program or service outcome

**System Measure 3:**  
Dads in CFI programs obtaining visitation agreement

**System Measure 4:**  
Dads in compliance with support obligations

**System Measure 5:**  
Dads maintaining regular contact with children

#### State and Provider Programs



#### Sample Data Development Measures:

Identification of fathers in various programs and partner systems.

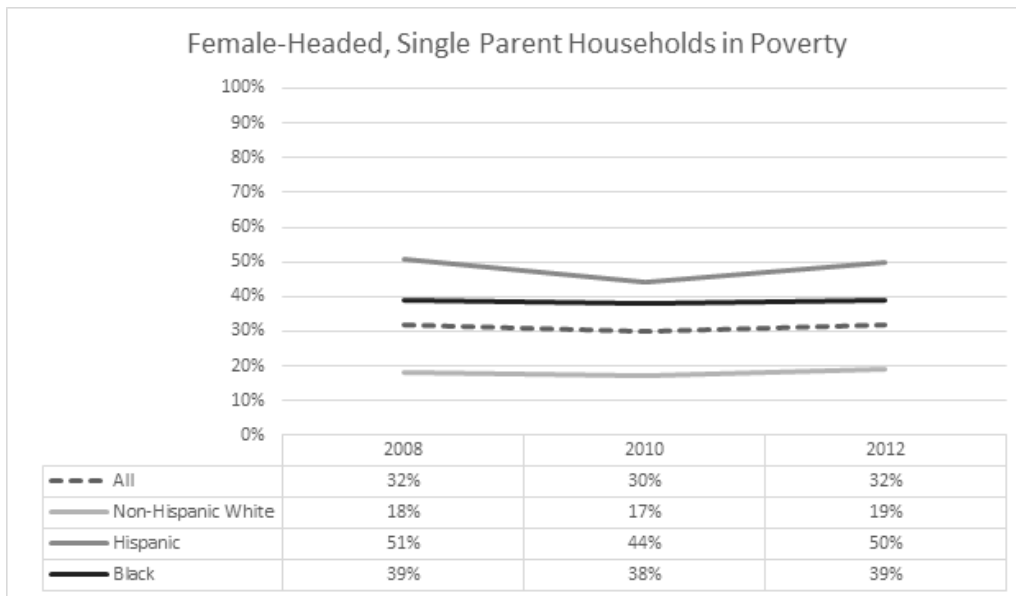
## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **Headline Indicators**

The headline indicators presented below were chosen to detail key elements of the result statement, such as safety, health and preparation for successful lives. In addition, three criteria guided the choices: Does the indicator communicate clearly to a wide audience, is it of central importance to understanding the issues associated with fatherhood and are data currently available for multiple years.

The data are presented in graphic form, and each indicator is followed by a narrative (the story behind the baseline) that highlights the main points about the data, their connection to the results, and the causes and forces behind the trend of each indicator.

Indicator 1



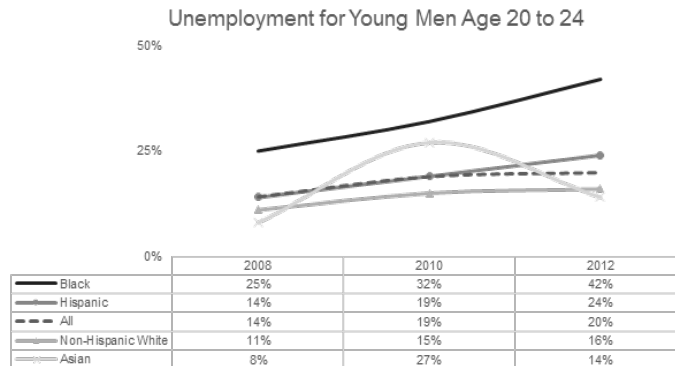
The chart presents the percentage of single-parent, female-headed households in Connecticut that are living below the federal poverty level. As evident from the chart, the indicator has changed very little since 2008. The households are mostly minority. Not all of the children in these female-headed households are without the consistent presence of a father, but, as noted by the Pew Research Center, 44% of Black children and nearly 35% of Hispanic children are without a father officially in their household.<sup>1</sup> The father's financial support (a minimum but insufficient level of engagement) is for most single, female-headed households the largest contribution to household support and the child's wellbeing other than the mother's own income.<sup>2</sup> Lack of living wage employment and lack of education impact both mothers and fathers and contribute to the level of female-headed households in poverty.

<sup>1</sup> A Tale of Two Fathers. Livingston and Parker. PewResearch: Social & Demographic Trends (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2009. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p60-240.pdf>

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

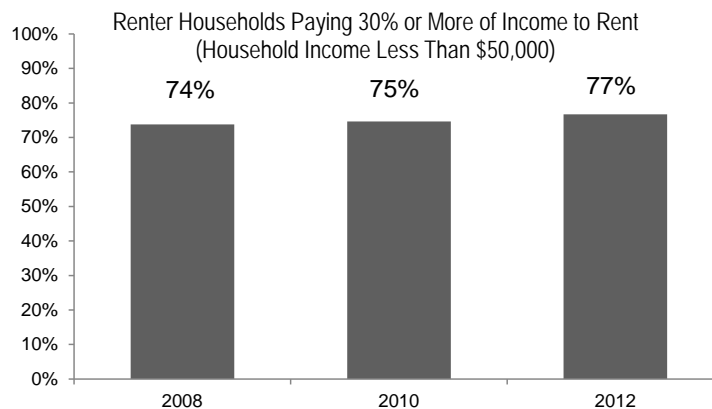
### Indicator 2



There are particular challenges that young minority men face in obtaining employment, especially young men with low levels of education or a history of incarceration. These barriers often lead to a lifetime of limitations in wages and consistent employment.

Not only do these young men have a high rate of unemployment, but the trend in their unemployment rate (except Asian men) has been rising since 2008. Turning the curve on this trend will be a major challenge, but it is critically important to do so. Research on unemployed fathers shows that their inability to fulfill their financial responsibilities often drives them away from their children.

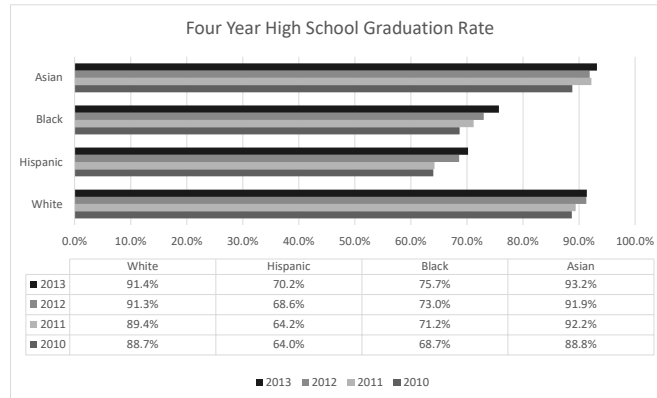
### Indicator 3



One of the major financial stresses families face is the cost of housing; this is especially so for those families with only one wage earner in the household. Research has consistently shown that paying more than 30 percent of income for housing creates challenges for meeting the other necessities of life, including food, clothing, and medical care. The cost of housing in Connecticut is going in the wrong direction. Lack of affordable housing adds to the strains on families, and where fathers are unwilling or unable to contribute to the household, there is the potential for greater strains on relationships and on the bonds between father and child and between father and mother.

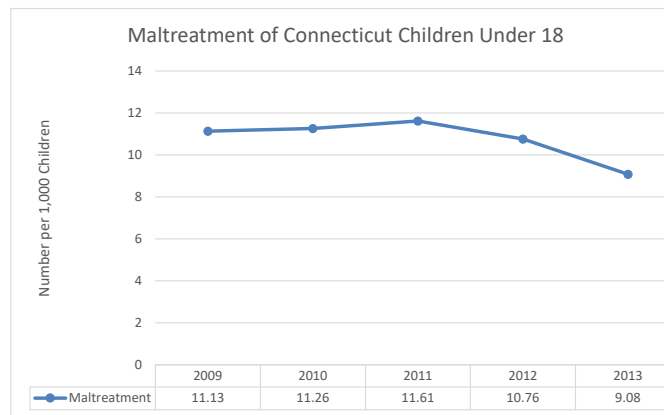
## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### Indicator 4



High school graduation rates have shown modest gains in Connecticut. Approximately 1/5 of all students do not graduate on time. In 2011-2012, however, the on-time graduation rate improved from the 2010-2011 rate of 81.7 to a rate of 82.7 for all students. As the chart shows, most of the improvement in the statewide rate was due to improvements among Black and Hispanic students. Even with this improvement, more than a quarter of Black and Hispanic students do not graduate on time. This indicator is a major predictor of success for young people whose future is marked by low levels of skill attainment, low wages, and higher rates of unemployment throughout their life. As a result, these young people have difficulty with fulfilling family responsibilities and other aspects of life.

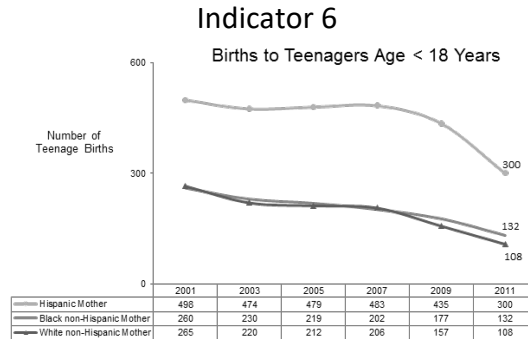
### Indicator 5



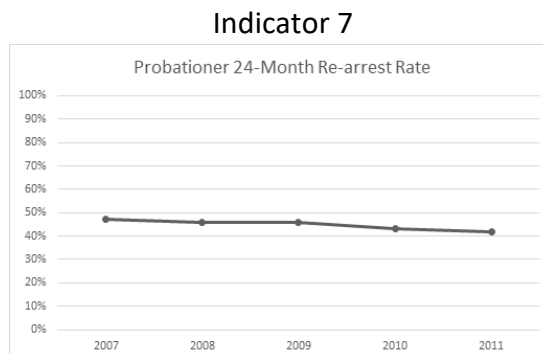
The data show the unduplicated number of maltreated children (ages 0-18) per 1000 children. Maltreatment includes both abuse and neglect. The vast majority of cases (approximately 85%) are reports of neglect, not abuse. There has been some significant decline in these rates from 2009 to 2013. However, the 2012 and 2013 data are not comparable to earlier years due to administrative changes affecting the way data were collected after 2011. Research shows that the presence of a father in the household is related to lower levels of abuse and neglect.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.fatherhood.gov/for-programs/for-your-fathers/father-presence#Can\\_Fathers\\_Prevent\\_Child\\_Abuse\\_and\\_Neglect](https://www.fatherhood.gov/for-programs/for-your-fathers/father-presence#Can_Fathers_Prevent_Child_Abuse_and_Neglect)

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**



Nationwide, the number of births to teen mothers has declined significantly over the past decade. Connecticut, in particular, has one of the lowest teen birth rates (births to teen mothers per 1,000 births) in the country. The data presented shows the decline in the actual number of births to teens. Births to Hispanic mothers declined from 498 (2001) to 300 (2011). Births to Black mothers declined from 260 (2001) to 132 (2011). Births to White (non-Hispanic) mothers declined from 327 (1998) to 108 (2011). Because of the focus of the *CFI*, however, it is important to continue tracking these data since teen fathers' involvement is often limited, and the chance that the father is mature enough to appropriately carry out his responsibilities as a father may be even more limited. The fathers are often those with the fewest financial and personal resources to support their child and the teen mother. They represent a group particularly challenged when it comes to being responsible fathers. These numbers are small, and the trend is going in the right direction. It is nonetheless important to track this indicator is to ensure that we maintain the progress already made.



