

## **Children's Trust Fund**

### **A Division of the State of CT Department of Social Services Report to the CT General Assembly SFY 2009-2010**

#### **Legislative Change:**

SFY 2009-2010 brought significant change to the Children's Trust Fund and the State Department of Social Services (DSS).

The Trust Fund, created by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1983, merged with DSS as part of an agency consolidation to streamline the administration of government services. Under the merger, the Trust Fund became a division of DSS.

To facilitate the merger, the Department of Social Services became the state's lead agency for community-based, prevention-focused programs and activities designed to strengthen and support families in order to prevent child abuse and neglect. In this role the department is charged with reaching families *before* a crisis occurs - before a child has been abused or neglected.

To fulfill this new mandate the legislation calls on DSS to collaborate with state agencies, hospitals, clinics, schools and community service organizations to:

- Initiate programs to support families at risk for child abuse or neglect
- Assist organizations to recognize child abuse and neglect
- Encourage community safety
- Increase broad-based efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect
- Create a network of agencies to advance child abuse and neglect prevention
- Increase public awareness of child abuse and neglect issues

These efforts are to be carried out with the guidance of the Children's Trust Fund Council, an interdisciplinary, collaborative, public - private partnership. The members of the Council include the Commissioners of the Departments of Social Services, Children and Families, Public Health, and Education or their designees. The leadership of the Connecticut General Assembly appoints three representatives from the business community, three from the child abuse prevention field, as well as three parents and one pediatrician.

#### **Program Administration**

In addition to its new mandate to prevent child abuse and neglect, DSS was charged with administering and maintaining a number of community-based prevention programs. The Children's Trust Fund division is responsible for the administration of these programs.

The programs under the Trust Fund include several major efforts that prevent child abuse and neglect by helping families and communities to be responsive to children, ensuring their healthy growth and development.

In addition, the Trust Fund is responsible for the administration of the Community-Based Program to Prevent Child Abuse (CBCAP), a federal program to support innovative community-based prevention efforts. As a part of the CBCAP program the Trust Fund has launched several important initiatives.

### **Program Administration and Implementation**

To ensure the quality and success of its programs the Trust Fund has developed:

- A highly trained and experienced staff in the field of home visiting and child abuse and neglect prevention.
- A comprehensive training program for the community-based providers who provide community-based services.
- A partnership with academic centers that conduct research and offer feedback used to inform and refine practices as the Trust Fund programs have developed.
- An infrastructure of community agencies that provide a range of services with Trust Fund oversight to ensure adherence to best practice.
- An approach to continuous quality improvement that includes representatives from the community-based programs, Trust Fund staff and evaluators to analyze and interpret evaluation data and make recommendations to improve program policy and practice.

### **Highlights of SFY 2009-2010**

#### **Merger with DSS:**

The Children's Trust Fund merged with DSS in October of 2009. Its offices and several of its staff and were moved to the DSS Central Office in Hartford. During the past year the Trust Fund focused its efforts on ensuring a successful transition to DSS. These activities included:

- **Exploring opportunities within DSS to take advantage of a shared vision and common purposes**

The Trust Fund and DSS work largely with the same population of families and children throughout the state. This population is usually headed by single mothers with limited family support. They tend to be poor, socially isolated, live in inadequate housing, have little education and few job prospects. They tend to be young and receive government assistance. Their children are young. The majority of the children are under the age of three.

The Trust Fund and DSS have identified several areas where its efforts are complimentary and could be enhanced by further collaboration. These include:

- Providing families receiving DSS services with more information and better access to community-based programs.
- Efforts to strengthen the ability of fathers to take hold of their responsibilities as a parent.
- Sharing information with child care centers that they can use to support the families they serve.
- Joint activities to prevent traumatic brain injury and shaken baby syndrome.

