



DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities



Joette Katz
Commissioner

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DCF Wins Federal Grant To Enhance Substance Abuse Treatment
For Families Whose Children Are At Risk For Removal
\$1.4 Million Award Over Three Years To Increase Rates
Of Successful Recovery By Focusing On Effects Of Trauma

HARTFORD – The Department of Children and Families (DCF) won a \$1.4 million, three-year federal grant to enhance treatment services for families at risk of losing their children due to their incapacity to appropriately provide care as the result of substance abuse.

The award from the federal Children's Bureau will be used to improve an existing recovery support model known as Recovery Case Management (RCM). The Substance Abuse Family Evaluation, Recovery & Screening (SAFERS) project will establish comprehensive screening, joint service planning, and concrete supports to enhance linkages to existing evidence-based services. SAFERS will build upon the existing partnership between DCF, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the Judicial Branch, Advanced Behavioral Health, Inc., (ABH), and the University of Connecticut Health Center (UCHC). The partnership was established four years ago to develop and implement the RCM program in seven pilot sites.

The target population for SAFERS is families with a substance abusing caregiver and that have a child 0-5 years old. The project is designed to improve identification of needs among caregivers, infants and young children, establish cross-agency service planning and rapidly engage families in community-based services. The goals are to increase rates of treatment compliance and recovery as well as decrease the rate of child removals and improve children's overall well-being.

DCF Commissioner Joette Katz said the project is one of a number of grants the Department has obtained to improve its work with children and families and fits well with its overall efforts to prevent children from entering state systems and to improve their overall well-being.

"When the Department can access federal resources to improve state partnerships, it is a good thing for state taxpayers and a good thing for the children and families we serve," Commissioner Katz said. "Supporting families facing challenges is complicated work, and we need to work together and leverage outside resources to be our most effective."

"DMHAS and DCF have forged a strong partnership based on a common interest in improving the health of individuals impacted by substance abuse" said DMHAS Commissioner Pat Rehmer. "The SAFERS grant will enhance the work we have been doing and improve our existing services."

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SAFERS will include the following components:

- Comprehensive screening for substance use, mental health, parenting, family violence and trauma for caregivers;
- Trauma screening for children ages 0-5 years old;
- Alignment of child welfare treatment plans and court-ordered "specific step" requirements;
- Workforce development to increase knowledge of substance use, recovery, and trauma among SAFERS partners;
- Enhancement of RCM services to make them more trauma-informed and family focused; and
- Reduction of barriers to accessing evidence-based community services.

SAFERS will leverage the Children's Bureau funding to further efforts toward developing trauma-informed family recovery. SAFERS will address important gaps in Connecticut's systems, including increasing knowledge of substance use and child and family trauma among the project's partners, implementing a universal trauma screen, enhancing the RCM model to be more family focused, and establishing a mechanism for cross-agency service planning.

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