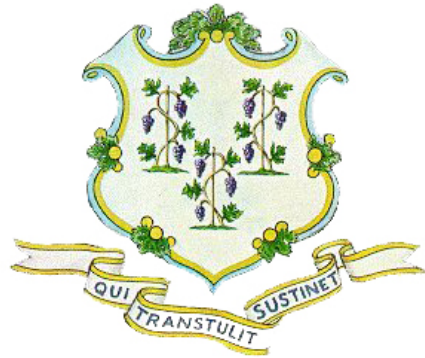




Landmark policy, proven practice, and return on investment

Connecticut Commission on Children

2010 Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Report & Annual Report



Innovation — Integration — Information — Impact — Leadership



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Commission on Children



January 2011

Dear Senators and Representatives of the Connecticut General Assembly:

This year was a rough year for children. Families lost homes and jobs. Programs shrank or disappeared. The Commission on Children worked to find federal dollars that might recoup some of the losses our state faced. Concurrently, we strove to gather the details of the recession and its impact on families, and to determine best policies to keep families and young adults engaged.

Funds

The Commission identified \$133 million available to Connecticut from the federal TANF Emergency Fund. We promoted the opportunity to state officials, brought national experts in, and enlisted and educated business, foundations, youth employment agencies and universities to enable them to take part. Through early action and vigilant collaboration with our Congressional delegation and state legislators, Connecticut successfully obtained \$39 million from this fund. We worked closely with groups, representing \$15 million of this federal reimbursement.

We also worked with the New England states and Senator Dodd to get funds into the federal finance bill that would help mitigate the foreclosure crisis. This led to \$32.9 million coming to Connecticut for the unemployed homeowners' loan program.

Policies

The Commission worked with legislative leaders to buffer the impact of recession-induced poverty on the young and to assist families. This led to the Speaker's Task Force on Children and the Recession, economists' reports, hearings and PA 10-133, which seeks to address homelessness, improve service delivery, promote efficiencies and federal funds, offer emergency support to families, address hunger and improve welfare protocols. This legislation is being replicated in Pennsylvania and Washington and was highlighted by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In addition, we worked with legislators and concerned parents to address poorly performing schools and the growing achievement gap. The Commission also drove the policy analysis regarding cyber-bullying as well as a review of why and how we could improve our school anti-bullying efforts.

Civic Engagement

As families are paramount to inform the state of what is and is not working for children in difficult times, we partnered with the legislature and the State Department of Education to bolster parent engagement through the Parent Trust Act. We helped raise dollars through the federal government and philanthropy to

assist with this family civics commitment. Connecticut has been recognized as having the strongest and most successful parent engagement initiative in the nation. This includes our agency's Parent Leadership Training Institute which is now in 20 towns and cities. This democracy initiative has produced more than \$1 million worth of volunteer hours for Connecticut.

Coordination

The Commission helped coordinate early-care and education policies and programs through the Governor's Early Care and Education Cabinet. We serve on that body's Steering Committee and helped guide the reformation of the Cabinet under the new federal Head Start mandate to ensure our state receives federal dollars for integrated service delivery for the young. We brought agencies together to incorporate children in their disaster planning, a need underscored by a worksite shooting in East Hartford, a power plant explosion in Middletown, a shoreline tornado, and flooding.

We linked state and local agencies that must contend with brain injury through child abuse, shootings, sports concussions, car accidents and falls.

Leadership

The work of the Commission has been recognized for its impact. The agency was one of four invited to speak on the State of the Child before a U.S. Senate Subcommittee chaired by Senator Christopher Dodd. The National Conference of State Legislatures selected our executive director to serve as staff chair of its Human Services and Welfare Committee. First Lady Michelle Obama invited us to work with her on child obesity.

The Commission also organized a visit to the state Capitol by Children's Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman, who recognized Connecticut's work to date on behalf of children impacted by the recession and urged lawmakers to continue it. When Senator Dodd and Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania proposed creating an entity to advise Congress on ensuring good outcomes for children, they used the Connecticut Commission on Children as a model organization.

Enclosed you will find an overview of our work, trend lines, and outcomes measures. We are honored to serve the Legislature and the citizens of Connecticut. We thank you for your review and partnership.

Sincerely,



M. Alex Geertsma, M.D., F.A.A.P,
Chairman



Elaine Zimmerman
Executive Director



“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, Former General Counsel, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare

INTRODUCTION

The country’s most severe recession in a generation has cost the nation more than 5 million jobs since it began in late 2007. Connecticut’s economic recession will affect children and families for decades to come without significant, substantial and well-informed policy and practice. With this backdrop, we reaffirm our commitment to Connecticut’s youngest generation. The Commission on Children continues to promote the health, safety and learning of Connecticut’s children through research and model policy, education and outreach, key partnerships, civic engagement, revenue generation, and leadership.

RESULT: No Child Lives In Poverty

INDICATOR 1: CHILD POVERTY

The story behind the baseline

Poverty contributes to poor social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes for children and hinders cognitive development. Although Connecticut’s overall poverty rate is lower than most states, the income disparities impacting urban and minority families are among the largest in the nation, particularly in this economic downturn. The Connecticut labor force is projected to lose over \$1 billion in future productivity for every year that the current number of Connecticut children live in poverty.

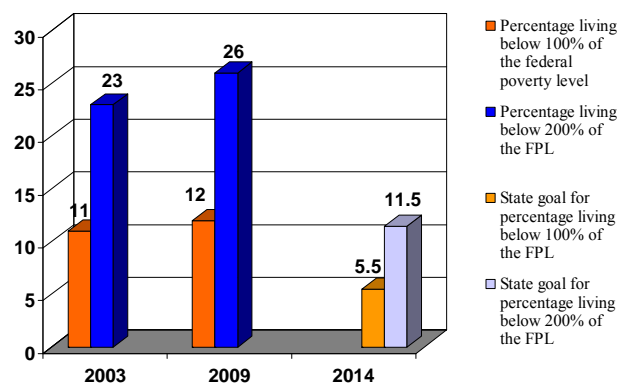
Connecticut has seen more than a 30% increase in homelessness in the rural and suburban sectors. Family stressors are up. More children are left alone while parents work or hunt for jobs. There is an increase in domestic violence. More youth are saying they cannot see their way to college. Some are leaving home to relieve parents of the extra costs.

