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Bill Number:	5915	
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THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Colapietro. Further comment or discussion? Senator Colapietro.

SENATOR COLAPIETRO:

Thank you, Mr. President. If there's no further discussion, I would move this item to the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection? So ordered. Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Calendar Number 397, File Number 444, substitution for House Bill 5915, AN ACT CONCERNING, quote, STUCK KIDS, end of quote, Favorably Reported, Committees on Children and Human Services.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Musto.

SENATOR MUSTO:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I move adoption of the bill of the Joint Favorable Report from the Committee.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you. You may proceed.

SENATOR MUSTO:

Thank you. This bill basically just has the House, excuse me, the Department of Children and Families collect information that it probably already has, but formalize it so that we're able to see it. There are a bunch of -- I should say, many types of children who are in the Department's custody that are not being kept track of by the Department, some previously were, and many are not, currently. And this bill would force the Department to keep track of those children so that they could decide what needs to be done with the children, specifically -- and also what trends are leading children to run away from home or otherwise be in placement plans that are not doing a good job for them. So I would urge adoption of this bill.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Musto. Further comment of discussion on the bill? Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I rise to support this bill, but do want to point out a few areas that we should be concerned about. That there's no question this addresses a very vulnerable

population that we have and there are a few aspects to this that, sometimes, present some issues for the Department. Certainly, the issue of keeping track of runaway and homeless kids is a certain challenge.

They do do this, however, and I'm sure that this can be accomplished. But they also have an aspect to this bill that, currently, they would have to make some changes in order to accomplish. And those are for providing a report that more accurately talks about those youths that refuse services, as that might happen oftentimes. And currently, the way in which this is kept track of is not in a manner that can be easily automated. And this will certainly require them to do that because most of these reports are usually taken care of by the Central Office staff.

Some of the budget proposals that have been floating around do look at, possibly, reducing staffing, most of which would come from that Central Office, some actual budget proposals have about 66 positions actually being removed. It would make this reporting requirement a little bit more problematic. So, I am hopeful that as the budget process continues, that we'll be considering just what impact that will

have on various good proposals such as this. And I'm sure that our Chairman of this Committee could speak to the fact that some of this data, certainly, is incredibly important. Not all of it, possibly, can necessarily be accomplished and it would be get to get the intent of this on the record if I could ask you, Mr. President. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Yes, Senator Boucher, you have a question for Senator Musto?

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Yes, thank you, Mr. President. If, certainly, Chairman Musto could explain his interpretation of just how far the Department needs to go to accomplish the purposes for this particular bill? Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Senator Musto.

SENATOR MUSTO:

Thank you, Mr. President. Through you, the intent of this bill, especially Section 2 regarding runaways and homeless, is that the Department already knows, to a large extent, where they've placed these children. They should know where they've placed every

child. And if they're in foster care or if there has been intervention with the family, that the Department already had that information. All we're seeking here is that if that child leaves, certainly, DCF custody through foster care or if the child has run away and DCF has lost track of this child or if there are trends that are leading children to be homeless in Connecticut, that DCF, as the chief child protection agency of the State, keep track of those children and keep track of those trends. We're not asking the Department to do what -- Senator Boucher and I have discussed this -- would be the impossible, which is go out and find all of these children. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for DCF to track down every one of these children. Because if they wanted to be found, they would likely not have run away in the first place. But what we are asking the Department do, at least keep track in records of where they were last seen, perhaps do what they already do, which is communicate with some of the homeless shelters and other areas where they might -- where these children show up. And also, to see why these children are running away. The ones they can

find, ask them what happened. Did something happen in foster care? Was it something that happened in your home? The trends that are leading to homelessness and runaways, so we can prevent some of this in the future. That's what we're asking them to go through and that's the way I would perceive it being implemented. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator Musto. Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER:

Thank you, Mr. President. I certainly thank the Chairman for his clarification. It is very helpful in this regard. We should also do take note that, currently, in which the computer system functions at the department, they do not currently have a reporting program to actually produce the kind of report for refused services, those that do refuse services. So that would entail some work on their part and, hopefully, they will have the staff in order to accomplish this. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator. Other comments on the bill? Senator Musto.

SENATOR MUSTO:

Without objection, Mr. President, I would ask that this be placed on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered. Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Calendar page 10, Calendar Number 579, File Number 565, substitute for House Bill 6295, AN ACT EXTENDING THE TIME PERIOD FOR DISQUALIFICATION OF CERTAIN STATE CONTRACTORS, Favorably Reported, Committees on Government Administration and Elections and Judiciary, Clerk is in possession of Amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, thank you, Mr. President. That item might be "passed temporarily" and I'd ask the Clerk to call next, Calendar page 10, Calendar 546.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Calendar page 10, Calendar Number 546, File Number 840, substitute for Senate Bill 579, AN ACT

that it be placed on the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered. Mr. Clerk, would you please return to the call of the Calendar. Mr. Majority Leader.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, if the Clerk might call the first Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

The roll call has been ordered in the Senate on the Consent Calendar. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber? An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate on the Consent Calendar. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber? Mr. President, those items placed on the first Consent Calendar begin on Calendar page 5. Calendar Number 392, House Bill 6433.

Calendar 397, Substitute for House Bill 5915.

Calendar 405, House Bill 5536.

Calendar page 6, Calendar 406, House Bill 5873.

Calendar 457, substitute for House Bill 6264.

Calendar page 12. Calendar Number 599, substitute for House Bill 6463.

Calendar page 13, Calendar 608, House Bill 6640.

Calendar page 14, Calendar 611, substitute for House Bill 6341.

Calendar 612, substitute for House Bill 6286.

Calendar 620, substitute for House Bill 5664.

Calendar page 15, Calendar 622, substitute for House Bill 6496.

Calendar page 16, Calendar 628, House Bill 5809.

Calendar 630, substitute for House Bill 5519.

Calendar page 23, Calendar Number 284, substitute for Senate Bill 290.

Calendar page 24, Calendar 103, Senate Bill 754.

Calendar 120, Senate Bill 818.

Calendar 136, Senate Bill 789.

Calendar page 26, Calendar 179, substitute for Senate Bill 951.

Calendar page 27, Calendar 207, substitute for Senate Bill 950.

Calendar page 29, Calendar 252, substitute for Senate Bill 1068.

Calendar page 34, Calendar Number 420, Senate

Bill 325.

And Calendar page 40, Calendar Number 541, House Bill 6076.

Mr. President, that completes the items placed on the first Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

On the first Consent Calendar, the machine is open.

THE CLERK:

The Senate is now voting by roll call on the Consent Calendar. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber? The Senate is now voting by roll call on the Consent Calendar. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber?

THE CHAIR:

Have all the Senators voted? Seeing that all Senators have voted, the machine will be closed. Clerk, please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Motions on adoption to the Consent Calendar, number 1.

Total Number Voting	36
Those voting Yea	36

Those voting Nay 0

Those absent and not voting 0

THE CHAIR:

The Consent Calendar is adopted. Mr. Majority Leader.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, a few more items to be marked "go." First, Calendar page 29, Calendar 249, House Bill 6185. Calendar page 35, Calendar 424, Senate Bill 1045. Calendar page 36, Calendar 429, Senate Bill 940. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, sir. Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Turning to Calendar page 29, Calendar Number 249, Files number 49 and 285, House Bill 6185, AN ACT CONCERNING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS OF CERTAIN PERSONNEL FILE STATUTES as amended by House Amendment, Schedule "A". Favorably Reported, Committee on Labor and Judiciary.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Prague.

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SPEAKER DONOVAN:

The bill passes.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 293.

THE CLERK:

On page 26, Calendar 2 -- actually, page 27. Sorry about that. Calendar 296, substitute for House Bill Number 6388, AN ACT PROVIDING MANDATE RELIEF TO MUNICIPALITIES, favorable report of the Committee on Planning and Development.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Representative Hamm.

THE CLERK:

That's page 2 -- 26, Calendar 293, substitute for House Bill Number 5915, AN ACT CONCERNING "STUCK KIDS," favorable report of the Committee on Human Services.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Let's try it again. Representative Hamm.

REP. HAMM (34th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

The question is on acceptance of the Joint

Committee's favorable report and passage of the bill. Will you remark?

REP. HAMM (34th):

Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. This bill attempts to have the Department of Children and Families report annually on a group of children who are lost in the system, if you would. Those who are living in a psychiatric hospital or out-of-state treatment center who may have run away from DCF or are otherwise homeless, and who lack a permanency plan or, in fact, may have signed themselves out, and DCF doesn't know where they are anymore.

We're doing our best to try to get a handle on the numbers of these children so that we can provide better services. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I move passage.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Will you remark further? Do you care to remark further on the bill? Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you, a couple of questions to the proponent of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Please proceed, madam.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you, Madam Speaker to the proponent of the bill, when on line 17 when it talks about the children that are runaways and homeless, through you, if a child is overseen by DCF, are they not provided a home through DCF, and therefore, even though they may be a runaway, they would not necessarily be homeless? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hamm.

REP. HAMM (34th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you, I think the intention here is to let the department decide the classification. You are right, that they were runaways in either event. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. And through you, Madam Speaker, I understand that one of the budget proposals has cuts to DCF. This is probably going to require some additional work and workload. Is there a fiscal note on this legislation, and if not, what is the

implication as far as added workload to DCF? Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hamm.

REP. HAMM (34th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The fiscal note indicates that it can be done with the available appropriations as reported by DCF. They're apparently collecting a number of these facts now. They're just not in one place, so we don't believe it's going to require any additional workload. Through you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY (112th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the good lady for her answers. I rise in support of this legislation. I think that the addition of the psychiatric children that are in the psychiatric hospital is a great addition. The implementation of the therapeutic interventions and being diligent about whether or not those interventions are actually working and the treatment plans are actually being met, I think is a very important component to this

legislation, and I urge the House to adopt it.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you. Will you remark further on the bill? Will you remark further on the bill? Representative Diana Urban of the 43rd, you have the floor, ma'am.

REP. URBAN (43rd):

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and it's nice to see you up there, madam. I rise in support of this bill and I would like to thank Representative Hamm for the amount of work that she has put into this. There is a population out there that does fall through the cracks, and virtually every child advocate group testified in favor of this bill in front of the Children's Committee. So I would urge my colleagues to please support it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you, Representative. Will you remark further on the bill? Representative Chapin.

REP. CHAPIN (67th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Good afternoon to you too, sir.

REP. CHAPIN (67th):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, earlier

we had another bill that I voted against that had a reporting requirement in it. And although I listened to the debate and I understand the merits and the reasons for that reporting requirement, it's not lost on me that the Appropriations Committee passed a budget last week that contained, I believe, staff reductions in DCF of 66 managerial positions. I think we all understand the importance and the important work that DCF does, but I'm left here wondering today if those reductions do actually take effect, what sort of consequence that has on the children that are in the care of DCF.

Reluctantly I rise to express my opposition to the bill today. I think DCF staff is better served by serving the children in the state of Connecticut, rather than reporting back to us on things that, I think, generally most of us can get when we make the inquiry of the proper agency. So reluctantly, I'll be opposing the bill today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Thank you Representative Chapin. Will you remark further? Will you remark further on the bill before us? Will you remark further? If not, staff and guests please come to the well of the House. The

machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the chamber. The House is voting by roll call. Members to the chamber, please.

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

Have all the members voted? Have all the members voted? Please check the machine to be sure your vote is properly cast. The machine will be locked. And the Clerk will take a tally. And the Clerk will announce the tally please.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5915.

Total Number Voting	146
Necessary for Passage	74
Those voting Yea	143
Those voting Nay	3
Those absent and not voting	5

DEPUTY SPEAKER ORANGE:

The bill passes.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar Number 131.

THE CLERK:

On page 6, Calendar 131, substitute for House Bill Number 6264, AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE HEALTH

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BRIAN MATTIELLO: Thank you, and good morning, Senator.

SENATOR MUSTO: And for Brian and for everyone else, if you could, when you start your testimony, whatever bills you're talking about, if you could sort of highlight them for us, and if you did give written testimony, please let us know so we can find it, and if you do I'm sure, Mr. Mattiello, you have several things you're going to talk about.

If you could sort of highlight them for us and point them to us, I would appreciate that as well, just so we can try to follow along and I can make notes where you know, where we need to.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Sure.

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you.

SB877
SB878 SB879
HB6419 HB6420
HB5915

BRIAN MATTIELLO: So good morning Select Committee members. My name is, for the record, my name is Brian Mattiello. I'm Director of Strategic (inaudible) at the Department of Children and Families.

You have before you a number of bills that I actually like to look at them as thoughtful topics regarding the Department as well as child welfare, the work of child welfare in this state.

And many of these bills I've had conversations with introducers and parties that have had a genuine interest in these matters, and they are really all premised on the interest in making DCF better at what it does, to gain a better understanding about some of the enormous challenges that we face at the Department and as a state, and ultimately, to achieve better

HB 5915

The last thing is on the out-of-state runaway and homeless youth. I mentioned earlier in my testimony obviously all those we come in contact with are vulnerable in some way when a child runs or finds himself or herself homeless, obviously there's a heightened concern with those individuals.

As we meet, there is a Runaway and Homeless Task Force that has been meeting under the, driven by the Center for Children's Advocacy. We have been participants, the State Department of Education have been participants in that committee. I believe some of them are here today to testify, and I did have a chance to take a look at some of that testimony. Obviously, we share the interest.

I wanted to just share with this group, a couple of things that we've learned about kids in care that run away. Again, the Committee is looking at runaways in general, but kids in care is of particular note.

Two-thirds of them come back in 24 hours, so we have, we collect this information. We have both the provider report to us about the runaway. We also have a separate law, you either call the worker or you call Hotline, and we track.

At any given time we have about 70 to 100 individuals on runaway status. We do understand from your Child Welfare League of America that's about in line with what other child welfare jurisdictions have, but that gives no comfort when, you know, each individual that's on runaway status we have to worry.

So what else we learned is that for those that aren't coming back in 24 hours, we're finding

for the most part they are placement related concerns, and that they're not happy where they are, whether that's a foster home or a residential setting.

And a particular note is that in the first 30 days if they're likely to run they're going to run. And the second time where we see sort of an up tick is at the year mark.

And what we've learned about that is that when kids get a little anxious about where they're at, they're stuck, which is why the title, I think, reads the way that is. They begin to become anxious and want to be someplace else.

Our focus has been in those first 30 days, to really get better at interviewing what's going on with that child, what is it that's making them unhappy. What is it that we can do to stabilize that placement?

And for those at the year mark, we've had considerable attention in trying to move kids along, that there's no clinical reason they should be at that level of care. We have planned for a discharge to another level of care. How do we make that happen?

We've gotten better at it. There are a lot of kids stuck, and the last thing I'll say about this, and open up to questions is, I understand from the testimony there are also some desire to have some improvements to our data collection.

We do have a couple of quirks. One is that some kids actually when they come to the larger database and given time, maybe five or six don't actually have an area office associated with them. We go in manually and have to find that and that might take a day or two and so at

any given time there's a concern about the quality of that database. We can fix that and we intend to.

And I think also making sure when a child is found, that we remove that name from the list as quickly as possible, and I think that's some of the concern that's been expressed and I'm happy to work with you and anyone else to accomplish those changes.

That concludes my testimony.

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you. A couple of things. I understand, I mean, we're here in a public hearing, and that there's somewhat limited time, and you have not spoken at length, and I'm sure you've spoken to the other members of the Committee at length on various things.

Some of the, there's no question that you guys do a very hard job dealing a very delicate population. Some of the concerns that I've heard about the Agency in general are sort of not focusing enough on the family as a whole, kind of focusing more on the child, and obviously you're trying to protect children. I understand that.

Could you give us any kind of specifics? I mean, you're talking sort of a 40,000-foot view here today, mostly, as far as I could tell. Can you give us any specifics about what you might, any strides you're making toward incorporating families more?

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Yeah. And so I, first of all I think that a well-placed criticism, one that, our own self-criticism of the Department would list, how do we improve a family engagement?

I want to answer that at two levels. The first is sort of at the system level, if you don't mind, and one of the issues that came to my mind when I looked at the task forces is particularly one that reorganization, quite often the conversation is, it's too much in one place. We need to separate and then families can, we can adjust the needs of families.

If you don't take the lens of sort of bureaucratic structure, you sort of start with the family itself, most advocates and when you ask families themselves, they're very confused about who's involved in their life and what types of services.

So I would just caution, if we do in fact take that lens in the family, you're going to find that you're going to be compelled to try to put more together to really figure out how we're doing a common assessment of families, where they can go to one particular place not seven places for the types of services, and how we make government and services more user friendly.

But I have to say that as a particular note, you really should bear some thinking, that if we only look at sort of organizational structure and decide from an accountability perspective how it should break out, you might miss something important.

And if you go back in 1969, 1968, you've got to go over to the State Library and look at why they passed the Consolidated Children's Agency, you'll see much of the things that we're talking about today, about the importance of making things simple for families on a more concrete level.

When you look at the *Juan F.* Exit Plan, and we're all familiar with that, 22 particular explicit outcomes, the issues that have, that were of concern to the plaintiffs, and frankly to the Department when we entered an agreement, was simply placement. It was search for relatives.

Sibling placement meant when more than one child comes into care, how well are we keeping them together. A search for relatives basically said, you know what? Every child has a family and we want to make sure in the first instance that the Department when a child comes into our care, we're learning about that natural support system around that child the best that we can.

That is a process measure. That basically says, are you doing the search. The follow up to that is, are you engaging the families, and are you really finding placement resources with that.

We have some good news in terms of a growth, in terms of relative placements, but I think from what other jurisdictions have been able to do on this front, we're about mid pack, about any given time about 20 to 25 percent of kids not of home care are in relative or kinship placement in the broader sense.

There is a jurisdiction and it's a particular note to us in Pennsylvania that has now exceeded 50 percent. We'd like to know more about how they've been successful with that.

The last one is on treatment planning, and we've heard a lot about this because this is a particular measure that we have not been successful in meeting, although the Commissioner testified yesterday in front of

Appropriations, and we've learned that for this latest quarter of data we're going to jump from just under 60 percent of the treatment plans meeting the criteria in the exit plans up to 80 percent.

And at the heart of that is, is it an understandable document to the family? How do you engage them? And there's a number of questions that are evaluated.

In addition to all those things that we measure, perhaps you heard a lot more, but the federal review that was just done in September looks deeply at these questions about family engagements.

We have a number of initiatives, and instead of taking the time here, I actually did a summary sheet of some very important initiatives, one called Better Together. Another was called Family Conferencing. They have not gotten to the levels that we're interested in in terms of their implementation, but they're very, very important initiatives that we're going to hang on to and get the most of.

And the third one that I wanted to mention is differential response, which is part of your prevention bill that's before you. And if members are not familiar with this initiative, I really would like to spend some time with this Committee, with Committee members on that.

In short, when a call comes in to Hotline, we go our investigation route. We accept the report of abuse and neglect.

What this basically says, this initiative says, is that for those low and moderate risk cases, there might be an alternative route instead of investigation. We want to go out and assess

the need to families, which is a much more friendlier approach, and address those risk factors that exist, that are either leading to concerns about safety, neglect and abuse and try to address those as opposed to a more forensic process. And I think that's an encouraging initiative, and I'd be glad to talk more about the status of that.

But I will outline for you some important initiatives in the Department that I think move us in that right direction. Having said that, the reason we have these initiatives and the reason we're measuring is that we have some distance yet to travel on this front.

SEN. MUSTO: Okay. Thank you. Regarding, I did mean to say this a little bit earlier, but regarding some of the task forcing, there are some, and this is for everybody who may be testifying today.

The bills do discuss task forces. There are some ideas in there that may or may not end up in task force. They may just be something we end up legislating directly without a task force.

Some of them have already been studied, as you pointed out. They may have been in some of these many, many studies you put at the back here.

I do want to take you up on your offer, you know, to sort of discuss this at length somewhere else, and in that vein, I would ask to the extent that you can, that you and DCF, your counterparts, sort of hang around today a little bit, listen to the testimony of other people.

We could probably use some feedback on that from DCF, and just to, you know, make sure that whatever gets said gets heard and gets commented on, and maybe we can incorporate some of that into what we're doing, and maybe you can do that as well.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: I will remain as long as I can. Probably around 12:30 or thereabouts I will need to part. But I'd be happy to stay (inaudible).

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you. I believe my Co-Chair has some questions.

REP. URBAN: Hi, Brian. You know, recognizing the budget issues that we're dealing with, and knowing that DCF has a very tough job, but I'm going to get a little tough here, okay, Brian?

