



Working toward ending domestic violence

## Appropriations Committee Re: Children's Trust-Fund

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February 18, 2009

Dear: Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for hearing my testimony. My name is Penni Micca. I am employed by Interval House, a domestic violence intervention and prevention program that serves Hartford and 23 surrounding communities. I am here to ask that you continue to fund The Children's Trust Fund (CTF) as an independent State program rather than allowing it to be absorbed by the Department of Children and Families. To allow that to happen – would be regrettable.

CTF is about supporting, nurturing and empowering families. It provides a plethora of programs for parents and caregivers as well as providers that work with families. We at Interval House provide one of their eight Family Empowerment Programs. Our program is called MotherShare, and I am the group facilitator.

MotherShare is a weekly parent education / support group for mothers who have experienced domestic violence. It is not meant to be a comprehensive parenting class. Its primary focus is domestic violence and parenting issues:

- Understanding the impact of domestic violence on their children and themselves
- Teaching moms to talk and to listen to their children about their experience of the violence
- Encouraging children's residency and
- Supporting parents in strengthening their relationships with their children

At the same time the group is going on upstairs, the children are downstairs working with the Child Advocates. Mothers' and children's topics are often overlapped to provide mom's and kids with complementary experiences that they can share with each other.

The whole purpose of starting MotherShare almost five years ago was to offer a parenting program to survivors of domestic violence that was ~~not mandated by Department of Children and Families~~. Now don't get me wrong. Some of the moms that attend our group are DCF involved, but others are not. MotherShare is for moms who want to be there – want to participate – want to grow as parents. They are not there because their DCF case worker told them they have to be... or *strongly encouraged it*.

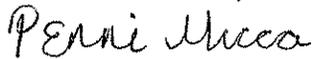
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Please know this makes all the difference in the world. Often times DCF mandated participants come to group angry and unwilling to actively participate. Others just don't belong in the group. It affects the openness of the group – the supportive element of the group and the progress that can be made by the women involved. *If Department of Children and Families were to absorb Children's Trust Fund, MotherShare and the other family empowerment programs would become just one more DCF mandated group.*

Domestic violence raises parenting issues for mothers. Problematic relationships with children are not unusual. MotherShare provides a safe place for women who have been victims of domestic violence to best parent their children – learn new parenting skills, dust off old parenting skills that have been dormant because of the violence in their lives. In MotheShare we acknowledge the strength of battered mothers and strive to assist them in overcoming the detrimental impact abuse has had on their parenting. Please do not allow Children's Trust Fund to be absorbed by DCF. They support programs like MotherShare that support families and children making positive changes in their lives when they want and need to make those changes.

Respectfully,



Penni Micca  
MotherShare Facilitator

The mother's meeting  
is important because it educates  
women with children about the  
many different types of abuse.

These meetings also  
offer on-going support ~~for~~ and  
awareness for women from all  
economic backgrounds.

Sincerely,  
Leah Bobbe

02/16/2009

## MOTHER SHARE

This is a wonderful program which allows woman to share their experiences in domestic violence situations. It allows you to share and network with others that may not have had an opportunity to do so. Woman open up, console and educate each others on being strategic in this violent world. This program is a great asset for woman and children who have witnessed emotional and physical <sup>abuse.</sup> It is greatly needed and would take away from the Interval House. I hope the funding is awarded for this program to continue.

April

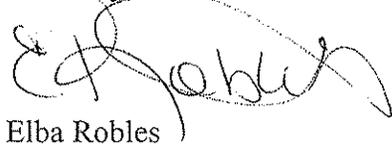
To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Elba Robles; I am a mother of three children ages 7, 5, 1 year old. I am residing at Interval House for 5½ weeks. Since my stayed at Interval House I have been attending the *Mothershare* group. The group has help me realized how to talk to my children and discipline them without using violence. The *Mothershare* has helped me build my confidence to be a better mother to my children. Also, the *Mothershare* has taught me that violence is not the answer.

The *Mothershare* group is very helpful for mothers that don't know anything about domestic violence and the effect that could do to our children. I strongly believe that if the *Mothershare* group gets eliminated is going to have a negative impact on all of us mothers.

Please reconsider your decision on eliminating the *Mothershare* group.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Elba Robles', written in black ink. The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a large loop at the end.

Elba Robles