Many middle class families are just a step away from falling into foreclosure or losing a job. Others have already fallen into a loss of home or job. Youth unemployment is the highest since just after World War II. Youth are competing with adults for the same jobs. This is disheartening to both generations.

Connecticut is the first state in the nation to declare the recession an emergency for children through state legislation, P.A. 10-133.

Connecticut Children in Poverty

Sources: U.S. Census, Connecticut Child Poverty and Prevention Council



What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:



Served as staff for House Speaker Christopher Donovan's Task Force on Children and the Recession.



Facilitated seven state hearings held by the Task Force in rural, urban and suburban communities across Connecticut.



Brought in youth to help lead the hearings and to share their views on the economy.



Brought in Marian Wright Edelman to speak on the importance of this work for our state and other states.



Facilitated a workshop at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) convention, where Speaker Donovan and the co-chair of the Task Force, Representative Diana Urban, outlined their efforts for colleagues from across the country.



Researched federal funds opportunities and linked federal opportunity to gaps in services.



Helped envision and draft Public Act 10-133 which: a) streamlines services, b) maximizes federal fund opportunities to include the TANF Emergency Fund that assists families facing unemployment, a housing crisis, increased debt, and other hardships as well as promotes job training and summer youth employment, c) ensures access to nutritional food for children to diminish the affects of food insecurity through coordinated and statewide outreach for WIC and SNAP applications, d) permits parents on TANF to go to school when the unemployment rate is 8% or higher, e) creates a leadership team across agency to address the emergency facing children in a recession, f) delineates specific tasks for each agency to perform in a coordinated manner with public accountability, g) streamlines and

integrates public information and access to services including a single point of entry procedure, on-line applications, screening tools and benefit calculators, and h) delivers state services to consumers within a reasonable timeline.



Spoke at numerous regional meetings on child poverty reduction to bring in business, philanthropy and families.



Worked with Liberty Bank Foundation, philanthropy, United Way, 2-1-1 Infoline, CHEFA and other agencies to assess the viability of an emergency loan fund for families.



Presented the work of the Task Force and its legislation as one of four invited speakers at a hearing before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families.



Worked with legislators and NCSL to identify \$133 million available to Connecticut from the federal TANF Emergency Fund.

Proposed strategies to turn the curve on child poverty:

- Reorder state priorities to invest strongly in the proven poverty reduction interventions as proposed by national experts for the Connecticut Poverty and Prevention Council and provided with an economic model analysis and template by the Urban Institute. Connecticut can reduce child poverty by 35% if we:

1. provide child care subsidies to families with incomes of less than 50% of the state median income;
2. provide education and training programs that result in associates degrees for half the adults with high school diplomas;
3. help high school dropouts get their GEDs;
4. increase employment by 6% for the unemployed;

5. increase participation in safety net programs by 85% such as food stamps, subsidized housing and LIHEAP; and

6. ensure child support payments.

- Ensure integration of tasks and function of Public Act 10-133 regarding Children and the Recession Task Force with the Poverty and Prevention Council.
- Ensure pursuit of all annual federal funding through the SNAP E&T 50/50 match fund and help all regional collaboratives utilize the funds for employment and increased wage opportunities. These dollars are approximately \$6 million per year on a continuous basis.

INDICATOR 2 – CHILD HUNGER

The story behind the baseline

Hunger is a growing issue in our state during these difficult economic times. FoodShare and the Connecticut Food Bank note a 30% increase in the need for food over the last 18 months. Together, the two organizations account for food distribution in all eight counties in Connecticut, but estimate they meet only one-third of the need. One out of five Connecticut children under the age of 12 – 102,000 youngsters – is hungry or at risk of hunger. Food insecurity affects child development. The increased odds for cognitive, behavioral, and other development delays have implications for educational achievement.

The federal government pays 100% of SNAP program benefits. Federal and state governments

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) annual report released November 2009, notes that 11% of Connecticut households struggled with food insecurity, ranking us 26th in the nation.
- Connecticut has had a 2% increase since 2007 representing the largest increase of food insecure households in the nation
- DSS reports that over 295,600 state residents received federally-funded SNAP/Food Stamp benefits in November 2009, up 32% from one year ago and 58% from five years ago. End Hunger CT! reports that over 338,000 households in Connecticut currently receive SNAP benefits.

share administrative costs (federal government contributes nearly 50%). Based on USDA research, it is estimated that each dollar in federal SNAP benefits generates nearly twice that in economic activity. Under-participation in SNAP adversely affects not only low-income people who are missing out on benefits, but also communities that could be benefiting from more federal dollars circulating in the local economy.

What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:



Placed language in Public Act 10-133 that requires the Department of Education to administer, within available appropriations, a child nutrition outreach program to increase (1) participation in the federal School Breakfast Program, federal Summer Food Service Program and federal Child and Adult Care Food Program; and (2) federal reimbursement for such programs.



Spoke publicly on hunger throughout the state, including visits to food pantries with community members, state elected leaders, and the Congressional delegation.



Linked state loss of dollars through unnecessary infant hospitalizations due to low birth weight, to hunger and poor nutrition.



Showed how much money the state was losing by not maximizing SNAP utilization.



Worked to streamline service access so that families could receive food quickly and seamlessly.

Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Launch information campaign through community- and faith-based organizations to increase SNAP participation;
- Enhance partnerships between DSS and local agencies to promote efficiency and speed-up in the application process for food stamps.

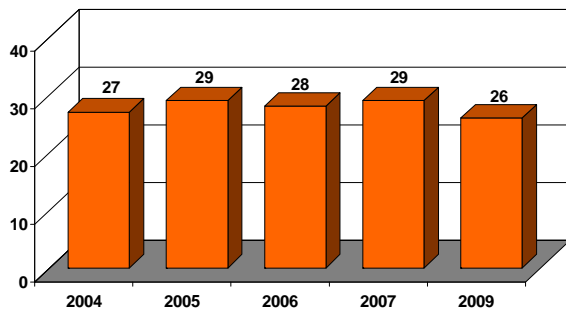
- Complete DSS online benefits project that will expedite SNAP enrollment online and expand use of End Hunger CT! USDA-funded e-fax system to expedite SNAP enrollment;
- Streamline, expedite, and simplify points of entry for intake and case management.
- Access federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funds that would allow support of meals for low-income early care and education professionals; they would eat with the children, modeling healthy eating.

