



## DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

*Making a Difference for Children, Families and  
Communities*

Joette Katz  
Commissioner



Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor

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Connecticut Celebrates National Adoption Month  
In Period Of Rapid Change For Foster Care  
*Kinship Homes Nearly As Common As Traditional Foster Homes*  
*And Now Triple The Share Of Children In Group Settings*

HARTFORD – Throughout November, Connecticut celebrates National Adoption Month with several events to raise awareness even as the state’s foster care system experiences rapid changes making it smaller and more reliant on families – especially relatives and kin.

Almost 800 Connecticut children in foster care found permanency during the previous state fiscal year through adoption or subsidized guardianship.

Governor Dannel P. Malloy said the state is working tirelessly to support children who need a permanent family.

“We believe that all children, regardless of circumstance, deserve a permanent home, and we’re working hard to achieve that goal,” Governor Malloy said. “We have a moral obligation to do what we can for the children that need our help most. That’s why we’re taking important steps – and that’s why awareness about adoption month is so important.”

Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman said, “National Adoption Month does more than just call attention to the need for permanent homes for vulnerable young people, it also helps us build families and communities. These children are the future of Connecticut — it’s critical that we are working on their behalf now.”

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Commissioner Joette Katz said special “permanency teams” are convened for all children in care and are re-convened periodically. The permanency teams consist of the child, DCF staff and other people in the child’s life who are important to him or her.

“We have to take every possible measure to connect children to someone in their lives who can provide a home and family,” Commissioner Katz said. “Through the hard work of our staff and successful partnerships with relative and kin, we have made the foster care system in Connecticut smaller and more family based. There are, however, still children in need of a

permanent family. Our work is far from done, especially when it comes to older youth, sibling groups and children with special needs.”

Since January 2011, many changes have been implemented to reform foster care and child welfare in Connecticut focused on strengthening and supporting families and also using relatives and other people with relationships with the child as resources for children in care. This has resulted in dramatic changes in the shape and dimensions of the foster care system:

- There are 785 fewer children in care -- a decrease of 16.4 percent;
- The percentage of children in care who live with a relative or someone else they know grew from 21% in January 2011 to 39.3%. For the first time ever in September, more than 50 percent of children entering care during the month were placed into a kinship home;
- The percentage of children in care who live in congregate (group) care dropped from 29.8% in January 2011 to 13.5% -- a reduction of 886 children or 62%; and
- There are 352 fewer children in out of state care -- a decrease of 97.2 percent. The number of children out of state stands at 10 as of September 1, 2015 compared to 362 when the administration began.

In part because of these improvements, the children remaining in care tend to be older. Of the nearly 4,000 children in care, approximately 45 percent are age 13 and older. The adoption of older children has, accordingly, become a heightened focus at the Department. Several of the adoptions taking place on National Adoption Day in Connecticut involve teenagers. Others involve relative adoption and sibling group adoption.

Following are some of the events and activities to raise adoption awareness in November:

- Connecticut celebrates National Adoption Day November 20 by partnering with the Juvenile Courts across Connecticut to conduct final adoptions proceedings in open court where the news media will be invited to report. About 50 adoptions are expected to occur that day, and the media will be advised of details in the coming days and weeks;
- www.CTParenting.com and the Department’s Facebook and Twitter social media platforms will offer educational resources throughout November on adoption;
- The Heart Gallery, an exhibit of portraits of children waiting to be adopted, is photographed as a courtesy by area professional photographers. The purpose of this display is to highlight a child’s story and to find potential families willing to adopt. Heart Galleries can be found during the entire month at the following locations:
  - Shubert Theater, New Haven;
  - UCONN Medical Hospital, Farmington;
  - North Haven Town Hall, North Haven;
  - State Capitol, Legislative Office Building, Hartford;
  - The Buttonwood, Middletown;
  - Robbyn’s Nest Daycare, Sherman;
  - Sweet Harmony, Middletown;
  - Carriage House, Meriden; and
  - Many CT public libraries.

- Middletown area businesses will feature an informational placemat for patrons at breakfast, lunch and dinner;
- Send Out Cards, a national corporation, is sending a thank you card to our families who are waiting to adopt a child. The card will serve as an appreciation for their patience and interest in our program;
- State Comptroller Kevin Lembo, who is an adoptive parent, will send a letter to all state employees to highlight National Adoption Month;
- “Doors To Hope And Healing” art exhibit featuring artwork by foster and adoptive children and families will be shown at The Buttonwood Tree, 605 Main Street, Middletown on November 12 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Commissioner Katz, Comptroller Lembo, and adoptive children and families will be speaking; and
- The Main Street Business District in Middletown is partnering with the Department to create additional awareness about adoption. Throughout the business district, there will be blue bows tied around the lamp posts and area businesses will display literature and information about adoption.

## **BACKGROUND**

Adoptions were finalized for 510 children, and subsidized guardianships transferred for 283 children during State Fiscal Year 2015.

### How to become an adoptive parent

- Call 1-888-KID HERO for more information and a listing of Open House informational sessions available in your area
- Training required to become an adoptive parent takes about three months
- It takes a total of approximately four months to become licensed, including training, a home-study and background checks

### What support do adoptive families receive

- Adopted children may be eligible for both a financial and a medical subsidy.
- Adopted children are eligible for DCF’s post-secondary education financial assistance program.
- Families can receive help through the Adoption Assistance Program for a variety of services, including assessment, support, and referrals to community-based and in-home services.

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