- **Maximizing efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery**

The Trust Fund and DSS have been exploring opportunities to better align the efforts of the Nurturing Families Network and the Healthy Start program. While there are a number of important differences, the programs work with similar populations and strive to achieve similar goals. The programs face many of the same challenges. Strategies for better coordination between these programs include:

- Streamlining referrals between programs.
- Offering joint training on topics of interest to both programs.
- Combining contracts when the same organization is implementing both programs.

The Trust Fund is working with others at DSS to pursue these strategies in SFY 2010-2011.

- **Integrating the Trust Fund fiscal and contracts operations within the DSS structure.**

The Trust Fund worked closely with the DSS fiscal and contracts divisions to convert its systems and procedures for contracting, payments, and record keeping to the DSS system. This involved entering fiscal and contracts information into the DSS computerized tracking systems, training the Trust Fund staff on the new procedures and protocols, and establishing office procedures aligned with the DSS system.

## **Program Developments**

The Children's Trust Fund has been working on a number of groundbreaking projects that will benefit families and children throughout the state and make a significant contribution to the prevention field.

- **Randomized control trial to study and treat maternal depression**

The Children's Trust Fund, in collaboration with the University of Connecticut Health Center and the University of Hartford Center for Social Policy, launched a randomized control trial to study in-home cognitive behavioral therapy to treat maternal depression. The study is being conducted through the Nurturing Families Network (NFN) home visiting program.

The effort is the first to replicate the in-home therapy program shown to effectively treat depressed mothers receiving home visits in Ohio. The Trust Fund looks forward to learning if the program will be as effective in treating depression among mothers participating in NFN. The Connecticut study includes many more Hispanic mothers and more families from distinctly different geographic locales including urban, rural, and suburban.

- **Home visiting program for new fathers and men**

Several NFN sites are moving forward to provide home visiting services for and by men. The program is among the first program of its kind in the country. The program, which provides home visiting services to fathers and men significant to a child enrolled in NFN, has been well received in the community.

For the most part, home visiting programs have been geared to meet the needs of high-risk first time mothers. Interviews with men participating in the program and the work experiences of the male home visitors are coming together to help tailor the home visiting program so that it will be effective for fathers and men. Plans are in place to enhance this effort next year.

- **The Kellogg Foundation funds national replication of Help Me Grow**

Over the past several years the Children's Trust Fund Help Me Grow program has gained national attention. The program trains health care and other community providers to identify children at risk for behavioral, learning and developmental problems and to connect them with wide range of services that can help. This recognition led the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to contribute \$2.4 million dollars to replicate the program in several states across the country.

- **Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome within high risk populations**

Two program models for effectively preventing shaken baby syndrome were developed and tested over the past decade. The models are the *Period of Purple Crying* and the *Diaz Model*. These evidenced based models, however, were tested with parents who only represented the general population and not with high risk groups of parents.

The Children's Trust Fund initiated a randomized control group study to test the two models with the high risk mothers participating in the Nurturing Families Network. The purpose of the study was to determine if the approaches would be effective with a high risk population of mothers – and if one of the models would be more effective than the

other. The two-year study determined that one of the models was significantly more effective than the other. The more effective model is the *Period of Purple Crying*.

As follow up to the study, the Children's Trust Fund will train all of the NFN home visitors in the *Period of Purple Crying* and use this approach in its community outreach efforts to prevent shaken baby syndrome.

- **Children's Trust Fund Council Public Awareness Activity**

This year the Children's Trust Fund Council focused its activities on engaging a large number of experts, community-based providers, parents and others in support of efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect and maintain funding for the Children's Trust Fund programs. This led to a number of successful public education events and several opinion pieces and articles about the consequences of child abuse and neglect and effective strategies administered by the Trust Fund to prevent it.

The Council developed a strategic plan to guide its efforts in 2011. The plan calls for continued activities to engage a network of supporters to advocate for prevention programs and advance the cause of child abuse and neglect prevention.

