



Strengthening Connecticut's Families

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

Department of Social Services Budget

February 11, 2016

PLEASE PROTECT THE SAFETY NET SERVICES NETWORK

Good evening. My name is Cindy Guerrerri, and I am the Director of Programs with the Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies (CCFSA). We have been entrusted for the past 20 years to manage the **Safety Net** program service delivery through our member agencies across the state.

I am humbled to speak to you on behalf of many of our states neediest children and families who depend on the **Safety Net** for food, stable housing, and job search supports that can restore dignity and hope. **I ask that you fully restore funding for this vital program for the thousands who need it.**

I will first tell you about our network of providers, then about the Safety Net program and the services we collectively provide, and then, most importantly share a scenario representative of most of our bravest families and the tough decisions they face daily.

1. CCFSA is an innovative statewide network of nationally accredited family service agencies dedicated to improving the lives of the children and families they serve. We work together to make a difference in the lives of those struggling with poverty by using a data-driven approach rooted in evidence-based best practice.

2. Safety Net provides solution-focused case management and care coordination for up to 12-months to help current and former recipients of TFA achieve self-sufficiency through the identification and reduction of barriers to employment.

The objectives of the Safety Net Program are:

- To minimize the likelihood of harm occurring to children.
- To help stabilize families.
- To assist families with attaining and maintaining adequate employment through the identification and improvement of existing psychosocial, personal and structural barriers.

A few facts:

In 2015 a total of 2243 new families with children were served

87% of Safety Net clients are women, whose average age is between 21-25 years' old

89% are single with an average of two children

78% of clients are racial minorities

Safety Net clients report significant barriers to employment including: employment history, mental health issues, child's health and behavioral health issues, history of domestic violence, substance abuse, legal issues, lack of transportation, childcare, education and housing.

In the Safety Net program all families are provided with a Primary Service Manager (PSM) who works one-on-one with parents in their homes to develop a personal plan for removing barriers to attaining and maintaining self-sufficiency. A comprehensive assessment serves to identify areas of strength and challenge for both the parents and their children. Linkages are made with child care providers, child development specialists, adult education classes, and job training

programs to name a few. PSMs serve as a coach, guiding parents in navigating systems such as housing and finance. Clinicians provide in-home assessments and brief therapy as needed.

3. I leave you with a scenario which may feel compellingly familiar.

Picture this...you need to make some really hard decisions on how to spend what little money you have, or figure out how to make what you have stretch beyond any reasonable limits.

How do you do this?

You look at your total resources and line those up with total needs

You look at other sources available to meet those needs, including other people

You train up, work more, smarter, harder

You take what you have and somehow multiply the effect out of sheer determination

You think *What can I go without? What might have to wait? Or Who?*

This is how many families with children live out each day, struggling to keep a roof over their heads and food in their child's stomach. Our dedicated team assist these families every day, providing needs assessments, linkages to other systems, tangible supports such as food vouchers and rental assistance and clinical treatment.

What do you choose?

RESTORE THE SAFETY NET