The re-arrest rate is one frequently used to measure recidivism. This rate has shown significant decline since 2007 and is at its lowest rate since 2006, the first year this measure was reported. The secondary indicator of recidivism reported in Section IV shows the age breakout for probationer re-arrest rates by age group. It shows that the strongest likelihood of returning to prison, as predicted by arrest rates, is for the youngest group of men, those under 23. By two years after release or discharge, 70 percent of this age group will have been re-arrested. This alarming rate, along with the education and unemployment rates for young men and especially young men of color, makes it clear where the challenges of fatherhood are likely to be most prevalent.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **III. STRATEGIES**

#### **KEY STRATEGIES**

The Workgroup and committees spent five months examining the available data, identifying both the positive and negative forces at work, and reviewing what had been done in Connecticut and around the country to promote the engagement of fathers. Out of this exploration, several main themes emerged, along with a number of strategies to help us realize the result, “All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children.”

In this section we present one key strategy that emerged from each of our committees. The selection of these strategies was based on a number of criteria, including:

- Reach and impact: How much will the strategy contribute to turning the curve on one of the indicators and achieving the result?
- Capacity and commitment: Do we and our partners have the skills, resources, and passion to be successful?
- Feasibility: Given the environment, how likely is it that the strategy can be successful?
- Foundation for other work: Will implementation of the strategy facilitate the completion of other important strategies?

Additional strategies for each domain of our result and the complete descriptions of all strategies by domain are presented in Appendix A.



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **KEY STRATEGY 1: Make sure dads count**

Several committees, including those dealing with fathers being economically stable, fathers in healthy relationships, child support reform, and fathers in the criminal justice system, emphasized the need for data. The Data Committee focused on this issue, recognizing the need for a common way to identify men who are fathers.

### **Why this matters**

Without data about men who are fathers that distinguishes them from all other men, we have no way of determining what services fathers receive. Moreover, the ability to distinguish fathers from all other males would make it possible to identify where existing programs may need to develop partnerships with fatherhood programs or where they need to develop their own resources to support fathers and attend to their unique needs.

The Data Committee noted that if we could have a common definition of fatherhood to use in identifying fathers throughout the service systems, we would be able to determine the systems with which these men are involved and the types of services they are receiving, including such areas as their status in regard to employment and educational attainment. Such a common definition for identification of fathers would be useful by itself but combined with other data collected by programs it could also provide a clearer picture of how fathers are doing in a variety of service and program contexts. The collection of uniform data about fathers could also help us develop new population indicators.

### **What are we going to do to turn the curve?**

According to the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services, "There is no standard definition of "father" in statutes across the States. Approximately four states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands provide no definitions for the term at all" While most states, including Connecticut have some statute(s) that define "father."





## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

Although Connecticut has statutes and case law that establish standards for determining fatherhood, there is no single definition that facilitates a common approach to data collection that would allow agencies across the state to distinguish fathers from all other men. To create a common definition to facilitate data collection, the three components, already in Connecticut statute<sup>4</sup> should be accommodated:

- 1) Presumption of fatherhood if the mother and supposed father are married to each other at the time of the birth
- 2) Court establishment of paternity
- 3) Formal acknowledgment of paternity by the father (e.g., acknowledgement on the birth certificate or through an acknowledgement process subsequent to birth recognized by law)

These three components would provide the foundation for the development of a common indicator of fatherhood. We propose formulating these components into questions that all cooperating agencies would use.

After the data committee has defined the way the common measure of fatherhood will be constituted, the second stage will be to engage the various partner agencies within the system to adopt the definition and begin distinguishing those men who are and are not fathers among all men served. Once data collection identifying men who are fathers can be established, more detailed data on fathers and the characteristics of their relationship with their children (e.g., custody, visitation) can be added, depending on the needs of the agency and program.

The result of this effort will be to understand what services fathers receive, what services they do not receive, and places in the system where services can be integrated or coordinated to improve the lives of fathers and their ability to fully participate in the lives of their children.



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<sup>4</sup> In [Connecticut] there are only three ways of legally establishing paternity: (1) the marital presumption if the mother and the putative father are married to each other; (2) adjudication of paternity by a court of competent jurisdiction; or (3) a formal acknowledgment of paternity in accordance with the acknowledgment statute." Hjarne v. Martin, Superior Court, judicial district of Hartford-New Britain at Hartford, Docket No. FA00-0631333 (Apr. 21, 2002) (2002 WL 1163023).

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### ***KEY STRATEGY 2: Encourage and facilitate dads' engagement with their children by reforming critical systems with which dads interact***

The state child support system will be the initial system for which system-wide changes will be sought to align with the federal child support system's family-centered approach to support strong emotional bonds between dads and their children, not just financial obligations.

#### **Why this matters**

As issues related to child support were raised during Policy Committee meetings, it became clear that a subcommittee was needed, dedicated to examining the major impediments related to child support that are negatively impacting dads' ability to engage with their children and their children's mothers, initiatives currently underway or pending in Connecticut that should be supported or increased, enhanced, or brought to scale, and evidenced-based or promising practices in other states that should be considered for Connecticut. The group also recommended important system changes that we should focus on in the next 2-3 years, as well as critical missing partners that need to be at the table moving forward. Detailed notes from the subcommittee meeting can be found in Domain 5 in Appendix A.

Some of the major system-related impediments to dads' engagement include:

- the existence of a felony record
- default orders and imputed income,
- unemployment/underemployment
- state and community-based staff attitudes and knowledge level about available resources.

Further, while the system handles child support and access/visitation/custody in different court systems, the two are intertwined for families (i.e., "If you don't pay you can't see him/her" and conversely, "I'm not paying unless I can see him/her").

Connecticut has had some great success with pilot initiatives, but these efforts have not been brought to scale. Some examples include the Judicial Branch Problem Solving Court Pilot, the Judicial Branch/DSS Employment Pilot Program, and the federal Access and Visitation Grant. Staff training and speakers' bureaus for the community about the child support process are conducted, but not in a formalized manner with all system partners' participating together.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **What are we going to do to turn the curve?**

The subcommittee recommended the following system changes for the next 2-3 years:

1. Increase the Department of Social Services' (DSS) Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) involvement with fatherhood-related matters on the side of the court dealing with the establishment of child support orders. Currently the main focus is on the contempt side. While supports are needed for fathers who currently have child support orders, having a process in place for referrals to programming prior to order establishment may help fathers avoid issues such as access, visitation, custody, and accumulation of debt.
2. Implement more affirmative efforts (e.g., multiple contacts, phone calls, review and revision of forms and notices) by both DSS BCSE and Judicial Support Enforcement Services (SES) to encourage people to engage in the child support process, attend court proceedings, and reduce the establishment of default orders.
3. Examine the feasibility of connecting child support and access/visitation/custody court processes.

In addition to BCSE, SES, the Family Support Magistrates and legal services, the following partners are critical in efforts for child support system changes: Office of the Chief Court Administrator, Office of the Attorney General, Judicial Court Support Services Division, and the Office of Policy and Management.



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

***KEY STRATEGY 3: Ensure that every phase of the criminal justice system from arrest to discharge treats fatherhood as a priority***

### **Why this matters**

Involvement in the criminal justice system often has a profoundly negative impact on fathers' engagement with their children, including lengthy physical and emotional separation from children. The criminal justice system has not historically supported the connection between fathers and children as a primary need during any phase of the process, including arrest, arraignment, pre-trial, sentencing, incarceration, or release. Outcomes for the parent and the children are more likely to be positive when efforts are made to support these significant relationships. Research shows, for instance, a reduction in recidivism when a parent is actively involved with his other children upon release. Further, children are less likely to come into contact with criminal justice agencies when their fathers are positively engaged in their lives.

### **What are we going to do to turn the curve?**

The initial step recommended for this strategy is the convening of a formal, on-going workgroup regarding fatherhood within the criminal justice system, co-led by the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division as point agency and the Department of Correction, outside of and distinct from the *CFI* Advisory Council and Executive Team, that includes a focus on data collection and the interoperability of computer systems. This workgroup would oversee the introduction of, and continued adherence to, fatherhood principles within all aspects of criminal justice involvement, which would begin with formal assessment of current practices in terms of policy, protocols, and service delivery from arraignment through release into the community. There may be agencies, both administrative and court location specific, that currently utilize fatherhood practices and programs (gender and culturally responsive) within the CJ system. The workgroup would identify these efforts to determine gaps as well as promising collaborations. The leads for this strategy will report their efforts to the Executive Team for the development of actions to formalize and expand promising practices throughout the criminal justice system.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

***KEY STRATEGY 4: Enable all dads to be financially responsible to their children by partnering with existing systems and programs to focus on the specific employment and training needs of dads, including education***

### **Why this matters**

Many dads, especially younger dads, suffer from lack of education and job skills, making employment difficult and hindering their ability to take on financial responsibilities for their children. More than a fifth of young men are not graduating from high school on time in Connecticut. And those individuals without a high school diploma (a GED only changes the picture slightly) are likely to have the highest unemployment rates and the lowest incomes when they are employed. National data show that in 2013, those without high school completion had nearly double the unemployment rate of those who had completed high school (including those who obtained a GED).<sup>5</sup>

### **What are we going to do to turn the curve?**

Partnering will take at least two different forms. One has already been discussed in the first key strategy, Make Dads Count. The collection of data to identify fathers using a common definition is one critical step in solidifying that partnership. The other step is to convene the agencies and other partners: Department of Labor, Adult Education, Community Colleges, Department of Social Services, Department of Housing, Department of Transportation, local non-profits working with fathers, and employers. The focus beyond common data on fathers is to develop MOUs and other mechanisms that will ensure that fathers can take advantage of existing education, training and employment programs. At the same time, those coordination mechanisms will also make it possible for agencies and programs to offer services specifically designed to help men better fulfill their potential and their responsibilities as fathers.

Many of the men who are fathers but struggle with fulfilling their financial responsibilities need to either finish high school or obtain some advanced training or education. Others may need help to obtain adequate, stable employment after they have gained new skills and knowledge. Many of the institutions that provide the training, education, and job search assistance have limited capacity in supplying the necessary supports. Many of them will be unaware of the circumstances of fathers who are trying to advance themselves while caring for one or more children. It is only through true partnerships between father-friendly service agencies and programs and the training, education, and job search institutions that fathers can be successful. We already know that many young men who begin education and training programs drop out before completion. Special support services are critical to raising completion rates. A recent article<sup>6</sup> in “Inside Higher Ed” suggests as much and advises “triage” rather than simply focusing support services on first year students. Fathers struggling with financial and other responsibilities along with their education would undoubtedly benefit from such approaches.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13\\_501.85.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_501.85.asp)

<sup>6</sup> Tyson, Charlie (2014). Website Inside Higher Ed; <https://www.insidehighered.com/>

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

***KEY STRATEGY 5: Ensure that youth become responsible adults and parents by implementing a universal K-12 sexual health curriculum that promotes the health and well-being of all students.***

### **Why this matters**

Prevention is universally recognized as a key component of any work within the fields of health and social sciences. The ultimate goal of any prevention program is to eradicate the occurrence of the condition or behavior. Three levels of prevention are commonly recognized and provide the rationale for the three-tiered approach to strategy development within this domain. Primary or universal prevention targets a whole population prior to the existence of negative conditions in an effort to introduce protective factors that can help people avoid negative behaviors and conditions. Secondary or selective prevention provides early intervention for a select portion of the population when risk factors of the select portion suggest an increased likelihood or risk of involvement in the negative behaviors and conditions. Tertiary or indicated prevention provides services that help to manage risk factors and circumstances and build protective factors in order to improve lives by reducing the prevalence or seriousness of the problem. To prevent high-risk behaviors, or improve the conditions and behaviors associated with the problem -- in this instance fathering a child at a young age or abandoning contact with the child -- a combination of these levels of intervention leads to greater success.