INDICATOR 3: EMPLOYMENT

The story behind the baseline:

With the economic downturn, fully 28 percent of the state’s children have parents with no full-time, year-round employment. Certain sectors are hit harder than others. Construction, manufacturing, finance, and government are industries facing significant cutbacks. Young adults entering the job market and workers over 60 are facing significant roadblocks.

Percent of Connecticut children in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment



Source: Kids Count, Annie E. Casey Foundation

The gap between black and white unemployment had been shrinking for decades, but the current recession has thrown it back to the early-1990s levels. Joblessness for 16- to 24-year-old black males has reached “Great Depression proportions.” Nationally, it was 34.5 percent—more than three times the rate for the general U.S. population.

An ongoing barrier to economic security is lack of education, pertinent job skills, and relevant employment training. High school graduates are seeing fewer opportunities than college graduates. Low-income families often face other barriers such as transportation, health care and child care – all of which are required in order to succeed in the workplace.

Two federal funding opportunities assist with employment, the SNAP Employment and Training 50/50 match funds and the TANF Emergency Fund. The former is an on-going fund through the US Department of Agriculture. The latter is a specific fund created to help families with emergency short-term funds including subsidized employment.


The SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) program is designed to help SNAP recipients obtain the skills they need to succeed in the labor market. SNAP E&T’s 50/50 matching funds enables states to be reimbursed for 50% of non-federal expenditures on employment and training and related support services to SNAP recipients – without a federal cap on the funds received.


The TANF Emergency Fund, established by Congress, offered funds to promote short-term subsidized employment to help both industry and worker during this crisis. This fund also assists with short-term needs, such as transportation, housing, and rental assistance; it assists the state with case management, and job training that takes less than four months.


What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:





Ascertained the availability of \$133 million for Connecticut through the TANF Emergency Fund which included subsidized employment opportunities. Worked with the university system, business, philanthropy, youth services and literacy programs to ensure utilization of this fund in creative and immediate forms. Connecticut successfully obtained \$39 million from this fund.

 Promoted the opportunity of TANF Emergency Fund to state officials, brought national experts to help educate key leaders, and enlisted and educated community non-profits, businesses, foundations, youth employment organizations and universities to enable them to take part.

 Worked with Representative Toni Walker and the National Conference of State Legislatures to create a community/state partnership and statute regarding the TANF Emergency Fund that would allow for maximum participation, increase and improve our eligibility for federal dollars and ensure an integrated use of funds to help in an array of community concerns.

 Facilitated the detailed submission of a number of the agency applications. The Commission worked closely with groups representing \$15 million of the federal reimbursement obtained by the state. This included the state university and community college systems and energy programs designed by the Connecticut Business and Industry Association.

 Increased Hartford Summer Youth Employment through the TANF Emergency Fund.

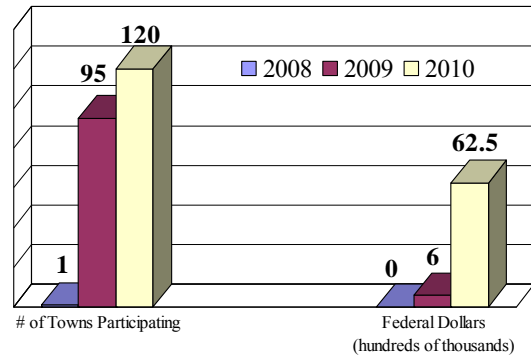
 Increased short term subsidized employment in partnership with Asnuntuck Community College using the TANF Emergency Fund (\$150,000 in federal funds).

Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Ensure all annual federal funds for the SNAP E&T 50/50 match program. These funds have been slowed down due to misuse in both California and Washington State. They have not been stopped, but certain categories of eligibility have been omitted. We should not allow this slowdown to impede our state’s strong and proper utilization of these funds locally, which will bring in an average of \$6 million per year.

- Bring together all regions using the SNAP E&T funds to share strategies in employability as well as methods of increasing family SNAP utilization to address nutrition and bring in more federal dollars.

Maximizing SNAP E&T Federal Reimbursement



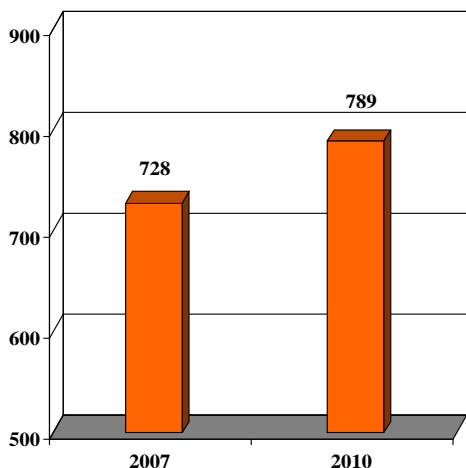
INDICATOR 4: HOMELESSNESS

The story behind the baseline

Annually, one of every 365 Connecticut children receives services at an emergency shelter. From 2007 to 2009, the number of homeless children in our state increased by 9%. Homeless children have higher rates of acute health problems, learning disabilities, and socio-emotional problems, coupled with lower rates of participation in early childhood programs, than their peers. Nationally, 20% of school-age homeless children do not attend school. Of those that do attend, 41% change schools during the year. Each school change sets a student back 4-6 months academically.

In Connecticut, homelessness is increasing, impacting people who thought it would never happen to them. Sixty percent of the adults in homeless families have 12th-grade educations or higher. Our shelters are well over capacity.

Connecticut children in homeless shelters on any given day



Source: Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Provide quality early care and education to homeless children.
- Provide job training, life skills training, job search assistance, and housing assistance for parents in homeless families.
- Streamline enrollment for services like food stamps, WIC, and HUSKY.
- Increase affordable housing in the state and maintain programs providing housing/rental subsidies.

RESULT: Parents are engaged and informed about children's programs and policies

What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:



Worked with the New England states and Senator Dodd to raise funds from Congress for home relief. This work led to \$32.9 million for Connecticut. People now at the brink of housing loss can get a three-month forbearance of mortgage payments.



Assessed the impact of homelessness on school attendance and worked with the state and our Congressional delegation to ensure full utilization of the McKinney-Vento Act.



Exposed the number of homeless youth in our state through the public hearings of the Speaker's Task Force on Children and the Recession. The legislature put funds into DCF to help homeless youth in this harsh time.



Worked with the 60 Minutes news program, the local NBC affiliate, and other stations to speak nationally on the problems of homeless youth as a way to foist the issue of children and the housing crisis into the public debate.

