

Questions for Children and Families Commissioner Nominee

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Commissioner of Children and Families (CGS §§ [17A-5](#) and [17A-6](#))

The commissioner is responsible for establishing facilities and services for children and families under the Department of Children and Families' (DCF's) care. These include child protective, foster care, and family services; substance abuse and related services; mental health services; and prevention and educational services.

Summary

1. The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is tasked by law with evaluating DCF's service delivery to children. The Child Advocate is also the head of the Child Fatality Review Panel, which reviews the circumstances of the death of any child placed by DCF in out-of-home care (CGS § 46a-13I). In fulfilling these responsibilities, the office must report its findings to the legislature along with recommendations to address any issues identified in the report. From your experience at DCF, how would you characterize the agency's current relationship with OCA? In what ways, if any, would you wish to change that relationship?
2. What are your legislative priorities for the 2019 session?
3. As co-chair of the DCF Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup, you collaborated with staff, DCF partners, and families to discuss how racism and power impact agency practice. As

DCF commissioner, what steps will you take to address the disproportionately high number of minority children in the department's care?

4. How do you plan to build and foster trust between DCF, communities, and other public and private agencies?
5. In July 2018, the *Hartford Courant* [reported](#) on the tragic suicide of a 16-year-old pregnant girl at the Albert J. Solnit Center (Solnit). In a September 2018 report, OCA found that multiple state agencies failed to ensure the safety of Solnit residents. OCA raised concerns about the functioning of the facility and the adequacy and monitoring of corrective action plans, among other issues. How will you work with the Department of Public Health and the Department of Social Services to address these concerns?
6. Since Solnit is run by DCF, it is not subject to state licensure, though its exemption from licensure will likely be examined this legislative session. What are your thoughts on licensing Solnit and, which agency, if any, would you envision as the appropriate one to be responsible for such licensure?
7. Some critics of the department say it has gone too far in shifting the placement of children from group homes to relative and kinship care, doing so without adequate support for the family members or plans in place for the children. What is your response?
8. In [December 2017](#), DCF and the *Juan F.* plaintiffs entered into a revised exit plan in hopes of facilitating the termination of the decades long court oversight of the agency that resulted from the original case. To that end, DCF must comply with certain outcome measures concurrently and for at least two consecutive quarters, including one that sets caseload limits for DCF social workers. The most [recent court monitor report](#) found that, as of February 2018, DCF remained out of compliance with this outcome measure. The agency has filled several case worker positions since that time. How familiar are you with the exit plan requirements and do you believe that achieving this and the other remaining outcome measures will be possible at current staffing levels?
9. What do you see as DCF's strengths and weaknesses? What actions do you plan to take to maximize those strengths and reduce the weaknesses?

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