Research shows that children who grow up in a home without a dad have an increased risk of living in poverty, doing poorly in school, having emotional and behavioral problems, and the list goes on. These risk factors impact children's day-to-day lives and follow them into the future.

### **What are we going to do to turn the curve?**

This initial strategy is a primary prevention strategy targeting all students in all schools and all grades statewide. The K-12 sexual health curriculum should include, but not be limited to, the knowledge necessary to prevent HIV/STD/teen pregnancy and the skills to develop healthy age-appropriate relationships. Inclusion of sexual health education taught by a certified legally-qualified teacher, as part of a planned, ongoing and systematic health education program, including components that deal with becoming a responsible adult and developing healthy age-appropriate relationships, is a critical step in reducing teen pregnancies, as well as reducing the number of children growing up without the presence of their dad. Recognizing the overarching strategy of data development, it is recommended that the State Department of Education (CSDE), Department of Public Health (DPH), state associations of school officials and local school districts work together to increase the number of Connecticut school districts that complete the CDC School Health Profile on a biennial basis in order to compile and track data on what sexual health topics are being taught in Connecticut schools and to ensure that data collection includes information about students' own fathers' involvement in their lives.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

**KEY STRATEGY 6:** *Build a system that has the capacity to meet the needs of dads and their children and in which program staff have the skills and knowledge to deliver effective services.*

### **Why this matters**

In order to support their children, dads need to be healthy in all senses, including being economically self-sufficient and sufficiently educated to navigate the systems with which they must interact to achieve economic success and be engaged members of their community. Individual responsibility is only one piece in the “responsible fatherhood” picture. An equally critical piece is system responsibility, in which the state and local agencies with which fathers interact are prepared, and held accountable, for responsive and high-quality service delivery.

This calls for a collaborative effort to achieve the results, “Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy and ready to lead successful lives” and, “All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children.” The partners’ agree this system must include activities to address the following: accountability, performance measures, performance-based contracting for programs, research to identify evidenced-based and promising practices, capacity building, standards of practice program sustainability, partnership agreements and coordination with related service delivery systems and networks.

What are we going to do to turn the curve?

Using the structures created by our new *CFI* Service Delivery System design (see Section V), we will work over the next two years to implement these major critical components of the comprehensive, integrated system we envision for fathers and their families. At a minimum it must have:

- A stable and adequate funding stream to establish sufficient fatherhood programming so that quality services are accessible when and where needed
- The ability to evaluate and document existing fatherhood program models to identify evidence-based, promising and best practices for successful outcomes with specific target populations
- Training of the staff in existing human service agencies to better understand and meet the needs of fathers and families, bringing all to a basic minimum standard of practice
- A statewide referral system that provides statewide access to quality programs
- Public will-building to increase the understanding of support of the need for serving fathers and families
- A statewide coalition of trained, passionate leaders who use their unified voice to change programs, policies and practices to benefit fathers, children and families.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **IV. Data Development as an Overarching Strategy**

**Primary Result Statement:** *Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy, and ready to lead successful lives.*

**Secondary Result Statement:** *All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children.*

*There are a number of indicators that tell us how Connecticut is doing in achieving the primary result and a few that report on the secondary result.*

Below are several of the currently available indicators. Some of the indicators that would further inform our understanding of the result are not currently available but are discussed in the Data Development Agenda; these indicators could provide information that would help chart our direction with the CFI. The investment in better data is clearly warranted.

#### **Currently Available Indicators**

The headline indicators are listed below; they are presented in chart form with the stories behind the baselines in Section II. Secondary indicators are presented with currently available data. Like the primary indicators, the secondary indicators are broken out, when possible, by relevant characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, and age.

#### **Headline Indicators**

1. Poverty in Female Headed, Single Parent Households by Race and Ethnicity
2. Unemployment for Young Men Age 20 to 24 by Race and Ethnicity
3. Percent of Renter Households with Incomes Less than \$50,000 Paying 30% or More of Income for Rent
4. Four-Year High School Graduation Rate by Race and Ethnicity
5. Rates of Maltreatment<sup>7</sup> for Children Birth to Age 18
6. Number of Births to Teen Mothers Less than 18 Years of Age
7. Probationer 24-Month Re-arrest Rate (a measure of recidivism)

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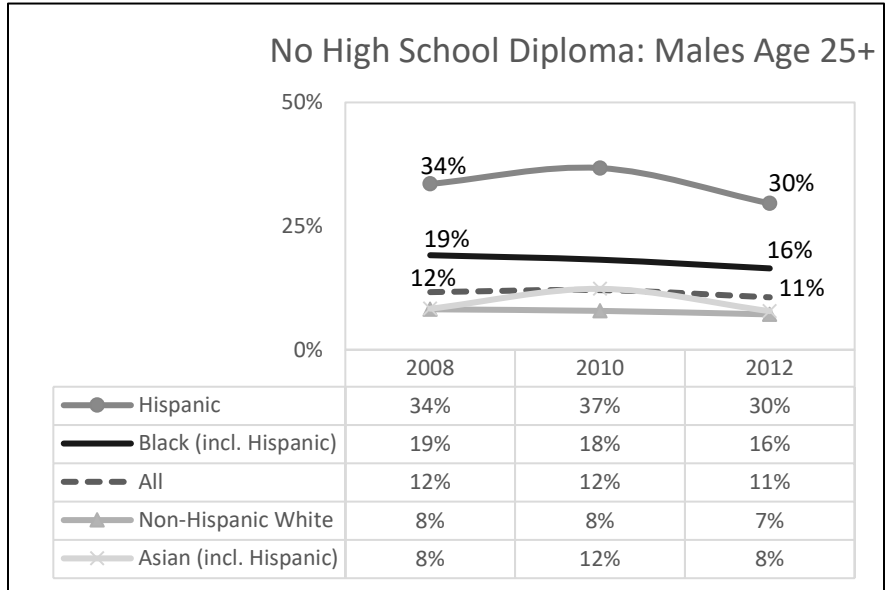
<sup>7</sup> The unique count of child victims counts a child only once regardless of the number of times he or she was found to be a victim during the reporting year.



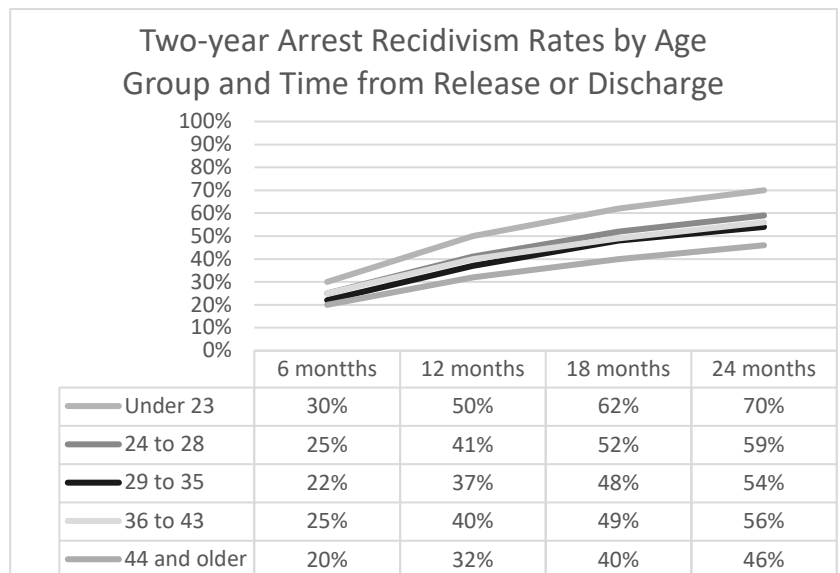
**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

**Secondary Indicators**

**Men with No High School Diploma**



This is one of many approaches to looking at educational attainment and is closely related to the primary indicators of unemployment and the four-year cohort graduation rate. We know that fathers without a high school diploma are unlikely to be able to earn a living wage and contribute to the support of a family. It is often this inability to earn a living wage that lowers a young man’s incentive to take on parental responsibilities. The graph shows a slow decline among most groups in the percentage of young men over 25 without a high school diploma. While the decline is significant, it still means there are over 125,000 men in Connecticut without a diploma in 2012.

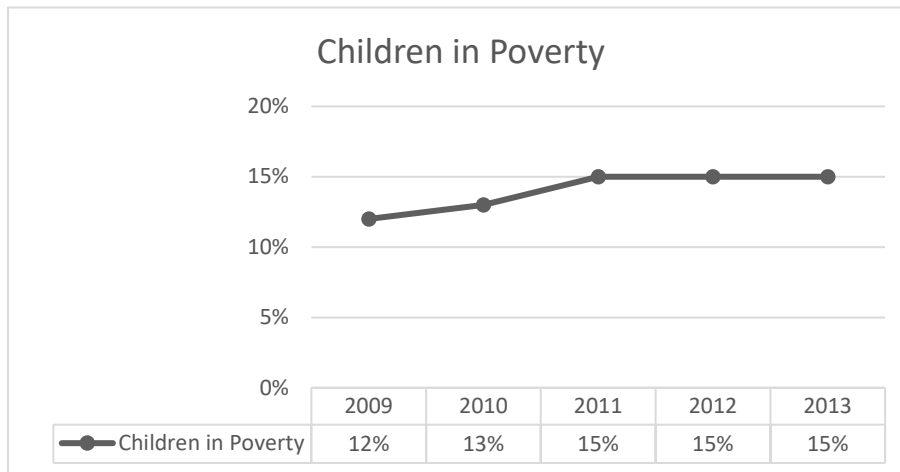


**Two-year Re-arrest Rate by Age Group**

This re-arrest rate is for individuals released from probation in 2008, who were then tracked for the next two years. It is designed to complement the primary recidivism indicator. The re-arrest rate for the youngest cohort (under 23) rises to 70% over these two years, providing a clear focus for our work.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### Children in Poverty



The rate of children in poverty is a complement to the female-headed, single-parent household indicator. Many of the children in these figures come from female-headed households. In 2013, 46 percent of children living in single-mother families were poor, compared to 10 percent of children living in married-couple families.<sup>8</sup> Census studies and other research based in part on Census data demonstrate that the absence of a father in a household is strongly related to children living in poverty.

### *Data Development Agenda*

The data development agenda for the *CFI* is substantial. There are two broad areas for data development: identifying men who are fathers, especially in setting where they are being served; and new measures related to fathers and their relationships with their children. To the degree that we can begin to collect data consistently about men's status as fathers, we will have a better picture of the state of fatherhood in Connecticut.

