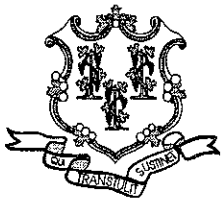
STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Interagency Council on Affordable Housing Report

Appropriations, Housing & Human Services Committees

January 29, 2013

The Department of Children and Families supports the recommendations of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing. DCF is particularly pleased that the Council has recommended that DCF retain jurisdiction of the Supportive Housing for Families program that the Department has operated for the past 14 years. Maintaining this program within DCF will permit the necessary coordination with the Department's case management services. This program has been recognized as a promising model by the Child Welfare League of America, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and the National Center for Social Research.

The Supportive Housing for Families program provides permanent housing and intensive case management services to DCF families where lack of appropriate housing present a barrier to reunification in child protective services cases. The Supportive Housing for Families program also prevents children from being removed from their families due to inadequate housing or homelessness.

DCF contracts with The Connection, Inc. and their six sub-contractors to provide services to over 500 families a year. A Supportive Housing for Families case manager works closely with the DCF social worker to provide intensive case management services to develop and utilize a network of services, including: substance abuse treatment / recovery support; mental health treatment / support; childcare / parenting / family supports / transportation; employment / education; daily living skills / housing; and, healthcare / medical needs / disability benefits.

The program has a success rate of 79.9%, which is defined as stable housing after one year. Also, more than 2,500 families have been served to date and more than 5,256 children have avoided coming into the foster care system because of this program. These children also have avoided being separated from their siblings or were able to reunify with their siblings and parents when the housing barrier was removed.

DCF would also like to bring to the attention of legislators that in September 2012, DCF was one of five jurisdictions chosen to receive a $5 million grant ($1 million each year for five years) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. DCF's proposal calls for an integrated, collaborative, cross-system intervention model for families who are chronically homeless and have high child welfare service needs in Region 3 (Middletown, Willimantic, and Norwich). The federal grant funding will provide: access to stable housing; trauma-focused assessment; interdisciplinary team-based support; access to empirically supported interventions for families and children, such as parenting support, and collaboration with other trauma-informed services; and employment services to increase preparedness, skills and income. In the first year of the grant, DCF, The Connection Inc., and

other community service agencies, will develop an implementation plan to create networks, complete pilot case identification, and establish triage and referral procedures. This formalization of interdisciplinary cross-agency teams and comprehensive assessment and supports tailored to families' strengths and needs will prompt team-based services, engaging parents as full members. Interdisciplinary family teaming will include DCF, parent(s)/caretakers(s), ISHF case manager, and service providers. The University of Connecticut will provide project evaluation and assess quality, sustainability, effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness of activities throughout the five-year grant period.

Finally, DCF appreciates the work of the Interagency Council on Affordable Housing and looks forward to partnering with other state and community agencies to address the issue of affordable housing in Connecticut.