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Please.

REP. URBAN: First of all, when I look at the mission of the Department of Children and Families, and you know that you were in front of the Results Based Accountability Subcommittee yesterday, and that we only got through one small part and that DCF will be coming back in front of my Subcommittee--

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Yes.

REP. URBAN: --to be looking at that so, you know, that's another story. But when I look at DCF and I'm looking at what is the result for the people of the State of Connecticut that we're trying to achieve, you know, just off the top of my head, I would say preserve the health and the safety of all Connecticut children and families.

And if we start to go through programs to see if we're actually getting there, it unfortunately looks like we have a lot of distance to travel.

So, you know, all my questions are coming from that perspective. If that's the outcome that we want, then every program that is under the umbrella of DCF has to be getting us to that outcome, and if it's not, then we need to know why and we need to know whether we're going to continue to fund it. So that's the perspective I'm coming from.

The other thing is, you did do the DCF, the PRI study at the end here. I have asked now that Program Review and Investigation is now going to be doing things from a results based accountability perspective, and for this Committee they have done the DCF study in terms of results accountability, and that will be available to the Committee.

And in essence what we're always asking, and you came forward with some numbers, how much did you do and how well did you do it? And I think that you have been very good on the how much that you're doing, but we really need to get to how well we're doing it.

That being said, there is a particular area that I have been championing and you didn't mention it at all. It was underneath a task force but that is, there has been a task force, the Speaker's Task Force on Animal Abuse and the Circle of Violence, which was meeting during the summer and the fall.

And what we were looking at is that animal abuse is an indicator of future violent behavior. The FBI uses it as an indicator of future violent behavior, and we were trying to

look at where we could step in so that we would be able to prevent violent behavior, that we would be able to counsel.

So in that spirit we asked, under that bill, that there would be attention to that. It's very simple. It is low cost.

When you do intake, does anybody ask the child, how is your little puppy doing? How's the cat doing? Is anybody feeding it? Because there's an 80 percent chance if that animal is being abused, the child is being abused. No cost. Low cost. Just add the questions in.

I'm also asking for cross reporting, that if an animal control officer sees animal neglect, and it's not just abuse, if the animal's neglected, the child's being neglected, that the animal control officer would report to DCF.

I've been at this home. The animal's not being fed. I think we need to pay attention. Again, I don't see that as a high cost item, and yet when I talked to your Commissioner, and when you guys came to my task force, which you did, you talked about how we had to do all this expensive training and represented it was going to cost all this money. I'm sorry. I don't accept that.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Okay.

REP. URBAN: I don't see why that is such a big deal, and I'm asking you guys to go across silos. I understand that your agency cannot guarantee the safety of children. I understand that there are many agencies that have to help.

But when I ask you to go to another agency like Department of Ag and work that out, I expect

that to be done. It's not a big cost item. Just do it.

And as I said, you're being the one that's the recipient of this Brian and I--

BRIAN MATTIELLO: This is not unpleasant in any way. I just want to, so that provision is before us. It's in one of the task forces. Forgive me for (inaudible)--

REP. URBAN: Yes. Yes.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: So it wasn't an attempt to avoid this. So let me address this as best as I can.

First of all, there was substitute language for a bill that came out on mandated reporters last week or the week before from the Committee where we're going to amend and have animal control officers placed in, so we're number one, supportive of that.

I think with respect to the, maybe the word training is conjuring up a very complicated image in your mind, but obviously we want to state the value behind any changes in our practice and in our investigation protocol and inform people what types of things they may come across. There is an element of that.

We also, when you add animal control officers to mandate a reporter, we do special outreach whether you're teachers, doctors. For a new group like that, you would want us to go out and introduce ourselves.

So, okay, don't be against training. So I think those, the animal control officer mandated reporters, the training piece, revising our investigation protocols, meeting

with the Department of Agriculture, I think they're are all doable items.

I think the cross reporting bill that we saw very early on maybe as a proposed bill, I talked about on a date certain, that that's calling us and back and forth. That might be a bit more complicated and I just want to just suggest a bit of caution on that, maybe as a first step taking these things on, seeing where we stand a year from now.

But I think we can have that conversation, but I don't want to be confused that these are, as you outline, doable steps for us.

REP. URBAN: There we go. Sorry. No, I really appreciate it, and in all fairness, when the Commissioner was here, she was very, very gracious about adding the animal control officers. She saw the value of doing that.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: So can I, just quickly on the PRI, how well, so we, in September the federal review took place. In the spring we did a case review in four offices. We're conducting one in Hartford coming up. These are very in-depth looks at our case practice. I'm trying to get underneath, just, you know, numbers tell you part of the story or they help allow you to frame the next question.

You do want to get at quality pieces, and not all of our exit outcome measures are just pure process, and I can convince you of it if you gave me some time, that there are really some quality pieces to it. But for the most part they were process.

You can't improve the quality of something you're not doing. You start with measuring, are you doing things that are going to lead to

the kind of outcomes of things that you value, and so there always is going to be a mix.

On the RBA piece, there are three levels of RBA as you know through your population base, and what, your comments were about the well being indictors of children as a whole.

We are going to make a contribution to that, a very important one as a Department with its mission. We are not the sole contributors to the well being.

Second, when you look at system, yesterday I think we might have missed the opportunity to share with you some system outcomes that we think are associated within home services, with family preservation, those sort of pieces.

I outlined a few here today in terms of direction, positive trends. There are also some things about permanency, achieving permanency. That is, kids who come into our care and then you know, adopted or placed with a relative for long term, or returned home.

There's some good news and then there's some news that we're still struggling with. But on a system level we can articulate those, and then on the child specific level, which is where some of those things went yesterday, it's really those three tiers.

I think the Department is very capable of articulating on those things, and I think, I don't want to return a criticism, but as a person who's skilled in RBA there were program areas selected, not programs.

We struggled to fit within those eight questions, you know, perfectly. I'm happy to struggle with it because it starts an important

dialogue, but even the questions were pure RBA in some respects, so it's not going to be a push back but if we are going to do this and do this well, then I think there needs to be some movement on both sides in terms of how is it that we really shape so that we can, in fact, form informed decision making.

There was a bit of a struggle in terms of squeezing it into those eight questions, and across a very vast program area.

REP. URBAN: You are absolutely right. There's no question about it. And as you know, we've been trying to go down this path and we've been getting pushed back ourselves.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Okay.

REP. URBAN: So it's an evolving process, and I fully recognize what you are talking about, and that's why I'm hoping when we have DCF in front of the RBA Subcommittee, just the RBA Subcommittee, that those, that dialogue will take place, Brian. That's the whole idea.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: I have my outfit picked out and everything.

REP. URBAN: Excellent. And I have to say just today, your conversancy with the way RBA works is excellent. So, you know, I'm looking forward now to our conversations.

And I hate to end on a bad note.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Oh, you've got more?

REP. URBAN: I just have one other, and I mentioned this in the Appropriations Subcommittee hearing, but these are the kinds of things that

we're dealing with that we get from the public, and I'll just mention two things.

I don't expect you to respond, Brian, it's just that these are the things that we get, we get slammed with.

It was brought to my attention that you did some car seat and car seat refresher training, Thomas Field, and that was $48,000. In my town you can get that done by the State Police. I don't understand why it was $48,000.

And in another one, the Global Talent Agency gave drumming lessons at the CCP facility and that was $62,000. And I'm just, you know, these are things we have to respond to as Legislators, and when those get picked out and are brought to our attention, those are, you know, those are things that take all the good work and you know, all the atta boys are gone because we have these things that come in front of us.

So those are the sort of things in this budget atmosphere that we simply cannot allow to be out there, unless there is some overriding reason why we need to have people drumming and--

BRIAN MATTIELLO: I've not had a personal experience with this car seat training, and so we'll respond on the 24th with that. In respect to drumming, and there may be some comments from folks behind me about that, but if you've attended a drumming session with the kids and you look at that experience through their eyes, it's unbelievable what passion develops.

When the kids are away from home filling their time with key programming, drumming has, is

really a therapeutic experience for many of the kids.

REP. URBAN: Keep doing that, Brian, and I really--

BRIAN MATTIELLO: All these things are up--

REP. URBAN: Yeah.

REP. MATTIELLO: I get that.

REP. URBAN: And you know, if that's the case and you know, we can look at it that way, awesome. I mean, I have a professional diploma in music, so you know, I know and I don't want to take away the musical souls and I know that drumming can be an outlet.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Yes.

REP. URBAN: But we need to justify it. We need to know this.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Okay.

REP. URBAN: I know I took way too much time, Mr. Chairman. Back to you.

SEN. MUSTO: Madam Co-Chair, that's perfectly fine. And again, this, there are public hearings, I actually have two other things to do today, so I know I'm going to be going in and out a little bit. I know other people are as well.

At this point, I would like to leave the meeting in the hands of my Co-Chair, but I believe Representative Jarmoc has some questions and then Senator Boucher and Representative Hovey have some questions as well, and of course, Representative Thompson probably has some questions as well.

So if, Karen, Representative Jarmoc, rather.

REP. JARMOC: Good morning, Brian.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Good morning.

REP. JARMOC: Just to focus on when you were initially beginning your comments you talked about things such as, and I was pleased to hear it, prevention, improved accountability, and therefore, you know, helping our most vulnerable groups of people.

And I'd like to add in, and I'm not saying that you were being negligent, but just intervention, and you have mentioned things like family preservation and achieving permanency.

And as you know, my, what I grapple with in regard to the Department of Children and Families is, I feel that you have an appropriate mission in place, and that you have adequate policies in place. But at the end of the day there's some type of a disconnect happening here where those policies are not being carried out, necessarily. The mission is not being adhered to, and that stems from obviously, the public hearings that took place between the Select Committee on Children and also the Human Services Committee throughout the fall.

And obviously where this topic of discussion in regard to the Department of Children and Families is taking place in this Committee and also the Human Services Committee, and that's what I grapple with, the disconnect because in regard to let's, for example, the leadership, the management study.

You expressed that you really were not in favor of that and I respect your opinion on that. I do.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: I just in the words of caution about--

REP. JARMOC: Caution.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: --to be sure that it's meaningful.

REP. JARMOC: Okay. And possibly because there have been a number of these types of management studies, and I do hear you on that. Although, I feel that this is becoming an unusual circumstance in terms of the movement and the dialogue that's taking place in regard to the discontent with what's happening within the Department of Children and Families.

And I, what I heard consistently back in the fall was the term systematic failure sort of at all levels of leadership, and I know you might not agree with that. But I'm just saying, this is my sort of the work that I've been doing and then also from hearing what was discussed at those hearings systematic failure was a very consistent word, and I happen to agree with it to a very great deal.

And so while I recognize that $300,000 for some type of a study, which we might not, you know, go that route in terms of paying for that, for it to be done that way.

But I do think that something does need to be done. Everything is not okay. We're not sort of moving along okay here, and there isn't that confidence in what's happening in the Department of Children and Families.

And so, I do want, I do think it's important that the Legislature work closely with the Department of Children and Families along with advocates and consumers. But there's definitely a disconnect going on, and I don't know if--

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Representative, I sat through those hearings, too. I've been at the Department four and a half years. It's given me an opportunity to experience some of that disconnect.

I've not been involved in child welfare for 30 years, so there's a lot that I need to learn and it was never a personal experience for me and I didn't grow up doing social work, so there's a lot of people that in perspective that I need to learn from in order to shape my own sort of pains and perspectives of this.

And your questioning isn't personal to me, but I feel like I want to respond at a personal level that I've been lots of places in government, and frankly, I've never been part of, this job means the most to me.

I come in contact every day with situations that absolutely break my heart and absolutely feel like it's not good enough, and it always seems to follow up with something that actually fills my heart. Something good occurred. Something safe happened, and it's a mix of that.

And you can't be at DCF or care about DCF without preparing yourself to have a mix of both. And in four and a half years I've actually come out of my skin wanting to get better at this, in deciding what's next and to try to keep this dialogue in a way that keeps

us focused on an agenda to improve and get better at this.

And frankly, part of getting better isn't taking everything that exists and just vertically, you know, funding more. It is about shifting, some real deep thinking that needs to go on here, to look at a case and go beyond, and it's important to do this.

But go beyond what did DCF do and not do, and look at what brought that family to our attention to begin with because families are being ravaged by substance abuse, mental health, you know, domestic violence and poverty, and all these things that are bigger than the theory of child welfare, what we're expected to do at a point of crisis.

And so, it's never going to feel good enough in this work, and frankly, some of the things that we want to change really require a lot more than what these task forces and what DCF can do, and it really requires some real deep thinking.

The final thing I want to say is that, I hope that I never come across someone in any of my settings that has not said the practice is uneven, that when we talk about some advancements, and there are some real important ones that have occurred at the system level, that there are families who haven't experienced that advancement.

And then on a case specific level, which is important to evaluate our work, might not be reflecting what might be happening in the larger system.

So when I talk about more in-home cases versus out of home, a lower entry into care rate,

which is real, you know, important. Talk about, of those permanencies that are happening, they're happening faster than in any point in history, but then remind you that there are some permanencies that aren't happening. Their kids are staying in care still very long periods of time, that the family settings, which I know is important to you, that a larger percentage of our kids.

So 57 percent of our kids in 2002, throughout the calendar year were in family-based settings, and 72 percent in 2007, and I should have within the week what's 2008 and I think it's going up. I'm encouraged by that.

What's the big driver? Relative placement, and that's real important. Now 17, or 20, or 25 is not going to impress you, but when I tell you that 3 years ago we were 11 percent, I hope you're encouraged by at least the trend in that direction.

So unevenness, never good enough, you know, not where we want to be, but we are somewhere, and if you are committed to change, sometimes it's about transactional, what's next and sometimes it's about that big thinking, too, and sort of a fundamental shift.

But I dismiss no one who has an opinion. Everyone who testified that their story at DCF, people had bad experiences with us. People want something different and more. There's no one opinion, and so you meet people that are going to decide sort of operationally what's next, and then you need something use both.

And so, if this Session is about starting a different dialogue, whether it's through a task force or through some initiatives, or even just the assignment you got recently, to try to go a

little deeper in the next couple of weeks to really figure out what makes sense, I think that's all to the good.

REP. JARMOC: All right, thank you, Brian. Because you know, just to use relative placement as an example, so again, this is where I struggle because you're providing me with figures in regard to how you've been able to increase relative placement, children being placed with relatives as opposed--

BRIAN MATTIELLO: A kinship, I should say.

REP. JARMOC: A kinship. And so, which is part of your mission and your policy, so therefore, hat's off.

But, I don't hear that. I'm not hearing that on the outside from families and from advocacy groups. And so, you know, this is where I struggle. What is going on? And I don't expect you to answer that.

But do you understand what I'm saying?

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Well, the numbers are accurate. The numbers are accurate.

REP. JARMOC: Yeah, I'm not questioning your numbers.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: There's 22 percent and that means there is a difference between the 78 percent--

REP. JARMOC: That's, I'm not questioning your number, but it doesn't always, at the end of the day I continue to question the, you know, adherence to mission and policy.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Yep.

REP. JARMOC: But I do think that we do need to work together, all of us, because you are correct when you were saying that we have, we all have the same sort of ultimate goal. We share a desire to do what's best for kids.

And so I just would say, and I said it to you before, let's try to work together on this because ultimately it's got to be about what's best for kids and for families. So thank you very, very much, and I look forward to hearing the testimony of the other people as well and I'm glad you're going stay. Thanks.

REP. URBAN: Thank you, Representative. Senator Boucher.

SEN. BOUCHER: Thank you, Madam Chairman and thank you for being with us today and I know that this is a very difficult subject, and some have even asked if this is opening up a can of worms.

And I think that any time you have an opportunity to discuss and review this, it's helpful for both sides, and it allows better introspection in what you have.

But part of the issue, too, it seems to me is the articulation and the ability to communicate what you do well, and that to me speaks of a higher issue, and that is at the top leadership areas. Is the Department communicating clearly and well about what they do well and have accomplished all that work that they do, but whether statistically and otherwise to show the proof but also give the message, because there is no question. It is a most difficult area of our state government to work in.

It is where the most difficult problems and in trackable problems, and problems that sometimes

the families themselves create, and the families may not always be, and you should be able to articulate that, not always the best place into relative placement, but oftentimes it is, and the work in that area is difficult, but it's the articulation of that.

And in another sense, that if it was working well management-wise, you might not need as many of these boards and task forces and so forth that seem to be so replete in all of this.

Just for my own information, how many advisory boards do you have at DCF? Do you have an idea of just the numbers that are there?

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Well, I mean, first, seven came to mind, and I'm certain of the youth advisory boards. They, each of the area advisory councils, so that's another 14.

SEN. BOUCHER: It sounds like a lot.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: (inaudible)

SEN. BOUCHER: It sounds like a lot.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: I mean, we touch many people. I don't know if that's the right number or the wrong number. I mean, there's lots of parts of the agency and then we're, of course, in over 20 locations.

SEN. BOUCHER: Right. And that's part of the issue there because there's this massive size and different areas. I really appreciate what you've provided here. I have to tell you. It's been very helpful because what you've done, and something I was looking for, actually, of all of the different review and evaluations, outside contractors that were

asked to review the Department, you've gone all the way, quite a long way back to the 70s, right up until 2007 and the Program Review Committee, which I thought was a great thing to do--

BRIAN MATTIELLO: I was nine at the time, by the way.

SEN. BOUCHER: You were nine? I can well understand. But it's interesting to me to go through this and to look and see where, 1995 KTMG came in and they found, you could tell that this outside group would do this.

They spoke a great deal about the small divisions and units of structure inter=department integration, horizontal communications, the current organizational structure ineffectively divides groups and functions.

Functions performed in the central office could be more appropriately in the field or on a contracted out basis. Central office's staff had grown substantially. There's a high number of managers and supervisors in central office relative to the staff, yet the span of control of these managers and supervisors is low.

And again, this is 1995, way before your time. And additional layers of management exist in the functional layers than is necessary. The Commission's span of control is too great, yet it excludes important areas of agencies such as Health and Mental Health and so forth.

So in your position, do you go back and review some of the previous analysis and what improvements have been made over a span of nearly 15 years to make sure that some of those things have been improved upon as compared to

maybe the 2007 study by Program Review where they touched on a few different things.

They didn't quite go the direction of actual organizational issues.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Yeah, that's right. And what's interesting about the 1995 report, if you were to look at the organizational structure today, it resembles about 70 percent of that report.

And there were some changes subsequent and actually, I think in one story it went one way and then it went back, kind of thing.

Probably the report that I place a lot of value on is actually about our Department, that organizational development as a whole on child welfare and it's issued by Muskie school, and which actually is now serving as a national resource center for the initial development of child welfare agencies, which we're working with on a couple of important projects.

And they said that organizational structure has to really fit right for, you know, sort of organic. It has to fit right for you. It's an important issue to think about, but that there is no structure that can be parachuted in any particular jurisdiction that guarantees a particular outcome.

And so, I find that it doesn't lessen the struggle of trying to get this right and trying to make sure that there's an efficiency in decision making, and that as that report pointed out it was to everyone was reporting to the Commissioner kind of thing.

And so, there are some, you know, some real problems that you can experience as a result of organization, but there isn't a template of

child welfare or even a consolidated children's agency that has proven to be, and that's from people who have done the most thinking on this front.

And so I think it belongs as a very important discussion, and it's mostly going to be about, it's going to be organic. It's here--

SEN. BOUCHER: Well, just on that topic of organic—

BRIAN MATTIELLO: --versus trying to grab some of these generalized statements about organizational parachuting and expect a particular outcome.

SEN. BOUCHER: But on a regular basis, organizations should be looking from within to see how they can better accomplish their goal or task, and oftentimes the process that's used is a process of re-engineering activity that actually maps what everybody does, and to make sure that they're doing it in an efficient way.

It actually points out duplicative, and I saw a duplication in some of this information that maybe, you know, the same thing was being done by more than one entity that was accomplishing the same goals.

And if you map that out, it's used in education, it's used in business. It's used in so many different, and in government, quite frankly, a lot in government to see, in fact, and that reviewing your process, what everyone does and the way in which they do it, also leads to really good job descriptions and procedures.

And that job description should really reflect the outcome you're trying to achieve, the best possible, most efficient way that that task can

be accomplished in order to receive that outcome, and I would strongly suggest that, because I've heard many comments about the, whether there's good job descriptions that are there and ferret out. That's one good way to ferret out duplication.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Okay, Senator. I hear what you're saying, yep.