Capturing some of these data will require national policy efforts. Some changes, however, can happen here in Connecticut. For example, we could determine which unemployed and under-employed men are fathers and could identify which men enrolled in post-secondary education or training are fathers. We currently do not have a consistent way of identifying incarcerated men who are fathers. We also do not know the numbers of young men in middle and high school who are fathers. These data are essential for understanding the state of fatherhood in Connecticut and would also allow us to identify special program needs for males involved in the criminal justice system, the juvenile justice system, and the public-school system. These are only a few of the relevant areas, but they indicate the types of large-scale data development that are needed and possible at the state level.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=children-in-poverty>

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### **1. Common Data for Identifying Fathers**

According to the Children’s Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services, “There is no standard definition of “father” in statutes across the States. Approximately four states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands provide no definitions for the term at all,” while most states, including Connecticut, have some statutes that define “father.”

Although Connecticut statutes and case law establish standards for determining fatherhood, there is no single definition that facilitates a common approach to data collection that would allow agencies across the state to distinguish fathers from all other men. To create a common definition to facilitate data collection, the three components, already embedded in Connecticut law<sup>[1]</sup> should be accommodated:

- 1) Presumption of fatherhood if the mother and supposed father are married to each other at the time of the birth
- 2) Court establishment of paternity
- 3) Formal acknowledgment of paternity by the father (e.g., acknowledgement on the birth certificate or through an acknowledgement process subsequent to birth recognized by law)

These three components would provide the foundation for the development of a common measure of fatherhood. We propose formulating these components into questions that all cooperating agencies would use.

The Data Committee has defined the way the common measure of fatherhood could be constituted, and it will engage the various partner agencies within the system to adopt the definition and begin distinguishing those men who are and are not fathers among all men served. Once data collection identifying men who are fathers can be established, more detailed data on fathers and the characteristics of their relationship with their children (e.g., custody, visitation) can be added, depending on the needs of the agency and program.



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<sup>[1]</sup> In [Connecticut] there are only three ways of legally establishing paternity: (1) the marital presumption if the mother and the putative father are married to each other; (2) adjudication of paternity by a court of competent jurisdiction; or (3) a formal acknowledgment of paternity in accordance with the acknowledgment statute.” Hjarne v. Martin, Superior Court, judicial district of Hartford-New Britain at Hartford, Docket No. FA00-0631333 (Apr. 21, 2002) (2002 WL 1163023).

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

In addition to the broad measure of fathers, we can obtain supplemental data on sub-groups of fathers by the uniform collection of common data elements on the status of men as fathers by all state and local agencies that serve men, their children, or their families. This is one of the major strategies of the Plan and cuts across all of the domains of the plan.

As a first and most critical step, we will focus on collecting data from all men. (The first two questions below are minimum requirements):

- 1) How many children do you have?
  - a. None
  - b. 1
  - c. More than 1
  
- 2) Is your name on all of your children's birth certificates?
  - a. All
  - b. Some
  - c. None
  - d. Don't know
  
- 3) Do any of your children live with you?
  - a. Yes, full-time
  - b. Yes, part-time
  - c. No
  
- 4) Do you have any legal responsibilities for any of your children?
  - a. Yes, sole custody
  - b. Yes, joint custody
  - c. No custody, but pay child support under a binding agreement or court order
  - d. No, I don't see them or support them

We will also seek data from the family court system on fathers with formal rights to visitation and custody and from the Child Support Enforcement system on fathers for whom paternity has been established. By adding these data to the data on fathers captured by our other system partners, we will be able to construct measures that can serve as imperfect but invaluable population indicators for sub-sets of fathers in Connecticut, particularly those most at risk for being disconnected from their children.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

Once we have established the most effective way to identify fathers, we will begin working with partners to collect information on fatherhood identity in a number of critical arenas, including:

- Employment/unemployment
- Education, both K-12 and post-secondary training
- Justice-involved youth and adults
- Mental health and drug addiction treatment
- Child welfare



### **2. Fathers and their Relationship with their Children**

In order to understand men's relationship with their children, we are working with the Department of Health and other state partners to add questions to the Connecticut Risk Behavior Survey, which is administered on behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to a random sample of high school students every two years. We have requested that the survey include:

- 1) How often do you see your Dad?
  - a. Every day
  - b. Every week
  - c. About once a month
  - d. Every 3 months
  - e. Every 6 months
  - f. Once a year
  - g. Never
- 2) Which of the following can you talk to when you need help, advice, or just someone to listen to you?
  - a. Father or Stepfather
  - b. Uncle or other male relative
  - c. Mother's boyfriend
  - d. Older male friend/neighbor
  - e. Male teacher
- 3) How many children do you have?
  - a. I do not have any children
  - b. 1
  - c. More than 1

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

The first of the above questions was approved by the CDC in October. The second and third were not approved. The final decision on the introduction of the first question will be decided later this year. We will continue to work with DPH and our other partners to have this question included in the survey administered in 2015.

Monitoring progress on these efforts and other newly initiated efforts will be carried out by the newly constituted standing committee of the *CFI* responsible for data, research, evaluation and accountability (see Section V. E. below).

### *Program and System Measures*

In addition to indicators, the Data Committee discussed possible cross-program measures that can be reported for both individual father-serving programs and the *CFI* system as a whole.

Initial ideas for Better Off (outcome) measures include:

- Successful completion of a program
  - Certificate or other credential upon completion of employment or training program
  - Gaining or retaining employment
  - Successful completion of probation without arrest
  - Remaining substance free for 3, 6, 12 months following substance abuse treatment
- Satisfaction with program or service outcome
- Dads in *CFI* programs who obtain a formal agreement of visitation or custody while in a program
- Dads in compliance with support obligations
- Dads maintaining regular contact with their children

There are also initial ideas for common How Well (quality of service delivery) measures, along with measures of the implementation of the Plan and the effectiveness of the *CFI* system:

- Satisfaction with quality and delivery of services
- Attendance rate at scheduled activities
- Rate of completion of classes and trainings
- % programs using evidence-based programs or externally developed promising practices
- % of programs implementing new referral or service protocols
- % of father-serving programs certified by the *CFI*
- % of partner program staff certified
- % Plan milestones reached on time
- % agency partners signing new MOU
- % of agency partners contributing to funding of local providers

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

### V. Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Service Delivery System Design

This section outlines the partners' design for a new *CFI* Service Delivery System. From the start of the work in developing this Plan, the group recognized the value of the existing Fatherhood Initiative created within the Department of Social Services and the active participation of multiple state and local partners for more than a decade. However, all agreed that a stronger, more defined design for service delivery was necessary to support effective leadership and guide the work. The System design outlined below covers such areas as governance, sustainability, accountability and performance measures, connecting with partner systems, capacity-building for father-serving programs, public awareness, the implementation of proposed strategies and data development agenda and a process for regularly updating the Results-Based Accountability model and Plan.

#### A. *CFI* Service Delivery System

- There is established the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Service Delivery System (*CFI* System). The *CFI* System shall consist of those state and local partners that are collaborating to achieve the result, "All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children."
- In advancing its work, the *CFI* System shall recognize the challenges faced by fathers who most need support, including but not limited to those who are low-income, men of color, ex-offenders, and veterans. The *CFI* System shall ensure that all of its work is carried on with cultural and gender responsiveness.
- The *CFI* System shall:
  - Prepare and update as required a strategic plan using an RBA format
  - Prepare an accountability plan and annually report:
    - indicators on the well-being of fathers contributing to the achievement of the population result
    - performance measures for the *CFI* service delivery system
    - common performance measures for father-serving programs
  - Develop standard approaches and models of performance-based contracting for father-serving programs, including standards that must be met by applicants for such funding
  - Conduct research to identify evidenced-based and promising practices and programs in Connecticut and nationwide, and to determine those programs and practices that have the highest return on investment
  - Provide capacity building and technical assistance to state and community partners
  - Develop standards of practice and certify father-serving programs that meet those standards

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

- Develop and implement a sustainability plan that includes:
  - State funding, including re-investment funding based on savings achieved by evidenced-based programs that improve child and family outcomes, reduce recidivism, and lead to fathers becoming productive and self-sufficient
  - Foundations and private funders
  - Public-private partnerships
  - Federal funding through grants and other opportunities
  - Succession planning to ensure continuity of leadership within the *CFI*
- Develop MOAs among the state partners and other partnership agreements that include each partner's contribution to the *CFI* System
- Coordinate with related service delivery systems and networks

### *B. Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative*

- There is established within DSS the *Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (OCFI)*. The *OCFI* shall report to the Commissioner and shall be staffed at appropriate levels to effectively support the activities as outlined in this document, including support for the *CFI* Council, Executive Team, and committee work and for the daily operations of the *CFI*, including but not limited to, such functions as contracting, program monitoring, training, and technical assistance. The *OCFI* shall support the *CFI* System in achieving the result, "All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children" and in carrying out the tasks set forth in Section A.
- Pursuant to MOAs, the *OCFI* may have the assistance of staff from other state agencies or from statewide or community partners
- The creation of the *OCFI* is not intended to cause the transfer or relocation of any existing state programs to the Department of Social Services

### *C. CFI Council*

- The Council is the policy making body of the *CFI* and is broadly representative of all partner organizations and stakeholders at the state and local levels that comprise the *CFI* System. The Council is responsible for approving the tasks of the *CFI* System set forth in Section A.
- The Council shall meet at least quarterly (in March, June, September, December), with additional meetings scheduled as necessary
- The Commissioner of the Department of Social Services shall convene the Council
- The Commissioner of the Department of Social Services will serve as Chair of the Council, along with another Council member from the state or local level, who will be appointed by the Commissioner to serve as Co-chair for a period of one year; a new Co-chair will be assigned at the December meeting each calendar year



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

- The membership of the Council shall include, but not be limited to:
  - The Commissioners of Social Services, Labor, Education, Correction, Children and Families, Developmental Services, Housing, Public Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Early Childhood, or their respective designees
  - Directors of Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division and Support Enforcement Services, or their respective designees
  - The director of the Department of Social Services' Bureau of Child Support Enforcement or his/her designee;
  - The executive directors of the Commission on Children, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, and the African American Affairs, Commission, or their respective designees
  - The chair of the Board of Pardons and Parole, or his/her designee
  - The chancellor of the regional community-technical colleges, or his/her designee;
  - One representative with expertise in the area of legal assistance to low-income populations; one representative of a regional Family Reentry Council
  - One representative of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission;
  - One representative of a regional workforce development board
  - One or more representatives of a local community- and faith-based fatherhood programs
  - One representative with expertise in male psychology and health
  - An individual representing the interests of custodial parents
  - An individual representing the interests of noncustodial parents
  - An individual serving the veteran population
  - A representative with expertise in the area of domestic violence
- All members shall be designated by the Commissioner of Social Services. The Commissioner shall seek the advice and participation of any person, organization or state or federal agency the Commissioner deems necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.
- The Council will identify additional state and community members as necessary, to which the Co-chairs will extend an invitation to participate

### *D. CFI Council Executive Team (ET)*

- The ET acts on behalf of the Council and implements policy adopted by the Council, addresses issues that may need attention between Council meetings, and advises Council on new issues that arise. The ET is responsible for ensuring that the tasks of the CFI System set forth in Section A are carried out, subject to the approval of the Council, and that the Plan is implemented.
- The ET may designate ad hoc and additional standing committees and shall coordinate and oversee the standing and ad hoc committees

