



Joette Katz
Commissioner

DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

DRAFT MINUTES **CT Three Branch Home Team Meeting** **Monday, January 6, 2014**

1. Welcome and Introductions

DCF Commissioner Joette Katz welcomed everyone to the CT Three Branch Home Team "kick-off" meeting and team members introduced themselves. Commissioner Katz thanked the Three Branch Institute core team for their hard work and commitment towards this endeavor and introduced the core team:

- Judicial Branch: Judge Nina Elgo
Judge Richard Dyer
- Legislative Branch: State Representative Diana Urban
- Executive Branch: Kate McEvoy, DSS Medicaid Director
Susan Smith, Chief of Quality and Planning
Elizabeth Duryea, Director of Development.
- National Consultants: Susan Reilly, Casey Family Programs
Alexandra Cawthorne, National Governors Association

The collective mission for CT's Three Branch Home Team is *to ensure that the health, safety and well-being of every child in Connecticut is a shared priority objective for Connecticut's Executive, Legislative and Judicial Branches*. To achieve this mission, the core team had identified supportive housing, mental health and permanency as the three key policy areas to improve well-being outcomes for children, and through the partnership of the agencies represented today, better outcomes could be accomplished. A partnership would require building better relationships across state government and stakeholders, identifying gaps, enhancing services, streamlining redundancies and ultimately achieving better outcomes for children and families.

As Connecticut's child welfare agency, DCF shares overlapping mandates and missions with other agencies which require us to work across the branches and existing silos to breakdown barriers to inter-branch collaboration. The membership of the CT 3BI Home Team reflects our need to work across the branches, systems and agencies if we are to having a meaningful impact in improving well-being outcomes for children.

2. Overview of the 3 Branch Institute from National Partners

Susan Reilly gave an overview of the purpose of the 3 Branch Institute (3BI) is to help all 3 branches of government collaborate and partner to improve well-being of children and families through an integrated, comprehensive and collaborative approach, and by aligning services across government to facilitate service delivery. See related presentation available [here](#).

3. Children's Well-Being Framework

Susan Reilly also presented on the Children's Well-Being Framework, modified from the U.S. Administration for Children and Families (ACF) well-being framework presented at the 3BI in Philadelphia. See related presentation [here](#).

4. Core Team Reflections of the Three Branch Institute

The CT core team members briefly shared their experiences, thoughts and reactions on the Three Branch Institute work. General themes from core team members that reflect both challenges and opportunities as we engage the broader CT 3B Home Team to move forward:

- Countless challenges impede our ability to impact broad policy issues and problems that require inter-branch collaboration and understanding of these challenges and commitment to action across systems.
- The CT 3B Home Team presents an opportunity to leverage power and knowledge to promote inter-branch collaboration through ongoing engagement and shared learning around multi-systems' issues like housing, mental health and permanency.



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- There is a need for stakeholders to understand the effects of trauma on the developing brain and trauma informed evidence-based treatment and response.
- Representative Diana Urban emphasized the need for government to be data-informed and data-driven. Agencies need to build data capacity so that data may track outcomes across agencies. Building Results-Based Accountability (RBA) capacity across agencies.
- How can agencies align interventions and build their capacity to achieve set goals?
- What role should Medicaid play given it already covers many of the evident informed interventions that support the well-being children and families?
- How do we know what we do works?
- What will be the common language or vernacular?
- How do we serve families?
- How do we earnestly know that our clients are doing better?
- How can we promote self-sufficiency by helping families meet their basic needs?"
- Well-being expands beyond DCF and calls for the commitment of all 3 branches to have a collective impact on issues like housing, mental health and permanency.
- CT 3B Home Team can assist with collective brainstorming about ways to leverage resources and generate measurable data.

5. Overview of Focus Areas to Support Well-Being for DCF-Involved Families

Through participation in the 3BI, the core team identified three policy domains where there are many efforts underway that relate to well-being: mental health, permanency and supportive housing. DCF administrators gave a brief overview about DCF's work in these areas, related federal grants and legislation, and how these efforts relate to the 3BI work.

- **Mental Health - Tim Marshall, DCF Clinical Manager**

Tim provided an overview of major projects underway that reflect the Department's focus on mental health and commitment to creating an integrated system that promotes health and wellness:

- Taskforce for older adolescence and young adults
- Public Act 13-178
- SAMHSA Connect Grant awarded in August 2013
- Potential SAMHSA Award for \$5M to fund the Behavior Health Plan infrastructure

- **Permanency - Kristina Stevens, DCF Director of Change Management**

Kristina discussed the need for a more global understanding of "permanency" and how other branches need to recognize the importance of permanency for young people. The national discussion on permanence for children and youth is the concern of children aging out of the system without permanent resources or supports. The notion of permanence invites and expects an extensive network of support for children and families. This has led DCF to implement numerous practice shifts to improve permanency outcomes for youth:

- Teaming - engaging the child's natural support network to discuss ways in which to move the child back to their family and community.
- Considered Removal Teaming - 50% of those families that came to the table diverted the children from entering care. The other 50% of children that had to enter care were placed with relatives and kin, and 50% of these children went into foster care.
- Permanency Roundtables - an effort spearheaded by Casey Family Programs that provided a methodology to look at children at risk of aging out without permanent resources. This allowed the roundtable to look at 186 youth that met the requirements.
- Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) reduction goals - APPLA relies on independent living which contradicts the reality that every youth needs a caring network of support as they transition to adulthood.



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- The 2014 goal is a full scale teaming and permanency approach, which will be an ongoing process. The Commissioner's message on permanency is that DCF honor the relational level by reaching the highest level of legal permanence that it can for children in the system.

- **Supportive Housing - Nancy DiMauro, DCF Director of Child Welfare**

DCF has several initiatives underway that reflect the unmet housing needs youth and families:

- Supportive Housing for Families Program - a statewide program that provides housing assistance and intensive case management services to DCF families to prevent children from being removed from their families due to unsafe housing or homelessness, and to support the reunification of children with their family when housing issues present a barrier to reunification. In the course of 14 years, close to 500 families were served and 5,256 families. As of today, there are 529 families (1368 children) that are currently being served. The problem is that there is a waiting list of 917 families - the highest it has ever been.
- Supportive Housing Pilots:
 - Young Adult Supportive Housing Pilot - 46 young adults were served who had left DCF care;
 - Pilot to prioritize housing for families with children birth - 5.
- Vouchers present a significant barrier to securing stable housing for families. To address shortages and delays in securing vouchers, DCF allows families into the program for 3-6 months until the voucher are received. Delays in this process make it more difficult for DCF to serve the number families that were served in the past.
- In October 2013, DCF was awarded a \$5M federal grant to demonstrate the effectiveness of supportive programs for child welfare involved families with multiple episodes of homelessness, substantiated abuse and neglect, mental health and domestic violence. High-end families will be randomized before receiving services from the grant. The \$5M can only be used for services, excluding housing, and for evidence-based programs. The grant will be launched in DCF's Region 3 (Middletown and Willimantic) and referrals are now underway.

6. Moving to Action

After the presentations, breakout sessions were convened to discuss each topic in more detail with the presenters to ask questions, generate ideas, and share information that would improve better well-being outcomes for children and families.

Feedback from the Mental Health Breakout Session

- Cross section of participants joined this break-out session
- Adding partners from: OEC, SDE, others TBD
- Role of philanthropy at the local level
- Track cultural competency and disproportionality through data
- Integrating CT 3B Home Team work with other state initiatives; support each other
- Need for shared learning and education
- Evidence-based practice not the end-all, be-all
- Lack of parity, coverage

Feedback from the Permanency Breakout Session

- Cross section of participants joined this break-out session
- Inclusion and integration (parallel conversations across agencies)
- Collaboration benefits kids and families
- Importance of the infrastructure and siblings and kin
- Adding partners from: OPM, DAS, SDE, OEC and families to this discussion
- Legislation to mirror federal level around adoption and guardianship



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Feedback from the Supportive Housing Breakout Session

- Need more vouchers but more vouchers are not the answer to homelessness
- Self-sufficiency – need to create systems-level change to promote self-sufficiency
- Set context within larger housing issues
- Integrate work with other sectors and sub-populations
- Fixing symptoms, need to get to root of system issues
- Health is linked to housing
- Adding partners from: legal services, OEC, housing court, AAG, public defenders, others TBD

Common themes across the breakout sessions:

- Bringing additional partners to the table - OEC, OPM, SDE, DOL, among others TBD.
- Data sharing and intergration
- Funding
- Correlation between mental health, housing and permanency

7. Next Steps Moving Forward

CT 3B Home Team members were asked to reflect on today's discussion and think about ways in which this forum could advance our collective efforts to improve well-being for children across mental health, permanency and housing. Questions posed for consideration:

- What role could you/your organization play to support a collective impact in any of these areas?
- How could the 3BI support the work in your respective branch/agency/organization?
- What are topics of interest related to systems-level issues that we could seek technical assistance from the 3BI and the sponsoring national partners?

Future CT 3B Home Team Events:

The Three Branch Institute meetings will be quarterly. The next meeting will be in April 2014, details TBD.

Elizabeth Duryea shared that the 3BI will sponsor several future events coming up:

- May 2014: CMS Medicaid expert - details TBD
- June 2014: Bryan Samuels, Executive Director of Chapin Hall - details TBD.

8. Closing Remarks

Commissioner Katz thanked members for coming to the meeting and being part of the conversation and work going forward. The meeting was adjourned.