INDICATOR 1: FAMILY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The story behind the baseline

Connecticut policy recognizes parents as the ultimate consumers of services and programs for children and that parents need to be involved from the onset as partners in public initiatives. Intentional efforts to increase family civic engagement improve public policy and program operation while diversifying the network of involved parents.

The number of communities offering parent leadership training has more than doubled in the last seven years. This trend is largely due to public demand and a public and private partnership supporting the Parent Trust Fund. Funds for the Parent Trust were allocated in the 2010-11 state budget, and \$250,000 in matching funds were leveraged from the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund. Additional matching funds were generated at the local level.

What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:



Continued the growth of the Commission's Parent Leadership Training Institute, rated by national researchers as one of the strongest parent leadership initiatives in the nation.



Ensured diverse participation and mentoring in PLTI.



Embedded parent engagement in the Governor's Early Care and Education Cabinet as one of four core functions of the work.



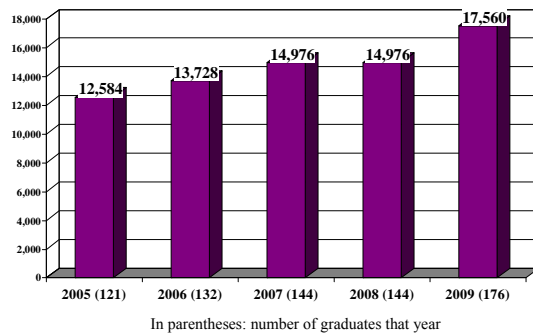
Participated in the State Department of Education's Family and Community Leadership Transformation Team and the Parent Trust Collaborative Management Team.



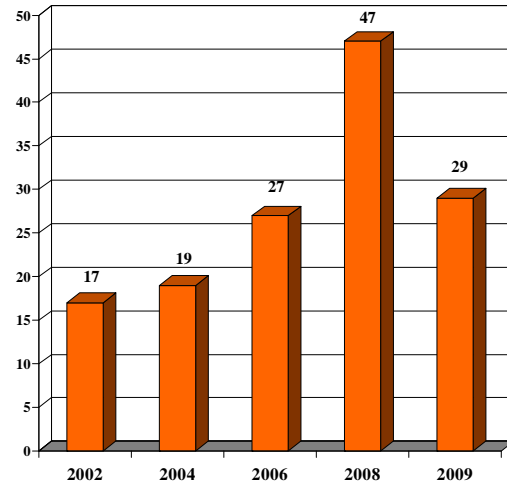
Worked with legislators and the executive branch to move the Parent Trust to SDE from DSS to ensure its viability and opportunity for state and federal match dollars.

"The Liberty Bank Foundation supports PLTI because it reaps so many rewards. We are bankers looking to invest and get a good return. This has been a good investment." - Sue Murphy, Executive Director, Liberty Bank Foundation

PLTI Volunteer Hours



Communities Offering Parent Leadership Training with Parent Trust Funds



A longitudinal evaluation conducted by RMC reveals that of the PLTI alumni surveyed:

- 97% "understand how service systems for communities are organized."
- 92% agree that "when problems arise within my community, I do something about them."
- 99% are "able to access information to help me better navigate my community."

Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

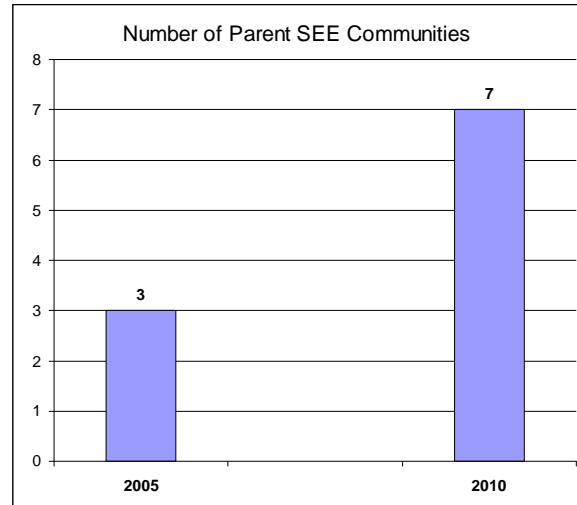
- Continue and expand the Parent Trust Fund to embed family civics in Connecticut.
- Continue outreach to increase fathers' engagement in leadership roles for their children.
- Train state and local leaders on how to work with parents and bring them in as community assets.
- Bolster opportunities for parents to lead on policy and program, particularly within the current economic context.
- Expand public-private partnerships to increase and embed the family as a true partner in children's policy.

- Ensure the public and private funds are allocated and released through the Parent Trust Fund so communities can offer parent leadership training.

INDICATOR 2: PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

The story behind the baseline

Research shows that children with parents involved in their learning develop better grades, test scores, long-term academic achievement, attitudes and behaviors. Children do best when families and schools share information and partner in creating quality learning environments. Families, schools and communities have come together to more than double the number offering Parents Support Educational Excellence (PSEE) training between 2005 and 2010.



What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:



Facilitated, with a core group of state and national, the doubling of Title I dollars for parent engagement from 1 to 2 %.



Staffed legislators to research, draft language and move policy forward on School Governance Councils to improve public accountability and school performance.



Worked with the federal Department of Education through hearings and forums on the importance of parent engagement in school reform.



Co-led the growth and implementation of Parents Supporting Educational Excellence (Parents SEE), which the Commission envisioned, designed and authored with the Center for School Change.

Outcome data reveals the following for parents attending Parent SEE's 12-week training.

- 84% agreed they "know how federal and state education policies affect my school and school district."
- 74% agreed they "know how school budgets are decided by leaders."
- 89% "know how a Board of Education functions, including what board members are supposed to do."
- 87% "know how to read state testing data and how to interpret that information."
- 88% "know how to use Strategic School Profiles to identify successful school practices and those that need improvement."

