Family & Children's Agency
9 Mott Avenue
Norwalk, CT
February 22, 2013

In Fiscal year 2012, Family and Children's Agency served 481 families in our two programs funded through the Children's Trust Fund - The Nurturing Families Network (NFN) and Healthy Start. At all costs, we attempted to screen and work with women prenatally to reduce the incidence of low birth weight and prevent birth defects. The results were overwhelmingly positive. We found that of the **481 families** we worked with:

- 99% of families did not have a documented case of child abuse or neglect with DCF.
- 98% of infants were born at or above 5.5 lbs
- 99% of prenatal women enrolled in services received regularly scheduled prenatal care
- 99% of families attended scheduled well-baby visits and kept immunizations up to date.

➢ The results of these cost effective, often life saving programs are abundantly clear. Child Abuse Prevention efforts not only work to save children from the devastating emotional and psychological effects of child maltreatment, but they save the state the exorbitant cost of providing services to families who have already become trapped in the cycle of abuse that often results in children being removed from their homes and dealing with a lifetime of trauma.

➢ In a report prepared by the University of Hartford's Center for Social Research in December 2009, they note that **since the inception of the NFN program in 1995, NFN workers across the state screened 42,827 first-time mothers, approximately one-third of all first-time births in the state. Of these families, 13,320 (31%) were found to be at risk for child abuse or neglect and 6,445 families received intensive home visiting services to prevent the devastating effects that accompany abuse and neglect.**

➢ The report goes on to note that families participating in the NFN program have shown statistically significant reductions in their risk for abuse, particularly in the area of rigid parenting. Annual rates of abuse and neglect for the NFN population have ranged from 1% to 6%, **well below** the 20-25% seen in other high-risk populations

➢ Family & Children's Agency has several DCF funded intervention programs for families who are referred following a substantiated report to DCF of abuse or neglect. Last fiscal year we served 121 families in ***these programs*** that include Intensive Family Preservation, Family Enrichment and the Reconnecting Families Program. While the services in these programs vary, they are all intensive home based programs designed to intervene in families to keep children safely in their homes and provide their parents the skills necessary to prevent them from a repeat episode of abuse or neglect. Last year the cost per family in these programs was $6,421 /family. The cost per family to serve the 294 families in our NFN programs last year was $949/family. A staggering difference! For every dollar we invest before a child is hurt and a family is broken we save countless dollars in revenue. But moreover, we save immeasurable trauma to that family and most importantly we break the cycle of abuse that if not prevented will continue for generations to come.

It is imperative to note that if this budget is passed with cuts to the Children's Trust Fund programs resulting in a 34% reduction to the Healthy Start programs statewide the results are clear. **There will be 34% more families who are at high risk for maltreating their children and as a result, there will most certainly be an increase in reports to the DCF hotline and the referrals to intervention programs across the state!** Not only will the seemingly endless cycle of abuse continue, it will most assuredly grow resulting in an increased cost of services and an increased number of children experiencing the lifelong trauma of abuse and neglect.