In addition, the Council will launch a three phase public education campaign. The campaign will include a number of forums and community discussions about issues facing families and children, ideas to help resolve these issues, and new information in the field.

The Council will also work collaboratively with DSS to expand and enhance the Nurturing Families Network (NFN) home visiting service for fathers and men. Several NFN sites will receive funding to hire male home visitors who will specialize in providing home visiting services tailored to the needs of fathers and men. This effort will be supported with federal grant funds and funds solicited from private sources.

## **Major Programs**

### **The Nurturing Families Network**

The program provides screening and assessment, group support and intensive home visiting for new parents who are at high risk for child abuse and neglect. The program focuses on nurturing parenting, child development, and health and community resources. The Nurturing Families Network serves approximately 2,000 families in intensive home visiting and 600 families in Nurturing parenting groups. The program screens 7,200 and provided supportive services to 1,700.

- **State allocation: \$10,389,446**

### **Help Me Grow**

Program ensures that children and their families have access to a system of early identification, prevention and intervention services. It links child health providers, parents and service providers with existing community resources through a toll-free telephone number (1-800-505-7000). Help Me Grow connected 2,800 children and families to community based services. It also provided the Ages and Stages Child Monitoring program to 3,000 families.

- **State allocation: \$336,582**

### **The Kinship and Respite Fund**

This probate court-administered program awards small grants to aid children living with relatives who are court-appointed guardians. The grants provide for a range of activities including tutoring, camp, extra-curricular experiences and program fees, and respite for grandparents. The Kinship and Respite Funds provided grants to 1266 children and 822 adults.

- **State Allocation: \$1,050,000**

### **Family School Connection**

The program provides intensive home visiting services to families whose children are frequently truant or tardy or otherwise at risk of school failure. These children are often not getting their needs met at home and are at greater risk for child abuse and neglect, developmental, behavioral and health issues. The program is offered in grades K-12 at five elementary schools. Family School Connection provided intensive home visiting services to 170 families.

- **State Allocation: \$930,000**

### **Family Empowerment Initiatives**

Family Empowerment Initiatives include seven nationally recognized prevention programs that assist high-risk groups of parents and others involved in the lives of children. Family Empowerment Initiatives provided home and group based services to roughly 700 parents.

- **State Allocation: \$211,402**

### **Legal Services on Behalf of Indigent Children**

The program provides experienced lawyers for indigent children. The lawyers give them a voice and represent them in family court. The program also provides information on legal matters involving children and advocates for legislative policies that advance the well being and best interest of children. The program provided services to 240 adults and 375 children.

- **State Allocation: \$150,000**

### **Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome**

Provides workshops to parents and students across the state and Assists hospitals and others to embed a program within their organization. Trains community providers to offer the program to the families they serve. 1,500 parents and students participated in programs to prevent shaken baby syndrome through their schools, hospitals, prisons and community groups.

- **Federal allocation: \$20,000**

### **Family Development Training and Credentialing program**

Training human services staff to better engage and support families in prevention efforts. Courses are offered for front-line and management staff. Six college course credits and a credential are available for participants that successfully complete the course for frontline staff. Seventy (70) students received credentials through the FDC program.

- **Federal allocation: \$100,000**

### **Randomized control trial to study and treat maternal depression**

This program is studying in-home cognitive behavioral therapy as a method to treat maternal depression among mothers participating in the Nurturing Families Network. The effort is the first to replicate the in-home therapy program shown to effectively treat depressed mothers receiving home visits in Ohio.

- **Federal allocation: \$130,000 for therapy services**

### **Nurturing families Network home visiting program for new fathers and men**

The program provides comprehensive home services to fathers and men who are significant in the life of a child participating in the Nurturing Families Network program.

- **Federal allocation: \$300,000**

### **Data Management and Program Evaluation**

The University of Hartford Center for Social Research maintains several data bases and conducts evaluation and research for each of the Trust Fund's major state and federally funded programs.

- **Federal allocation: \$300,000**