RESULT: Children are born healthy and remain well and safe

INDICATOR 1: LOW BIRTH WEIGHT BABIES

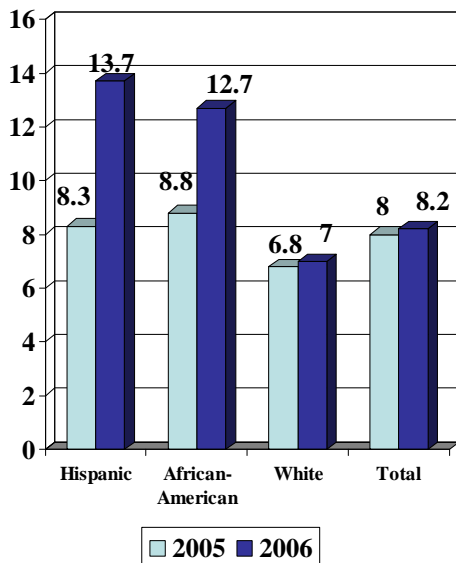
The story behind the baseline

Reducing the rates of low birth weight babies (infants born weighing less than 5 pounds 8 ounces) would increase the number of healthy children in our state. Adequate prenatal care and social/emotional supports are key to healthy

pregnancies and healthy newborns. Connecticut's incidence of LBW babies is high, and the rates for minority subpopulations are even higher. The national *Healthy People 2010* target for LBW babies is 5% or less. Eleven percent of LBW births in our state are to mothers who received late care and 26% are to mothers who received no prenatal care. Impacts of LBW include infant death, cerebral palsy, vision impairments, cognitive deficiencies, developmental and learning disabilities, poor educational performance and behavioral problems.

LBW newborns accounted for \$183,964,519 in preventable hospitalization charges in 2008 and had the highest average charge per stay (\$70,837) of all preventable hospitalization health conditions. From 2004 to 2008, Medicaid preventable hospitalization charges grew by over 50%. LBW newborns accounted for two-fifths of this growth with an increase of \$30 million.

Percent of babies with low birth weights, by race and ethnicity



What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:

Partnered with DPH on a home visitation assessment to ensure our state's candidacy for federal home visitation dollars that would help young and vulnerable new families.

Partnered with Child First to garner \$4 million dollars from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support medical home visits for children in the largest cities in our state.

Created cross-agency efforts to address low birth weight.

Raised \$150,000 from Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, partly to address LBW in Hartford. Commission on Children has secured grant funding for two year start-up costs of Hartford pilot. Subsequent costs will be paid by insurance in same way as traditional prenatal care is covered.

Sought to finance low birth weight interventions utilizing the federal TANF Emergency Fund.

Proposed strategies to turn the curve

- Maximize WIC enrollment and co-enrollment with Medicaid for all eligible women. Studies show enrollment in WIC at least 12 weeks prior to delivery decreases probability of delivering LBW infant by 31%.
- Pursue federal grants to fund increased outreach and referrals for prenatal care, such as \$6 million grant just awarded to SDE and partners for supporting pregnant and parenting teens.
- Implement Centering Pregnancy model statewide.
- Increase activities around male involvement, including use of curriculum developed by Real Dads Forever. Pursue recently announced federal funds for fatherhood initiatives.

INDICATOR 2: TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Conn. TBI Deaths, Hospitalizations and Emergency Department Visits by Age Group, 2005-2007						
Age Group	# TBI Deaths	Rate*	# TBI Hospitalizations	Rate*	# ED Visits	Rate*
< 1 year	10	8.4	175	146.7	2056	1723.7
1-4 yrs	12	2.4	181	35.8	6379	1261.7
5-9 yrs	3	0.5	153	23.0	3901	585.6
10-14 yrs	6	0.8	275	37.9	5028	692.1
15-19 yrs	57	7.6	661	88.3	7108	949.7
All Ages	1,081	10.3	7,956	75.6	56,548	537.7

*Age Specific Rate per 100,000 population

Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health, June, 2010

The story behind the baseline:

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a major health problem that disproportionately affects young people. It is the leading cause of death for children. Sports injuries are one example, but children also experience TBI through falls, motor vehicle crashes and intentional violence. TBI is often referred to as the “silent epidemic” because the complications, such as changes affecting thinking, language or emotions, may not be readily apparent.

Each year, more than half a million U.S. children (0-14 years)—and nearly 9000 Connecticut children under age 20—experience a TBI that results in an emergency room visit, hospitalization or death. Some evidence suggests that Connecticut may underreport the prevalence of TBI among children. Survivors of TBI are often left with significant cognitive,

behavioral, and communicative disabilities, and some patients develop long-term medical complications, such as epilepsy. Connecticut hospitalization charges related to TBI totaled \$312.9 million in 2000-2004. Direct inpatient TBI-related hospital charges for children under age 20 in Connecticut exceeded \$46 million during this five-year period.

Children with TBI who remain unidentified or misidentified are likely to fail or fall behind in school. Lack of identification may lead to misdiagnosis, inappropriate treatment, a mismatch between treatment and cognitive impairment, academic and vocational failure, increased psychopathology and reduced quality of life.

What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:



Planned, marketed and led state forum on TBI in 2010, featuring national and state experts and parents.



Prepared an issue brief containing a detailed overview of the prevalence of TBI, identifies strategic issues considered at the forum, and proposes next steps for the new state-level effort.



Performed research on promising practices, interventions and strategies with children who have sustained a brain injury.

Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Implement public awareness campaign, based on models that work.
- Establish TBI school action teams in every school district.
- Expand pediatrician training.
- Create statewide TBI task force.
- Improve minimum training standards and credentials for TBI direct service providers.

INDICATOR 3: CHILDHOOD OBESITY

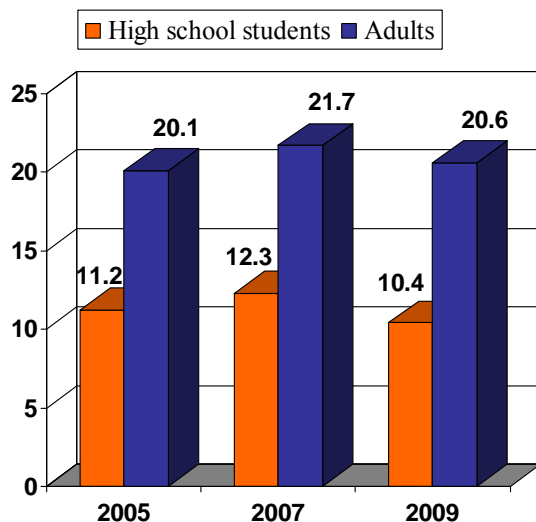
The story behind the baseline

Obesity is one of the most serious public health concerns facing our state. It reduces the productivity of our state's economy, places an unsustainable burden on our health care system, and disables workers. Obesity-related health problems in Connecticut adults generate \$856 million in annual medical expenses.