SEN. BOUCHER: And I think the last thing I wanted to bring out, Brian, because I did read in the Program Review and Investigations Report, they pointed out your strengths, which was good. There were a number of things that you did very well, and I'm sure you've looked at that as well.

But then they went on to talk about what you needed to do better, and I would suggest going back in some of those different reports and seeing where there's similar items, you know, that they pop up in every report.

If that's still popping up, that that's an area of focus that you guys need to go and really, really review.

But I just wanted you to comment on the debate going on about whether the Department should continue to be in the business of prevention, or should that be done by another entity, whether that still fits, whether that's appropriate, does it take away from the focus of what your main mission and job should be.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: I'm going to speak in general terms not necessarily about the move of the Children's Trust Fund over to the Department.

Everything that I've read about, prevention, framework in state government, one thing that

has emerged repeatedly, and therefore I think conclusively, is that prevention is not about a program or a set of programs that should exist in one particular location, that it's a way of thinking. It's a way of doing business, and the more stakeholders you have in prevention, the more results you'll get.

What do I mean by that? I think not having DCF involved in prevention. Whether we're fulfilling our mandate as a whole is certainly a fair discussion, but to have us not in the business at all I think is a mistake and inconsistent with what some of the best thinking around prevention programming really is all about.

We need to be a stakeholder and, but there's a continuum as you know, and so what is that you're trying to prevent? Whether it's someone falling down in a nursing home, or are you trying to prevent someone, you know, being abused and neglected.

Outside our doors, if the only thing that exists in prevention outside of DCF's door, which by the way, the most important pieces do exist, what's happening in our hospitals, in our communities and in our schools, and that's the way it should be.

But if it stops at our door and doesn't at the, on that continuum, and doesn't enter the door at DCF I think you've lost an important stakeholder, and you've also lost a focus on what is it when we didn't purely, primarily prevent abuse and neglect, but we're starting to see an early intervention or we're seeing risk factors that of our low and moderateness before they get to, you know, real high-end safety concerns, that that continuum needs to

flow through our Department and frankly, throughout state government as a whole.

That's my generalized response to your question. Is that--

SEN. BOUCHER: Well, for those of us that are--

BRIAN MATTIELLO: --does that answer your question?

SEN. BOUCHBER: --not as familiar with how prevention is handled through your Department, do you have a separate group that does that, or is it integrated in all of your different departments?

BRIAN MATTIELLO: We have a prevention division, but we also have prevention liaisons in each of our area offices so we try to integrate it into our business within the community.

We do try to bring up topics with our area advisory committees, which exist associated with each of our area offices, our 14 area offices.

And we run, we outline those programs for you here, most of which are done in partnership with others. So while we have a division, we're not the ones exclusively running the programs. Partnership with State Department of Ed, with a number of private providers, we conduct a number of training opportunities, which necessarily mean that we're really connected with a large network of individuals, and then we serve on a number of, you know, organizing task forces and committees that are doing important planning and developing of services on prevention.

There are four individuals dedicated exclusively to prevention in our Department and

then those liaisons hold other jobs like function, have important functions in the area of prevention.

SEN. BOUCHER: Brian, I'm just, one last thing in the report that was, the last report in 2007, there was a comment made that there's a duplication of external monitoring efforts and that there were, it was determined that there were several mandates that could be eliminated without the loss of accountability.

Do you recall any of those that were being proposed and did the Department come forward, therefore asking for that relief so as to streamline the process?

BRIAN MATTIELLO: We did, Senator, and this Committee actually voted out. What we did was, we pulled from the Program Review and Investigations Committee those obsolete and redundant reporting items, and advisory boards, and those sort of people, and separated them in an individual bill that was voted out by this Committee.

SEN. BOUCHER: Thank you so much for your testimony, and I also leave you with the thought, and I don't, Representative Hovey has some questions as well, that there should be a much greater emphasis on internal processes and procedures, and by looking at that, by mapping out what each department does, each individual does within that department, and having a clear job description will maybe highlight a number of things that could be very helpful to your Department, and might alleviate some of these concerns and questions.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Your point's well taken. Thank you.

REP. URBAN: Thank you, Senator. Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, Brian. There seem to be a couple of, in my mind at least, a couple of reoccurring things, and the first reoccurring thing is communication, and just to speak to communication personally, the Co-Chair said that he was sure that we had all been communicated with and had conversations at length with DCF and I would say that as probably the newest member on this Committee and the Ranking Member, I've had no conversations with DCF.

So just, you know, I've been getting all of my research from, and my background information from going on line and reading all the testimony from this fall, and you know, Program Review's piece of material.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: (inaudible)

REP. HOVEY: I'm sure you will. I'm sure you will. But I just, again, I think that kind of highlights some of the holes in communication when the Ranking Member, and granted, I have a fair amount of expertise because I was previously the Ranking Member on Education and because of what I do privately, my background is, you know, very much in behavioral and emotional health.

So I'm up to speed on lingo and all of that. But the intricacies of DCF's workings, I am not. I'm trying to get there. So please, I ask for your indulgence.

And the second piece of that, fragmentation, in looking at all of the communication that I've reviewed, there seems to be this kind of

underlying theme that the left really doesn't know what the right is doing, and also this piece that really concerns me that, because you know I have a hard time to believe that people working in DCF and the people I know who work in children's services and preventive services and even, you know, some of the more punitive arms of intervention services, all do it because they are interested in doing what's best for children and families.

But there's a real disconnect between what people's perceptions are and probably what I hope is the reality, you know. I'm not going to make that a blanket statement, but I hope that that's, that the reality is not truly what people's perceptions are.

And of course, when you're working with any area of emotion and behavior, so much of what you have to do is change perception. Change perception not only of the individual clients that you're working with in their own internal dynamics, but also the way they view the world, and you're a part of that world.

And so that's the piece that keeps coming up for me is this idea that people, our constituencies' perception, your clients' perception is so negative, and I'm, you know, known for my candor. It's just so negative about DCF and its workings.

And so then when I move to some of the changes that are occurring, and specifically with regards to the prevention component, and I know you folks have a prevention component.

But I wonder how you're going to deal with this compatibility issue, in my mind anyway, of DCF's perception and the ability for people to

access, which is what needs to occur if you're going to be involved in prevention.

People have to perceive you as being supportive and you know, nurturing and you know, almost maternal if you're going to be involved in the prevention arena.

And so I'm wondering how you folks are going to deal with your compatibility issue?

BRIAN MATTIELLO: I said earlier that I had sat through those hearings and it wasn't the first time, you know, that I've been exposed to some of those concerns.

One, there were really two major parties. One was those who experienced the child protection system and some of the concerns expressed.

And then there was a large contingency of individuals that were experiencing our voluntary services system in a way that was a bit disappointing to hear, you know, that we weren't meeting their needs because that is designed to be a bit more user friendly.

The, on the child protection side, I think the nature of what we do, and for many families it's not going to engender, you know, some good will in every case. And I'll remind members of this Committee that as far as authority of government goes, the only thing greater than having authority to remove children is perhaps the death penalty.

So we're engaged in something that's extraordinary, and there are some really bad things that happen to kids out there, and I'm glad we have an agency and a mandate that says the safety of children comes first.

When you get to those cases where it's not as easy, you know, so a scenario, you walk in, mom's got a needle out of her arm that's hitting her. The kids haven't eaten in two and a half days. While those are hard things to see, they're actually easier cases to make judgments on. We need to figure out the rule from that unsafe situation.

That's not the majority of our cases. Our other cases are, there's some deep-seated issues the family's struggling with. There might be a mental health issue associated with a child. It might be just, and not all poor people abuse their children but poverty that's really, you know, just taking a hold of that family in a way that they, all those stressors, and it results in some neglectful behavior with children.

The most cases that I think child welfare as a whole, and I'll just state it straight out, is a bit underdeveloped around. This is not unique to Connecticut DCF but we want to, we only care about Connecticut DCF and so do the people sitting in this room.

But I think it's a struggle nationally of how you move from those again, easier to judge cases of safety and making sure that we have all the authority that we need to keep kids safe, and feeling good about that theory.

And then when we get to those more complicated cases, how do we become a bit more engaging, and in fact, through a differential response, figuring out a way, an entirely different way from when that report comes to us and it's accepted, but there are some risk factors going on and we address that different. That's the bigger thinking.

On the day-to-day stuff, it's really my response to Senator Musto, because what I want to get to you is that those summary sheets, what are the family engagement initiatives within the Department? What are we currently investing in that's going to help us make a difference on this front?

And you can look through and say, this one I like, this one I don't. Or as a whole it's not a collection of enough. It's not moving fast enough and we all have those opinions.

But I want you to understand that there some important things going on, and that this is a direction, not just the exit plan tells us so, but that there is a different way to deal with these families.

I heard that at the hearings, and in particular I walked away on the voluntary services with wanting to understand that a bit further, and so there's some, I can't answer definitively that tomorrow or next week, you know, through these means we'll solve this problem, but I'm pleased with the direction we're going in terms of the measurement, and in terms of the initiative, and I would like you to know about that and then we can decide what's the gap between where we are and where we want to be.

REP. HOVEY: Thank you. And I think that probably for me, one of the easier components of your job, so to speak, to evaluate is the protection part versus the prevention part.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Right.

REP. HOVEY: And I personally am very concerned about the voluntary intervention component because those are individuals who are being proactive versus your needing to be reactive.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Yes.

REP. HOVEY: And so the perception of those people and their ability to access quality preventative programming, and especially in this environment where I believe the stressors are going to become phenomenal, not just on those individuals that we have traditionally considered higher risk, but also at groups that have never been at risk before.

So I think that the demand for voluntary preventative services and quality services is probably going to grow significantly.

So just putting that out there, I would like to move on to the fact group, the State Advisory Council, and just, I'm not really, I guess I'm not really understanding exactly how the system works and who are participants in the system.

I know that people are appointed to the Advisory Council, but the feedback that I've had is that those have absolutely a talk down issue also, that the Advisory Council, and that people who are say, lay persons who want to participate in those are feeling like they're wasting time and not really having much to contribute.

And so I'm wondering, and I will look forward to the follow up from your Department. I'm wondering, first of all I would like, I will explore who all of the chairs are and that piece of it myself.

But also, I personally have sat on a couple of advisory councils and considered expert in at least one area, and had my minority leader remove me because I wasn't really feeling like it was a worthy expense of my time.

And so if I'm feeling that way, and I'm not known for being shy, then I would call in to question the talk down nature of those advisory councils also and the need to really look at that. Thank you.

REP. URBAN: Thank you, Representative Hovey. Representative Thompson.

REP. THOMPSON: Good morning, Brian.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Good morning.

REP. THOMPSON: Thank you very much for your testimony and for your frankness and your awareness of all the issues.

I do want to say that I will simply make a statement. There are some heavyweights. No offense to the one following me, but there are some people waiting to testify both from agencies and from the public who have been very patient for the last hour and a half.

So I'm looking at this report you submitted to us. Oh, first may I thank you very much for the book you gave to me and the study and I think you said you had copies for other members of the Committee, or did you?

BRIAN MATTIELLO: I'd be happy to do that, yes.

REP. THOMPSON: Okay. And I think that really throws a light on what we're coping with here. It was a study of child abuse throughout the industrialized world and I'm sad to say we live perhaps in the most violent society in that world.

And so when I first came to the Legislature, I had a meeting with Amy Wheaton and she's been

succeeded by a number of people since, but I went over there because I at one time in my life had represented employees in all of the institutions and in the different youth departments and so on.

And I can remember going to Long Lane School for Girls, the Meriden School for Boys, and these were the kids who had gotten in trouble and had to be institutionalized, and I can remember such things as going to a picnic at Long Lane School and the superintendent was a Miss Meacham, who was about 5'3" and weighed about 110 pounds, white hair, motherly type, who just controlled that institution and the people working behind the tables and so on with some of the girls who were residents there. It was just a different world, and it was something a little bit different over at the school for boys.

But it was a different population, different challenges, and so I went to Amy Wheaton and I said to her one day, I said, Commissioner, you testified before us and the statistical evidence that you presented to us, the number of kids in trouble, in serious trouble and so on, and the number of kids who have been abused and so on, just blows my mind.

And I didn't say it, but I was thinking of it, here's a woman who lost a leg to cancer, had just lost her husband and I said to her, how do you cope with all of this? And she said to me, to tell you the truth, there's one thing that keeps me going.

I know if a child, no matter how badly they've been treated, is loved by one person they have a hope. If they need a, it doesn't, it can be a father, a mother, a sister, an older brother,

a coach, a youth worker, whatever, that child has a chance.

And I kind of think that's still true, that somewhere in all of this, if we can relate to kids that way, and we put your Department I think in, as you and Representative Hovey discussed, we put you in a very difficult position because you're really dealing most of the time with kids who have been hurt or damaged, and it's a matter of putting the pieces back together.

So one of the Committee's findings is goals of the consolidated children's agency, leadership and advocacy for children versus an integrated service delivery have not been fulfilled.

I agree with that, and I think you have more or less said that you agree with it, but we're still learning. We're still responding.

And one of the recommendations, or one of their findings, children and families are best served by integrated individualized care delivered through community-based systems, and I think that's the key to the whole issue here.

The fault we find with DCF, the faults we find with a lot of things, we are doing more things in preschool, school readiness. Birth to Three is a model agency. They touch kids right from birth. They're dealing with families right from birth.

The Healthy Families Program under the Children's Trust Fund are dealing with families right from birth, and much of their programs beyond that recognize that. The Commission on Children recognizes that. Their focus is a lot different than what you're served.

So I think yes, there's a very important role for DCF and it should be part of that community system. But I wasn't kidding the Commissioner yesterday when I said to her, I think you ought to tell the Governor that you're not ready for this responsibility of integrating further and taking away much of what has been done in prevention than just simply shifting the money.

None of the people who built the system would go with it, so, and I think the book you gave me, and I hope you all could share it, will demonstrate that, that times are different in America right now and this economic situation will only make it worse.

But there is another way beyond results-based accounting. There is another way. There's a picture of what can be and we know that other countries, other societies are meeting these same challenges. Maybe not as great or as acute as we do, but when you have, you know, 47 million Americans without healthcare and many of them children, or most of them perhaps children.

Our infant mortality rates are off the chart in comparison to most of the other industrialized countries.

There is a way of working toward that, and we see it happening, and I think I would invite you to, and I know you guys work with the commissions and with the Trust Fund of exploring what they're doing, how they're doing it, and working closely how your services might be integrated with theirs, rather than theirs being swept up by yours, and we preserve what we have.

We had a child plan here some years ago. We had a meeting. We had the French-American

Foundation here. We had people from all over the country and one of the things they, I think one of the things they recommended, every community should have responsibility for their children.

And one of those communities that took that to heart was East Hartford. Not my district, but close enough. They have a community-based health center. They have a school-based health center. But when they came together as a community, they decided, what is the best thing we can do for our children, and that was to have a school-based health center because the kids didn't have access to dental care often or even to healthcare.

Well, they established that and they got it going. Now they have their own dental service right in the school. They really cover most of behavioral health but it's integrated with the community and they also work with a community-based hospital.

And it just seems to me to make a lot of sense. They have a youth service commission that's wonderful, and there's a law on the books that enables communities to, it's optional with the community, to create a community-based person, like we have the agent to the elderly. There would be an agent for the youth, who would, you know, report to the town council annually and give him an idea and do, you know, all that local feeling out and sounding out, what can we do to make things better for our kids.

So we are doing things to improve healthcare. We are doing things to improve children's readiness for school. We do have the Birth to Three, which is a national program, which works, and there are good things happening.

But you guys have, and I don't mean to make too much of this, you have the most difficult job, I think, in dealing with your, and you need more help rather than trying to absorb things that are already working.

You can coordinate with them and so on, so that's the end of my statement. I hope you'll take it in stride and work with us.

REP. URBAN: Thank you, Representative Thompson. And Brian, thank you for answering the questions and I would just like to say that any time I have had to deal with somebody at DCF and it's been you, you've done a tremendous job.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: Thank you.

REP. URBAN: And I thank you for the job that you are doing. You've been very responsive, and I also thank you for being in the hot seat this morning. I know it's not easy, but you do a terrific job, Brian, so thank you.

BRIAN MATTIELLO: You're very kind. Thank you.

REP. URBAN: We have gone over the one-hour limit for the public officials, so now we're going to go back and forth between the public themselves and the public officials.

We did have somebody cancel at the first, so I'm going to exercise the chairman's ability to indulge in this and ask that the first person be Kate Nicoll from Soul Friends.

KATE NICOLL: Good morning.

REP. URBAN: Good morning, Kate. Thank you for being here.

done, but there needs to be a comprehensive overview of that before any restructuring is put into place.

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you. Are there any other questions from members of the Committee? Thank you very much.

SARAH CHASSE: Thank you.

SEN. MUSTO: Our next speaker from the legislator agency list is Carolyn Signorelli. How did I do on that one? Better? Okay. Good afternoon.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Good afternoon, Senator Musto, distinguished Committee members. Thank you for this opportunity to address you today.

My name is Carolyn Signorelli and I'm the Chief Child Protection Attorney for the State of Connecticut, and I've submitted testimony to you on all the bills that are on the agenda today, because they all affect the clients that my agency serves.

But instead of going through my testimony in the interest of time, I'd just like to address some of the sort of macro-concerns that are being raised by all of these bills and sort of being addressed by all of these bills, and address some of the questions that you have, that the Committee members have brought up today.

One of the things that was pointed out was that, one of the questions that's being asked is, where should prevention lie?

And I agree with Brian Mattiello that DCF has to be engaged in prevention, and the issue around prevention isn't whether DCF should have

all of prevention or whether some other agency should have all of prevention because prevention occurs across the board at every level of entry where somebody in need is interacting with state government.

So you know, for example, DSS engages in prevention when they help somebody find supportive housing. That's preventing homelessness.

Then we have DCF is engaging in prevention when they remove an abused child to prevent them from being further abused.

So I think the question that we're really grappling with is, how encompassing should DCF's mission be? Who are the people that DCF should be serving and focusing their prevention efforts upon?

I also agree with Brian Mattiello that, you know, prevention has to do more with a way of thinking and a way of approaching folks.

What I would like to submit to you when you're sort of thinking about these issues and about DCF's mission, and whether or not it's capable of achieving its mission. All of these bills are taking a look at that.

Is that DCF's primary mission is its protective mission, and I think a lot of folks would agree that having a protective mission and a sort of an early prevention mission interferes with what folks are talking about the disconnect.

Representative Jarmoc said you have these great policies in place. Your policy is to engage with relatives and families, yet there's this disconnect, and people come before the

Legislature and say the Department isn't meeting our needs, isn't serving us.

And what I would submit to you is that having this protective mission and attempting to engage with families who may be lower risk or who may be, you don't, can't substantiate neglect and abuse with, creates the disconnect because it's very difficult for families to engage with the agency that they know has the authority to severely intrude in their lives and remove their children.

So what I've sort of proposed throughout my comments on all these bills is that the differential response system, and what I've said in my comments on Senate Bill Number 878 is that I don't think you need a task force to look at that. I think that differential response system definitely needs to be implemented. I think July 1, 2009 is too soon. I am on the steering committee working on implementing that, and I think that a deadline should probably be set but July 1, 2009 is too soon.

But what I would submit is that DCF needs to recognize that a differential response system where they're trying to engage families on a voluntary basis should not really look like a DCF program in the community. That's part of the problem. That's part of the disconnect, is that many families don't want to engage voluntarily with the Department that they know can remove their children.

So, and I say this with all due respect to the efforts that the folks at DCF are making to engage prevention, but I think we need to look at which families DCF is primarily responsible for prevention with, and those families who can be identified by a differential response system

that are low risk and who could be served directly by the community should be served directly by the community, and DCF should really be more in a background, more supportive role.

And you know, just to sort of comment on the issue about family engagement and relatives and you know, being told that DCF is not following their policies, you know.

In defense of DCF, you know, the way the community and families see their decision is not, you know, they're often not going to be happy with the decision by DCF to say we are not going to place a child with you.

And that also brings into play DCF's protection role, you know. DCF always has to have in the back of their mind you know, is it really safe to put the child back into the family system, and they don't necessarily engage with the families in some of the ways that say a DRS model with family conferencing or family strengthening approach would.

Or, Brian Mattiello pointed out that the Department wants to do better in utilizing the family conferencing model, and the family conferencing model is a model where you know, these family members would sit down at the table with the Department and do some problem solving. But that's a collaborative effort, and if your mission is protection, sometimes it's very difficult to engage in that collaborative effort.

And the issue of trust goes both ways, because you know, some community members and families don't trust DCF because they're afraid they're going to remove their children.

