

Commissioner's Monthly Message



June brings us **Father's Day, Reunification and PRIDE Month, Juneteenth,** and the **end** of the **Legislative Session!**

Happy Father's Day to all our Fathers, Stepfathers, Grandfathers, and Father figures! We **THANK YOU** for what you do, the example you set and the **values and principles** you stand for while nurturing and loving your

families.



Speaking of Fathers..... The **Best Dad by Par** foster care event was a day filled with laughter and comradery amongst **birth, foster, adoptive and kinship fathers** from across Connecticut. Yes, I even hit a few balls after my **golf cart tour** of the course!

Excellent job Foster Care Division on this outing and all the others that took place this month celebrating and honoring our **foster, kinship and adoptive families!**



June is also **Reunification Month**. Reunification remains the priority when children are separated from their parents and **since January 2025**, we have **reunified over 200 children** which brings the total to approximately **760** since the **beginning of this Administration**.

Read in this month's **Spotlight** about the **journey of two fathers** who have been reunified with their children and the **very special Father's Day** they recently shared with their families.



After resolving prior legal issues and working closely with DCF for about a year, **Parris** was reunified with his daughter, **Pae'shanz**, in January 2025. **The two celebrated Father's Day together.** Reflecting on the circumstances that led to his daughter's removal, Harris shared, ***"It was an eye-opener because I have somebody who really depends on me... I just focused on doing anything and everything to get my child back."*** Read the full story in this month's **Spotlight**.

9-year-old Joshua crouched behind a dresser in his foster home and put a **notch in the wood** for each day he was **separated from his family**. He eventually stopped counting. Today, he is exactly where he needs to be - **home with his father** - catching largemouth bass, having sleepovers and riding the Superman roller coaster at 6 Flags New England. Read "**I wish I could live with him sooner,**" which tells the story of Joshua and his father, Theodore, **who never gave up on reunifying** with his son.



Pride Month is celebrated to commemorate the **Stonewall Uprising**, a series of spontaneous demonstrations by members of the **LGBTQ+ community** in New York City in 1969. Read in our *Spotlight* newsletter about these events, triggered by a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar, as they are widely considered a turning point in the **fight for LGBTQ+ rights**.

Look in the coming months as we are enhancing our **V.I.T.A.L model** to include an **affirming and respectful framework** for **LGBTQIA+ youth** with an emerging expanded chapter entitled, Uphold.Us (Supporting, individuality, visibility and community). **Current V.I.T.A.L. Support for LGBTQIA+ Youth** can be found here: [LGBTQIA+ Supports](#).



Juneteenth, a Celebration of Freedom and a Day of Reflection, was held this month. In our state, this was the third year Juneteenth was **legally recognized** as a paid state holiday commemorating the date that news of the **Emancipation Proclamation** (and their subsequent freedom from slavery) reached enslaved people in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865.



I was honored to take part in a **panel discussion** and **flag raising** event with the **Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity**, the **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission**, and the **Connecticut Keep the Promise Coalition** honoring the 160th anniversary of Juneteenth with leaders across our state.



Dr. Nicole Taylor and Dr. Stephanie Bozak took part in the **City of Hartford African American Parade and Juneteenth Celebration**. Along with **Orlando Edwards from The Village for Children and Families**, they



promoted the **Urgent Crisis Centers** now available to families of children who are experiencing a

behavioral health crisis but do not require an emergency department level of care. **Learn more about them** here: [UCCs](#)

The **2025 Legislative Session** is over and **Chief Administrator of Government Affairs and Policy Vinny Russo** and **Legislative Program Director Mike Carone** can get some sleep! A huge **THANK YOU** to both individuals for their tireless efforts to pass our legislative package and ensure any new legislation was made with the **best interests of our children and families** in mind.



June is **Men's Mental Health Month**. **Director of Fatherhood Services Anthony Gay** took part in a Fatherhood Roundtable Discussion with **Comptroller Sean Scanlon**. The topics included the unique challenges that being a father present in today's society including how **pride** and the **unwillingness to ask for help** impacts men, their **mental health** and **fathering abilities**.

A **shout out** one more time to the **May Employees of the Month**! Who has been nominated to receive the **June Award**? Read to see who is described as *"extraordinary,"* bringing a *"deeply personal touch,"* and having the mantra *"Family First."*



Simply **amazing presentations** were heard during the graduations for our employees in the **Leadership Academy for Supervisors (LAS)**, **Leadership Academy for Middle Managers (LAMM)** and the **Mentoring Closing Ceremony**. We have such talented staff with fantastic ideas on how to improve our Agency!



Congratulations to **Superintendent of the Albert J. Solnit PRTFs Mike Rulnick** for graduating from the Aspiring Leaders cohort. **Aspiring Leaders** was a 10-session training that provided opportunities for managers from various state agencies to interface with one another and hear from a variety of subject matter experts from **different walks of life** within

state government.

DCF Director of Interagency Navigation William Seals and **Children's Services Consultant Ivy Erazo** graduated from **TYJI Tow Youth Justice Institute (TYJI)** cohort. The Institute was created to build the **capacity of present and future leaders** as agents of change.





Program Manager Lisette Cobb from the **Office of Multicultural Affairs** and **Dr. Stephanie Bozak** from the **Office of Behavioral Health and Community Services** graduated from the **DHMAS Champions for Diversity and Health Equity Program** offered by the **Office of Multicultural Health Equity (OMHE)**. This 10-month long program is designed to help participants prioritize health equity and other topics more effectively and to embed it in their work, regardless of the location of the regional agency they represent.

One of our own recently **presented** at the UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) first international conference on *"The Role of Academia in Promoting Child Rights"*. **Deputy Commissioner Dr. Joyce Taylor** presented, *"Applying the ABCD Paradigm to Integrate Children's Rights into University Curricula."* We are proud of you for representing DCF across the globe!

Special thanks to our partners at **ROCA** for inviting me to speak at their **Hartford Graduation Ceremony** honoring the first cohort of young women. Roca's behavioral health intervention model is an intensive **long-term intervention for high-risk young women and mothers**, characterized by chronic and ongoing trauma, and impacted by violence. **The stories of success were inspiring!**



A **Commissioner's Monthly Video** will now be provided to keep you updated on Agency operations. Watch **June's** again here: [Commissioner's June 2025 Video](#)

Thank you everyone and stay cool this Summer!