Obese children and adolescents are at risk for health problems during their youth and as adults. For example, during their youth, obese children and adolescents are more likely to have risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease (such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type 2 diabetes) than are other children and adolescents. Obese children and adolescents are more likely to become obese as adults. The current generation may be on track to have a shorter lifespan than their parents.

Unhealthy food choices, poor eating behaviors, and reduced activity levels are major factors contributing to overweight and obesity. Only 25 percent of Connecticut high school students are physically active every day; and only 21 percent eat the recommended 5 or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

Percent of Connecticut high school students and adults who are obese



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:



Provided guidance on policy development to Sustinet Obesity Task Force. COC recommendations formed a core part of the Task Force's recommendations issued in July 2010.



Initiated partnership with Hartford community leaders to pursue obesity prevention strategies.



Developed proposed statewide data tracking system for obesity and chronic diseases with state and local partners.



Worked with National Conference of State Legislature and staff of First Lady Michelle Obama on her child obesity campaign. Attended White House think tank session to offer policy ideas and linkages.

Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Encourage wider participation in the state's Healthy Food Certification program.
- Access new obesity prevention grant funds through the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.
- Establish statewide data tracking system for obesity and chronic diseases, based on Commission proposal and recommendation by Sustinet panel.
- Develop a "Complete Streets" vision and plan for Connecticut.
- Establish a permanent council on childhood obesity, as recommended by COC and the Sustinet Obesity Task Force.
- Launch statewide public awareness and education campaign.
- Develop state strategy to fully maximize federal food security program funds.

INDICATOR 4 – CHILDREN REMAIN SAFE IN NATURAL AND UNNATURAL DISASTERS

The story behind the baseline:

The United States remains seriously unprepared to protect children during major disasters. There are 67 million children in American schools and child care facilities at any given point on a weekday, separated from their families and dependent on school officials and caregivers to provide protection. If a disaster strikes, it's crucial that children are in a safe place and are able to quickly reunite with their parents.

Most parents expect that when they drop their children off at school or at a child care facility, they will be protected if disaster strikes. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Save the Children's U.S. Programs Report Card graded all 50 states and the District of Columbia on whether they meet four criteria of preparedness:

- (1) the state requires all licensed child care facilities to have a written plan for evacuating and moving all kids to a safe location for multiple disasters;
- (2) the state requires all licensed child care facilities to have a written plan to reunify families after a disaster;
- (3) the state requires all licensed child care facilities to have a written plan that accounts for all children with special needs during a disaster, and;
- (4) the state requires all schools to have a disaster plan that accounts for multiple hazards.

Connecticut meets only the last of these four criteria.

What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:



Worked with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) on children and disaster planning. With DSS, brought in Save the Children to create a plan that will help child care centers meet national recommendations for an

evacuation plan. The funds for this come from the federal Child Care Development Block Grant.



Co-Chaired the Child Care Crisis Subcommittee on Evacuation Planning and Standards Development with DSS and DPH.



Worked with the National Commission on Children and Disasters to ascertain all necessary policy directions to protect children in the face of unnatural disaster such as plant explosions and workforce shootings, or natural disasters such as tornadoes.

Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Continue to partner across agencies through the Child Safety and Response Subcommittee chaired by DEMHS, which meets quarterly to explore disaster-related gaps and potentials for federal and private funding.
- Continue to participate on the FEMA's Children's Working Group to ensure that a federal disaster response meets the unique needs of children.
- Worked with Save the Children on a Resilient and Ready Community Initiative to ensure a comprehensive emergency plan for children birth to 18. This work may possibly be financed through homeland security funds.

Result: Children and youth are ready for and succeed in school

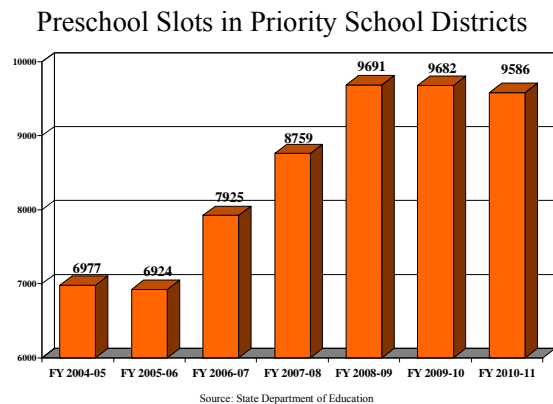
INDICATOR 1: PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT

The story behind the baseline


The brain develops to 90% of its capacity in the first five years. A child's ego, self esteem and learning patterns are developing and linked together before a child reaches kindergarten. Quality preschool is proven to assist in these important years with cognition, social and emotional skills, gross motor skills and language and numeracy development. Poor quality care or


no early care is often the starter fuel for inequities in educational achievement.


The chart below shows that the number of children utilizing preschool slots grew nearly four-fold between 1998, when preschool was made available for 3- and 4-year-olds, and 2009. While the number dipped slightly in 2010, the overall increase should continue if we are to close the gap for children who can't attend preschool due to lack of supply, limited access, or family working hours.




What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:

 Co-authored SAC grant application to federal government for \$800,000 to create an integrated early care and education system. These dollars have been awarded to the State Department of Education.

 Worked with Congress to put language in early care and education bill for financing of facility expansion with low-interest financing to expand supply of safe space in urban sector. This was modeled after our state's school readiness legislation. Bill still pending.

 Organized a business forum on the economic necessity of quality early care. Co-authored grant with leaders from the Pew Foundation to bring in national business leaders, including Rob Dugger from the Partnership for America's Economic Success and Rob Grunwald from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

 Served as Steering Committee Member of Governors State Advisory Council/Early Care and Education Cabinet. On-going work on standards, professional development, financing and family engagement.

Proposed strategies to turn the curve

- Maintain investment in child care and school readiness programs to meet demand.
- Invest in child care workforce through scholarship and increased wages.
- Align standards and financing for the early childhood education system across departments. This would increase supply, align reimbursements and promote a stronger system.
- Expand infant and toddler programs to address our current shortage
- Develop a continuum of birth to five programming rather than segments of services for infants, toddlers, birth to three and preschool.
- Bolster the Early Care and Education Cabinet and give it budgetary authority to improve and solidify an integrated early care and education system.

