

UPDATED: AUGUST 2009



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children



The Commission on Children at the Cutting Edge

The Commission's Mandate

Public Act 85-584 created the nonpartisan Connecticut Commission on Children (COC) in 1985, mandating it to promote public policies in the best interest of children. To that end, the Commission: develops landmark policies for children; brings dollars and donated skills to the state; leads in media for children and youth; performs key research on children's needs; brings the family to government and government to the family; and is recognized as the best coordinating entity for children in the nation. This costs the state \$1.30 per child.

A Smart Return on Investment

For each dollar invested in it, the Commission on Children locates or brings in more than three times as many dollars from federal funds, foundations, and private sources. These funds do not come to the Commission—rather, they support initiatives at the state and local levels. Examples include:

Initiative	Approx. Dollars
2008-2012	
SNAP-ET legislation maximizes federal reimbursements with 50 cents to the dollar for poverty reduction implementation in towns.	\$15-16 million by 2012
SAMHSA (U.S. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration) Project LAUNCH funds key systems at the state and local levels to promote the wellness of young children and their families.	\$4.25 million pending
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for home visitation with vulnerable families.	\$3.2 million
Best urban practices for children and youth in Hartford focused on literacy, prison re-entry, parent engagement, and low birth weight.	\$150,000
The TANF contingency fund, an incentive grant from Congress for states that reach an increase in food stamp recipients.	\$13 million
Previous years	
Over the past five years, generated an estimated \$1 million in matching funds for parent leadership training in 23 towns and cities.	\$1 million
National Institute for Child Development from Congress to train school leaders and teachers in the science of reading.	\$3.3 million
Free technical assistance to create an out-of-school time system of programs for children. Disney and Mott Foundations.	\$3 million
Philanthropic dollars for prevention programs, including the Packard and Travelers Foundations, Research!America, and The Rockefeller Brothers Fund.	\$200,000
Anti-bullying programs in schools to make learning safe. \$500,000 from a private donor matched state dollars to create \$1 million for the Safe Learning Act.	\$1 million
National League of Cities and Connecticut Conference of Municipalities partnership to reduce obesity in Connecticut towns.	\$200,000

"Business has partnered with the Commission on Children for more than 10 years. Linking the development of the child to competitiveness, quality of life and the overall strength of the economy, business leaders meet to discuss child policy issues. The business community, across small, international, corporate and moderate size businesses have been most active in school readiness, safety and prevention policy for the youngest generation." -- David E. A. Carson, retired CEO, People's Bank

A Cutting-Edge Track Record

The Commission has spearheaded policies that have put Connecticut in the forefront of children's policy in the United States:

- **An Act Concerning Responsible Fatherhood and Strong Families**, which became law in 2009, will provide unemployed and under-employed parents with the training they need to support their children and form better connections with them. It gives judges the option to refer fathers to services instead of jail if they fall behind in their payments due to unemployment. (Public Act 09-175)

- **The Children and Homeland Security Act** is the only state law in the nation addressing the needs of children in natural and unnatural disasters. (Special Act 02-8) A COC report was used nationally assessing the impact of terrorism and Hurricane Katrina on children.

- **The State Investment in Prevention Act** set a goal for state agencies that serve children and families: allocation of at least 10 percent of their budgets to prevention services by 2020. (Public Act 06-179)

- **Eliminating lead poisoning in children.** In 2007, Public Act 07-2 required universal lead screening in pediatric wellness visits for all children at ages 12 and 24 months to ensure early detection and treatment. In 2008, landmark legislation in Connecticut (Public Act 08-106) preceded national law by setting standards for lead content in children's toys and products.

- **The Child Poverty Reduction Law** seeks to reduce poverty among children by 50 percent within the next decade. Benchmarks and accountability measures are included. (Public Act 04-238)

- **The Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative** helped absent parents re-engage with their children (Public Act 99-193)

- **The Parent Trust Act**, a parent engagement initiative to maximize family input and participation in policy at the school, neighborhood, and state level. (Public Act 01-2)

- The **Anti-Bullying Act** strengthens efforts to prevent school bullying by requiring every school board implement a bullying prevention strategy, that the state Department of Education develop model policies and that bullying prevention becomes an in-service training topic for school personnel. (Public Act 08-160)

- **The Early Reading Success** law provided school options for reduced class size, full-day kindergarten, and school reading plans. (Public Act 98-243)