But when I have conversations with folks in DCF about letting the community or allowing another agency who is already in the community and whose primary focus is prevention, to be the face of this program, you know, their reaction is well, we have to make those kids are safe first, and that DCF worker needs to be in that home and those sorts of things.

So DCF also doesn't necessarily trust the community providers or the family strengthening models to really address the needs of those lower risk children, and I think that it's time that when we take a look at these task forces and what these task forces are looking at to say, DCF, you really need to focus on protection, and you really need to focus on these higher risk families.

And yes, prevention has to be a part of that, but as far as prevention for lower risk families that may be facing issues of poverty or, you know, you may not necessarily be able to substantiate actual neglect or abuse yet.

The DRS model is a good way to shift those families from a child protection system, and engage them in problem solving and you know, addressing their needs before there's actual neglect or abuse or before a child has to be removed.

Are there any questions?

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you. I have a couple questions, and I understand you talked about a lot here about prevention, and DCF's role and other people's role, and I know it's sort of all jumbled up together.

But what I'd really like to do is try to separate it a little bit, so I'm going to ask

you to really focus on the question I ask because I've got three or four questions about DCF's role and other people's role in prevention. I'd like to see if we can kind of break some of the things out without aggregating them.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Sure.

SEN. MUSTO: The first question is the potential for duplication if DCF and one or more other groups gets involved in prevention.

And what I'd like you to specifically address is, what would DCF's role be in prevention versus someone else's role and would you have to have one other or two other, or how do you see, how would you prevent duplication itself?

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Well, I think that the issue isn't duplication because you're talking about perhaps intervention at different stages in a family's life, and intervention based upon the issues or the severity of the risk that families are facing.

So let me try to give you an example of what I sort of envision with implementing the DRS model, which I think is an excellent way to start addressing some of these concerns about family engagement and prevention.

Right now I believe the model that DRS is proposing is that the DCF social, that this is going to be a DCF program primarily, and that the DCF social worker is going to be very involved with these families that have been identified by the Hotline as sufficiently low risk that DCF does not need to start an investigation on.

So the idea is, they will receive a differential response track, and that track will include being referred to community providers that are obligated as part of a contract requirement, to engage the family in a family conferencing model and problem solving.

Let's sit down and see why this family was brought to the attention of the Department, you know, why somebody made a Hotline referral. What are the issues that this family is facing, and how we as community providers and varied other resources for the family can come to the table to solve those problems, address those issues, sort of nip them in the bud, provide the family with supports, community supports or ways to solve their own problems so that hopefully they will never have another referral made on them and they will never come to DCF's attention.

So that's not a duplicative service. That's a service that's getting to that family early enough before DCF has to take greater measures such as doing an investigation, doing forensic evaluations of children, possibly filing a neglect petition or removing the child.

So the other issue is with a prevention agency that's primarily focused on what is termed primary prevention. That means let's try to help families who are at risk never come to DCF's attention.

Those type of programs need to be made available to all families that are identified in need of support or help or intervention. So for example, there are currently programs in the state that identify at risk mothers in the hospital or in clinics because you know, this is their first pregnancy and perhaps they have mental health issues, or perhaps they struggle

with substance abuse issues or perhaps they're struggling with housing, you know, just issues that might affect their ability to support and properly care for a child.

And that sort of primary prevention is addressing a risk, but it's not a child protection prevention. It's a pure prevention. It's trying to make sure that that family starts addressing the child's needs and meeting a child's needs and raising healthy children right off the bat.

And those programs would not be duplicative. They should be provided. The hope is that they prevent a child ever coming to DCF's attention. But if a child eventually does, you know, if for some reason that program fails, and if a child does come to DCF's attention it's not duplication. It's DCF interceding at a new sort of risk, a continuum of risk that families might deteriorate to or arrive to that DCF then comes in and provides services.

SEN. MUSTO: Wouldn't that in some ways, though, it seems to me, I don't know, but I'd like a comment on this.

But wouldn't that in some ways mean that people would sort of view DCF in general as completely adverse. I mean, that there would be no chance that once you're involved in DCF it would just be a completely adverse relationship.

Because if what you're doing is saying, we're going to put all the nice parts as it were of DCF prevention, take them out of DCF, that once DCF does sort of come knocking on the door, somebody gets referred to DCF, that it would really at that point be completely adverse. There would be no view on the family part that people would be able to actually work with DCF

but at that point DCF would be just completely adverse to them.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Well, I disagree that that's the way it would have to be, and I think that Brian Mattiello pointed out that prevention is more a way of thinking. It's not necessarily where or when something's happened, it's how interventions are conducted.

So there's, even if we were to take primary prevention out of DCF, which it really isn't there now in any event, and I don't think it should be put there, but this issue of family engagement, you know, to my mind if DCF did make a more concerted effort to follow its own policy regarding conducting family conferencing meetings early on in every case that comes to their attention, that they decide the allegations are at high enough risk that they need to investigate, that perhaps the family would see them as a more benign intervention and would be able to work better with them.

I don't, I think it really has to do with more how you engage the family and the issue becomes, which families are you engaging and which families are you identifying that DCF needs to engage with and provide services to, versus which families can receive a differential response and be, you know, placed in the hands of the community or community provider that has a contract with the fee agencies.

SEN. MUSTO: So who makes the second, who makes that decision? Once we get a family at risk in some way, there's been some referral, or even if it's just you identify some risk factors and try to get in early, which I think probably we can all agree would be the ideal world, but if

possible, or to what extent it's possible is a different question.

But who makes the secondary determination as to okay, this has now gone to the next level. We need to get a more interventionalist response?

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Well, DCF has their Hotline, and the DCF workers that man the Hotline, they have to assess the allegations that are made to them for risk level, and what the level of risk is that those allegations support.

So it would be the DCF Hotline worker that's making, and probably in consultation with the supervisor there, or perhaps even a program supervisor, that's making the determination of which track the case can go on.

Is it going to go to differential response, or are we going to refer it to an investigation, or in some instances they decide not to accept the referral because the allegations are not sufficient to support a finding of neglect at all.

So that's where the initial decision for the track, which track the family is going on, is made. But once it's determined that it goes to the investigations track, there's no reason that at that stage the Department can't engage in intervention that the families perceive is more helpful.

But we're never going to be, you know, as long as DCF is the agency that has the authority to do removals of children when the risk is high enough, you know, I don't think that you're ever going to necessarily be able to get every family to see their intervention as benign and helpful.

And a large part of that, if you know how the investigation social worker intervenes with that family, reacts, you know, interacts with that family, that's a large piece of it.

But you know, investigation workers always have in the back of their minds, safety first and that's as it should be. You know, I'm not arguing that it shouldn't be that way. That's why we need child protection, and that's why DCF was initially created.

So you know, there are families that do successfully engage with DCF even after the children have been removed. It's not really all black and white, but I think that if we want to, if the state wants to start engaging in earlier lower risk levels to truly prevent families from deteriorating into crisis, that it would be important to not have the child protection agency be the agency that's engaging at that stage.

SEN. MUSTO: Okay. Thank you. The second sort of question I had is, is there, and I guess unfortunately I'm going to have aggregate a little bit because it seems like this is part of the first one as well.

If you have an agency in general or any group that has experience at later levels in the proceeding, once there's a removal, once there's reunification issues, once there's treatment, that sees the end result, how does that information get back to the beginning, to the prevention to know what things to focus on if you end up taking the prevention out to a certain extent from that organization?

If that was not clear, please let me know because I know it's a little bit complicated.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Yeah, and you know, there's so much here and all the issues are so complicated, it's really sort of hard to cover everything, and you know, the reality, I'm not proposing that DCF should have nothing to do with DRS, because I think that the reality is, is that all the agencies that are involved in providing the various types of services that families present in needing, need to be collaborated in the system.

So, you know, for example, you know, if a family is put on the DRS track, they may need the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. They may need housing services.

So I think that the reality is that it's still, it's a state intervention, but the issue is, you know, which state agency is going to be more directly involved with engaging the family, and I think that once they're, I believe that DCF plans on continuing to track, whether they've, when they receive a referral, whether they've accepted the referral and whether it's been placed onto the differential response track.

So if that family were to come back at a later time with a new referral and the presumption being perhaps differential response was that this family did not work, did not resolve the problems, I believe that DCF would still have that information in their records, that there was a referral and the family did receive a differential response.

So they would be able to track back and say, we tried to intervene. DCF typically in their investigations, if it comes to their attention that a parent has received prior substance treatment, they ask a parent to sign a release.

So you know, that in this situation the investigations worker would probably say, you know, please sign a release for the community service providers that you received services from through differential response, so that at that point the Department can begin to get the whole picture of the family and what the family's needs are and what the nature of, if the intervention needs to be at that point.

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you. Are there other questions? Yes, Representative Thompson.

REP. THOMPSON: I think what you were describing was a healthcare model of a kid who breaks his arm. He's immediately taken into the hospital where he's going to be seen and his needs addressed and repaired. At that point there may be a, you know, determining how that break happened, there will be a determination whether to bring in DCF or so on.

But at that point coming through that system, DCF would be looked upon as a support, making sure if there is some question, making sure that the child is safe from that point forward. Am I following you correctly?

They have a different role, but it can be constructed so that the role is supportive and interpreted by the public as supportive.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Well, I mean, the reality is that when DCF gets called by hospitals because of a break in the arm, that's because typically the hospital or somebody at the hospital made a determination that that break may not have been accidental.

REP. THOMPSON: Right.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: So that's going to be, you know, your (inaudible) at the child protection investigation, and depending upon how the investigative worker engages with that family, and what information they begin to discover about how that break occurred, that's what's going to determine what the need for intervention is.

REP. THOMPSON: Okay. But if in the public eye it can be construed as being helpful and supportive, the role of DCF on a community basis, I would think a police officer might be called in as well, and that's a community person.

My thought is that for a basic model the healthcare system, which in some of the programs, you mentioned one from the Children's Trust Fund program, what is it, Nurturing Connecticut? And that's a good model. People are reassured and so on.

My problem with all of this is when, if we go back six years to 2003, we had a program, a number of programs that affected this population, which was badly damaged by reduction of funding.

One of them was Birth to Three. Children, they changed some of the eligibility standards for children getting into that system, and I think in all due respect to the Legislature, they made a big mistake by increasing, you know, the level of birth weight and so on, and so many kids were denied services.

Our neighbors in Massachusetts and Rhode Island were going the other way. We were going up, and as a result the number of children did not get into that program until sometime later, and the, it's been well documented that a child who

receives that care from birth, the kind of care they were denied, will be 50 percent less likely to need special education.

That's now up to 65 percent, so it was almost a no brainer, but I think in the stress, and it was like the situation we're in now. People thought, well, we'll just cut a little here and a little there and the consequences were long range, was very expense to the community, but even more expensive to the child and to the family.

I don't know how you can do that any other way than having a community based system that works with the state agencies and the state providers and with the local police, the local youth groups, the local education groups and so on and so forth, are all involved in looking at the children.

And I would suggest that we have models around the world, and certainly I think the French childcare system is you know, superior to ours because there is that involvement right from day one, involving both the healthcare, the education and so on.

So if you can answer that question, how do we get the community so well informed about the good things that DCF can be doing, the good things that other agencies are doing probably the good things you're doing.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Well, you know, I mean, I think that question was, you know, posed earlier about being able to articulate the positive and you know, the reality is that the folks who have been satisfied by DCF intervention, they don't call their legislators and they don't come up to public hearings to testify.

But you know, I did spend nine years representing DCF in the courts, and they do do some tremendous work, and they do prevent children from being further damaged, and they do get children back to healthier families and that goes on all the time. And you know, those aren't necessarily the things that you hear about up here at the Legislature, and that's a little unfortunate.

Because what happens is, as a result of hearing only the bad stories, you start looking at making sweeping changes in the opposite direction, you know, when the issue is how to better carry out, you know, existing policies and things like that.

And you know, I think that we have a lot of families in Connecticut that need early intervention, and I agree with you that, you know, cutting Birth to Three and eligibility for Birth to Three, you know, is not the way to go.

We're talking a lot about focusing more on prevention, and I think one of the last bills on the agenda, House Bill Number 6411 talks about taking some more concrete measures to actually achieving what the Governor set out to achieve, and this Legislature set out to achieve when it talked about transitioning 10 percent of all social service states agencies' budgets to prevention.

And if, I mean, if we were to actually accomplish that, you know, when you think about the budgets of DSS and DCF and Corrections and all those agencies, when you think about what we could accomplish with early intervention and how much we could truly prevent, it's pretty staggering.

And I think that this combination of bills that are before you today, if they can be consolidated in a way where we're really looking at, how do we create that shift to prevention where the state is able to successfully engage the families early on and make sure that their children's needs are being met early on, we're going to see, you know, resolution of a lot of problems, including, you know, school readiness and future incidents of neglect and abuse, you know, future incidents of juvenile delinquency cases and things like that.

So hopefully, this is a great start, what's going on with these bills of making that transition, and one of the other things that I commented in my written testimony is that several of the task forces that are being proposed, some of what they're looking at overlap to a certain extent for, you know, if you make a certain decision on leadership issues, it's going to have an effect on organizational and structural issues.

Or if you make a decision about where, which agency should be the face of DRS or should be handling DRS or doing the quality assurance, that's going to affect issues of the leadership organization and the structure of the Department as well.

So I think that they really need to be looked at in concert and although some, each task force is very specific, there's definitely overlap and it would probably make more sense for there to be sort of an overriding task force or maybe just to see back in Program Review so there isn't this duplication because I think this is a great opportunity to enable DCF to focus its mission on protection and preventing further neglect or further abuse, or

helping children who are already experiencing the problems of neglect.

That's a huge mission in and of itself, or just appropriately caring for the children that they have in their custody. That's also a huge mission, and I think that this is an opportunity to enable DCF to focus on that, and for other state agencies to have more experience and a proven track record with actual prevention and preventing neglect and abuse to begin to be more involved in the shift to greater prevention efforts by the state overall.

REP. THOMPSON: Thank you very much. I agree with you.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Thank you.

SEN. MUSTO: Are there any other questions from members of the Committee? Representative Hovey.

REP. HOVEY: Thank you. Hi, Carolyn.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Hello.

REP. HOVEY: So, Carolyn, when we're trying to sum up all of the conversations and we've had quite a few conversations about many and varied issues with regard to children, would it be safe to say that the differential around prevention is voluntary prevention versus prevention and protection, and that if we divided, just divided that out, that that would make the differential between DCF, DCF involvement and private public provider involvement?

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: I would agree with that, and I think I spelled that out a little more

articulately in my testimony because just the idea behind differential response is that those families are going to engage voluntarily.

REP. HOVEY: Okay.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: And voluntary services, as you said earlier, families are being proactive in seeking help, so it's really not necessarily a child protective case of a family voluntarily willing to try to solve their own problems and address their children's needs, and I think that that is a logical place to sort of make the differential.

SEN. MUSTO: Any other questions? Thank you very much.

CAROLYN SIGNORELLI: Thank you.

SEN. MUSTO: There's a, we'll go back to a member of the public. It looks like Tamara Kramer. Did I get that one right?

TAMARA KRAMER: Kind of.

SEN. MUSTO: Close enough?

TAMARA KRAMER: It's actually pronounced Tamara, but.

SEN. MUSTO: Tamara.

TAMARA KRAMER: I think my parents might have mispronounced it when they chose that name, so I don't blame anyone who says it incorrect.

SEN. MUSTO: Puts them in good company.

TAMARA KRAMER: They'd be so proud that I come in public. Good afternoon, Senator Musto, Representative Urban, not here right now, and

distinguished members of the Select Committee on Children.

My name is Tamara Kramer, and I'm a Policy Fellow testifying on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well being of Connecticut's children, families and youth.

I'm here today concerning five different bills, so I'll keep my comments short on each. We support with revisions, which we have filled out in detail in our written testimony, which I hope you have before you, the following proposed legislation.

Senate Bill Number 877 An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning The Department Of Children And Families, Senate Bill Number 878 An Act Concerning The Prevention Role Of The Department of Children And Families, House Bill Number 5915 An Act Concerning "Stuck Kids", House Bill Number 6419 An Act Concerning Transparency And Accountability Of The Department of Children And Families, and House Bill Number 6420 An Act Concerning A Leadership Audit Of The Department Of Children And Families.

Regarding the recommendations of the PRI report, Voices strongly supports their adoption. As the Committee report finds, *Juan F.* litigation has done much to increase the resources available to DCF.

However, it also notes that the court monitoring is an expensive and time-consuming endeavor. DCF must further enhance its internal processes for ensuring high quality care, and not only for children in the foster

progress report can be given to the General Assembly.

HB 5915

On the Stuck Kids legislation, we strongly support this legislation with a request that this report on the number of out of state runaway and homeless youth be required to be made public through publication on the Department's website, provided that any personally identifiable information about DCF involved children and families be redacted.

HB 6419

Regarding the transparency and the accountability of the Department, our recommendation is to implement these proposals immediately as many of the ideas in this legislation were pulled directly from the 2007 PRI Committee report, as well as the court reports coming from the court monitor on *Juan F.*

We feel that a creation of a task force once again would be unnecessary and instead would put a hold on these important measures that can improve the performance of the Agency.

HB 6420

And regarding the leadership audit of the Department, we know that despite our best efforts it's entirely impossible to ensure the best possible outcomes for children through legislation and implementation and accountability are just as, if not more important.

We support a leadership audit that would take a look at the multiple layers of management within the Agency and ensure that those who are employed in the various positions have the skills to match their job descriptions.

It would make good sense that an employer working with you with specialized mental health

needs be educated in a way that provides them with the correct level of expertise.

We believe this leadership audit should also look at areas where there is too much management and bureaucracy, which is bogging down the system and potentially preventing the Agency from fully meeting its mandate to protect kids.

And I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify. I apologize for speaking so quickly.

SEN. MUSTO: Yeah, that was good. You're going to be in politics soon if you can keep that up.

I do want to reiterate for those of you who may not have heard it, we did talk in the beginning that the task force recommendations, we are going to be looking at those and where there's a task force whether we're going to be taking some of those recommendations and implementing them directly.

So there were some discussions about that. I want to make that clear again.

From what I could gather from, you seem like you're supporting the Stuck Kids, the transparency and accounting and the leadership audit.

HB5915
HB6419
HB6420

TAMARA KRAMER: That's correct.

SEN. MUSTO: Those are all three clear supports.

TAMARA KRAMER: Yes.

SB877

SEN. MUSTO: The first one you're supporting with your one, excuse me, one exception.

There's going to be other places where we actually can immediately innovate and make ourselves eligible and I'll get that to you.

REP. MUSHINSKY: Thank you. Appreciate it.

ELAINE ZIMMERMAN: Sure.

SEN. MUSTO: Any other questions from members of the Committee? Thank you very much.

ELAINE ZIMMERMAN: Thank you.

SEN. MUSTO: Representative Urban.

REP. URBAN: Thank you. I just wanted to point out to members of the Committee, earlier we had talked about the DCF the PRI, Program Review and Investigation Report on DCF and you now have it in RBA terms, so they have taken the report and they have put it into terms of performance standards, indicators, how much did we do, how well did we do it, and is anybody better off?

So that report has now been distilled down to three pages, so I just want you to know you now have it. Thank you.

SEN. MUSTO: Returning to the public hearing sign up sheet, Sarah Eagan. Is Sarah Eagan in the room? Good afternoon, Miss Eagan.

SARAH EAGAN: Good afternoon. I want to thank the Committee for holding this hearing and allowing me to testify. My name is Sarah Eagan. I'm a lawyer and I direct the Child Abuse Project at the Center for Children's Advocacy and I'm here to cram as much as I can about three different bills into my three minutes of public testimony, which is House Bill Number 6419, the transparency and accountability bill, Senate

HB5915

HB5916

Bill Number 878, which is the prevention bill and the Stuck Kids bill is the third bill. It's right on one side.

And first of all, even, and I appreciate Senator Musto underscoring this point throughout the duration of today's hearing about the fact that the transparency and accountability bill as well as the prevention voluntary services bill, Senate Bill Number 878, both call for the creation of a task force before implementing an action step.

And I wanted to follow up on Senator Musto's emphasis on the fact that task forces may, are not needed to implement a lot of these action steps.