INDICATOR 2: READING

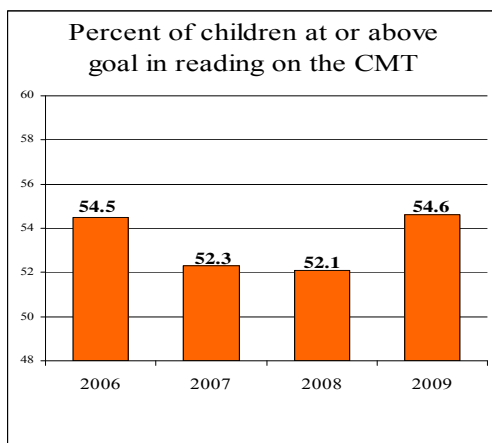
The story behind the baseline

A child who is not reading by the end of first grade has a one in eight chance of ever becoming a proficient reader. The impact of low literacy is seen at many levels including school retention, special education, drop outs, unemployment and crime. Connecticut has one of the greatest achievement gaps in reading in the states.


The state CMT results reveal strong differences in performance between low and moderate income children and middle class children. Similarly, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test above shows white students significantly outperforming black and Hispanic students. Since 95 % of all children can be taught to read,


the achievement gap in reading calls for critical review.


Teachers who know the current research and are trained in the science of reading can help every child read. Yet, not all teachers know how children learn to read. They have not been taught assessment and intervention. So when a child is not catching on, they do not know how to assist and succeed in a timely manner. Not all higher education institutions teach their pre-service teachers the science of teaching reading to young children. This is both a national and Connecticut challenge.




What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:


 Partnered with the national Casey Foundation and the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund to pilot community literacy interventions in the early years with evaluation.


 Began a strategy to teach parents throughout the state the importance of reading and how to partner in early care and education as well as in schools.


 Created a draft curriculum, in partnership with Literacy How, to help parents understand what their children should know about reading at each level of early care and early schooling.


 Partnered on a working paper about children with learning disabilities and reading for the legislature. This research was done in

partnership with Literacy How and was funded by the Tremaine Foundation.

 Held three focus groups with parents on reading to ascertain what parents need to know to partner with schools in early reading.

 Served as resource to the Annie E. Casey Foundation on reading for report released in state from Kids Count on reading in Connecticut.

 Worked with the legislature's Black and Latino Caucus to increase the number of parents who are aware of achievement gap challenges in Connecticut and how to reverse the trend.

 Studied the use of assessment tools in literacy to determine which assessment tools would promote quality and efficiency.

Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Provide external mentors for current teachers in kindergarten through grade three in the science of reading.
- Ascertain what skills are not adequately taught in higher education, utilizing the findings from the preservice test in reading and improve curriculum to meet reading goals.
- Inform parents, particularly low-income parents, how children learn to read and what they can do at home while partnering with the schools in grades kindergarten through grade three, to improve reading scores.
- Bolster family literacy and parent child reading programs for families with infants and toddlers.
- Ensure literacy opportunity in early care and education settings with well-trained providers who understand the rudiments of oral language and pre-literacy skills development.
- Utilize technology and improved assessment tools to reduce the number of hours teachers are assessing children's literacy skills and to improve interventions for children before it is too late.

INDICATOR 3: BULLYING PREVENTION: PROMOTING POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

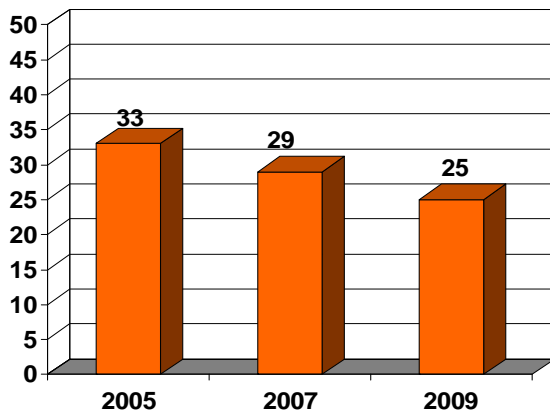
The story behind the baseline:

Bullying interferes with student health, safety and achievement at all grade levels. Connecticut high school students who report being bullied are more likely to get less sleep, be depressed, miss school because they feel unsafe, have property stolen at school, carry a weapon to school, be depressed and attempt suicide.

Bullying impedes our state's effort to close the achievement gap because bullies often target others based on race, ethnicity or other differences.

At the extreme, students who have been bullied become suicidal and sometimes turn from self-abuse to externalized violence. Virtually, all school shootings involved shooters students who had been bullied.

Percent of Conn. high school students who reported being bullied on school property in the previous year



Source: Connecticut School Health Survey, Department of Public Health (DPH)

One in four Connecticut high school students—and 35 percent of the state's 9th graders—reported having been bullied or harassed at school in the past year. Bullying also occurs off school property. Cyberbullying is emerging as a particularly harmful form of bullying, with more than 900,000 U.S. high school students reporting being cyber-bullied in one year.

What the Commission on Children did about this in 2010:



Worked with federal officials to investigate federal funding opportunities for 2011, with continued work led by state legislators to follow.



Held major state forum featuring Kevin Jennings, the federal official in charge of school climate. More than 500 people gathered for a wide-ranging conversation between young people, state and federal officials, and local stakeholders on bullying and cyberbullying.



Issued *20 Questions for Your School*, a policy checklist to help families and schools determine whether their school district is meeting the broad requirements of the state anti-bullying law.



Proposed legislative revisions to state law to address cyberbullying and help schools build a positive school climate.



Formed alliance with Governor's Prevention Partnership to plan widespread training of school personnel and parents on how to prevent bullying in their schools.



Trained the school district leadership team of Groton and helped them plan for systemic implementation of a research-based anti-bullying strategy.

Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Seek federal funds to help schools comply with state law by implementing strategic bullying prevention plans.
- Train schools in evidence-based bullying reduction strategies.
- Strengthen Connecticut's bullying prevention law to address cyberbullying, enumerate categories of protection, and improve accountability.
- Hold school districts accountable for compliance with the anti-bullying law and help

them understand what they must do to prevent bullying and establish positive school climate.

- Establish a decrease in bullying as a performance measure in school improvement plans.
- Kevin Jennings, Director of the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools at the U.S.

Department of Education, encouraged the Commission on Children to collaborate with local education agencies and other partners for bullying prevention efforts under this federal funding opportunity. The funding opportunity is scheduled to be announced in the spring of 2011. Past SS/HS funding opportunities have offered grants from \$750,000 to \$2,250,000.

