



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 Connecticut Commission on Children (COC) in 1985. This non-partisan Commission is mandated to promote public policies in children's best interest.

In accordance with the mandate, 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.

Cutting Edge Track Record

The Commission guided the following legislation for policy leaders, from research, to public interviews to systems design:

- **The Children and Homeland Security Act**, the only state law in the nation addressing the needs of children in natural and unnatural disaster. Special Act 02-8
- **The Prevention Initiative** that shifts the state budget from crisis to prevention with proven programs that work early and well for children and youth. Public Act 01-121
- **The Child Poverty Reduction Law** seeks to reduce poverty among children by 50 percent within the next decade. Benchmarks and accountability measures are included.
- The **Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative** to re-engage absent parents with their children Public Act 99-193
- **Adoption reform** promptly placing young children in permanent caring homes. Public Act 00-137
- **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
- **Lead Action** for Medicaid Primary Prevention Pilot reduces lead hazards in dwellings of low-income children at risk for lead poisoning. Public Act 00-216
- **Early Reading Success** law that provided school options for reduced class size, full day kindergarten and school reading plans. Public Act 98-243
- **The Safe Learning Act** to ensure safe learning in school and to 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 State of Connecticut was prescient in establishing the Connecticut Commission on Children. The Commission has been an important factor in placing Connecticut at the cutting edge of dealing with child and family concerns.”

Dr. Edward Zigler, Sterling Professor of Psychology Yale University and Director of Yale’s Bush Center on Child Development and Social Policy

A Smart Return on Investment

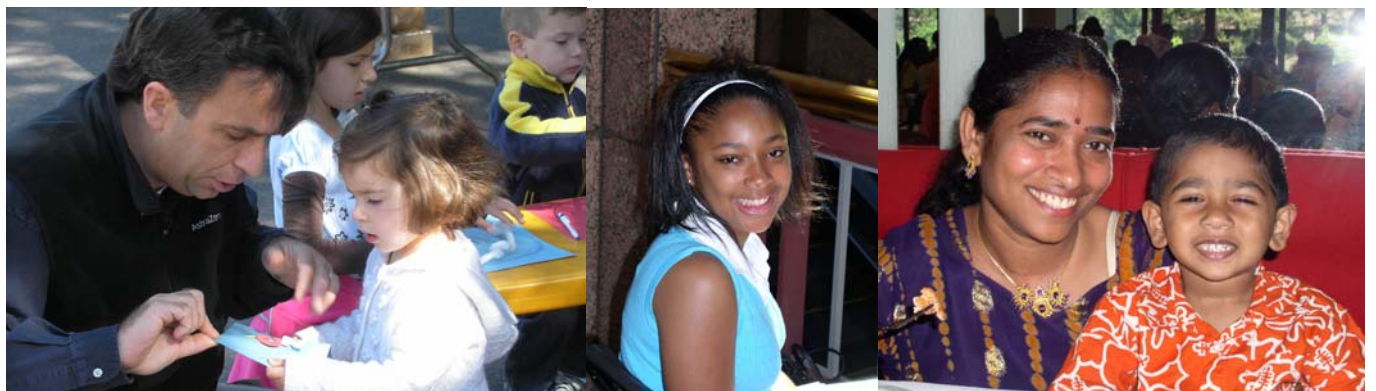
Each dollar invested in the Commission is tripled by the agency. These funds do not return to the Commission, but support initiatives at the state and local level.

Recent examples include:

- FSET legislation to maximize federal reimbursements with 50 cents to the dollar reimbursement for poverty reduction implementation in towns. \$1-3 million
- The TANF contingency fund, an incentive grant from Congress for states that reach an increase in food stamp recipients. Approximately \$18 million.
- Congressional support to train school leaders and teachers in the science of reading. \$3.3 million
- Federal and community dollars for parent engagement and family civics. \$330,000
- Philanthropic dollars for prevention programs including the Packard and Travelers Foundations, Research!America, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.
- Small business events for homeless children including an annual haircutting event. Book bags, books, supplies, \$7,000.
- Anti-bullying programs in schools to make learning safe. \$500,000 from a private donor matched by state dollars to create one million for the Safe Learning Act.
- Free technical assistance to create an out-of-school time system of programs for children. Disney and Mott Foundations. \$3 million
- Best urban practices for children and youth in Hartford focused on literacy, prison re-entry, parent engagement, and low birth weight. \$120,000.

“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



Extensive Public Information

- Performed a return on investment analysis on programs for children. Released the findings in a *Children's Stock Portfolio*.
- Media campaign with Coach Calhoun, producing a *Playbook and Game Plan on Prevention*, a game plan for Connecticut children. Paid for with \$1 million of grants and in-kind support.
- Authored and disseminate more than 2 million booklets for parents on preparing children for school, selecting quality child care, helping children read and 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;
- Promote a children's web site with information on local and state issues as well as ways to be involved and a state website for the public and policymakers. Approximately 3,200 visits each month.
- Brought 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 the 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;

- Assessed the impact of terrorism and Hurricane Katrina on children. Wrote a report used nationally on children and natural and unnatural disaster.

“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.”

-- “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. Parents volunteer 8 hours a month upon graduation;
- A Business Advisory Committee comprised of executives from small and large businesses to look at competitiveness and child policy implications;
- A website for children and youth to access information on civics, government, and history;
- 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



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