And pointing to my testimony, I wanted to alert the Committee to the fact that there have been at DCF itself in the last several years has undertaken at least 15 internal evaluations and monitoring projects just since 2002, that the legislative PRI Committee issued a report just in the last year and a half with 37 recommendations that have still yet not been legislatively implemented, that between the Office of the Child Advocate, the office of the Attorney General, as many as 10 DCF advisory groups and close to 20 Juan F. court monitor quarterly reports, these organizations, task forces and evaluations have all exhaustively studied the operations of the Department of Children and Families, and issued numerous recommendations, many of which are found in the bills that are on the docket for today.

So I just wanted to highlight that perspective for the Committee, and going back about a month or two, my office also wanted to underscore that the Human Services Committee and the Children's Committee held four days of

SEN. MUSTO: No, that's fine. This is the Center for Children's Advocacy, correct?

SARAH EAGAN: Yes.

SEN. MUSTO: Okay. The only, did you submit, I have some written testimony here on House Bill Number 5915. Did you submit anything else?

SARAH EAGAN: Yes. I've also submitted testimony on House Bill Number 6419 as well as Senate Bill Number 878.

SEN. MUSTO: Okay. So three different ones? Okay. Could you, again, could you tell us a little bit about the Center itself, the history and what, who comprises it, et cetera.

SARAH EAGAN: The Center for Children's Advocacy is a nonprofit legal organization affiliated with the University of Connecticut School of Law. We were created about ten years ago. We're in our 11th year. We are currently comprised of nine lawyers and multiple supportive staff, and we are broken up into numerous projects, all of which, all of the attorneys in our office represent children and youth of all different ages on a multitude of issues ranging from child protection, juvenile justice related work, special education related work, and medical housing and other property related issues.

The Center does its work through three major categories. One, legislative advocacy. Two, general policy work, training and also litigation.

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you. Are there any questions from members of the Committee? Representative Urban.

REP. URBAN: Thank you. I'm thrilled with this. How many runaway and homeless children and youth are in Connecticut we don't know.

That, you know, that sort of encapsulates where we need to go. We need to know on many of these programs what's happening and I see that, you know, you're strongly in support of the bill.

Do you have any comments on why we don't know?

SARAH EAGAN: On why we don't know the numbers?

REP. URBAN: Yeah.

SARAH EAGAN: Actually, it's a very good question, and if I could, Representative Urban, I'd like to defer the answer to that question to a colleague of mine who's here, who's going to be testifying after me, Stacey Violante-Cote.

REP. URBAN: Why doesn't she just come on up and answer the question and then we'll, she's next on the list, right?

SARAH EAGAN: It's a main project of hers. I don't want to stumble over the answer.

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: Representative Urban, thank you for the question.

REP. URBAN: For the record, your name, so we know you're up here with Sarah.

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: My name is Attorney Stacey Violante-Cote. I am also an attorney at the Center, and I run the Center's Team Legal Advocacy Clinic.

The testimony that you have in front of you I've written on behalf of the Stick Kids bill, HB5915

in part due to my work as the chair of the Connecticut Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth.

So the data sheet that you have in front of you, our Committee has been working months to put together the information that you have there, which I think as you can see, is all over the place.

The data is different from different agencies, and even when you look at the numbers, we don't have a clear sense of how many runaway and homeless youths we have in this state.

In direct answer to your question, I think that's because we don't have any one source of information. A lot of these children and youth, as you can see from the statistics under the category Connecticut Department of Children and Families, are involved with DCF. You see that there's a 2007 total of 1,522 incidents of runaway youth.

That includes youth who have either left a facility for a few hours and youths who have truly run away and are at great risk for all kinds of vulnerabilities.

And so we don't have a clear sense in this state. After working with Court Support Services Division, State Department of Education, Department of Children and Families and all sorts of private providers who contract with the federal government to serve these kids, we don't have a clear sense of how many runaway and homeless youth we have in this state, which is why we call them the invisible population.

And we believe that the Stuck Kids bill will go a long way and is a good start toward trying to understand this population and then provide the

supports and services they need. As of now, they still remain invisible to us.

REP. URBAN: As I look at the data that you've given us, and I've listened to you, again, this comes back to what is so dear to my heart, and that's results accountability.

Clearly, we can't go across silos here. It's, you know, the silos are there and nobody's talking to each other, so we have no idea what kind of data is accurate or inaccurate. Is that, I mean, obviously, it's part of the problem, right?

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: I do believe it's part of the problem when it comes to runaway and homeless youth in particular. I think that these kids fall through the cracks of the various systems in which they're involved, and that each system may have its own way of counting them, but that we don't know as a whole in this state how many we have.

The Office of Legislative Research did a study that's included in my testimony and came up with a wholly different number based on national homeless counts.

So we've spent months putting this information together, and really thought it was telling that for a group that really combed what we could to get good, accurate information with important stakeholders at the table, we still don't know.

REP. URBAN: That's what strikes me is that you made this a project and really attempted to get an accurate number, and even devoting yourself to trying to get that accurate number you still were presented with numbers that are all over the place.

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: That's right.

REP. URBAN: If there's any additional language or suggestions that you have for the Stuck Kids bill, I would be very interested in you submitting that to us.

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: We could certainly put something together and get that to you.

REP. URBAN: Thank you. Thank you.

SEN. MUSTO: Representative Hamm.

REP. HAMM: Thank you. Nice to see both of you. I'm struck with the chart that you've given us. Could we get the stakeholders to agree on the definition? I mean, are we using the statutory definition in Connecticut of runaway or homeless, or is that also part of the problem?

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: I do not believe that each of these agencies are using the same definition.

For instance, Court Support Services definition would depend on whether or not the child or youth is a family with service needs runaway child or youth or a youth in crisis, which as I think you know in your work, are both under-reported areas.

And the State Department of Education uses a federal definition of homelessness, which includes runaway youth, but that's determined under the federal law for providing education to homeless youth.

And then the Department of Children and Families in our conversations and in part of this work on our Committee has, as I mentioned earlier to Representative Urban, definitions

that include kids who have left a placement for a period of hours to kids who are gone from placements and they don't know where they are.

So I do not believe that these agencies are using the same definition.

REP. HAMM: And how about by either gender or age? I think that would be useful information as well as we try to figure out how to provide services. It would help if we knew what our population was.

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: I agree.

REP. HAMM: But nobody's keeping that data, because the numbers you have are just the total numbers, right?

STACEY VOILANTE=COTE: We have some further data from some of these different agencies, and I could culminate that data for you and present that in addition to this if it would be helpful.

REP. HAMM: Do you have a sense of any kind of age where our majority of runaways from say, particular DCF facilities are?

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: I would not want to speak without looking back at the data, but I will be happy to get that to you.

REP. HAMM: I would appreciate it.

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: Sure.

REP. HAMM: Thank you.

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you very much. Representative Thompson.

JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS

SELECT
COMMITTEE
ON CHILDREN
PART 2
298 – 494

2009

REP. THOMPSON: I'm sorry. I came in at the tail end of your testimony and I was at another subcommittee, but in tracking the homeless, do you deal with Beyond Shelter? That's one program we put in several years ago, ideally working with shelters and working with the families in particular. Have you dealt with them at all?

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: We have as part of our Committee, a newly joined group, which is the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness and we've gotten our, some data from them, and they agreed when we talked with them, that the issues around homeless children and youth are something that people are struggling to get their hands around, and that statewide, there may be separate conversations going on, but no integrated approach to deal with this issue for children and youth.

REP. THOMPSON: I think that's a primary responsibility working with the homeless, and it seems to me they've expanded since it was first initiated, so they're part of your apparatus now.

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: They have joined our group and they're very interested in dealing with this issue and this population. We're pleased to have them.

REP. THOMPSON: Thank you.

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you. Are there any other questions? Thank you very much for coming in today.

SARAH EAGAN: Thank you.

STACEY VIOLANTE-COTE: Thank you.

prevention, child protection, mental health and juvenile justice, because they can't be generic kinds of job descriptions in all of those entities.

SEN. MUSTO: Any follow up from the Committee based on that testimony? Okay, thank you very much.

JEANNE MILSTEIN: Thank you very much.

SEN. MUSTO: We're back to the public. I believe there are no more agency heads or public officials on the list, so we just go the public, and Gwen Samuel, I believe Connecticut Parent Power is our next speaker. Good afternoon, Miss Samuel.

GWENDOLYN SAMUEL: Good afternoon.

SEN. MUSTO: Thank you again for waiting.

GWENDOLYN SAMUEL: And I just need to clarify. I'm here in the parent role. I was formerly employed with Connecticut Parent Power so I'm here as a parent leader.

HB 5915
SB 878
SB 877
SB 879
HB 6411
HB 6420

And I'm from Meriden, Connecticut, but a lifelong resident of Middletown, so again, good afternoon, Senator Musto and esteemed members of the Select Committee on Children.

I'm here as a parent leader and a community activist, advocate, for children and families just based on my personal experiences.

So I'm a product of Head Start, which is an anti-poverty program. So with the right supports in place, families can succeed.

I'm a recent graduate with my bachelor's degree a couple of years ago through the support of Head Start just encouraging me, placing focus

on my children in Head Start, but in doing so, it said as a parent I need to take responsibility.

And in regards to the Representative that spoke earlier, we also had a non-custodial parent, which was my children's father, and it's important that we support non-custodial parents as well, because Head Start said, it's not about you, Gwen. It's not about him. It's about the child. So you and him are going to have to work out your differences. You're going to work as a family to best meet the needs of children.

So early interventions and prevention is key because I'm wondering if I didn't have the support services that I had years ago, I always ask myself the question, where would I be? So I'm glad where I am today, but that's the importance of anti-poverty programs as such.

I'm here to support, actually the majority of the bills. I'm here to support House Bill Number 5915, which is An Act Concerning "Stuck Kids", because I'm very concerned about the children that are out of state. We have over 300 children that are out of state and the bottom line is, they're Connecticut residents.

But because for whatever reasons, we don't have the systems in place or the services in place or the children's needs, they had to be placed out of state. That does not mean that we don't have a responsibility to those children out of state.

So we need to be looking at how we're monitoring those children out there to make sure that their needs are being met out of state. Again, out of sight out of mind can

become so easy, and so I would ask you to consider House Bill Number 5915.

I'm actually looking at also Senate Bill Number 878, which is An Act Concerning The Prevention Role Of The Department Of Children And Families, and Senate Bill Number 877 An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Program Review And Investigations Committee Concerning The Department Of Children And Families, Senate Bill Number 879 An Act Concerning Oversight And Reorganization Of The Department Of Children And Families.

I'm so 110 percent behind Elaine Zimmerman in the Commission on Children in regards to An Act Concerning The Reduction Of Children In Poverty And Investment And Prevention. HB6411

But I want to go back to the parent leadership piece because I've heard how the esteemed leaders are going to be making these decisions on behalf of the families. HB6420

But I'm a parent, that you want me to, I'm legally and morally obligated to my children, so I have a responsibility to take care of them. So it needs to be a shared leadership role in making these decisions, because it's parents like me that you want to prevent my children from getting in DCF system.

So I have a problem. I have a concern with the fact that we're hearing it so top heavy of what people think parents need to be without communicating with the families you're trying to protect.

So with that being said, with all due respect to the DCF lawyer that was here earlier that said you know, as an attorney, she was an

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children

Select Committee on Children
Public Hearing
February 19, 2009

Testimony Submitted by Elizabeth C. Brown
Legislative Director

HB5915

Senator Musto, Representative Urban and members of the Committee. My name is Elizabeth C. Brown and I am the Legislative Director for the Commission on Children. I appreciate the opportunity to testify this morning on bills pertaining to the Department of Children and Families that seek to renew the agency's mission and performance to become more effective in serving Connecticut's most vulnerable children and families in the 21st century.

SB 877 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Department of Children and Families.

The Commission supports the overall need for strategic planning, but recommends the following:

- Adopt a results based accountability framework for a more outcome driven system.
- Bring in strategic partners in each region to determine what action steps need to be taken to improve the outcomes for children and families in each region from a prevention and early intervention perspective.
- Focus on what is working, not what we have always done
- Focus on building strong local partnerships to get results
- Enhance the role of the state Advisory Council by adding representative from the Select Committee on Children and more parent voice
- Include the Unified School District in the Planning Process to ensure quality of services and educational outcomes for children in their programs.
- Include an assessment of personnel and recommend necessary staff qualifications, experience and mindset necessary for a high performing organization

SB 878, An Act Concerning the Prevention Role of the Department of Children and Families.

The Commission recommends that the Department immediately begin the important work of strengthening the prevention arm of the Department to give an equal role to family strengthening as it does to child protection.

Recommendations

18-20 Trinity St. Hartford, CT 06106 Phone: (860) 240-0290 Fax: (860) 240-0248 Website: cga.ct.gov/coc

Fiscal impact: Utilization of professional, mental health staff as the members of the Community Team would mean that the home-based assessment and intervention was Medicaid reimbursable, leveraging tremendous federal dollars in support of this system.

Agenda: Support legislation implementing DRS with a system of care framework, including not only comprehensive wrap-around services, but also provision of mental health services within the home by the Community Team, if needed.

The Commission believes action must be taken now to establish a broader vision and mission with a focus on prevention and building local family support systems. This would leverage existing federal, state and private dollars and re-direct scarce resources to investments in strengthening families.

HB 5915, An Act Concerning 'Stuck Kids"

The Commission supports this bill and believes it will hold DCF accountable for the welfare of very vulnerable youth, including out of state, runaway and homeless youth. Currently, DCF does not review or monitor these populations in a systematic manner. The bill would require the commissioner to issue an annual report, to the Select Committee on Children regarding the placement of the children and youth.

HB 6236
HB 6475
SB 878
SB 879
HB 6419
HB 6420
HB 5915

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY OF
BRIAN MATTIELLO

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
FEBRUARY 19, 2009

S.B. No. 877 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Department of Children and Families **is in general agreement** with **S.B. No. 877** AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, which incorporates the recommendations from last year's report prepared by the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee concerning DCF Monitoring and Evaluation. In fact, we have already initiated implementation of the vast majority of the recommendation contained in report. Attached is a summary status report of department progress on implementing the various recommendations (see **ATTACHMENT A**). A more complete status report was made available to the Program Review and Investigations Committee last week in response to several questions that they posed.

Section 1 - Subsection (b) deletes the existing biennial 5-year master plan requirement (*PRI Recommendation # 21*) and replaces it in subsection (c) with a new comprehensive strategic planning process (*PRI Recommendation # 1*). The Department **supports this modification** and is in the process of finalizing an integrated agency-wide strategic plan in conjunction with the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement.

Section 2 - This section would require that the four DCF-operated facilities have DCF facility advisory boards and mandates that all boards respond to their facility's annual report and require that they add recommendations deemed necessary (*PRI Recommendation # 30*). The Department **supports the intent of this recommendation** and is committed to ensuring that each of our facilities has an active advisory board, but we do not believe it is necessary to establish this as an independent statutory mandate. We are already explicitly permitted to establish such panels under statute and are committed to ensuring we have parity across all our facilities in the use of advisory boards.

Section 3 - This section requires that all DCF facilities produce an annual report for their respective advisory groups. The report shall contain at a minimum the following: (1) aggregate profiles of the residents; (2) description and update on major initiatives; (3) key outcome indicators; (4) costs associated with operating the facility; and (5) description of education programs and outcomes (*PRI Recommendation # 22*). The Department **supports this reporting requirement**. We would like to allow each facility to develop its own format in conjunction with their advisory groups. We believe that this could provide an instructive basis for systems improvements.

a review of our current organizational structure and identification of changes to that structure and realignment of existing resources that will better position the Department to meet those strategic planning goals. We need to make sure that any study that may be undertaken is well scoped, that it accounts for past studies, and that if costly, must be weighed against other priorities given our fiscal climate.

H.B. No. 5915 AN ACT CONCERNING "STUCK KIDS".

The Department of Children and Families **offers the following comments** regarding **H.B. No. 5915 AN ACT CONCERNING "STUCK KIDS."** This bill requires DCF to review and monitor the placement of every out-of-state, runaway and homeless child and youth in the custody, care or supervision of the Department of Children and Families.

It is important to note that out-of-state placements only occur when in-state options are exhausted and a child requires a specialized level of care not available in Connecticut. Our staff conduct regular visitations with the child and make arrangements for visits from family members. It's also important to recognize that anytime a child in our care runs away, it's a concern not only to staff who work with child, but also to the Department as a whole, and every effort is made through various means to locate the child as quickly as possible.

The Department already tracks all out-of-state placements and maintains a daily log of all runaway youth in DCF care. We also have the some capability of breaking this information down in various demographic categories, however, depending on the specificity desired, there may be a fiscal impact associated with modifying the databases needed to track some of the information referenced in this bill.

Commission On Child Protection
State of Connecticut

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CAROLYN SIGNORELLI
CHIEF CHILD PROTECTION ATTORNEY

Written Testimony of Carolyn Signorelli
Chief Child Protection Attorney

Select Committee on Children
Public Hearing February 19, 2009

SB346

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the bills on today's agenda regarding the Department of Children and Families, as well as prevention services to children and families. I would like to provide testimony generally in support of bills 878, 879, 5915, 6411, 6419 and 6420 with some suggestions and caveats for your consideration. I am opposed to Sections 1 and 2 of Senate Bill 877.

Raised Bill No. 877, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Department of Children and Families.

Bill No. 877 containing recommendations from the Program Review and Investigations Committee appears to maintain a policy direction whereby DCF will continue to be responsible for virtually all children and families that are in need of treatment services for a myriad of issues effecting child well-being, for prevention activities that are mostly unspecified, in addition to its child protection mission. This bill also charges the Department with the task of developing "a strategic plan meeting the needs of children and families served by the department." It is premature to support these aspects of the Program Review Committee's recommendations found in Sections 1 and 2 of the bill, given the questions about the role, structure and leadership of DCF being posed in S.B. 878, S.B. 879, H.B. 6419 and H.B. 6420. While I recognize that the Department must continue to plan and strategize for how it will address its existing mission and goals, it would be wasteful for the Department to begin formulating a new strategic plan based upon the broad based responsibility for child welfare envisioned by the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

If the Department's role in prevention efforts is to be re-defined or voluntary services are to be privatized pursuant to the enactment of Senate Bill 878, then any future strategic plan or implementation of required programs must be informed by those policy directives. Also, in the event recommendations to re-structure or transfer responsibilities of the Department are made by the Task Force created by Senate Bill 879 or if the leadership audit called for in House Bill 6420 results in significant changes in leadership or its structure, it would be more efficient for new strategies to be formulated and implemented after those changes are effectuated.

directions being formulated by different bodies. Perhaps the Advisory Council's initial role during this time of re-examination should be to advise and inform the work of the task forces envisioned. I would further recommend that there be one task force to look at all the issues proposed to be studied in these bills, including privatization, and that subcommittees to look at the specific issues be formed and their work coordinated. Policy decisions regarding prevention roles, privatization and leadership structure will obviously effect any recommendations regarding reorganization and what DCF's future strategic plans, outcome goals and reporting requirements will be.

H.B. 5915 An Act Concerning "Stuck Kids."

I support H.B. 5915 regarding Stuck Kids to the extent that this is not already being done by the Department and to the extent that the information the Department tracks should be relayed to the Select Committee on Children as an important oversight and accountability measure.

H.B. 6411 An Act Concerning the Reduction in Child Poverty and Investment in Prevention:

I enthusiastically support this bill and see it as an important step to thoughtfully implementing the laudable goals of C.G.S. §§ 4-67v and 4-67-x. Based upon my hope that the Children's Trust Fund will survive this legislative session, I am confident that the Office of Policy and Management will recognize the value of including the Children's Trust Fund's expertise in carrying out the directives of this bill. Much of the work and study that will inform the analysis required in this bill has already been carried out. I am confident that the Children's Trust Fund will survive due to recognition of its critical contribution in this state to the goals outlined in Section 2(b) of this bill. The Children's Trust Fund has already implemented and evaluated cost-effective programs that are successfully addressing the promotion of competent parenting; the development of socially and emotionally healthy children; maternal health and safety, connecting parents with child care, as well as vocational, educational and social service supports; ensuring school readiness; engaging fathers; and avoiding crisis.

