



Galit Sharma

3/4/2011 - Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

Testimony in SUPPORT of the NURTURING FAMILIES NETWORK

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Galit Sharma, I am the Clinical Supervisor of the Nurturing Families Network (NFN) at the Coordinating Council for Children in Crisis, Inc. in New Haven. Please vote against eliminating the Nurturing Families community-based sites as proposed in the Governor's budget (page 357 under cuts to DSS) .

Eliminating these sites will not save the state money- because

PREVENTION COSTS LESS:

We use the principles of prevention to our benefit in other areas of our lives:

- We highly recommend the use of \$50 car seats for children while driving, because they have been proven to prevent not only loss and suffering but also to save thousands of dollars in case of an accident.
- We highly recommend the use of \$15 smoke detectors in homes and businesses because they have been proven to prevent not only loss and suffering but also to save thousands of dollars in case of a fire.
- Therefore, we should recommend and support the Nurturing Families Network, because it has been proven not only to prevent family suffering but also to save thousands of dollars by decreasing family involvement with DCF.

PREVENTION COSTS LESS:

Supporting a family in NFN costs only \$3,000 dollars annually while the same family under DCF would cost the state \$30,000 a year.

The University of Hartford's Department for Social Research reports that in 2008 there were only 1.3% cases of abuse and neglect among NFN families, and only 2% were reported in 2009. This is compared to 20% in similar high-risk populations.

The proposal calls for eliminating 'only' the non-hospital based sites and emphasizes that others will remain in operation. However, all of these sites are located in the high-

need communities of New Haven and Hartford. If the plan passes, services in New Haven and Hartford will be reduced by more than 70%. Fourteen NFN sites will close and services provided by the remaining five will be like a drop in the ocean compared with the need in the community. It is like saying that only 30% of homes should use smoke detectors, or recommending that only 30% of children should use car seats while traveling in a car.

Also important to mention is that three of the six New Haven sites that will be eliminated provide specialized services for fathers. We provide home visiting, fathers groups, support with employment and education and opportunities for social interaction. Such services for fathers are very hard to come-by. Cutting three sites that provide them will be unfortunate, especially since Fatherhood Initiative sites are also up for elimination.

- I am currently working with Jimmy, a 17-year old father in a juvenile prison facility. In response to one of my letters he wrote back: *The day of our meeting I was thinking that it's time to grow up. I did everything and been through some things that most grown men can't handle but that's getting old. I realize I am getting older and that path will lead me to death or life in jail, I don't want either, especially for my child. I just want to come home and be the father I didn't have to my daughter.*
- In another letter Jimmy wrote: *Being a father is a very big responsibility that many people can't handle. Sometimes they don't have the patience and sometimes they just don't know what to do. That's why people that care have programs for parenting.*

With the encouragement and consistency of Nurturing Families' visits and letters, Jimmy is making progress in self-reflection and personal goal setting, keeps up with his child's development and stays involved with his daughter in spite of their difficult circumstances.

Consider the Nurturing Families Network as the smoke detector of child abuse and neglect: Inexpensive, effective, consistently present to detect an early sign of trouble and address it. I hope you will oppose the cut to this valuable, money-saving program, because, we know that-

PREVENTION COSTS LESS !

Thank you for your time.

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