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN PERFORMANCE REPORT CARD 2010

Approach 1: Research

The Commission on Children performs pertinent research on current trends impacting children and families and shares the research findings with the Legislature and the public.

Six Major Reports	<p>Connecticut’s Bullying Prevention Law & Positive School Climate: 20 Questions for Your School</p> <p>Traumatic Brain Injury in Children: Connecticut’s Silent Epidemic</p> <p>Testimony before U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Subcommittee on Children and Families</p> <p>SNAP E&T Participating Communities</p> <p>Dyslexia and Other Learning Disabilities – What Connecticut’s Next Governor Can Do.</p> <p>New Leadership for Children: Recommendations for Gov.-Elect Malloy on Children’s Policy Actions for 2011</p>
Five Major Policies	<p>An Act Concerning Children in the Recession (PA 10-133)</p> <p>An Act Concerning Education Reform in Connecticut (PA 10-111)</p> <p>An Act Concerning Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Contingency Funds (PA 10-185)</p> <p>An Act Providing a Safe Harbor for Exploited Children (PA 10-115)</p> <p>An Act Concerning Student Athletes and Concussions (PA 10-62)</p>

Approach 2: Education and Outreach

The Commission on Children educates the public on child development and public policy issues in the areas of child health and safety, learning, economic self-sufficiency and equal access, family strength, and overall social health.

40,000	Immunization packets distributed statewide to new mothers
141,173	Public information requests fulfilled
166,000	COC website visitors
100,000	Documents downloaded through the COC website
1,300	Subscribers to the COC newsletter (excluding legislators and staff)
6	Meetings televised on the Connecticut Network (CT-N)
30	News reports highlighting the Commission’s work

Approach 3: Partnership Development

The Commission on Children performs its functions through substantive partnerships with educators, families, city and town officials, youth leaders, scholars, the elderly, the business sector, the news media, the religious community, and health and public safety professionals.

14	Public forums and panel discussions, held to assess state and local needs and to craft solutions
179	Partnerships with national, state, and community organizations, forged to achieve specific policy or civic outcomes
469	Information and strategy meetings with parents, providers, elected officials on information policy, civic engagement

Approach 4: Civic Engagement

The Commission on Children performs its functions within a civic framework ensuring that families understand, participate and lead on children’s issues in Connecticut. Outcome data reviewed annually from the two extensive family civics initiatives created by the Commission on Children to increase family civics and family leaders for children, the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) and

Parent Supporting Educational Excellence (PSEE). The outcomes include a) increased technical skills, b) increased civic involvement and confidence, c) increased community involvement and d) increased parental input at decision-making tables. Both initiatives has been evaluated by national researchers for their civic impact. The Commission also works statewide ensuring the voice of youth in community and state policy.

16 Communities	Offering the Parent Leadership Training Institute or Parents Supporting Educational Excellence training
50 Communities	Offered training and technical support to promote family civic engagement
2 Youth-focused Public Hearings	Integrated Congressman Larson’s Youth Cabinet with the Children and The Recession Task Force Public Hearings

Approach 5: Revenue Generation

The Commission on Children finds additional resources for children through comprehensive revenue generation efforts including identifying federal funds maximization opportunities. And seeks opportunities to generate private funds as well.

Revenue generated and/or identified by source:

Revenue Identified	
\$133 Million	TANF Emergency Fund
\$6.25 Million	SNAP E&T 50/50 Match Funds
\$32.9 Million	Emergency home relief

Revenue Generated	
\$39 Million	TANF Emergency Fund
\$250,000	Parent Trust Match
\$1 Million	Kellogg Foundation Grant in partnership with HFPG
\$32.9 million	Emergency home relief
\$800,000	Federal Head Start for CT State Advisory Council
\$10,000	Pew Foundation

Population Results

Children are healthy and safe.
No child lives in poverty or suffers from discrimination.
Children and youth succeed in school.

Population Indicators

Low Birth Weight Babies	Preschool Enrollment	Child Poverty Rate
Employment Rate	Childhood Obesity Rate	TBI Rate
Homelessness	Youth Leadership	Reading Scores
Racial & Gender Inequities	Family Civic Engagement	Parent Involvement in Schools

Foundational Strategies

Model Policy Development	Leadership Development	Public Awareness
Legislative Action	Community Capacity-Building	Civic Engagement
Systems-Building	Research-based prevention	Return-on-Investment
	Federal Funds Maximization	

Key Partnerships

Business	Parents	State Agencies
Philanthropy	Community Civic Leaders	Congress
Community-Based Organizations	Faith-Based Organizations	Universities
School Leaders	Judicial Branch	Youth

Organization Core Values

Innovation	Integration	Information	Impact	Leadership
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Create innovative strategies to overcome barriers.
Focus on outcomes with impact.
Promote racial and economic equity.
Work across sectors.
Continue to lead for children.

Commission on Children Board and Staff, 2010

Voting board members (asterisk indicates Executive Committee member)



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M.D., F.A.A.P.,
*Chair**



George A.
Coleman
*Vice Chair**



Mary Grace Reed
*Secretary**



James P. Cordier
*Treasurer**



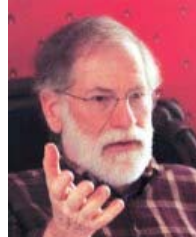
Laura Lee Simon
*Chair Emerita**



Mary K. Fox



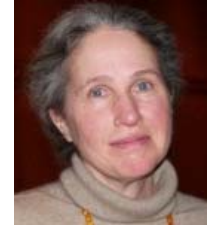
Robert Francis



Andrew Gibson,
Ph.D



Jordan E.
Grossman, Ed.D



Alison Hilding



Josh Piteo



Justine Rakich-
Kelly



Barbara J. Ruhe



Ron D. Ward, J.D.



John Yrchik



Representative
Andrew M.
Fleischmann



Representative
Toni E. Walker



Senator Mary Ann
Handley



Senator Jonathan
Harris



Senator Andrew
McDonald

Commission on Children Board and Staff, 2010 (cont.)

Non-voting board members

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Designee: Rudy Brooks

Department of Correction

Commissioner: Theresa Lantz

Designee: Mary Marcial

Department of Developmental Services

Commissioner: Peter O'Meara

Designee: Tammy Garris

Department of Education

Commissioner: Mark K. McQuillan

Designee: George Dawaliby

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or order our publications:

- visit our website at www.cga.ct.gov/coc, or;
- call us at (860) 240-0290.