I would therefore respectfully request that this bill be approved but amended to include the Children's Trust Fund as a collaborating or advisory agency with the Office of Policy and Management.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Signorelli

CONNECTICUT
VOICES
FOR CHILDREN

Testimony Concerning S.B. No. 877, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Department of Children and Families, S.B. No. 878 An Act Concerning the Prevention Role of the Department of Children and Families, H.B. No. 5915 An Act Concerning "Stuck Kids", H.B. No. 6419 An Act Concerning Transparency and Accountability of the Department of Children and Families and H.B. No. 6420, An Act Concerning A Leadership Audit of the Department of Children and Families

Tamara Kramer, Jamey Bell, JD & Alexandra Dufresne, JD

Select Committee on Children Public Hearing

February 19, 2009

Senator Musto, Representative Urban and distinguished Members of the Select Committee on Children:

We testify on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

Connecticut Voices supports, with suggested revisions, S.B. No. 877, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Department of Children and Families, S.B. No. 878 An Act Concerning the Prevention Role of the Department of Children and Families, H.B. No. 5915 An Act Concerning "Stuck Kids", H.B. No. 6419 An Act Concerning Transparency and Accountability of the Department of Children and Families and H.B. No. 6420, An Act Concerning A Leadership Audit of the Department of Children and Families

1. Implementation of the Recommendations from the Program Review Investigations Committee

Voices testified on this language during the last legislative session, and continues to support the adoption of these recommendations. As the PRI Committee report found in December of 2007, the *Juan F.* litigation has done much to increase the resources available to DCF. Further, on-going monitoring by the Court Monitor of DCF's performance against 22 specific outcome measures has helped improve DCF practice, including DCF's internal quality improvement programs. Similar impacts from the *Emily J.* and *W.R.* court monitoring processes have occurred.

As the Committee's report also discusses, however, court monitoring is a "expensive and time-consuming endeavor." DCF must further enhance its *internal* processes for ensuring high quality care – and not only for children in the foster care system, but also for children with mental health needs

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The Department's efforts to implement DRS have lacked both a real commitment as well as a sense of urgency. In the past six years two different pilots failed to get off the ground due to leadership change and re-organization, as well as a general failure to provide the necessary support. We urge you to leave the July 1, 2009 DRS implementation deadline so DCF will be mandated to commit to the program. The January 1, 2010 task force report date should be amended to be an implementation progress report to be presented to the General Assembly and to be made available on the DCF website.

b. Privatization of Voluntary Services

One of the major hurdles to efficiency and greater access to services within the Voluntary Services program is the high caseload ratio of 49:1. By privatizing the system there would be the ability to have a lower number of cases, and a greater ability to locate and provide youth with the correct services. This privatization could also be critical in an increased utilization of voluntary services; anecdotally we have heard individuals share an apprehension of becoming engaged in the system due to a fear of the department. By removing voluntary services there could be a removal of the stigma and trepidation of engaging with the program.

3. "Stuck Kids"

H.B. 5915, An Act Concerning "Stuck Kids", would shed light on a population that is often overlooked, and difficult to quantify in numbers. We strongly support this legislation that would require the Commissioner to review and monitor the placement of every out-of-state, run away and homeless child and youth in the custody, care or supervision of the Department of Children and Families and then report to this Committee the status of these placements. We would request that this report also be required to be made public through publication on the department's website (provided that any personally-identifiable information about DCF-involved children and families, if a part of any report, be redacted).

While we do have numbers on the number of youth placed out of state, and register concern that this number has never been reduced in any significant way over the years, there is no true count on the number of youth who are homeless or who have runaway and this would be a significant step forward in monitoring this uniquely vulnerable population.

4. Transparency and Accountability of the Department of Children and Families

H.B. 6419 would create a task force made up of legislative appointees to consider the following issues regarding transparency and accountability: whether DCF should report aggregate administrative case review data (ACR) and Connecticut comprehensive objective reviews to the General Assembly; whether DCF should include measurable outcomes in contracts with private providers; whether DCF should conduct service needs reviews and case conferences for "stuck" kids and the "unseen population"; and whether two different pilot programs should be established: one to combine ACRs and case status conferences, and the other to open Juvenile Court proceedings in one judicial district. While we applaud the serious consideration of initiatives that would make the

000450

(HB 5915)
(HB 6411)

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS HITS HOME

THE UNFOLDING INCREASE IN CHILD & YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

BARBARA DUFFIELD & PHILLIP LOVELL
DECEMBER, 2008

NAEHCY
Building futures through education

FIRST FOCUS
MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While the economic downturn has appropriately become the top priority of policy makers, one element of the crisis has gone largely unnoticed: its impact on children and youth.

Largely due to the economic and housing crises, many school districts across the country report increases in the number of homeless students in the classroom. In a voluntary survey conducted during the fall of 2008 by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and First Focus.

- 330 school districts identified the same number or more homeless students in the first few months of this school year than they identified the entire previous year.
- 847 school districts identified half or more of last year's caseload in the first few months of this school year.
- 459 school districts had an increase of at least 25 percent in the number of homeless students identified between the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years.

School districts also report many challenges associated with the increase in homelessness. These include:

- Rising transportation costs and logistical challenges in making sure homeless children have access to school
- Inadequate staff to identify and support children and youth experiencing homelessness
- Lack of available shelter space and low-income housing
- Reduction in other community services and supplies
- Greater severity of needs

That's the bad news. The good news, is that we can do something about it. Specifically, we recommend:

- Congress and the new Administration should expand funding for the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth program so that homeless children and youth can stay in their schools and receive the support they need to attend and succeed.
- Congress and the new Administration should make homeless prevention a priority through the infusion of funds into the Emergency Shelter Grant program.
- Congress and the new Administration should increase the availability of rental housing through an expansion of Section 8 Housing Vouchers.
- Congress and the new Administration should ensure that all homeless families are eligible to receive federal homeless assistance by broadening HUD's definition of "homeless" to be more closely aligned with the Department of Education's statutory definition of homeless.

Schools and communities also have a vital role to play in meeting the needs of homeless children and youth. This report also summarizes the impact of homelessness on children and youth; explains key provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act, the federal law that requires state and local educational agencies to provide homeless students with access to school and support for their attendance and success; and provides many practice recommendations to assist schools and communities to identify and support families, children, and youth who have lost their housing.

In the midst of our actions to address the immediate economic and housing crises, we must not lose sight of the terrible effect this recession is having on our children and youth. While we are investing in our financial institutions and taking other measures to stimulate the economy, let us not forget that the most important investment we can make is in our children and youth – the home buyers, CEOs, and leaders of the future. An investment in them, is an investment in us

The impact of the economic crisis is seen in the fall of the stock market, declining home values, and the quest of company after company for government help to stay in business. A critical repercussion of the financial crisis is being overlooked amidst the flurry of conversation about bailouts, stimulus plans, and other elements of our country's economic tailspin: increasing child and youth homelessness.

Many school districts across the country report increases in the number of homeless students in the classroom, largely due to the economic downturn and foreclosure crisis. In a voluntary survey conducted during the fall of 2008:

- 330 school districts identified the same number or more homeless students in the first few months of this school year than they identified the entire previous year.

- 847 school districts identified half or more of last year's caseload in the first few months of this school year.

- 459 school districts had an increase of at least 25 percent in the number of homeless students identified between the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years.

Homeless students are at greater risk than their peers of school failure, behavioral problems, and other challenges. While the long-term consequences for the nation's human capital are potentially severe, policy makers have yet to give strong consideration to the impact of the economic crisis on our children and youth, and what it could mean for the nation's future.

The Economic Crisis Hits Home presents the results of a survey of school district homeless liaisons conducted by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) and First Focus between October 24 and December 10, 2008.[1] Based on these findings, we also present policy recommendations for the new Administration and Congress, as well as practice recommendations for schools and community agencies.

The increase in families in need is mind boggling. With the cost of gas, etc., so high, families who have a car breakdown or medical expense who would have been able to absorb it in the past, are now nearing eviction or foreclosure. The fear of lost jobs and the actual cutbacks in the county's largest employer have also made everyone very nervous.

- Barb Skillman
Homeless Liaison
Shelton School District
Washington

RECENT INCREASES IN STUDENT HOMELESSNESS REPORTED ACROSS THE COUNTY

A total of 1,716 school districts completed a voluntary online survey distributed either through State Coordinators for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, or directly to school district homeless liaisons (see "About the Survey" on page 16 for more information about methodology and limitations).

School districts across the country, large and small; urban, suburban and rural; from the west coast to New England, have reported increases in student homelessness.

MORE HOMELESS STUDENTS IDENTIFIED IN FIRST FEW MONTHS OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR THAN IN ENTIRE PREVIOUS YEAR.

In the first few months of the school year, 330 school districts report that they have already enrolled the same number, or more, homeless students than they enrolled during the entire previous year.

For example, by December 5, 2008, Vista Unified School District, serving nearly 30,000 students in northern San Diego County, California, identified twice the number of homeless students that were identified the entire previous school year. During the 2007-2008 school year, Vista Unified identified 697 homeless students. By December 5, 2008, 1,384 homeless students were identified — a 99 percent increase in just the first three months of the school year.

"There is such an influx of families to all of our local agencies that are homeless service providers that many families have to wait 3-4 weeks for an appointment to receive assistance," according to Rebecca Benner, Vista Unified's homeless liaison. "There is a huge need for more immediate services."

Wake County Public Schools System, serving nearly 140,000 students in central North Carolina, has also seen a striking increase in the number of homeless students entering its classrooms. During the 2007-2008 school year, Wake County identified 1,069 homeless students. By November 1, 2008, 1,200 homeless students were identified - a 12 percent increase in just the first two months of the school year. It's stunning to note that this figure represents a 50 percent increase over the total number of homeless students identified just two years ago (800 homeless students identified during the 2006-2007 school year).

Melissa Brisbon-Obame, Homeless Liason for Wake County Public Schools, said "It is really sad to see so many working poor. People are working but still can't meet basic needs. Families are fighting with each other and as a result people are left homeless Times are really tough for even professionals with 5-6 digit incomes."

In the time I have been at this district (16 years), I have not seen the homeless, jobless, low income issues that exist like they do this year The economic crisis situation that exists today isn't projected to change anytime soon, either.

- Mary B. Gedemer-Jensen
School Counselor
Bristol School District No 1
Wisconsin

SCHOOL DISTRICTS IDENTIFIED HALF OR MORE OF LAST YEAR'S CASELOAD IN FIRST FEW MONTHS OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.

About three months into the school year, 847 school districts report a caseload that is 50 percent or more of last year's homeless caseload for the entire year. For example, by October 28, 2008, Wisconsin Rapids Public School District, serving 5,700 students in central Wisconsin, identified 59 percent of the homeless students identified during the entire previous school year. During the 2007-2008 school year, Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools identified 273 homeless students. By October 28, 2008, 160 homeless students were identified. It is important to note that this figure is over 50 percent higher than the homeless student caseload during the 2006-2007 school year. Thus, this school district is in its second consecutive year of significant increases in homeless students.

Heather Lisitza, Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools' Homeless Liaison, reports that:

> One of the biggest challenges our district faces is providing transportation to students who are experiencing homelessness. There are few approaches that our district can utilize to provide transportation for these students. Our city has only one taxi cab service and no public bus system Our cab company is small and simply can't fulfill all of our transportation requests. When

> it's possible, we add students to existing bus routes or set up a contractual agreement with the student's parent/guardian. However, there have been many situations where none of these options have worked.
>
> Another challenge our district faces is providing proper outerwear for students who are homeless. Being that we live in central Wisconsin and have long, cold winters, all students need proper outerwear to go outside. Proper outerwear includes snow boots, hat, mittens, snow pants, and a winter jacket that has a working zipper or buttons on it. This expense adds up quickly and is hard to provide to the increasing number of homeless students.

By October 28, 2008, Adrian Public Schools, serving approximately 4,000 students in southeast Michigan, identified 53 percent of the homeless students identified during the entire previous year. During the 2007-2008 school year, Adrian identified 135 homeless students. Just two months into the school year, 72 homeless students were identified.

Beth McCullough, homeless liaison for Adrian Public Schools, said "We are seeing an increase in Child Protective Service (CPS) cases due to homelessness. Shelter beds are full, and when parents sleep in cars and tents with their children, CPS is becoming involved."

It should be noted the current enrollment calculated as a percentage of last year's enrollment provides a valid indication of an actual increase in the number of homeless students identified. Because children and youth experiencing homelessness are a highly transient population (changes in housing occur year-round), schools identify homeless students throughout the entire school year, not just at the beginning like most other groups of students. Therefore, we are alarmed at the number of school districts that report enrolling such a large portion of last year's caseload so early in the school year.

Another reflection of the fact that school districts are experiencing an actual increase in student homelessness is the comparison between this year and last year of homeless student enrollment on specific dates. Few school districts had the data tracking system to provide this comparison; however, some did: 141 school districts report a 30 percent increase this year over the same time last year. This finding validates the concern that rises in response to the high number of school districts that have served a large portion of last year's case load in just the first few months of the school year.

THIS YEAR'S INCREASE BUILDS ON LAST YEAR'S INCREASE.

For many school districts, this year's increase in homeless students builds on large increases from the previous year, making the situation ever more serious Between the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years, 459 school districts had an increase of at least 25 percent in the number of homeless students identified.

- The National Bureau of Economic Research officially announced that the U.S. economy is in a recession that began in December 2007.[21]
- During the first week of December, 2008, the number of people filing for unemployment benefits for the first time — 573,000 — reached a 26-year high. The last time this level was reached was November, 1982.[22]
- According to the Mortgage Bankers Association, a new record was set in the fourth quarter of 2008 for the percentage of loans in the process of foreclosure.[23]

For example, Clark County Public Schools, serving nearly 300,000 students in southern Nevada (including Las Vegas), had a 43 percent increase in homeless students between the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. During the 2006-2007 school year, Clark County identified 3,352 homeless students. During the 2007-2008 school year, 4,801 homeless students were identified. Three months into this school year (by December 8, 2008), Clark County identified 4,049 homeless students - more homeless students than were identified during the entire 2006-2007 school year

San Bernardino City Unified School District provides a similar example, having a 33 percent increase in homeless students between the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years. During the 2006-2007 school year, San Bernardino identified 1,274 homeless students. During the 2007-2008 school year, 1,700 homeless students were identified. Two months into this school year (by October 28, 2008), San Bernardino identified more homeless students than were identified during the entire 2006-2007 school year.

The current economic and housing crises compound the pre-existing crisis of child and youth homelessness. In the 2006-2007 school year, public schools across the nation identified and enrolled 679,724 homeless students in grades preK-12, and this figure is likely to be a gross underestimate.[2] Unfortunately, due to limited federal funding, only six percent of public school districts received federal support for homeless students. However, these school districts receiving federal support identified more than half of all homeless students reported to the Department of Education.[3] It is highly unlikely that six percent of school districts actually serve more than half of the nation's homeless students. A much more plausible explanation is that homeless children are more likely to be identified and enrolled in school when school districts have the resources and trained staff to serve homeless students.

Evidence from this survey suggests that the 2008-2009 school year may reveal another dramatic increase in homeless students over the previous year. School districts need additional resources in order to identify these homeless students and help them stay in school.

SPECIFIC CHALLENGES CITED BY RESPONDING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Our survey included an open-ended, optional space where respondents could share comments, current needs, examples, or other thoughts. Approximately 400 liaisons added comments. These insights provide a critical context for the numbers reported above, and the policy recommendations below. Common concerns cited by liaisons include the following:

- Rising Transportation Costs and Logistical Challenges for School Districts. The increase in student homelessness has created financial and logistical challenges for school districts, as more children and youth need transportation assistance in order to continue their education, uninterrupted, after losing their housing. Wendy Gaylord, Social Worker and McKinney-Vento liaison for the Boulder Valley School District in Colorado, reported that "there has definitely been an

PERCEIVED REASONS FOR INCREASES IN HOMELESSNESS REPORTED BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	Number of School Districts*
Economic Downturn (job loss, high cost of living, etc.)	845
Foreclosure crisis (including renters, where rental property has been foreclosed)	492
Other housing-related factors	464
Increasing incidences of domestic violence, substance abuse or other factors negatively influencing mental or physical health	394
High medical expenses, with inadequate or no health insurance	149
Other	322

** Total does not equal the number of survey respondents because (1) not all school districts experienced an increase in homelessness and (2) respondents were permitted to provide multiple responses.*

increase in referrals to us, and waiting lists for services in the community. We find it much harder to get assistance for families in need. Our school district has much higher costs transporting students and no funds in the district budget for this increase."

Her statement echoes that of many other school districts, including Windham City Schools in Connecticut. "We are identifying homeless families according to the McKinney-Vento legislation at a much greater rate than this time last year. Transportation costs are spiraling and we will far exceed the amount we spent on this last year," stated Bill Stover, Director of Supplemental Services.

- Inadequate Staff to Identify and Support Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness. Several school districts reported being unable to keep up with the rate of referrals, leading to delays in providing services. As Gaile Helineg, Coordinator, Santa Fe Public Schools ADELANTE Program in Santa Fe Public Schools, New Mexico, explains: "Our numbers so far this year have increased by approximately 47 percent. Although we collaborate with many youth and homeless organizations in town, due to the fact that we are still operating with two staff people only and our numbers have increased tremendously, the most appropriate gap to fill right now is funding. We can't keep up effective work without another part-time staff person to help us."

  Similarly, Jennifer Griffin, Homeless Program Coordinator for Mesa Unified School District, Arizona, commented that "most telling is the rate at which we are receiving referrals this year. At this point last year we had identified 471 eligible students and we were fielding all incoming referrals daily. Currently, we have identified just over 500 students, but we are still receiving referrals so quickly that we have an additional 190 inquiries in process; this means that the students are enrolled and attending, but we are still working on making personal contact to confirm eligibility and determine other needed services "

  As discussed below, federal law requires that every school district designate a school district liaison to identify, enroll, and support homeless students.

PERCEIVED REASONS FOR INCREASES IN HOMELESSNESS REPORTED BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

As is clear from the chart included on the left, economic downturn was cited most frequently as the perceived cause of the increase in homelessness by school districts. Housing problems, including foreclosures, was cited both in response to the question about perceived causes, and quite frequently in an open-ended question on challenges.

Additional reasons entered in the "other" category of perceived causes included better identification and awareness efforts (34); hurricanes (24); floods and tornadoes (9); house fires (14); parental incarceration (8); deportation of undocumented parents (13); and increased incidents of runaway/"throwaway" youth (22).

However, most liaisons have many other responsibilities and are not working full-time on homeless issues. The increase in homelessness among children and youth means that liaisons and homeless education programs are further stretched in their efforts to identify and serve homeless children and youth

- Lack of Available Shelter Space and Low-Income Housing. Even prior to the most recent economic and housing crises, most communities faced an acute lack of emergency and transitional shelter beds. The increase in homelessness brought on by the economic downturn and foreclosure crisis has exacerbated this lack of shelter capacity, forcing many families to live in cars, motels, or in temporary, precarious, and sometimes unsafe arrangements with other people.

  Many respondents, such as Sarah Greenwell, Homeless Liaison for the Olympia School District in Washington, mentioned lack of shelter space as a primary challenge for families and children, complicating efforts to keep children and youth stable in school: "The numbers of those experiencing homelessness has at least tripled so far this year compared to past years, and the resources available have shrunk. There seems to be fewer people who are able to donate to community resources, and more people who need from these agencies. The shelters have all been full and the list for housing has grown. Thankfully we have overflow shelters housed in local churches, but they just opened this month and for the first two months of school many families were literally on the street with their children."

  Similarly, many school districts noted the long waiting lists for housing assistance and lack of affordable housing options as barriers to stability for students and families.

- Reduction in Other Community Services and Supplies. At a time when more families are in need of assistance, school districts report that less help is available School district liaisons are required to collaborate with community organizations and make referrals for needed services. Yet the economic crisis has resulted in fewer people being able to make donations to service organizations, and budget cuts are causing reductions in services by other community organizations. Consequently school districts are struggling to find clothing, school supplies, food, and other basic necessities for families and children.

  "Our local food pantry has had many, many more requests this year and last year for food, gas vouchers, and down payments for rental units," said Mary Arnold, School Social Worker and Homeless Liaison for Stevens Point School District in Wisconsin. "This is a difficult time to be homeless, as it seems that local resources are being called on much more to help, and at the same time budget cuts and the economy mean that resources are not as robust as they were years ago "

- Greater Severity of Needs. School districts reported not only an increasing number of families in need of assistance, but also more severe problems faced by those families who are homeless Increasing incidence of domestic violence

I would like to see more low-income housing options available for families. Our community does not have enough and, many of these are two-bedroom. It is hard to find three or more bedrooms.

Also, I hope they renegotiate the home loans for families, as I know, if given the opportunity, these families would pay as much as they could afford monthly to keep their homes.

In addition, food stamp benefits need to increase with the current cost of food and health care coverage needs to improve. It also would be great if the number of homeless shelters increased, as many times these families have to leave state or try to beg someone to take them in as the shelters are full.