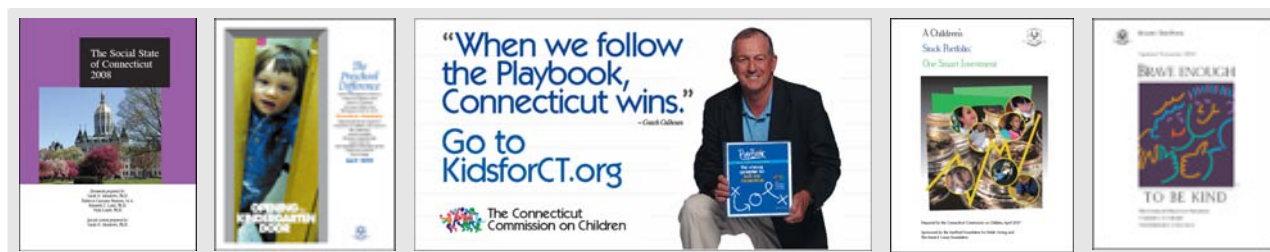
- **The Safe Learning Act** ensured safe learning in school and reduce child aggression. (Public Act 01-1)

- **School Readiness** legislation that developed preschool and a statewide infrastructure for quality early care and education. (Public Act 97-25)

"The Commission on Children is the brain trust for children's issues in Connecticut." -- Joseph McGee, Vice-President, Public Policy & Programs, The Business Council of Fairfield County

Reaching the Public

- Performed a return on investment analysis on programs for children. Released the findings in a *Children's Stock Portfolio*.
- Managed a media campaign with Coach Calhoun, producing a *Playbook and Game Plan on Prevention*, a game plan for Connecticut children. Paid with \$1 million in grants and in-kind support.
- Authored and disseminate more than two million booklets for parents on preparing children for school, selecting quality child care, helping children read and addressing children's health issues.
- Host public forums and television talk shows on key issues such as child obesity, homeland security and children, early literacy, fatherhood, gangs and youth violence, child poverty reduction, and prevention strategy. A regular on Connecticut NBC television.
- Respond to public inquiry and community requests regarding children on the average of 350 requests per week.
- Host a website for children and youth to access information on civics, government and history and a state website for the public and policymakers. 3,200 visits monthly
- Bring experts to Connecticut including: 1) Scandinavia's Dan Olweus, credited with the most successful anti-bully interventions among nations; 2) Morgan Spurlock, the filmmaker of *Super Size Me* on child obesity; 3) Dr. T Berry Brazelton, famed child pediatrician on the early years and; 4) Michael Petro, Business and Government Fortune 500 Committee for Economic Development, on children and return on investment.



Targeted Policy Research

- Released a comprehensive infant toddler policy study, *First Words, First Steps* to the Governor. Harvard University cites this as the most comprehensive in the states.
- Established the first *Social State of Connecticut* that reports to the General Assembly and public yearly on quality of life and trend lines specific to youth.
- Coordinated longitudinal research on the implications of preschool on the achievement gap and K-3 teacher training in reading and school performance.

- Analyzed the impact of bullying in schools and neighborhoods.
- Compiled, with Yale University, international and national research on the impact of race bias through early exposure to diversity among young children.
- Determined the impact of parent engagement on child outcomes and community.

"The Connecticut Commission is unique among the active governance bodies nationally surveyed by the Family Impact Seminar. Known for its facility at mobilizing both public and private stakeholders and creating effective public education campaigns, the Commission is perhaps most valuable as an influential advisor to all branches of government and as a site for the negotiations of state and family and child policy." – from **"Coming Together for Children and Families: How Cabinet-level Collaboration is Changing State Policymaking**, published by the Family Impact Seminar

Leadership Development and Capacity-Building

The Commission helps the public participate in state government through:

- An ongoing partnership with mayors on School Readiness;
- A nationally recognized Parent Leadership Training Institute in 16 cities to help parents become advocates for their children and other children. Over the past decade, it is estimated that PLTI graduates generated more than \$1.1 million in volunteer hours;
- A Business Advisory Committee comprised of executives from small and large businesses to look at competitiveness and child policy implications;
- A prevention advisory comprised of judges, mayors and child policy experts to review prevention and expand its potential for cost savings and proven outcomes;
- A model partnership with superintendants and parents, teaching both parent and school leaders how to partner to promote school excellence. Parents Supporting Educational Excellence Initiative is in nine Connecticut cities.

"Whatever the issue may be, the Commission seeks out the authoritative information, identifies the knowledgeable leaders in the field and defines the best practices. In doing so, the Commission informs the legislative process and the general public on those policies that have proven effective in advancing the health and well being of children. If we didn't have the Commission, we would have to invent it." -- Peter Libassi, formerly of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare