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM THE PLAN**

- The ET supports the Council with agenda development and other assistance to guide the Council's policy making
- The ET shall meet at least quarterly (in March, June, September, December), with additional meetings scheduled as needed
- The Commissioner of the Department of Social Services shall convene the ET and appoint as members:
  - At least four representatives of the Executive and Judicial branch agencies
  - Four representatives of community-based agencies
  - Two representatives from statewide organizations/Commissions
  - Two parent representatives
  - At least one representative from the domestic violence field
- The Commissioner of the Department of Social Services will serve as Chair of the ET, along with another ET member from the state or local level, who will be appointed by the Commissioner to serve as Co-chair for a period of one year; a new Co-chair will be assigned at the December meeting each calendar year and will be a different person from the Co-chair of the Council

### *E. Standing Committees*

- There shall be 4 standing Committees of the *CFI* System:
  - Capacity building, standards, and certification
  - Data, research, evaluation, and accountability
  - Partnerships and statewide and local planning
  - Public awareness, education, and advocacy
- The Committees shall implement the Plan adopted by the Council, undertake the tasks set forth in Section A as appropriate, and perform such other duties as may be assigned to them by the Executive Team
- Committee meetings are held bi-monthly, in between Council meetings so that each may report back at the quarterly Council meetings
- Each Committee reports to the Council on Committee progress and on issues raised that demand attention (e.g., policy changes, cross-Committee collaboration, new partnerships in the *CFI* that may be required to carry out work of the Committee)
- Council members will self-select for Committees, and additional members will be solicited based on identification by that Committee's membership of potential gaps in expertise needed at the table
- Membership may include representatives who do not serve on the Council or ET
- Committee leads will be chosen by each Committee at its initial meeting
- The Council may develop such other standing and ad hoc Committees as appropriate

**IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: CFI SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM EFFORTS**

The *CFI* System shall:

ACTION ITEM	STATUS
Prepare and update as required a strategic plan using an RBA format	CFI Strategic Plan 1.0 released 12/2015
Prepare an accountability plan and annually report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• indicators on the well-being of fathers contributing to achievement of the population result</li> <li>• performance measures for <i>CFI</i> service delivery system</li> <li>• common performance measures for father-serving programs</li> </ul>	
Develop standard approaches and models of performance-based contracting for father-serving programs, including standards that must be met by applicants for such funding	
Conduct research to identify evidenced-based and promising practices and programs in Connecticut and nationwide, and to determine those programs and practices that have the highest return on investment	
Provide capacity building/technical assistance to state and community partners	
Develop standards of practice and certify father-serving programs that meet those standards	
Develop and implement a sustainability plan that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• includes State funding, including re-investment funding based on savings achieved by evidenced-based programs that improve child and family outcomes, reduce recidivism, and lead to fathers becoming productive and self-sufficient</li> <li>• Foundations and private funders</li> <li>• Public-private partnerships</li> <li>• Federal funding through grants and other opportunities</li> <li>• Succession planning to ensure continuity of leadership within the <i>CFI</i></li> </ul>	
Develop MOAs among the state partners and other partnership agreements that include each partner's contribution to the <i>CFI</i> System	Interagency MOU currently includes 11 partners; in revision phase; changing MOU to MOA requires leadership discussions to reach braided funding to support programming
Coordinate w/related service delivery systems and networks	Connections to 2Gen Coordinator and OPM Core Agency Working Group; Reentry efforts

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: CFI SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM EFFORTS**

### *Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative*

There is established within DSS the *Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (OCFI)*. The *OCFI* shall report to the Commissioner and shall be staffed at appropriate levels to effectively support the activities as outlined in this document, including support for the *CFI* Council, Executive Team, and committee work and for the daily operations of the *CFI*, including but not limited to, such functions as contracting, program monitoring, training, and technical assistance. The *OCFI* shall support the *CFI* System in achieving the result, “All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children” and in carrying out the tasks set forth in Section A.

- Pursuant to MOAs, the *OCFI* may have the assistance of staff from other state agencies or from statewide or community partners
- The creation of the *OCFI* is not intended to cause the transfer or relocation of any existing state programs to the Department of Social Services

**IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: CFI SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM EFFORTS**

*CFI Council*

The Council is the policy making body of the *CFI* and is broadly representative of all partner organizations and stakeholders at the state and local levels that comprise the *CFI* System. The Council is responsible for approving the tasks of the *CFI* System set forth in Section A

ACTION ITEM	STATUS
<p>Recommended Council membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commissioners of Social Services, Labor, Education, Correction, Children and Families, Developmental Services, Housing, Public Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Early Childhood, or their respective designees</li> </ul>	<p>Confirmed Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social Services, Labor, Education, Correction, Children and Families, Developmental Services, Housing, Public Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Early Childhood</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directors of Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division and Support Enforcement Services, or their respective designees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Judicial Branch Court Support Services, Support Enforcement Services, and Family Support Magistrate Division</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The director of the DSS Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) or his/her designee;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Director of DSS Office of Child Support Services (formally BCSE)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The executive directors of the Commission on Children, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, and the African American Affairs Commission, or their respective designees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The chair of Board of Pardons and Parole, or designee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chair of the Board of Pardons and Parole</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The chancellor of the regional community-technical colleges, or his/her designee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chief of Staff from CT State Colleges and Universities (CSCU)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 rep with expertise in the area of legal assistance to low-income populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Greater Hartford Legal Aid</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 rep of CT Employment and Training Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 members also serve on CETC</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 representative of a regional Family Reentry Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rep from Central CT State University, Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (working with Re-entry networks)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 rep of a regional workforce development board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DOL representation in support of WIBs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 or more reps of a local community- and faith-based fatherhood programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 reps from local agencies running fatherhood programs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 rep with expertise in male psychology and health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rep from Consultation Center at Yale</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual representing interests of custodial parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual representing interests of noncustodial parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual serving the veteran population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DVA Commissioner</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A representative with expertise in the area of domestic violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence</li> </ul>

**IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: CFI SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM EFFORTS**

*CFI Council, CONTINUED*

ACTION ITEM	STATUS
The Commissioner of the Dept. of Social Services shall convene the Council	Council convened and first meeting held September 2016
The Commissioner of the Dept. of Social Services will serve as Chair of the Council, along with another Council member from the state or local level, who will be appointed by the Commissioner to serve as Co-chair for a period of one year; a new Co-chair will be assigned at the December meeting each calendar year	Council agreed Co-Chair may change every 2 years; currently seeking Co-chair to begin service in 2020
The Council will identify additional state and community members as necessary, to which the Co-chairs will extend an invitation to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Researcher from UConn Dept. of Human Development and Family Sciences joined December 2018</li> <li>▪ Director of UConn Health Center Health Disparities Institute joined</li> <li>▪ State Rep joined September 2019</li> </ul>

*CFI Council Executive Team (ET)*

The ET acts on behalf of the Council and implements policy adopted by the Council, addresses issues that may need attention between Council meetings, and advises Council on new issues that arise. The ET is responsible for ensuring that the tasks of the CFI System set forth in Section A are carried out, subject to the approval of the Council, and that the Plan is implemented.

ACTION ITEM	STATUS
<p>The Commissioner of the Dept. of Social Services shall convene the ET and appoint as members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At least four representatives of the Executive and Judicial branch agencies</li> <li>▪ Four representatives of community-based agencies</li> <li>▪ Two representatives from statewide organizations/Commissions</li> <li>▪ Two parent representatives</li> <li>▪ At least one representative from domestic violence field</li> </ul>	<p>Members Confirmed representing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DSS, DOC, DOL, DCF, CSSD, SES</li> <li>▪ Real Dads Forever, New Haven Family Alliance, Catholic Charities</li> <li>▪ CWCS COE</li> <li>▪ CCADV</li> </ul> <p>First meeting held December 2016.</p>
The Commissioner of the Dept. of Social Services will serve as Chair of the ET, along with another ET member from the state or local level, who will be appointed by the Commissioner to serve as Co-chair for a period of one year	it was decided the ET Co-Chair will be same person serving as Co-Chair of Council and will change every 2 years

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: CFI SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM EFFORTS**

*CFI Council, CONTINUED*

*Standing Committees – Tabled*

There shall be 4 standing Committees of the CFI System:

- Capacity building, standards, and certification
- Data, research, evaluation, and accountability
- Partnerships and statewide and local planning
- Public awareness, education, and advocacy

Council agreed to Executive Team recommendation to convene 5 Committees for the domains outlined in the Plan:

*Domain Committees*

Before Standing Committees could be created, the CFI Council Executive Team recommended, and CFI Council approved, that Committees should be convened according to the 5 Domains outlined in the CFI Strategic Plan.

Council members from the agencies identified as leads for a particular Domain, or strategy under a Domain, confirmed individuals to Chair/Co-Chair. Individuals who served on the original Committees were contacted regarding their interest in returning to the Committees on which they served, or different ones. Council members asked to serve/recruit individuals who they thought would be an asset to a particular Committee.

ACTION ITEM	STATUS
Confirm Chair/Co-Chairs for Domain 1-5 Committees	Chairs for the 5 Committees confirmed as of March 2017
Convene Domain Committees	Domain Committees 1-5 formed; each held initial meetings in late April-early May 2017 and set a regular meeting schedule to address the strategies under their respective Domain
Committee Chairs report their group's work at quarterly Council meetings and seek guidance/approval on direction as appropriate	reports have been provided by Chairs at ET and Council meetings since June 2017

Detailed information about the five Committees can be found on the following pages.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

This section provides an overview of the work that has been done for the following five substantive domains in the Plan since it launched in 2016:

- Domain 1: *Fathers economically stable*; includes strategies related to employment, education and other supports such as mental health services, housing, and so on to assist fathers with their economic stability; lead agency is the Department of Labor
- Domain 2: *Fathers in healthy relationships w/their children, co-parents, significant others*; a broad domain that encompasses strategies for several systems; therefore, the lead agency depends on the committee's focus
- Domain 3: *Young people prepared to be responsible parents*; led by the State Department of Education, this committee work focuses on at-risk youth and involves strategies for agencies' both engaging pregnant and parenting young fathers as well as identifying how well they are involving the fathers of the youth being served through programming
- Domain 4: *Men involved in the criminal justice system supported in being responsible fathers*; co-lead by the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division and DOC, this group is working on a comprehensive examination of all aspects of the criminal justice system , to identify ways men can be supported in their fathering role from arrest through reentry
- Domain 5: *Policy/Public Awareness*; is large in scope, co-lead by the Department of Social Services and the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity; focuses on strategies related to program sustainability, evidence-based, promising and best practices; scale, infrastructure and standards of practice; public will-building and advocacy

Members of all five Domain Committees were provided an overview of the Strategic Plan effort at their initial meeting. It was explained that Committee reports will be a standing item on the Executive Team and Council meeting agendas until Committee work is completed. The Council did not put a time limit on implementation of strategies outlined under each Domain, because there may be items not currently feasible, and that was okay. The Committees were asked to work on items as best they can, recommend steps that could be taken that may be no-cost/low-cost, but also think outside the box.

Since November 2018 changes in leadership and staffing at several CFI partner agencies, both at the state and local levels, resulted in the postponement of meetings for several Committees and the 211 Workgroup, with the exception being Domain 4 Committee.



## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 1: Fathers economically stable**

The inaugural meeting was held April 25, 2017. The Department of Labor served as lead agency for implementation of strategies under this Domain

The following agencies were represented on this Committee during the period it was active:

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Hartford	Dept. of Transportation
CT State Colleges and Universities	Family Strides, Inc.
Dept. of Correction	GBAPP
Dept. of Housing	New Opportunities, Inc.
Dept. Of Labor	NW Regional Workforce Investment Board
Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services	Office of Early Childhood
Dept. of Rehabilitation Services	State Dept. of Education (Adult Ed)
Dept. of Social Services	

All three strategies outlined in the Plan were approved by Council, and after review the group agreed they should address both Strategy 1 and Strategy 2, proposing the following steps: (1) Identify and bring critical partners to the table; (2) develop a Resource Directory to connect fathers and the providers serving them with services related to employment, education and related supportive services in their geographic area; (3) develop partnerships for outreach, messaging and spreading the word, at both the state and local levels.

A Subcommittee was formed in September 2017 to work specifically on the development of a directory of resources. Service areas the for inclusion in the resource directory were employment; education; housing; childcare; mental health/addiction supports; transportation; services for people with disabilities; services for incarcerated/formerly incarcerated. Group members raised questions about infrastructure, what services are offered, whether the state agency offers services directly, makes referrals to community partners or combination of both, eligibility requirements, etc. A questionnaire was developed and completed by representatives of the state agencies linked to the identified service areas.

In the Domain 1 Committee meeting the group discussed having the Subcommittee connect to United Way CT (UWCT) 2-1-1 as the most up-to-date, extensive database of available resources in the state. Staff from 2-1-1 were invited to present at the Subcommittee meeting for members to gain a better understanding of the tools they have and see if there were ways to make modifications to support the needs of fathers, and it became clear that the tools 2-1-1 has connect to all five Domains. UWCT 2-1-1 staff were asked to present to the CFI Council to allow for members and Domain Committee Chairs to learn about the website/call center and other services 2-1-1 may be able to offer CFI and how the network can better connect to 2-1-1 staff/networks.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 1: Fathers economically stable, continued**

Staff presented to the Council at their April 2018 meeting, which resulted in a decision to form a workgroup with representation from all five Domains to identify ways to better connect the efforts of CFI with 2-1-1; further, the Executive Director was invited to serve the Council moving forward, which he accepted.

The Committee approved a resolution in December 2018 for the development of a process for a “CFI Speakers’ Bureau”, as an added strategy to messaging and dissemination about the activities of the CFI to the general public. Messaging is the overarching focus of the Domain 5 Committee (Policy/Public Awareness). The Council approved the recommendation that there be representation from all Domains on the Domain 5 Committee. This will be addressed when they reconvene.

In May 2019, the Committee agreed quarterly meetings are more appropriate at this point in their work, with the focus shifting to ensuring the implementation of the strategies on which they had worked. For example, with members of Domain 1 Committee serving on the 211 Workgroup and Domain 5 Committee, information can be shared back to the larger group keeping all abreast of implementation.

Chair Chris Caruso retired after the June Council meeting and Commissioner Westby has identified Heriberto (Eddie) Cajigas to replace him as the DOL designee moving forward.

## Domain 2:

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

#### **FOCUS: Paternity Matters**

The initial focus for this domain was paternity establishment. The inaugural meeting was held April 20, 2017. The Department of Social Services' Office of Child Support Services served as lead agency for implementation of strategies related to paternity establishment.

The following agencies were represented on this Committee during the period it was active:

Dept. of Social Services	Dept. of Children and Families
Dept. of Public Health	Judicial Branch, Family Support Magistrate
Greater Hartford Legal Aid	Division
Judicial Branch, Court Support Services	Judicial Branch, Support Enforcement
Division	Services
Judicial Branch, Juvenile Matters	
Madonna Pace, Inc.	

This group discussed the need for connecting systems and information sharing across agencies involved in any part of the paternity establishment process, and noted potential ways to enhance communication about paternity related matters are

- the identification of additional official agents able to view the state case registry (currently limits access to DSS OCSS and Judicial SES)
- the final rule from federal Office of Child Support Enforcement that states can pursue only certain aspects of child support enforcement, one of which would be
- “paternity establishment only” services (currently if parents apply for paternity establishment services such as DNA testing, the application includes establishment of a child support order)
- a new, enhanced state child support system – DSS is currently conducting feasibility study to address the federal/state required elements as well as elements DSS and SES administration and staff believe would enhance their efforts for families

The group completed a mapping exercise, answering the following questions about each agency regarding the paternity establishment process:

- What role does the agency play/assistance does it provide?
- Are there requirements the agency must follow? If so, what are they?
- How is assistance provided?

The CFI Council Executive Team and larger Council agreed there is a critical need for connecting systems and information sharing across agencies involved in any part of the paternity establishment process, given the numerous points at where paternity may be raised as an issue; services that may be needed to assist custodial and/or noncustodial parent; requirements associated with entity/entities attempting to assist with the process and collateral consequences when correct procedures are not followed.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 2: Fathers in healthy relationships with their children, co-parents, significant others, continued**

#### **FOCUS: Paternity Matters, continued**

In order to decrease duplication/ case processing time/resources and increase cost savings, the group the group questioned whether modifying language from the cooperative agreement between DSS Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) and DPH on paternity establishment (currently specified as for “child support enforcement purposes”) would allow for other state entities having access to the information for their cases. This raised questions as to what data elements would be needed by the various partners; depending on what these elements are, legislation may be required to outline parameters for access etc. DPH statute 19A-42A may be the avenue to extend authority, as it outlines the registry, disclosure, etc. “inquiry –only” purposes to determine the status of paternity in order to ensure next steps are appropriate, again decreasing the chance of duplication of effort.

Council members agreed the fatherhood umbrella is the appropriate place for leadership of the judicial branch and those executive branch agencies connected to paternity matters (DSS, DPH and DCF) should meet further the conversation about information sharing for agencies with cases concerning children. The work of the Committee members focused on paternity establishment formally ended at the last meeting held January 11, 2018.

#### **FOCUS: Child Welfare**

The CFI Council agreed at their April 2018 meeting that Strategy 4 under Domain 2, *Child Welfare System Reform* should be the next area of focus. The inaugural meeting was held February 15, 2019, and a second meeting took place on March 29, 2019. The Department of Children and Families serves as lead agency for implementation of strategies with this focus.

The following agencies are represented on this Committee:

Dept. of Children and Families (DCF)	
Dept. of Correction (DOC)	My People’s Clinical Services, LLC
Dept. of Social Services (DSS)	New Haven Family Alliance, Inc.
Exchange Club of Stamford	Radiance Innovative Services
Family Re-Entry, Inc.	Saint Joseph Parenting Center
Klingberg Family Centers	

While DCF is Connecticut’s child welfare agency and serving as the lead agency for this piece of the implementation for Domain 2 in the CFI Strategic Plan, DCF is not the child welfare “system”. There are many partners that make up the system as a whole, which is why state and local partners were asked to serve on the committee to identify potential strategies for effecting improvements/enhancements/collaborations in child welfare. The group is committed to consideration of mental health needs of fathers and trauma-informed approaches for any recommendations it makes to the Council.

## **Domain 2:**

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

#### **FOCUS: Child Welfare, continued**

The group is examining approaches to ensure staff are better able to identify/address their own biases in order to better engage this population, not just staff at DCF staff but at all partner agencies in the child welfare system. These approaches include all aspects of employment in the field, i.e., the hiring process (interview questions as an example), training and performance evaluations.

The Committee is seeking a representative to join from CT State Colleges and Universities, as they discussed the importance of higher education preparing human services professionals now and in the future to effectively work with fathers and seek the expertise of a CSCU representative to share whether or not courses on the importance of father involvement/father engagement/working with fathers are currently offered by social work programs in the state college system, and if so what are those courses and where are they offered. If not offered, how might recommendations be made for inclusion of such courses in the future.

The Committee identified the following action steps for its work:

- provide guidance for the DCF regional Father Engagement Leadership Teams
- review language DCF currently includes in contracts with providers (beginning with those agencies represented on this Committee) and make recommendations for revisions to ensure requirements/set-up of programs are inclusive of fathers (for example, Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) program and Parenting Support Services (PSS) program)
- examine human services/social work programs in the state college system for courses that include education about father engagement

The Committee has been “on hiatus”, to avoid possible duplication of effort due to recent change in leadership and other efforts at DCF currently underway that may address some of the same issues this group was going to examine. For example, DCF is one of six sites across the nation for participation in a pilot study and evaluation of a process for which the Federal Administration for Children and Families has contracted with Mathematica called Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC), to better engage fathers and paternal relatives in the child welfare system. Also, DCF’s Father Engagement Services (FES) grant is currently underway, working with community providers to increase engagement of fathers with children are involved with DCF.

The Committee will reconvene within the next few months, potentially with additional partners, to begin work on the activities they identified and any additional ones they decide may support efforts like those named above.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

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

The inaugural meeting was held May 2, 2017. The State Department of Education serves as lead agency for implementation of strategies under this Domain. John Frassinelli, Bureau Chief for SDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness is assigned as the Chair.

The strategies outlined by the Committee working on this domain during the development of the Plan included what this group saw as "higher hanging fruit". John raised, and the group agreed, focusing on what is currently available for children/adolescents in connection to SDE and other partner agencies serving on the Committee, and the degree to which boys/young fathers are included in those efforts, would be a useful approach. As the group progressed, they believed the focus should be at-risk youth, to connect to some of the efforts already underway. John brought this to the CFI Council and members approved this recommendation.

Representatives from the following agencies have served on the Committee to date:

CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV)	Dept. of Social Services
CT Regional Education Council (CREC)	Fairhaven Community Health Center
CT Youth Services Association (CYSA)	Governor's Prevention Partnership
GBAPP, Inc.	Klingberg Family Centers, Inc.
Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)	State Dept. of Education (SDE)
Dept. of Public Health	Office of Early Childhood (OEC)
	Wheeler Clinic

Members agreed to take a systems change approach, coordinating community to connect children, and professionals serving them, to resources. Further, the group identified, and the CFI Council agreed, violence prevention will be integrated throughout this group's efforts.