Michigan needs more job opportunities. Basically, Michigan families need a lot of help and support.

-Holly Fiedler
School Social Worker
Milan Area School District
Michigan

and removal of children from the home were cited as examples of related hardships experienced by families.

Dr. Deborah Smith Mileski, Director of Pupil Personnel Services for Wilkes-Barre Area School District in Pennsylvania, stated: "We seem to be witnessing an increase in domestic violence resulting in mothers seeking housing in protective shelters. Economic difficulties often cause confrontations that result in these placements. Our homeless families require psychological support/ counseling to assist in resolving these problematic situations."

The increases in homelessness unveiled by the NAEHCY/First Focus survey demand a coordinated response at the federal level. An appropriate federal response must be guided by information about the impact of homelessness and school instability on homeless children and youth, the roles that schools can play in bringing stability and resources to the lives of homeless students, and the existing programs upon which a federal response should be built. Thus, before turning to our policy and practice recommendations, we briefly discuss the impact of homelessness on children and the existing federal homeless education program - a program that should be the foundation for the federal action we propose

IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Research shows that, generally speaking, homeless children are more likely to suffer from health/mental health problems, developmental problems, and are more likely to perform poorly in school, than other children and youth with stable housing.

For example, a study of homeless children in Worcester, MA found that homeless children were twice as likely as their peers to have clinical or borderline clinical mental health problems. Additionally, homeless children were nearly three times as likely to exhibit developmental delays in a study of homeless children in Boston.[4]

Homelessness puts children at severe risk of health problems. A study of homeless children in King County, Washington found that homeless children were four times as likely as other children to be in fair or poor health, and twice as likely to be in fair or poor health as other low-income children. They were two-to-three times more likely than other children to use emergency rooms, and were also more likely to go without standard immunizations. Additionally, homeless children were three times as likely to experience an episode of hunger than other children according to a study of homeless children in Los Angeles.[5]

Not surprisingly, academic performance suffers as a result of homelessness. Researchers from the School of Public Health at Columbia University and others found that, in comparison to their housed peers, homeless children were.

- 1.5 times more likely to perform below grade level in reading;
- 1.5 times more likely to perform below grade level in spelling; and
- 2.5 times more likely to perform below grade level in math.[6]

The economic downturn our nation is experiencing is greatly affecting families in our area of rural Georgia. Franklin County has always had a high poverty rate in the past and the issues with job losses and loss of housing seem to be steadily increasing in our area. These issues directly affect our homeless education program and how well children in homeless families are educated. Many families are moving from area to area to find work while their children's education is suffering due to changing schools. Our program works to assist these families and provide transportation, when feasible, so that children can remain in their school of origin.

- Sarah Bryan, LMS
School Social Worker &
Homeless Liaison
Franklin County Schools
Georgia

One of the primary reasons that homeless children are likely to perform poorly in school is because homelessness is characterized by turmoil, and homeless students are at-risk of bouncing from one school to another and missing several days, if not weeks or more, of school as their families attempt to meet the most basic of human needs.

Research shows that mobility can have a detrimental impact on student achievement. A study from the Government Accounting Office found that third-graders who have changed schools frequently are more than twice as likely to repeat a grade than their permanently housed peers.[7] Others have found that high mobility can reduce the chances of high school graduation by more than 50 percent.[8]

But there is some good news: it appears that the educational impacts of homelessness can be mitigated. In an analysis of studies on homeless children conducted for the Department of Health and Human Services, Dr. John Buckner of Harvard Medical School found that the successful implementation of the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, which limits school mobility for homeless students and facilitates greater attendance in school, helps to eliminate the education-related problems that result from homelessness.[9]

SCHOOL AS SAFETY NET: THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT

School can be an oasis of stability and support for children and youth experiencing homelessness. School can provide opportunities for homeless children and youth to obtain the skills they need to escape poverty and avoid homelessness as adults, as well as essential services such as food and clothing.

Despite the valuable support schools provide to children and youth in homeless situations, these children and youth face unique barriers to education. These barriers include being unable to meet enrollment requirements (including requirements to provide proof of residency and legal guardianship, and school and health records); high residential mobility resulting in lack of school stability and educational continuity; lack of transportation; lack of school supplies and clothing, and poor health, fatigue, and hunger. When these barriers are not addressed, homeless children and youth often are unable to attend, or even enroll in, school. This prevents them from obtaining the education that is guaranteed under law and their best hope of a better life.

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (hereafter referred to as the McKinney-Vento Act) is a federal law designed to increase the school enrollment, attendance, and success of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act was passed in 1987 and reauthorized as part of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. The McKinney-Vento Act requires that state and local educational agencies provide students experiencing homelessness with access to school and support for their attendance and success

The McKinney-Vento Program has allowed us to provide services to this population, who probably wouldn't have received such direct services. We have been able to identify students and get them enrolled into our schools; or were able to keep them in their schools of origin. However, the high cost of gas is causing a barrier for a small and economically stressed district. We also find a need to provide immediate housing for families that have been evicted on the weekend (Friday afternoon) when the shelters are full or the family is too large and the shelters refuse to take them. One solution would be to pay a week-end stay at a reasonable motel.

- Dr. Amy Perkins
  Federal Programs Director
  Harlandale Independent School District
  Texas

Key provisions of the Act include:

- Students who are homeless can remain in their "home" school, even if their temporary living situation is located in another school district or attendance area, if that is in their best interest. Schools must provide transportation.[10]
- Children and youth who are homeless can enroll in school and begin attending immediately, even if they cannot produce normally required documents, such as birth certificates, proof of guardianship, immunization records, or proof of residency.[11]
- Every school district must designate a homeless liaison to ensure the McKinney-Vento Act is implemented in the district. Homeless liaisons have many critical responsibilities, including identification, enrollment, and collaboration with community agencies.[12]
- Every state must designate a state coordinator to ensure the McKinney-Vento Act is implemented in the state [13]
- Both state coordinators and homeless liaisons must collaborate with other agencies serving homeless children, youth, and families to enhance educational attendance and success.[14]
- State departments of education and school districts must review and revise their policies and practices to eliminate barriers to the enrollment and retention in school of homeless children and youth [15]

The McKinney-Vento Act contains many other provisions designed to support the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It is a critical tool in any effort to help these students meet their educational goals

We are in desperate need of McKinney funding to support the academic support needs for our homeless students. The greatest need is support for basic educational needs of clothing, school supplies, funding for extra curricular activities, and transportation. Our district's Title I allocation was cut by $88,000 this year, and we weren't able to apply for a McKinney subgrant (2008-2011).

We have had numerous requests for clothing this week since the weather is changing, but there is no funding to purchase them. We are doing the very best that we can by working with United Way and other local community partners to meet the basic educational needs of homeless students but there aren't enough resources to address our need.

- Serena Williams
Coordinator of Community Services
Rock Hill Schools
South Carolina

WHAT FEDERAL POLICY MAKERS CAN DO

- Increase Funding to Keep Homeless Children and Youth in School. As described above, the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth program helps to ensure that students who are forced to move from their homes do not also have to leave their schools. In addition, the program provides homeless students with a variety of supports, such as tutoring, school supplies, and counseling, among others, to help stabilize their education even though the rest of their lives are fraught with uncertainty.

  Congress should provide school districts with an infusion of $72 million to help children and youth experiencing homelessness enroll, attend, and succeed in school. This funding would provide approximately 450,000 homeless students with additional supports to help them stay in school.[16] As mentioned earlier, the funding level for the McKinney-Vento program did not meet needs before the economic and housing crises; now that more families and youth are experiencing homelessness, more funding is desperately needed.

- Increase Funding for Head Start and Child Care. It is estimated that over 40 percent of children living in homeless shelters are under the age of five. These children are at an age where early childhood education can have a significant positive impact on their development and future academic achievement.[17] Compared to non-homeless children served by Head Start, young children

experiencing homelessness were reported to have greater developmental delays, to be more likely to have learning disabilities and developmental delays, and to exhibit a higher frequency of socioemotional problems

Current funding for Head Start and child care did not meet the previous demand, let alone the significant increase in need related to the economic crisis We support increased funding for Head Start and child care in any economic stimulus package to help address these needs.[18]

- Increase the Availability of Rental Housing for Low-Income Families According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, renters comprise approximately 40 percent of the households who are losing their homes due to foreclosures [19] Renters are often at the lower end of the income scale, and therefore, are among the most likely to become homeless when they lose their housing

  Congress and the new Administration should increase the availability of rental housing by allocating $10 billion to the recently created National Housing Trust Fund. These funds would be used to produce, rehabilitate, and preserve housing for people with very low incomes (50 percent or less of area median income). This infusion of funds would result in 100,000 units of affordable rental housing. Additionally, Congress should fund 400,000 new Section 8 Housing Vouchers over two years at a cost of $3.6 billion. This is critical, as communities currently have long waiting lists and additional funds are necessary to make even a modest attempt at meeting this growing need for rental assistance

- Prevent Families from Becoming Homeless. The best solution to homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Congress and the new Administration should provide families at risk of homelessness with such resources as security or utility deposits, utility payments, rental assistance, credit repair, and other activities to help stabilize housing for low income families. This could be accomplished in the economic stimulus package through an infusion of $2 billion into the Emergency Shelter Grant program, with accompanying language requiring that these funds be used for homeless prevention.

- Ensure that all Homeless Families Are Eligible for Federal Homeless Assistance. Many families who are becoming homeless due to the economic downturn are not considered homeless by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The HUD definition of "homeless" does not include

We still have many Student Residency Questionnaires to input into our Homeless Education Program database. We collect our data as quickly as possible This count is merely a point in time reference

More homeless students are being identified every day and it is impossible to keep up with the data entry.

With continued staff training and the current crisis, I believe we will far exceed last year's final count of 12,087.

We hear stories from our families regarding their current circumstances and the impact that the current economic and housing crisis has had on their lives. Current funding is woefully inadequate for those families that are in most need.

- Melissa Schoonmaker, L.C.S.W.
Pupil Services & Attendance Coordinator
Los Angeles Unified School District
California

We have seen a marked increase in families who are homeless because the home they were renting was repossessed. These are frequently families who have not had to depend on support resources in the past and are at a loss as to how to access resources. They often do not qualify for many services because their income was adequate to maintain stability prior to the eviction, but they don't have enough income to quickly obtain new housing and their circumstances deteriorate rapidly

- Alyson Collier
Program Coordinator ,Center Unified School District
California

families who have lost their homes and are temporarily staying with others or in motels. The reality is that homeless families often stay in these situations because shelters are full or do not exist where needed, or because shelter policies would cause families to split up. Fortunately, the Department of Education and other federal agencies have a broader definition of homeless, one that includes families who are temporarily "doubled up" or staying in motels. The disconnect between the two definitions means that many homeless students have access to school, but their families are not eligible for shelter, transitional housing, or other support services provided through HUD's homeless programs. During the reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Congress should more closely align HUD's definition of homeless with the more accurate statutory definition used by the Department of Education.[24]

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO SUPPORT FAMILIES, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

The McKinney-Vento Act provides the framework for the school response to homelessness, regardless of the reasons for homelessness. There are many steps that schools can take to ensure that children and youth who lose their housing maintain their school enrollment and stay on track in their education. In the recommendations below, we offer suggestions for implementing the McKinney-Vento Act (legal requirements are noted as such) and for going beyond the letter of the law to enhance stability, access, and support for success.

- Distribute Notice of the Definition of Homelessness and McKinney-Vento Rights to All Families and Students. School districts are required to distribute notice about who qualifies as "homeless" under the McKinney-Vento Act, as well as the basic rights to school stability, enrollment, and services.[20] This requirement is critical because so many families experiencing homelessness do not know that their living situation qualifies their children for educational protections and services. Many families are ashamed and embarrassed about their loss of housing, and may be reluctant to disclose personal information to school officials. Still, other families may fear child welfare involvement if their housing situation is known. Therefore, it is important for schools to both distribute notice and create an environment where families feel safe with their disclosures.

  The National Center on Homeless Education (NCHE), a clearinghouse funded by the U.S Department of Education, has developed and made available many tools on their web site. These include posters in English and Spanish (www.serve.org/nche), a poster specific to foreclosures, brochures for families and brochures for youth who are on their own. These materials can be placed in school front offices, counselors offices, school health offices, as well as throughout the community. In addition, school districts can use newsletters, web sites, and mailings to families as a way to get information to families and students

- Include Information on Homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act in Staff Development Activities. Many school personnel are unaware of the breadth of

Our transitional population continues to grow due to the economic crisis and the fact that our county has limited services for these individuals. We do whatever we can for the children who attend our schools; however, there are not enough resources for the families sa the support is not there

We are trying desperately to work 'within the system' to increase funding and to improve the shelter and housing situation, but everything seems to take so much time. Right now, we have a family of four doubled up with another family. A mother and her three high schoolers are sharing a room and sleeping on the floor.

In another situation, a mother with a preschooler and a kindergartener relocates every few nights because they have no permanent resident.

We have two families of five who have registered with our SafeNights Program, the county's traveling shelter program that utilizes churches. They have not yet started using the facilities, but will be doing so soon. We do not know where they are staying right now.

These are just some of the stories. The list goes on and on. All of these are of grave concern to us.

- Karen Kunkel
  Homeless Coordinator
  Charles County Schools
  Maryland

the federal education definition of homelessness and the basic provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act. It is critical that teachers, counselors, enrollment staff, bus drivers, and others who work directly with students become aware of potential signs of homelessness so that they may refer students to the school district liaison for assistance, and so that they may inform families and students of their right to continue to attend their same school despite mobility caused by loss of housing

Those conducting staff meetings or other staff development activities can draw upon numerous NCHE-developed training tools for school personnel, including fact sheets, flyers, sample forms, sample PowerPoint presentations, and other materials. The school district liaison should be contacted to provide information about district-specific policies and programming. Schools should contact the Office of the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth for state-specific information, policies, and training tools.

Our district's administrators, teachers, counselors and support staff work in consort with each other and our office, so that our homeless students are identified and enrolled in a timely manner. A big part of this success is due to the intensive training we provide to all-school staff and our Title I HOPE Advocates at the beginning of each school year with back-up training as needed.

- Myra Berkovits
  Coordinator, Title I HOPE
  Clark County School District
  Nevada

- Develop Relationships with Community Agencies. Schools have a unique position in communities, yet they cannot respond to the economic crisis in isolation. The McKinney-Vento Act requires school district homeless liaisons to collaborate with community agencies serving homeless families and youth. Collaboration with all community agencies is essential, particularly in times of economic crisis, in order for comprehensive services to be provided to families, including housing, shelter, health care, clothing, and other necessities. Schools should become familiar with agencies serving homeless and low-income families. These include the Continuum of Care programs funded by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as well as faith-based and other relief organizations. A listing of Continuum of Care programs may be found on HUD's web site at http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/budget/2007/index.cfm. Other directories of homeless service providers may be found at http://www.nationalhomeless.org/resources/index.html

- Support the School District Homeless Liaison. School district homeless liaisons are the backbone of the school response to homelessness School district liaisons are required to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness, to ensure that they are enrolled and have opportunities to succeed in school, to collaborate with community organizations, and many other duties. However, lack of funding at the federal, state, and local level mean that most liaisons have many other responsibilities and cannot dedicate the time required to sufficiently identify and meet the needs of all homeless children and youth. This lack of capacity is particularly acute during times of crisis, when more children and youth are in need of attention and assistance. School districts can help support the school district liaison by designating a contact person at each school site to serve as the eyes and ears of the liaison and assist with coordinating identification and services. District administrators also can provide liaisons access to school and district staff for awareness activities, as well as ensure that directors of other state and federal programs, such as Title I and special education, coordinate with the liaison to support homeless children and youth.

- Provide Supports at the School Building Level. Many schools have established a supply, clothing, and food closet at schools to meet the needs of homeless children. Schools can expand partnerships with businesses, parent organization initiatives, and civic groups to provide these items.

- Establish Thorough Orientation Practices for New Students (Including Homeless Students). Many schools have developed practices to welcome both students and parents and make them feel comfortable, safe, and wanted. Some schools accomplish this by linking new students with other students and helping them become involved in school and extracurricular activities

WHAT CAN COMMUNITY AGENCIES DO TO SUPPORT THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

An effective response to the educational needs of homeless children and youth involves many community agencies working together with schools to address the myriad needs of families and youth. The following action steps are recommended for community agencies, including those working with children and youth experiencing homelessness

- Distribute Information About the McKinney-Vento Act. The NCHE educational rights posters described above should be posted in shelters, motel front offices, the waiting rooms of medical clinics and public benefit offices, housing agencies, faith-based organizations, and any other location in a community where families congregate. Posters in these locations are especially important to reach families whose children may not be in school due to reasons associated with homelessness, and who may not know that their children are entitled to assistance with enrollment. School districts are required to post this information where children and youth receive services; community agencies can assist with further distribution and dissemination efforts.

  In addition, community agencies should familiarize themselves with the education definition of homelessness (see endnote 20) and inform families who meet this definition of their educational rights. Agencies should make referrals to the school district liaison so that families can receive the assistance their children may need to enroll or stay enrolled in school

- Assist Schools with Fund-Raising and Other Supports. As mentioned previously, school district homeless education efforts, as well as community homeless services, are woefully underfunded. Schools and homeless service agencies are witnessing stark increases in homelessness at the same time that budget crises are reducing resources for schools and relief organizations Community agencies can initiate drives for items such as food, clothing, and supplies to support homeless and other students in need.

- Support the School and Preschool Attendance of Young Clients. Those agencies that provide services to homeless families and youth should reinforce the importance of staying in school and attending regularly. Agencies can further assist by providing quiet places for students to study, appropriate environments

We have two local shelters with many great needs from tissue paper to detergents for washing clothing. There are no local funds to assist these families. We help with donations (personal), and the community assists, but these are tough times and funds just aren't available

We provide materials, books for children to read, uniforms, tutoring, social services, counseling and obviously personal items for the children who attend our schools. We provide these items through the McKinney-Vento Grant and Title I funding

Sometimes, we have to make hard decisions because we have limited funds and many needs. Fortunately, there are those more fortunate individuals who call and say they want to sponsor two families for the holidays. It is never enough We need increased funding for the homeless families and better facilities to house them.

- Charlotte Campbell
  Director of Instructional Services
  Gadsden City Schools
  Alabama

for children, including young children, to play, and enriching before and after-school activities. Agencies can also support attendance by assisting with transportation, particularly to early childhood programs and extra-curricular activities.

- Include School District Homeless Liaisons in All Appropriate Community Tasks Forces and/or Coalitions. School district liaisons occupy a unique role in communities. HUD Continuums of Care and other groups related to housing and homeless support services should include school district liaisons to share school data and needs, and to ensure communities consider the impact of their housing and economic decisions on the education of children.

- Adopt Policies and Practices that Allow Families to Stay Together. Too often, the trauma of homelessness is compounded by shelter policies that prohibit families with boys of a certain age (often 10 or older) from admittance. These policies force families to separate during a time of crisis, exacerbating hardships for children and parents, or forcing parents to seek alternative, precarious arrangements in order to keep their children with them. Agencies should accept families intact with all minor children, regardless of sex or age, or work to find adequate arrangements if lack of capacity prevents them from serving all members of the family.

- Allow Unaccompanied Youth to Access Services. In times of economic crisis, many youth experience homelessness on their own after family separation. These youth are particularly vulnerable and need additional assistance to navigate social services. Unfortunately, age or guardianship requirements often prevent unaccompanied homeless youth from accessing critical services. Agencies should review eligibility and other policies to make sure that unaccompanied homeless youth can participate in needed programs.

CALL TO ACTION

Our economy is in recession, the stock market has plunged, jobless claims are at their highest point in nearly three decades, and more loans are under foreclosure than ever before. In response, the government has taken unprecedented action - from the $700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program, to the bailouts of Bear Stearns, AIG, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and Citigroup, to the consideration of the auto industry bailout. Additionally, at the time this report was released, a large economic stimulus package is being prepared that is likely to stimulate job growth through infrastructure projects and make other investments in order to address the economic crisis.

Unfortunately, very little attention is being paid to the impact of this financial crisis on our children - and very little is being done to address it.

Our economy will recover from this crisis. The stock market will eventually rally, home prices will stabilize and home values will rise. But this crisis could have lasting long-term impacts on our children and youth if we do not act now.

It is less than 2 months into this current school year and we are already almost to half the number of total students we had during the entire year last year. I see a definite correlation to the current national economic downturn.

