

***Department of Social Services Children's Trust Fund
Year End Report – State Fiscal Year 2013- 2014***

Overview

The Children's Trust Fund, established in 1983 by the Connecticut General Assembly, was merged with the Department of Social Services (DSS) in 2009. Under the merger the Trust Fund became a division of DSS. 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 part of the CBCAP program the Trust Fund has launched several important initiatives.

Highlights of 2014

Home Visiting for Fathers and Men

In the 2014 fiscal year, the Nurturing Families Network programs employed seven fulltime and four part time fathering home visitors. One hundred and twenty-two fathers and or boyfriends participated in over 2,200 home visits. This was a 22% increase in home visits from the previous year. Fifty nine fathers participated in Nurturing Parenting Groups. The Family Support Services unit continues to develop and strengthen the Fathering Home Visiting component of Nurturing Families Network through professional development, policy work and technical assistance. Over the past year, David Mandel from David Mandel and Associates has worked with the Fathering home visitors around risk assessment and gender specific strategies for engagement and retention of fathers in the home visiting program. As a result of these trainings fathering home visitors developed skills and gained confidence to engage dads in the program. In January, Mark Perlman, the author of the Nurturing Father's curriculum spent two days working with NFN staff and partnered with one of our fathering home visitors to present the "how" of fathering home visiting through an innovative demonstration on diapering and new dads.

In May 2014, a staff member from the FSS unit co-presented our abstract *Fathering Home Visitors: Reflecting the lives of families and the needs of children* at the 19th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect. This workshop delved into the history of Nurturing Families Network home visiting program, from its origin design of working with first time mothers through its expansion and development in recent years to include a fathering home visiting component.

The Family Support Services unit continues our commitment to be state partner around Fatherhood. We've been a participating member on the CT Fatherhood Initiative (FI) Advisory Council and the Fatherhood Initiative Strategic Plan Workgroup.

Screening and early Identification of Children with Developmental and Behavioral Delays

This spring, OEC launched the *Help Me Grow* campaign to increase awareness of the critical need for universal developmental screening of children birth to five years of age and linking at-risk children to supports and services they need. The Campaign was conducted in Bridgeport, Danbury, Derby, Hartford, Killingly, Putnam, Plainfield, Sterling, Middletown, New Britain, Norwalk and Stamford during April, May, and June.

Without the use of a formal screening instrument in developmental screening, only 30% of the children who need help are identified, leaving many children without necessary supports and services. During the Campaign, nearly 400 human services providers were trained in the use of the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ), a formal screening tool that can help identify 70-80% of the children who need help. If each of these new ASQ-users screens only 20 children in the coming year, that will be 8000 new children screened.

Through Campaign funding, each participating community received four sets of ASQ materials to distribute to early care and education settings to support developmental screening and timely early intervention. One of the four sets was donated to a library in each community where parents can become familiar with the ASQ.

As part of the Campaign, 34 parents received six hours of training to host Community Cafés in their communities. During the month of April, these parents hosted 28 Cafés where invited parents were able to participate in guided, meaningful conversations about healthy growth and development.

In May, the same communities conducted 17 events to register parents to receive the ASQ from Help Me Grow to monitor their children's development at home. The more children screened, the more children will get the help they need during their first five years to succeed in school.

Eight events to screen two-year-olds were held in June, and 61 children were screened. Four of those children were referred for further testing to find out if they need supports and/or services in one or more of five developmental areas. Parents who participated were registered to receive the ASQ from Help Me Grow to continue screening their children at home.

Campaign events were designed to provide a service to the families who participated, but the primary purpose of the events was to draw attention to the Campaign message. One thousand five hundred and forty-five people participated in the Campaign as partners, volunteers, or parents. If each of these individuals shares, with only five people, the Campaign message about the critical need for universal developmental screening and timely linkage to supports and services, they will raise awareness among 8500 people in Connecticut during the coming year, and fewer children who need help will slip between the cracks.

Community-Wide Approach to Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

Triple P is an evidence-based parenting program that gives parents simple and practical strategies to help them manage their children's behavior and to build nurturing healthy relationships. Triple P CT offers support and information for families with children up to age 12 through classes, seminars, one-on-one counseling and hundreds of tips that can be found online at www.triplepct.com.

Over 140 individuals working in the City of Hartford and five towns in Northeastern CT are now trained and accredited in the Positive Parenting Program – Triple P. Since November 2012, classes were offered in Primary Care Triple P, Standard Triple P, Triple P Discussion Group Series and Selected Triple P Seminar series. Our Triple P practitioners are working in a variety of settings and include school social workers, family resource center staff, youth librarians, preschool teachers, recreation staff, case managers, behavior technicians, school counselors, home visitors, health care clinicians, mental health counselors and outreach workers. Clinical/implementation support is available to new Triple P practitioners, and it includes one-on-one coaching, telephone support and refresher workshops. A public awareness campaign was launched in May 2014 and includes community kickoff events, radio ads and the development of a website, brochures, posters, and billboards.

Child Obesity Prevention

The early childhood obesity prevention program, known as Building Healthier Families and Communities, is an 18 month randomized controlled trial. Michelle Cloutier, MD CT Children's Medical Center and UCHC and Amy Gorin, PhD University of Connecticut are Principle Investigators on this project.

The study design includes six Hartford neighborhoods (Asylum Hill, Frog Hollow, Blue Hills, Southwest, Northeast, Parkville) with their Brighter Futures Family Centers (Asylum Hill, El Center, Parkville/Family Life Education, RAMBUH/Village for Families and Children, Parker Memorial/City of Hartford, Southside) have been randomized into an intervention and control group.

While participating in the intervention group, 30 mothers and their newborns will receive home visits through the Nurturing Families Network and curriculum enhancements including innovative and interactive interventions regarding target areas for infant and maternal health, and will receive a toolkit containing items pertaining to each intervention.

Four target areas of intervention:

- Breastfeeding duration and exclusivity
- Introductions of solids
- Sugar sweetened beverage consumption
- Infant routines

The control group consists of three Brighter Future Family Centers and their current NFN program and curriculum.

Trainings for participating sites include: Orientation to ECHO project and tools for implementation, CITI training, training to understand and support breast feeding. Regular contact and technical assistance is provided to participating programs.

Major Programs and Initiatives for 2014

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**

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**

Healthy Start

The evaluation found that the program achieved its goals to support and promote positive maternal and neonatal health outcomes through Medicaid enrollment assistance, referrals to health care, and other services. In addition, the program was and continues to be considered effective because it engages roughly 5,000 adults and children in services that include enrollment assistance in HUSKY, providing safety information, depression screens, and, in some cases, intensive case management and outreach to medically at risk non-compliant women each year. The services also help undocumented pregnant immigrants, not eligible for HUSKY, to find resources in their communities to help cover the cost of prenatal care, including medical tests. A follow-up study of the Healthy Start program is recommended.

- **State Allocation: \$1,432,310**

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. One thousand five hundred 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 to front-line and management staff. Six college course credits and a credential are available to participants that successfully complete the course for frontline staff. Seventy 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 databases and conducts evaluation and research for each of the Trust Fund's major state and federally funded programs.

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

Statutory Change

Legislation was enacted in May of 2014 transferring the Trust Fund from DSS to the Office of Early Childhood.