

**Testimony of Gwendolyn Eaddy-Samuel – Meriden CT
Before the Select Committee on Children
Connecticut General Assembly
Public Hearing, February 19, 2009**

Good Morning, Senator Musto, Representative McMahon and esteemed members of the Select Committee on Children.

My name is Gwen Eaddy-Samuel, a mother of four and I live in Meriden, Connecticut. I am parent leader & community advocate for children and families based on personal experiences, past employment and my commitment to help create a results based accountable, culturally sensitive Child Protective System that puts into practice strength based approaches versus the deficit model approach to address the needs of Connecticut's children and their family with a focus being placed on community based and family centered.

I am a strong supporter of PREVENTIVE, EARLY INTERVENTION types of programs and initiatives that keep kids safe, teach conflict resolution, and parent supports that keep families safe, healthy and intact as families continue to work toward self-sufficient living. I work toward making Social services of CT an Accountable, results based, community based and family centered systems

Please support the following bills:

HB 5915, AN ACT CONCERNING "STUCK KIDS"

The raised bill would develop accurate information on out-of-state, runaway and homeless children and youth in the custody, care or supervision of the Commissioner of Children and Families.

What does this bill do?

- Require the Commissioner of Children and Families to review and monitor the placement of every out-of-state, runaway and homeless child and youth in the custody, care or supervision of the Department of Children and Families.
- Require the commissioner to issue an annual report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the Select Committee on Children regarding the placement of the children and youth

HOUSE Bill 878, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

What would this bill accomplish?

- It would create a task force to examine whether:
 - DCF should implement a state-wide *Differential Response System (DRS)* by July 1, 2009;
 - DCF should *privatize voluntary services*;
 - DCF should implement other prevention measures, as well as the nature and cost of these additional measures.

What amendments should I propose to this bill?

- *The task force should be eliminated.* Creation of a task force to study these programs is *unnecessary* and only serves to delay implementation of these critical prevention efforts.
 - DRS has already been selected as an appropriate intake system, is **already operative in at least 26 states**, and has been deemed a promising practice by child welfare practitioners around the country. Unfortunately DCF's efforts to implement DRS have lacked consistently, urgency, and commitment.
 - In 2003, DCF attempted to implement a DRS pilot. Evaluators concluded that the pilot failed in part due to changes in leadership related to the re-organization at DCF and a lack of clear accountability mechanisms.
 - In 2006, DCF attempted DRS implementation again. For a second time, commitment to the program lapsed and DCF abandoned the pilot.
- The July 1, 2009 DRS implementation deadline should remain intact so that DCF will be mandated to commit to the program. Subsequently, the January 1, 2010 task force report date should be amended to be an implementation progress report.

HB 6419, AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

What does this bill accomplish?

- It would **establish a task force to study** a series of issues related to **transparency and accountability** in the Department of Children and Families (DCF), including:
 - Whether DCF should report aggregate administrative case review (ACR) data and Connecticut comprehensive objective reviews to the General Assembly
 - Whether DCF should include measurable outcomes in contracts with private providers
 - Whether DCF should conduct service needs reviews and case conferences for "stuck" kids and the "unseen population"
 - Whether two different pilot programs should be established: one to combine ACRs and case status conferences, and the other to open Juvenile Court proceedings in one judicial district

What amendments should I propose to this bill?

- Require that the important **substantive measures** designed to increase transparency and accountability be **implemented immediately**, rather than studied through the creation of another task force
 - Many of the recommendations raised in the bill are either drawn directly from the 2007 Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Report or from the quarterly reports issued by the *Juan F.* court monitor.
 - The task force will only serve to delay implementation of long overdue and critical recommendations made by multiple reviews of DCF policy and practice.

An amended bill would require implementation of what we already know would improve transparency and accountability in DCF:

- **Results-based accountability in contracts with service providers**
 - *2007 PRI report:* Since there is currently little accountability in meeting contract expectations, “the program review committee recommends [that DCF] compile necessary required data elements to compare actual and expected outcomes based on the performance-based contract. Failure to meet contract expectations should result in discussion and joint plans for progress in meeting expectations.”
- **Fixing what doesn’t work**
 - *Juan F. Court Monitor’s report:* “[T]he level of provider input, family engagement and participation of key stakeholders (youths, mothers, fathers, providers, and attorneys) in both the development of the treatment plan and attendance at the Administrative Case Review (ACR) must improve.”
 - *2007 PRI report:* “[I]ntegrating the court-ordered specific steps and the DCF treatment plan would strengthen the entire treatment planning process. The plan would be the result of discussion among parents (who are usually present at the court proceeding), children, DCF social workers, and attorneys. The fuller participation and development of a single, consistent treatment plan, would lead to a more comprehensive and higher quality plan . . . [and] would ensure that implementation of the treatment plan occurs” as a court order.
- **Achieving permanency for our most vulnerable kids**
 - *Juan F. Court Monitor’s report:* Service needs reviews are “remov[ing] barriers impacting permanency and well-being” and “driving a thorough review of action step timeframes” for children in temporary placements, psychiatric placements, and out-of-state residential facilities.

What we do now as a state will influence the quality of life in the years to come in the future of CT’s children and most vulnerable populations!!!!.