



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
GOVERNOR DANIEL P. MALLOY

GOV. MALLOY: U.S. COURT AFFIRMS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES HAS REACHED SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE, PUTTING STATE ON PATH TO END DECADES OF FEDERAL OVERSIGHT

(HARTFORD, CT) – Governor Dannel P. Malloy said that an agreement approved today by the U.S. District Court overseeing the Juan F. Consent Decree will put the state on a clear path toward ending decades of federal oversight of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Pursuant to an agreement between DCF and Children’s Rights, the nonprofit law firm representing the class of plaintiffs, the judge has ruled that 12 of the 22 original required outcomes have been met and has set an expedited process for certifying compliance when the remaining outcomes are met. In addition, four of the remaining outcomes have been “pre-certified” as met and the actions of the Department must be sustained for a period of time in order to attain compliance. The modified judgement will require approval by the Connecticut General Assembly as required under state law, and is anticipated to occur early in the 2017 regular legislative session.

“This important milestone toward exit from federal oversight represents a significant moment for Connecticut and most importantly is a real demonstration of the improvements made for our children and families,” Governor Malloy said. “Trends are moving in the right direction – we’ve reduced the number of children in state care, increased the use of family and relative placements, and reduced our reliance on institutional settings. It is gratifying to see the court and the plaintiff’s legal team acknowledge Connecticut’s progress. I’d like to thank Commissioner Katz and her staff for their dedication to the children and families of Connecticut.”

Of the original 22 outcome measures, 16 outcomes will no longer actively be monitored because of the court monitor’s determination in recent reviews, including in the most recent report for the first quarter of 2016, that the department had demonstrated significant progress in meeting these outcomes.

The six remaining outcome measures (OM) that need to be monitored include:

1. Commencement of investigations (OM 1)
2. Completion of investigations (OM2)
3. Case planning (OM3)
4. Children's Needs Met (former OM 15)
5. In-home case worker-child visitation (former OM 17)
6. Caseload standards (former OM 18)

The four outcomes that need to be sustained – meaning the department must maintain the required level of performance for two consecutive quarters in order for them to be completely removed from the monitor's oversight – are:

1. Repeat maltreatment (former OM 5)
2. Maltreatment of children in out-of-home care (former OM 6)
3. Re-entry into care (former OM 11)
4. Worker-child visitation in out of home care (former OM 16)

Under the previous exit plan, the court monitor conducted reviews of as many as 500 cases for each of the 22 measures, and during the review period, the department had to maintain performance of all the measures in order to achieve exit. The modified judgment was developed at the court's direction by the court monitor, the department, and Children's Rights to recognize progress made by the department and to establish a plan for exit that is achievable, realistic, and sustainable once formal court oversight ends.

DCF Commissioner Joette Katz said that the department has changed the way it views and works with families.

"We have changed our relationships with families and communities," she said. "Families have to be at the center of providing solutions for their children. We cannot do this work without them. We are no longer an agency that sees families as the source of the problem. Rather, families are viewed and respected as the source of the solution."

Once approved, the modified judgement is intended to bring the consent decree to a conclusion upon the achievement of realistic benchmarks for the remaining six outcomes. In addition to reducing the number of outcomes actively monitored, the methodology for measuring outcomes for quality case planning and meeting children's needs has been streamlined substantially. Under the prior exit plan, each measure was made up of up to 11 elements or components – all of which had to be met at the same time. Under the modified judgement, when the department's performance on any one component meets the standard, the department will assert compliance and request that the court monitor "pre-certify" the individual component. Once pre-certified, that component will be removed from the monitored outcome measure. The domains will not then need an additional review before final exit.

The final phase of the 2016 exit plan requires the department to conduct ongoing reporting for a period of 12 months after the court terminates its jurisdiction over all outcome measures. The

department, rather than the court monitor, will issue two reports during this period, and the monitor's role will be limited to validating the department's reports. The revised exit plan will require the department to maintain staffing levels necessary to keep caseloads at 75 percent of the maximum caseload standards and also to expand services by \$6 million in key areas.

The co-chairs of the legislature's Committee on Children said the progress made under the Malloy Administration resulted from many organizations and individuals working together to make needed improvements.

"Today's modified judgement is indicative of the significant progress that DCF has made in addressing so many of the underlying concerns in the Juan F. decree, and that's largely a result of the collective hard work of a lot of people – including legislators and children's advocates, but especially Commissioner Katz and her staff," State Senator Dante Bartolomeo (D-Meriden) said. "If this judgement is approved, we can move on and build on the momentum and success that we have achieved over the past decade and a half and really focus on continued improvements for children and families in need. That has always been our goal, and that will continue to be our goal."

State Representative Diana Urban (D-Stonington) said, "As the House Chair of the Children's Committee, I have worked closely with Commissioner Katz and her staff to make the department a data-driven organization and a leader in utilizing the Connecticut's Children's Report Card. Working together, Connecticut has become a national leader in child welfare and reaching this final stage of oversight will allow us to make further progress."

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