Families are losing the ability to provide basic housing, and turning to friends and relatives for lodging. This is not a reliable source of housing, and we are seeing an increase in transient students. Some students have already attended 2-3 schools so far this year. These families are also desperate for food, clothing, and basic necessities; many parents do have jobs, but in low-paying sectors. They are doing their best in a bleak situation, but it is their children who ultimately suffer the most.

As liaisons, it is our support of these families and their children that makes a critical difference in their school success. In turn, it is essential that we are supported by our government to be able to continue to do our work with America's homeless students.

- Lucinda McKenney,
Homeless Education Liaison,
Dover School District,
New Hampshire

An investment in our children is an investment in our country. In the actions that we take to reverse the economic downturn, we must make our children and youth a priority.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Economic Crisis Hits Home is based upon a web-based survey of school district homeless liaisons conducted by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) and First Focus. An email link to the web survey was sent to each State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (see Appendix A for the survey questions). Some state coordinators forwarded the link to their local liaisons, while others provided a list of liaison email addresses to NAEHCY/First Focus for direct distribution (state coordinator participation was voluntary). Responses to the survey were voluntary and self-reported; thus, the survey is not statistically representative of all school districts in terms of geography, demography, or size. 1,716 school districts completed the survey berween October 24 and December 10, 2008. Nationwide, there are approximately 14,598 school districts. Although efforts were made to reach all school districts through state offices, we do not know if in fact every school district received the survey. Since it is not possible to determine how many school districts received notice of the survey, a true response rate cannot be determined

It is important to note that the numbers reported by school district liaisons are likely to understate the magnitude of child and youth homelessness for many reasons. First, these numbers represent only those children identified as homeless and enrolled in school. While the McKinney-Vento Act requires all school districts to identify students experiencing homelessness pro actively, school district identification and outreach efforts vary. Many school districts have developed comprehensive methods for identification, while others are still in the process of creating awareness, training, and tracking systems. Even with the best identification and outreach methods in place, students may not be identified as homeless due to their mobility, their attempts to hide their situation due to stigma and fear of disclosure, being too young for school or preschool, or their absence from school or local homeless service programs.

Similarly, although all school districts are required by the McKinney-Vento Act to designate a liaison for students experiencing homelessness, this position is not typically a full-time position, but rather an assigned duty on top of other responsibilities. Lack of funding compounds these issues: only 6% of school districts nationwide receive dedicated McKinney-Vento homeless education funding. Districts that receive subgrants have more support for robust outreach and identification efforts.

The survey asked respondents for 2006-2007 school year totals of homeless children and youth enrolled, 2007-2008 school year totals of homeless children and youth enrolled, and current enrollment for this year, 2008-2009. 614 school districts were able to give a specific date to compare this year's enrollment to the previous year's

I have surpassed the number of students served for the 2006/2007 school year before the end of the first semester. I predict that the number of students served will outpace any previous year (including Rita/Katrina numbers).

I have seen a rise in domestic disturbances and homeless youth. There have been more families moving over state lines hoping far a better economic outlook in this area.

We are doing more out of district transportation than any previous year, and transportation has spent more money on this program than any previous year. Transportation has already increased spending due to high gas prices, and increased ridership in general. Transportation needs more funds to enable us to best serve the increase in out-of-district bussing requests.

Not only have the numbers increased, but that is coupled with an increase in the depth of the family crisis, and decrease of emergency funds. Shelters are full, public housing is overwhelmed, all charities and aid agencies are seeing a dramatic increase in need.

I think that this increase will persist into the next school year, and possible beyond. People are running out of places to turn when they need the help more then ever.

- Emily Walters
  Youth in Transition Social Worker
  Buncombe County Schools
  North Carolina

enrollment at the same date, thus allowing a direct comparison between years. Of those, 220 showed an increase.

Not all respondents' data systems allowed for this specific comparison. For those districts that did not have the ability to submit data for specific dates, we calculated the current enrollment as a percentage of the previous year's enrollment. It should be noted that children and youth experiencing homelessness are a highly transient population; thus, unlike other groups of students, schools do not enroll all homeless students at the beginning of the school year. Some students become homeless as the school year progresses, or they are not identified until later in the year, while other students experiencing homelessness move into the school district later in the year and are identified at that time. For this reason, we believe the current enrollment calculated as a percentage of last year's enrollment provides a valid indication of an actual increase in the number of homeless students identified.

ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATIONS

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) is a national grassroots membership association, serving as the voice and the social conscience for the education of children and youth in homeless situations. NAEHCY connects educators, parents, advocates, researchers, and service providers to ensure school enrollment and attendance, and overall success for children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by the lack of safe, permanent, and adequate housing. NAEHCY accomplishes these goals through advocacy, partnerships, and education. Visit our website at www.naehcy.org.

FIRST FOCUS

First Focus is a bipartisan advocacy organization that is committed to making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. First Focus brings both traditional and non-traditional leaders together to advocate for federal policies that will improve the lives of America's children. Child health, education, family economics, child welfare, and child safety are the core issue areas in which First Focus promotes bipartisan policy solutions. Visit our website at www.firstfocus.net.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NAEHCY and First Focus would like to express our gratitude to local school district homeless liaisons. Liaisons are a lifeline connecting families, schools, and communities; we greatly appreciate their tireless work on behalf of homeless children and youth.

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APPENDIX A – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Name. _____
State _____

1. Your LEA's total number of enrolled homeless students (including preschool students) for the 2006-2007 school year

2 Your LEA's total number of enrolled homeless students (including preschool students) for the 2007-2008 school year

3 Your LEA's most current number of enrolled homeless students (including preschool students) for the 2008-2009 school year (i e this year),

a Pleose give the date of this enrollment data _____
b If you have the enrollment numbers as of this same date last year, please list those numbers here.
_____

4. If your district hos experienced an increase in homelessness, please indicate your perceptions of the primary causes of the increase. Please check all that apply:

- Economic downturn (job loss, high cost of living, etc.)
- Foreclosure crisis (including renters, where rental property has been foreclosed)
- Increasing incidences of domestic violence, substance abuse, or other factors negatively influencing mental or physical health
- High medical expenses, with inadequate or no health insurance
- Other (describe) _____

5. OPTIONAL: If you wish to share any comments, current needs, examples, or other thoughts, please do so here

6. OPTIONAL: I am willing for NAEHCY/First Focus to refer Congressional Offices and/or national or local media to my school district for more information

- yes
- no
- possibly (please elaborate) _____

7 OPTIONAL. Please list your email address if you would like a copy of survey results sent to you
_____

NOTES:

[1] Federal law requires each public school district to designate a liaison that has responsibility for identifying, enrolling, and supporting homeless students This law, subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, is discussed in greater detail on page 9

[2] The U S Department of Education is in the process of collecting 2007-2008 school year data from all states, a national total for 2007-2008 will not be available until early next year

[3] National Center for Homeless Education (2008) Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Analysis of Data from the 2006-07 Federally Required State Data Collection for the McKinney-Vento Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 and Comparison of the 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2006-07 Data Collections Greensboro, North Carolino Author NCHE publications are supported through a contract with the U S Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs For more information, visit http //www ed gov/programs/homeless/index html

[4] Buckner, J (2007) Impact of homelessness on children. An analytic review of the literature In D Rog, S Holupka, & C Patton, Characteristics and dynamics of homeless families with children Final report (Contract No 233-02-0087 TO14) Washington, DC U S Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Services Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation A later and condensed version of this paper was published in the American Behavioral Scientist· Buckner, J C (2008) Understanding the impact of homelessness on children Challenges and future research directions American Behavioral Scientist, 51(6), 721-736

[5] Ibid

[6] Rubin, D H , Erickson, C J , San Agustin, M , Cleary, S D , Allen, J K , & Cohen, P (1996) Cognitive and academic functioning of homeless children compared with housed children Pediatrics, 93, 289-294

[7] General Accounting Office (1994). Elementary school children Many change schools frequently, harming their education (GAO/HEHS-94-45) Washington, DC Author

[8] Rumberger, R (2003) The causes and consequences of student mobility Journal of Negro Education, 72, 6-21

[9] Buckner, J (2007)

[10] No Child Left Behind Act, 42 USC §§11432(g)(1)(J)(iii), 11432(g)(3)(A)-(B) (2002)

[11] No Child Left Behind Act, 42 USC §11432(g)(3)(C) (2002)

[12] No Child Left Behind Act, 42 USC §11432(g)(1)(J)(ii) (2002)

[13] No Child Left Behind Act, 42 USC §11432(f) (2002)

[14] No Child Left Behind Act, 42 USC §§11432(f), (g)(6) (2002)

[15] No Child Left Behind Act, 42 USC §11432(g)(1)(I) (2002)

[16] An additional $72 million is equal to twice the amount of funding that was included in the stimulus packages proposed by the Senate during the fall of 2008 These funds would provide services for those homeless services who were identified by the Department of Education but not served, plus a 23% increase in homeless students resulting from the economic downturn and foreclosure crisis
(A) Number of unserved homeless students during 2006-2007: 679,729 homeless students identified - 385314 served homeless students = 294,410 unserved homeless students (Source = National Center for Homeless Education, 2008)
(B) Cost per homeless student $61 9 million/385,314 homeless children served = $161 per homeless child
(C) Cost of serving 2006-2007 unserved homeless students 294,410 unserved homeless students X $161 = $47 million
(D) Cost of serving a possible 23 percent increase in homeless students = A 23% increase is 155,280 newly homeless students 155,280 x $161 = $25 million
(E) Total Cost· C + D = E [$47 million (294,410 homeless students) + $25 million (155,280 homeless students) = $72 million (approximately 450,000 homeless students]

[17] Burt, M R , Aron, L Y , Douglas, T , Valente, J , Lee, E , & Iwen, B (1999, August) Homelessness Programs and the people they serve Summary report-findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients Washington, DC The Urban Institute

[18] For additional information on Head Start and child care policy recommendations, contact the National Head Start Association (www nhsa org) or the National Association of Resource and Referral Agencies (www naccrra org)

[19] Pelletiere, D , & Wardrip, K (2008) Renters and the housing credit crisis Poverty and Race, 17, 3-7. Additional information on the impact of the foreclosure crisis on renters is available at www nlihc org/template/page cfm?id=159

[20] Under federal education law (No Child Left Behind Act, 42 U S C 11434a(2) (2002)), the term "homeless children and youth" —
(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence , and
(B) includes—
(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason, are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations, are living in emergency or transitional shelters, are abandoned in

hospitals, or are awaiting foster care placement,
(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings, and
(iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii)

[21] National Bureau of Economic Research (2008). Determination of the december 2007 peak in economic activity Cambridge, Massachusetts Author

[22] U S Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (2008, December) Unemployment insurance weekly claims report Retrieved December 14, 2008, from http //workforcesecurity doleta gov/unemploy/claims asp
[23] Mortgage Bankers Association. (2008, December). Delinquencies increase, foreclosure starts flat in latest MBA national delinquency survey Retrieved on December 14, 2008, from http //www mortgagebankers org/NewsandMedia/PressCenter/66626 htm

[24] During the 2006-2007 school year, 69 percent of the children and youth—470,000 students—who were considered homeless by the Department of Education were not considered homeless by HUD This is calculated based on information provided in National Center for Homeless Education, 2008

TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL NO. 5915 "AN ACT CONCERNING STUCK KIDS"

February 18, 2009

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a non-profit organization based at the University Of Connecticut School Of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy.

We strongly support Bill No. 5915 which will require the Department of Children and Families (DCF) review and monitor its placement of out-of-state youth and issue annual reports to the General Assembly concerning these children.

Recently, the Center for Children's Advocacy represented **Jason,** a 15 year old boy who had lived in out-of-state treatment for 3 years. He was so desperate to get back to his home community by spring of last year, that he said that he was even willing to go to a residential placement in Connecticut, if only because it brought him closer to his home town of Waterbury and a half-brother who lived in a city foster home. **He said that he just felt like people had forgotten about him.** Today Jason attends school, lives in a therapeutic foster home in Waterbury, and has regular visits with his half-brother.

Unfortunately, today there are still hundreds of children and youth that make up the "unseen population" of children placed out-of-state by the Department of Children and Families.[1] These youth are at great risk of "falling through the cracks" because they are not being adequately monitored at a critical point in life – adolescence and their young adult years. These children are also leaving a community that they may have called home for many years and are being asked to adapt to a new, typically institutional setting, without regular contact from parents, mentors, siblings and friends. Many of these youth can be and should be placed in community-based placements in Connecticut, where they can be treated in a less restrictive environment and allowed to foster nurturing relationships with family, friends and mentors.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Healy Eagan
Director of the Child Abuse Project

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[1] **There are presently 300 children out of state.** The number of children placed in out of state institutional or residential settings has fluctuated, but it has never been substantially reduced and continues to be a priority concern. DCF Court Monitor, JUAN F. V. RELL EXIT PLAN QUARTERLY REPORT JULY 1–SEPTEMBER 30, 2008, p. 23, *available at* http://www.ct.gov/dcf/lib/dcf/positive_outcomes/pdf/3rd_quarter_2008_report.pdf

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF COMMITTEE BILL NO. 5915
AN ACT CONCERNING "STUCK KIDS"

February 19, 2009

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a private, non-profit legal organization based at the University of Connecticut School of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy. I am an attorney at the Center and the Director of the Center's Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic, which provides legal services to teens throughout the state. In addition, I am the chair of the Connecticut Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth,[1] a statewide group of professionals interested in improving access to services and supports for runaway and homeless youth in the state of Connecticut. The Team is comprised of state agencies such as the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Court Support Services Division, and the State Department of Education, as well as private providers throughout the state including Kids in Crisis, RYASAP, The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, the Village for Families and Children as well as others.

I write today to urge you to support Committee Bill No. 5915, "An Act Concerning 'Stuck Kids'." The Center is supporting this bill because we believe it will improve Connecticut's ability to provide supports and services to an invisible population. We also believe this bill will bring much-needed attention to the needs of runaway and homeless youth in this state. The bill seeks to require DCF to review and monitor the placement of every out-of-state, runaway and homeless child and youth in DCF custody, care or supervision and to issue an annual report to the General Assembly.

Why do we call runaway and homeless youth "the invisible population"? This is because there is very little known about these kids in Connecticut. They are invisible because:

- there is little data on this population
- there are few services for this population
- there is little coordination between a multitude of systems and agencies serving this population
- there is little awareness of this population in Connecticut

Who are Connecticut's runaway and homeless youth? They are youth in the care of the DCF, youth who have been physically and sexually abused, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth who have been kicked out of their homes after "coming out", adolescent boys who are not allowed into family homeless shelters, and youth who are

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[1] The Connecticut Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth was convened in the summer of 2008 in response to a request by the American Bar Association's Committee on Homelessness and Poverty as well as the National Network for Youth that each state bring together advocates to affect systemic change on behalf of runaway and homeless youth.

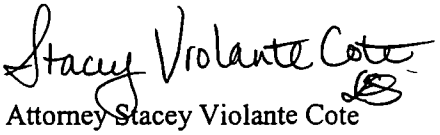
victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth states that parental abuse and neglect is a primary cause of homelessness among unaccompanied youth (homeless youth who are on their own).[2] The National Network for Youth estimates that according to studies of a homeless youth sample, 33% had been in foster care, 51% had been physically abused, and 60% of girls and 23% of boys had been sexually abused.[3]

In Connecticut, we do not have an accurate number of runaway and homeless youth. We know that the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), a database maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, reported on October 20, 2008 that there were 236 active runaway cases and 4,300 purged records for runaway cases in Connecticut for 2008. (Please see attached data sheet.) We also know that the National Runaway and Homeless Youth Management and Information System reported a total of 209 runaway and homeless youth in Connecticut for 2007.[4] A report from the Office of Legislative Research indicates that though the number is difficult to precisely count, there are more than 350 unaccompanied homeless children under the age of 18 in Connecticut.[5]

This bill would help to shore-up at least one source of the data necessary to understand the needs of runaway and homeless youth in Connecticut. DCF's data of runaway kids in its care is equally inconsistent as the numbers cited above. *The number of runaway incidents of children/youth in DCF care includes a 2007 total of 1,522 and a 2006 total of 1,815.*[6] However, this data intermingles youth who have left DCF placements for short periods of time and those who have truly runaway from DCF placements. Since we know that the runaway and homeless youth population is closely tied to the child welfare system, asking for an accurate count of runaway and homeless youth in the care of DCF makes sense. This bill will help to move us from a discussion of an "invisible population" to a discussion about the supports and services needed to effectively address issues of runaway and homeless youth in Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Attorney Stacey Violante Cote
Director, Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic
Chair, CT Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth

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[2] "Using What We Know: Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth." 39, Julianelle, Patricia, The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, February 2008, available at http://www.naehcy.org/dl/uwwk_youth.pdf.

[3] "Unaccompanied Youth: Fast Facts" National Network for Youth, citing YouthCare, Inc , 1998, available at http //www nn4youth.org/media/factsheets/FactSheet_Unacompanied_Youth.pdf.

[4] This number is believed to be an underestimate as it is only includes reports from grantees of a national grant to work with runaway and homeless youth

[5] "Poverty, Homelessness, and Children." CT Office of Legislative Research (July 7, 2008).

[6] Data provided by DCF to the CT Team: Runaway and Homeless Youth in December 2008.

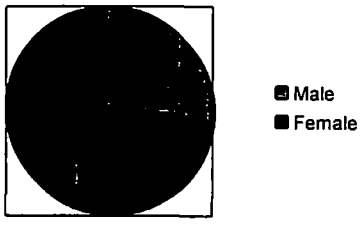
How many runaway and homeless children and youth are in Connecticut?
We don't know!

What *DO* we know?

National Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS)

CT 2007 Total: 209

Male:	77
Female:	132
<12 years:	22
12-14 years:	68
15-16 years:	87
17-18 years:	32

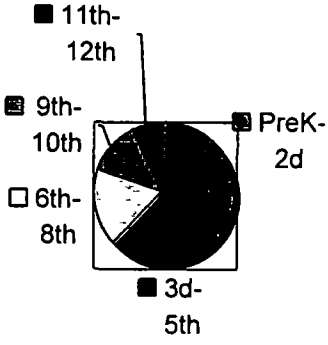


CT Department of Education

Homeless children/youths enrolled in public school (132 LEAs not reporting)

2007-08 School Year Total: 2017

Pre-k – 2d grade:	722
Grades 3-5:	532
Grades 6-8:	367
Grades 9-10:	253
Grades 11-12:	143

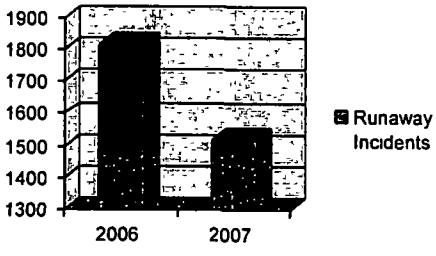


CT Department of Children and Families

Runaway *incidents* of children/youth in DCF care

2007 Total: 1,522

2006 Total: 1815



CT Court Support Services Division

Runaways (unique clients):

FWSN 10/1/07 – 9/30/08:	240
YIC 1/1/08 – 11/15/08:	147

National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

Active runaway cases on 10/20/08:	236
Purged runaway records for 2008:	4,300

Testimony of Gwendolyn Eaddy-Samuel – Meriden CT
Before the Select Committee on Children
Connecticut General Assembly
Public Hearing, February 19, 2009

HB6419

Good Morning, Senator Musto, Representative McMahon and esteemed members of the Select Committee on Children.

My name is Gwen Eaddy-Samuel, a mother of four and I live in Meriden, Connecticut. I am parent leader & community advocate for children and families based on personal experiences, past employment and my commitment to help create a results based accountable, culturally sensitive Child Protective System that puts into practice strength based approaches versus the deficit model approach to address the needs of Connecticut's children and their family with a focus being placed on community based and family centered.

I am a strong supporter of PREVENTIVE, EARLY INTERVENTION types of programs and initiatives that keep kids safe, teach conflict resolution, and parent supports that keep families safe, healthy and intact as families continue to work toward self-sufficient living. I work toward making Social services of CT an Accountable, results based, community based and family centered systems

Please support the following bills:

HB 5915, AN ACT CONCERNING "STUCK KIDS"

The raised bill would develop accurate information on out-of-state, runaway and homeless children and youth in the custody, care or supervision of the Commissioner of Children and Families.

What does this bill do?

- Require the Commissioner of Children and Families to review and monitor the placement of every out-of-state, runaway and homeless child and youth in the custody, care or supervision of the Department of Children and Families.
- Require the commissioner to issue an annual report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the Select Committee on Children regarding the placement of the children and youth

HOUSE Bill 878, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES