



Susan I. Hamilton, MSW, J.D.  
Commissioner

## DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

*Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities*



M. Jodi Rell  
Governor



Judge Christine E. Keller  
Chief Administrative Judge  
for Juvenile Matters



Thomas A. Kirk, Jr.,  
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Commissioner

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**Parents Receive Substance Abuse Treatment to Help Reunite With Children**  
**Partnership of Judicial Branch, DCF and DMHAS**  
**Results In Innovative Program at No Added Cost**

**New Britain** – Parents whose substance abuse led to the removal of their children will be able to immediately access treatment as a result of a collaborative effort among the Judicial Branch, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS).

The "RSVP" (Recovery Specialist Voluntary Program) is funded by a transfer of \$144,000 from existing administrative services and is offered on a pilot basis in the New Britain Juvenile Court beginning March 13. The program also will open in the Bridgeport and Willimantic Juvenile Courts before June 30.

In commenting on the program, Governor M. Jodi Rell said, "This is an example of using existing resources in a more effective way. At no added cost to taxpayers we can get the best return on our investment and provide much-needed help to parents, children and families."

Using RSVP, parents whose children are being removed in Juvenile Court because of the parent's substance abuse can volunteer for the program in order to increase the likelihood that their children will be returned to them. Parents will be assigned a "recovery specialist" who is responsible for administering drug tests and monitoring the parent's attendance in both substance abuse treatment and support groups. Program participation would last nine to twelve months and is expected to increase permanency for children and streamline the court process so that less time and fewer resources are expended in the course of determining the child's custody and permanency planning.

**(MORE)**

## **RSVP 2-2-2-2**

A program similar to the RSVP model has proven cost effective in Sacramento, Calif., where there were significant improvements in child-parent reunification rates, successful treatment completions, permanency for children, and cost savings to the taxpayers.

DCF Commissioner Susan I. Hamilton said: "This program reflects a national recognition that more substance abuse treatment resources need to be focused on children and families and need to demonstrate clear and positive results. We must make wise investments; if something is not working effectively we have to make adjustments based on evidence of what works best. This program affords an excellent opportunity to provide timely access to substance abuse treatment services and supports. This helps expedite reunification of children with their parents whenever safely possible."

Judge Christine E. Keller, chief administrative judge for juvenile matters, said: "We are very pleased to be better able to assist parents in recovery. These model programs will expedite services to improve parenting skills and promote the primary goal of family reunification. If they are successful, I am hopeful that we can expand this service to other juvenile courts in the future."

DMHAS Commissioner Thomas Kirk thanked the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare, an organization funded under a contract from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, for providing technical assistance to this project. "This program is a unique opportunity to combine recovery supports with treatment services to work with families that touch three governmental systems," Commissioner Kirk said.

The program will be evaluated to assess its effectiveness in the parent's recovery and to determine if it results in shorter stays in foster care for children, lowers repeat maltreatment rates, and improves permanency for children. These positive outcomes would increase the prospects of future funding. On an annual basis, it is estimated that the program will serve between 100 to 125 families in the New Britain, Bridgeport and Willimantic juvenile courts.