The Committee has worked on the following activities:

- Connecting the work of the CFI and this Domain Committee with CCADV's efforts, co-planning symposium with CCADV, CT Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs and the CT Board of Regents, entitled *iChose: A Call to Action for Men and Boys* and held in September 2018. The goal of the symposium is to address and reinforce the role of men and boys in preventing dating and intimate partner violence, to increase men's and boy's comfort with seeing themselves as responsible, caring, and non-violent partners and encourage them to reflect upon and discuss issues surrounding masculinity, relationships and sexuality.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

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

- Developing a survey for Youth Service Bureau (YSB) staff with the following questions:
  1. What specific programming are they doing for young fathers?
  2. Is there a question or a conversation put to young men on intake asking if they are fathers, or have fathered children? And then “Are they involved in their kids’ lives or not” “How? or Why Not?”
  3. Do they have any groups/entities that they refer young fathers to in their catchment area that have specific programs – focus on dads?
  4. What do they see as the greatest need(s) of young fathers that they see?
  5. If there are gaps or a dearth of available programs for dads/young dads – What do they think the need is – (i.e. what would they like to see?)
  6. Are staff talking to the boys and girls they are serving about their fathers, level of involvement their fathers have in their lives, etc.
- Reviewing the YSB referral forms, including those made by schools per the legislative change of August 2017 that youth are no longer referred to juvenile court (Judicial CSSD) for Families With Service Needs (FWSN) matters, such as truancy, but to YSBs. The group sees opportunities for integrating questions about fathering/fatherhood.
- Increasing father engagement with WIC program through a staff training initiative WIC is a high-paced environment; as staff begin to view dad as an ally in helping them meet their responsibilities for the program engagement will increase, resulting in better outcomes for children – training was conducted at the statewide meeting in 2018; and as a result audits are being conducted at WIC offices around the state to ensure office environments and informational materials are inclusive of fathers/family men
- Reviewing results from a focus group with fathers conducted through SDE’s Family Engagement work, asking participants “What does family engagement look like when it’s working well?” and “What would you like schools/early childhood programs to do differently?” Members then identified key themes:
  - Building relationships, being consistent and demonstrating reciprocity are critical to actively engage fathers
  - The language we use should be specific – when we say “parents” or “families” we may mean different things – use the word “dad” to engage fathers, be clear it’s their involvement that we are looking for as well as mothers
  - Fathers feel it’s important for administrators/leaders to engage with them, not just teachers
  - Having fathers engaged benefits the school personnel as well as the children

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

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

The YSB staff survey yielded mixed results, with some showing more detailed responses than others. Overall, however, it seemed evident that fatherhood/father engagement was not standard practice for YSBs. Therefore, it was discussed that a stronger connection be made with the CYSA Professional Development (PD) Committee, the group that coordinates quarterly training for YSB staff. Introducing the CFI to staff will allow for coordination of sessions relevant to their work and the work of the YSBs. In turn, learning more about the work of the YSBs and CYSA will increase CFI partners' knowledge about the services they provide and potential opportunities for networking. This is an activity for which the group still needs to begin work.

Another issue still to be examined by this Committee is the connection to the Juvenile Review Boards (JRBs), now that juvenile justice-related issues are fully under the purview of CSSD. These boards are a diversionary approach for youth arrested to go before the JRB rather than through the juvenile court; the JRBs prescribe programming, school attendance guidelines, etc. LISTS were also mentioned – Local Interagency Service Teams – this system is under the CYSA along with YSBs. (<http://www.ctyouthservices.org/Advocacy/Local-Interagency-Service-Teams-LIST-/>).

Members discussed inviting representatives from Head Start and the CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence (The Alliance) to join this Committee, as well as the SDE staff who manages the Family Resource Centers statewide.

Lastly, the group is seeking to engage the CT State Colleges and Universities to see if there is a potential connection that can be made to higher education about parent engagement becoming part of the certification process for teachers. Currently students can take classes as electives, but it is not part of the foundational coursework.



## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 4:**

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

The inaugural meeting was held April 25, 2017. The Judicial Branch (Court Support Services Division as point agency) and Department of Correction serve as co-leads for implementation of strategies under this Domain. Joseph DiTunno, Deputy Director of Family Services at CSSD and Justin Oles, and later Jeffery Fargo, Counselor Supervisors with the Programs and Treatment Division at DOC serve as the Committee Co-chairs. Representatives from the following agencies have served on the Committee to date:

Career Resources, Inc.	Judicial Court Support Service Division (CSSD)
CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV)	○ Adult Probation
Dept. of Children and Families	○ Family Services
Dept. of Correction (DOC)	○ Juvenile Probation
Dept. of Developmental Services (DDS)	Judicial Support Enforcement Services (SES)
Dept. of Social Services (DSS)	New Haven Family Alliance, Inc.

The Co-chairs shared that the CFI Council recommended the group begin its work with Strategy 1 from the Plan, as it is an overarching systemic change approach. Members agreed.

The group proposed the following steps to assist with addressing strategies:

- *Bring critical partners to the table*
- *Conduct staff information sessions*
- *Form ongoing workgroup of the criminal justice system (including a focus on data collection and computer system interaction) that speaks to the needs of fathers and their children, outside of and distinct from the Fatherhood Advisory Council*
- *Identify points throughout the CJ system where fatherhood-related matters can be inserted and become part of the daily operations*

The group also discussed the challenge of data collection and sharing, even across divisions within the same agency. Members also acknowledged that individuals in the CJ system may be dealing with language/communication barriers (including deaf/hearing impaired), literacy, executive functioning, culture, etc. and so any recommendations from this Committee must be responsive, considering ways to reduce such challenges and enhance success of individuals throughout their involvement with the CJ system.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 4:**

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

The Committee has worked on the following activities:

- **Developing a survey for those involved with CJ system**
  - members recognized more than one survey will need to be developed – one for men in the system, one for women in the system, one for professionals working in each of the different parts of the system, etc.
  - the initial survey developed was for the targeted group for their work - men who are fathers involved in the CJ system; questions drafted and approved by the Council were:
    1. Did anyone ask you at any point in the process if you were a dad? If yes, at what point(s)?
    2. Where would it have been helpful to be asked if you are a father?
    3. How old was your child/children when you first became involved with the criminal justice system?
    4. How do you think your child/children have been affected by your involvement in the system (arrest/conviction/sentencing/incarceration)?
    5. What was your relationship like with your child during your incarceration?
    6. What could the system do/have done to help you stay connected to your child/children?
    7. While involved with the criminal justice system, what other systems/supports were you and/or your child involved (DSS, SES, DCF, other state/local programs)?
    8. What could the system do/have done to help your children while you are/were separated?
- **Identifying participants for and run focus groups** – groups were conducted with fathers incarcerated at Osborn Correctional Institution (February 2018), fathers involved with New Haven Probation (June 2018) and fathers on Parole living at a hallway house in Waterbury (February 2019); full summaries were shared with the CFI Council;  
Recurring themes from the focus groups include:
  - The participants shared they would like to see their role as father viewed as important by those working in the criminal justice system; while they understand the constraints staff in different parts of the system may have and that staff are required to direct them to do certain things (i.e., job search, drug testing, etc.), they wish for flexibility to support them in their role while meeting those requirements
  - Participants wish for consistency across the system, whether during arrest, in court, while incarcerated or on probation/parole regarding staff interactions, policies, etc.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 4:**

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

Recurring themes from the focus groups, continued:

- Self-awareness and personal responsibility for their actions, and what they did to get involved with the system, and a recognition that they need ongoing support to help them be successful as fathers
- Mistrust of systems, skeptical of agency involvement
- Worries about repairing relationships with their children and the effect of their incarceration on their children
- Experiences they and the mothers of their children had as children themselves have affected them. Many of their own fathers were “in and out of jail”; some mentioned other father figures, stepfathers, and how they don’t want their kids to have someone else playing the father role instead of them
- Relationships with mothers, and in some cases maternal grandmothers, viewed as a reason why they were either able to be/stay connected with their children while incarcerated or why they can’t be engaged in a regular way
- Appreciation for programs with which they were involved while incarcerated and/or in the community after release; however, they expressed a need for more supports, programs to help them in their fathering role and also supports for their children and family

Expansion of some current efforts, such as prison tours as part of orientation training for new DCF staff and “softening” of the lobby at Osborne Correctional Institution with the removal of historical artifacts such as past uniforms and installation of monthly art displays done by the incarcerated men and the information and services handbook that was developed for pregnant and parenting women at York Correctional and the caregivers for their children to name a few, should be discussed and looked at from the fatherhood lens – how can training of state agency staff incorporate information about men involved in the criminal justice system as fathers and the effect on children? How can changes be incorporated into all correctional facilities to transform lobbies, visiting rooms, etc. into more welcoming environments? Can a handbook be developed for men in the correctional facilities who are fathers? These questions and others will be considered with the goal of drafting recommendations for consideration by the CFI Council.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 4:**

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

While the lack of consistency across the various parts of the criminal justice system in order to better meet the goal of this Domain, namely “men involved in the criminal justice system being supported as responsible fathers”, has been raised as an issue by the participants involved in the focus groups, the group also agreed that “one size does not fit all” with regard to programming that meets the comprehensive needs of fathers and their families. The interventions will vary in order to ensure we are setting up fathers and children for successful relationships moving forward – for instance, children and fathers who have not be connected with each other need different supports than those who are seeking to continue a relationship where they feel connected and engaged with each other. The need for trauma-informed approaches for both fathers and children/family members was noted as well.

It was noted the messaging this group develops to raise awareness of the CFI and the “why” behind the work and engage the partners in the criminal justice system as we continue to request input and emphasize the importance of the fathering role is also something that may need to be adjusted for the various audiences. Overall, the group agreed that the message involves the following points:

- children do better when fatherhood is taken into consideration
- father’s connection to his children is a factor in reducing recidivism which in turn improves safety in families/communities
- we are asking for their input to improve outcomes for children and for their communities

Next steps for this Committee include

- developing surveys for other groups (mothers, staff)
- connecting with staff managing the Children of Incarcerated Parents Initiative at Central CT State University’s Institute of Municipal and regional Policy (IMRP) to see if they have conducted focus groups with children and if so, if they can share the information they collected with this group
- drafting of questions for targeted interviews with staff from different areas of the criminal justice system not yet connected with this Committee – namely, public defenders, state’s attorneys, law enforcement

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 5: Policy/Public Awareness**

The inaugural meeting was held May 1, 2017. The Department of Social Services and Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity serve as co-leads for implementation of strategies under this Domain. Anthony Judkins, DSS Program Manager for the CFI, and Steven Hernández, Executive Director for CWCSEO serve as the Committee Co-chairs. Representatives from the following agencies have served on the Committee to date:

Commission on Women, Children and Seniors	Dept. of Social Services
Community Renewal Team, Inc.	Hartford Public Schools
Dept. of Children and Families	Judicial Support Enforcement Services
Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services	Real Dads Forever

The group agreed to the following tenets as important for inclusion in messaging that frames the CFI:

- father presence/father absence as a social issue, and the importance of framing it so that it will be supported by legislative leadership
- defining the value of father involvement beyond financial, while recognizing financial support is part of parenthood
- Recognize the difference in the value of father involvement given to separated families of affluence vs. low-income families; for example, someone is a “good dad” or “better dad” because he financially supports his children vs. not having the ability to pay support but being engaged with his child in other ways – the value of “providing” and pride that comes with that; also, the guilt of not being with your child, or being able to provide
- the terms used throughout systems and efforts to support them are presented as gender-neutral, i.e. “family” or “parent”; however, the target for policy/services are the family in one household or the custodial parent, which many times leaves dads out of those efforts
- efforts that start with the relationship first and build out policy from there will be more successful and responsive to the needs of children and their moms and dads, and extended family too
- “reality pedagogy” that is culturally relevant is significance of– what is the frame of reference from cultural, socioeconomic, ability, geography, educational levels etc. – not a one-size-fits-all approach

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 5: Policy/Public Awareness, continued**

Tenets for inclusion in messaging that frames the CFI, continued:

- be direct in our messaging, using the word fathers, dads, etc. within the overarching context of respect for mothers and extended family and connection to raising healthy, successful children...as described in the Strategic Plan on page 9: “the primary and secondary results statements define the conditions of wellbeing to which we aspire. The primary result matches the Children’s Report Card of the Connecticut legislature’s Committee on Children: ‘Connecticut children grow up in a stable environment, safe, healthy and ready to lead successful lives.’ We made this the primary result because engaging fathers is critical for ensuring that all children grow up in a stable environment. The secondary result, ‘All Connecticut fathers are engaged in the lives of their children,’ speaks specifically to the concern of the *CFI* and makes clear how the CFI contributes to the primary result.”
- Ensure that messaging is inclusive of women, as supportive of father engagement
- Include fatherhood as a component of all we do to ensure fairness and equity gets injected into policy throughout systems, i.e., child support, child welfare, etc.
- Data matters, both quantitative and qualitative, we have both but the work lends itself more to the qualitative – how to tell the stories and show results
- Show how the intervention and increased engagement of fathers leads to prevention of negative outcomes for children and fathers (i.e., prevention of early sexual activity/teen pregnancy, involvement with juvenile justice, reduced recidivism) – return on investment!

The group also has focused on identifying efforts currently in place to address the needs of children and families in CT and connecting and embedding fatherhood into those efforts, including achievement gap council, 2Gen, ACES, early childhood, health, home visitation, employment and training, re-entry, among others. Beyond connecting to points of entry such as those previously named, a concerted effort must be made by representatives serving on the CFI Council and connecting to the CFI in other ways to ensure the “fatherhood hat” is not worn by just one representative at a particular agency, but that dads are brought into all conversations for which each of our agencies are involved related to parents, children, families.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 5: Policy/Public Awareness, continued**

Domain 5, Strategy 1 is to "Create a stable and adequate funding stream...." given fiscal conditions of our state, the Committee agreed there is a necessity to reframe this work as an investment with a great return, rather than an expense. The group discussed looking into potential funding for community-based programming and CFI activities through corporations and private foundations. Corporation and foundation leaders can be approached about the connection between the CFI's principles and their support of employees and consumers, and how their financial contributions will enhance this important work. Questions about what level of involvement state agencies are legally allowed to have when requesting financial support must be answered, but it was noted that a nonprofit agency could be approached to serve as fiduciary for these funds, such as the CT Association for Human Services (CAHS). Members recognize the need for research/data in order to communicate the message and achieve stable funding for the programming element of the CFI, particularly how it relates to the return on investment of father engagement efforts, while acknowledging the challenges of data collection and data sharing, even across divisions within the same agency.

The Committee recommends state agencies should look at their existing framework and find opportunities to bring in the objectives and be more inclusive of fathers. For example, writing language into contracts that clearly states what is expected of contracted partners, namely inclusiveness of fathers as parents, service to both parents is expected regardless of which parent is in the home with the child/children, etc. Further, foundations need to be brought into this conversation as funders of local programs. By increasing their awareness of the CFI and asking them to think about who they fund and what they require of their grantees may result in philanthropy to be more inclusive of fathers. Some questions to ask include: Are they funding programs that are inclusive of fathers? Are they even asking those questions when they right request for proposals, including it as an expectation for the granting of funding?

The group planned, and the Council approved, a full-day event at the LOB. The event tile included the tagline of the CFI logo: *Showcasing How Fathers TEACH, LOVE and INSPIRE* and was held on May 3, 2018. The messaging for which the program aimed to convey throughout the day included:

- strengths-based outcomes for children, dads and moms when fathers are positively involved in their children's lives
- the need for support of the CFI infrastructure, the importance of investing in program services, evaluation, data systems to collect information and track outcomes
- Setting the stage so we can then connect with legislators before fall term, make the "ask" for funding etc.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 5: Policy/Public Awareness, continued**

An informational flyer developed by the Committee stated: “Come join leaders from CT State Agencies, Community Organizations, Legislature and the Community for a free one day event to raise awareness on the efforts of Connecticut’s Fatherhood Initiative to promote the importance of positive involvement of fathers in the lives of their children. The event will highlight work of its partners over the past two decades and the work currently being done to better support fathers and their families.”

Several leaders from the Executive and Judicial Branches were in the room, and remained in attendance for most/all of the day, which shows the commitment to the CFI and its efforts. Leaders including Commissioner Bremby, DSS; Commissioner Semple, DOC; Commissioner Wilkinson, OEC; Commissioner Evonne Klein, DOH; Commissioner Jordan Scheff, DDS and Judge Solomon, Deputy Chief Administrator, Judicial Branch all participated and spoke of the CFI’s collaborative approach and successes over the years in working together. Legislative Commission heads were also in attendance, and reiterated the legislative connection is crucial to this work as well.

In addition, there were 3 moderated panel discussions, with parents, providers, and MOU partners, answering the following questions:

#### Parents Panel

1. How did you come to understand fathering from childhood until now?
2. While attending your Fatherhood Program, what experiences stood out for you?
3. How does your understanding of fathering and your program experiences impact your future?

#### Providers Panel

1. What are some of the community challenges that impact your work with fathers?
2. Could you give an example of something you have in place internally at your agency to support fathers, and an example of collaboration with another agency in the community, to support fathers?
3. How does your agency’s work benefit families and community?

#### MOU Partners Panel

1. Could you give an example of how a father experiences support from your agency and an example of a collaboration with a sister agency that supports fathers?
2. What can you do better, and what do you need to make it happen?
3. What are a few recent accomplishments of this work that your agency has experienced?



## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: COMMITTEE EFFORTS BY DOMAIN**

### **Domain 5: Policy/Public Awareness, continued**

This group also worked on the development of a messaging campaign called the *Dear Dad Tour*, which was approved by the Council at the December 2018 meeting. The Tour launched after Mothers' Day in May of 2019 and ran until Fathers' Day. This campaign shares compelling fatherhood stories of men, women and children throughout the state to bring attention to the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative as people explain what fatherhood means to them and how we can be affected by the presence or absence of our fathers. The Council is considering running the Campaign annually.

Members of the group collaborated to plan a two-day event entitled *Achieving a Positive Family Legacy: A Statewide Summit on Fatherhood*, on August 8 and 9, 2019, at CCSU's Alumni Hall. Federal, state and local stakeholders convened to share information about current father engagement efforts, highlight fathers as critical forces in their children's lives, and focus on how state systems can assist with the important role they play. Featured speakers and panelists also demonstrated the importance of collaboration, identified action steps to further the work Connecticut is doing to support fathers and families, and celebrate 20 years of father engagement efforts in Connecticut. The summit featured a viewing of the *Dear Dad Tour compilation video*. More information can be found on the *Dear Dad Tour* website at [www.deardadtour.org](http://www.deardadtour.org)

The Co-chairs will be seeking to confirm members from Domain Committees 1 through 4 to join this Committee so that all domains are represented and there can be increased intercommunication across the various groups.

This group will be working to develop "informational briefs", one-page sheets that speak to the various areas examined by the CFI where father involvement is important, to be shared with legislators and other audiences to increase their awareness and invite them to engage in the work.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: 211/CFI WORKGROUP**

This workgroup was formed as a result of a presentation delivered to the Domain 1 Committee's Resource Directory Subcommittee, and subsequent presentation delivered to the CFI Council, as members acknowledged that the resources available through United Way of CT/2-1-1 (UWCT) were relevant to the work of all five of the CFI Strategic Plan Domain Committees.

The initial meeting was held June 21, 2018. Representatives from all five Domain Committees are represented on this group, from both state and local agencies. Rick Porth, President and CEO of United Way CT serves as Chair of this Workgroup. This group's purpose is to examine how CFI and UWCT/2-1-1 can better connect, focusing on service delivery/access to available resources inclusive of fathers, especially noncustodial fathers.

The group has conducted the following activities:

- Toured the 211 Call Center and the research unit to gain a better understanding about their operations and support provided to the residents of Connecticut
- conducted "test" searches, looking up agencies/programs and to set up their individual My 211 Account in order to set up and test creation of resource lists, etc., searching for potential opportunities for language/text inclusive of fathers (especially thinking about those who are not living in the same household as their children)
- examined and enhanced resources to ensure the UWCT211 database includes all the programs serving dads in the community. A small team of Resource Specialists work to keep the system up to date. There is a thorough review and update conducted annually, so ongoing support by CFI partner agencies to keep UWCT informed of changes will lead to the most helpful referrals to resources for fathers and the providers serving them.
- added many new "folksonomy terms", which are more common terms/phrases users enter for searching for services (e.g. "help for dads", "programs for fathers", "programs for dads"); these terms are layered onto the existing taxonomy and added to the 211ct.org search engine to make it easier to find fatherhood programs
- Revised the 211 website, including adding "fatherhood" to the "search by category" feature; adding a fatherhood category for compiling lists of e-library papers; promoting CFI events
- Delivered training for staff from community-based agencies serving fathers/families on the 211 Call Center and website; objectives were to raise the providers' familiarity/comfort level of the resources available to help their clients and empower their clients to use the tools themselves

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: 211/CFI WORKGROUP, continued**

- Delivered training for UWCT Call Center and Resource Specialists on the CFI and how important they are in the process of connecting dads to resources for themselves and their children
- created Fatherhood category in the 211 e-library; the following papers are listed:
  - Becoming a Parent – this paper includes the following section:
  - FATHERS
  - Dads are essential to their children’s success! When fathers are involved, even if the father is separated from the mother, children are happier, do better in school, and have a better chance for success in life. For information about the importance of the father, and to learn how to be the best Dad you can be, go to:
  - Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative:  
<http://www.ct.gov/fatherhood/site/default.asp>
  - National Fatherhood Initiative: <http://www.fatherhood.org>
  - Care 4 Kids Child Care Subsidy Program
  - Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit
  - Child Custody
  - Child Support in Connecticut
  - Child Tax Credit
  - Divorcing Parents Parenting Education Programs (PEP)
  - DNA Testing
  - Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC/EITC) / Federal Earned Income Tax Credit / Connecticut Earned Income Tax Credit
  - Family/Juvenile Court – Connecticut
  - Help for Children With Learning Disabilities
  - Paternity Establishment
  - Support Groups
  - Truancy Laws – Connecticut
- Developed and delivered a webinar for the 211 Winter Webinar Series

My211Account is an anonymous, personal account, they ask for very little information to set up to encourage people to use it. Additional information if entered allows 211 staff to see who is signing up and using the feature. Providers are the main users at this time, using their My211Accounts mainly as a client-specific case management tool to create an action plan for a particular client, or for topic-specific lists of resources in the area where the agency/program is located, for use with their client base.

## **IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE: 211/CFI WORKGROUP, continued**

This group discussed a recommendation that state partners with contracted providers include language in contracts requiring agencies to list their program in the database, and agree to have program staff set up My211 Accounts and support enrolled program participants who have smartphones in setting up accounts as appropriate/applicable; this would require a training component for agency staff and their contracted providers - 211 does offer webinars that guide users on the various features of the website, including how to set up the My211Account. This information could be included for contractors to ensure they know where to access the webinar etc.

211 can support the CFI and its messaging beyond the listing and updating on agency information in the database, including:

- *Community Connections* newsletter, which has a listserv of 14,000 recipients
- Get Connected (New Haven and Waterbury) – through the My211 account; a continually updated, comprehensive database of services provided by the City, non-profit and community organizations. The site was created to enhance knowledge of and empower broader access to the wide array of programs and services available in New Haven and Waterbury; also a tool that service providers can use to assist clients with referrals to needed supports, thereby encouraging collaboration and cooperation among organizations that serve those in need in those communities.
- Queue messaging – messages with a call to action that callers will hear while they are waiting to speak to a Call center specialist
- 211 Barometer – uses 211 data and other information to explore issues affecting CT residents; tracks the type of information callers are looking for and referrals made
- 211 eBulletins – topic specific information, seasonal information such as extreme heat precautions and cooling centers, time-sensitive

211 would like to collaborate with the Workgroup on creating a new eLibrary paper that describes the larger context, background, activities and legislation related to the CFI, as well as think about how to incorporate additional focus on fathers in the subsequent ALICE reports and share ideas with the Workgroup.