



DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities



Joette Katz
Commissioner

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

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A Healthier Foster Care System Emerges As State Celebrates National Foster Care Month
Kinship Care Now More Common Than Group Care
As Department Continues To Focus On Relative Caregivers

HARTFORD – Kinship care has supplanted congregate or group care as the second most common type of placement for children in the state foster care system. As Connecticut celebrates May as National Foster Care Month, the Department of Children and Families is increasingly using relatives and other people who know the children as a family resource.

This shift has become so pronounced that in February 2014, more children who entered care during that month were placed with kin than any other type of placement, including non-relative foster homes, which are typically considered "traditional" foster homes. This was only the second time on record that this has occurred.

Governor Dannel P. Malloy said that kinship care is better for children because placing a child with someone he or she knows is less traumatic and increases the likelihood of reunification and, ultimately, permanency.

"Think about what any of us would want for our children," the Governor said. "If something happened to us as parents and we could not care for our children, we would want them to live with a relative or other person with whom they were close. It is simply the best way to respond to a child in time of need."

Commissioner Joette Katz said she is very proud of Department staff for their response to the call to increase kinship care and decrease congregate or group care. "Our workers have very difficult jobs and raising the bar in the way we have only makes that work more challenging," Commissioner Katz said. "More work remains to be done for sure, but they have made tremendous progress in engaging relatives and kin in this work."

In January 2011, when the current administration came into office, nearly 30 percent of children in care lived in a group setting and 21 percent lived with kin. As of March 2014, that has been reversed -- with 21.2 percent living in group care and nearly 33 percent living with kin. During February 2014, 38.9 percent of the children entering care during the month were placed with kin, which exceeds even the percentage placed in traditional foster homes. (That is only the second time that has occurred, with the first time being September 2013.)

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Commissioner Katz also has challenged Department staff to reduce the percentage of children in group care even further and, as part of that effort, recognizes that recruiting foster homes for teenagers is particularly important because 93 percent of the children in group care are 13 years old or older. "We need to focus recruitment activity in particular on our teenagers because they are the most likely not to be living in a family," Commissioner Katz said. "This is the area of greatest need, and so it is really important that we get out the message that teenagers in care can be the most rewarding to parent."

Connecticut's celebration of National Foster Care Month includes a number of initiatives:

- Thank you cards featuring artwork by children in foster care are being sent to all licensed foster families in Connecticut;
- 21 salons in Connecticut are featuring a "blue service" such as a blue-dyed strand of hair, blue hair chalk or blue manicure. Each salon will offer informational materials on foster care and adoption to the public;
- The May 23 CT Sun women's professional basketball game will focus on National Foster Care Month as fans in attendance will learn about the rewards of being a foster parent, and 200 tickets are being given to foster families as a form of appreciation;
- Throughout May, the New Britain Rock Cats will highlight National Foster Care Month and offer information about foster care and adoption at all home games;
- Connecticut businesses -- Big Y, Lake Compounce, Coco Key, and Tanger Outlet -- are offering discounts to foster families;
- Alex and Ani held a special event April 22 bringing awareness to foster care and adoption and donating 10 percent of sales to the "CAFAP (Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents) Kids Fund" to be used for special expenditures for children;
- During the month of May, the Department's Facebook and Twitter pages will be dedicated to raising awareness about foster care and adoption;
- Heart Gallery exhibits featuring children awaiting adoption are on display at the Mystic YMCA, Artworks in Hartford, the Legislative Office Building, the Omni Hotel, Colchester Town Library and Middlesex Community College;
- Informational displays are being shown at public libraries in West Hartford, Manchester, Southington, Cheshire, Killingworth, Clinton, Woodbridge, Milford, Fairfield, and Trumbull;
- IHOP restaurants in Hamden, Bloomfield, Orange, Meriden, and Waterbury will use a special placemat featuring information about foster care and adoption to serve customers on Mother's Day weekend; and
- Build A Bear stores at the Trumbull, Buckland Hills and Danbury Fair malls will host 40 foster children to attend a bear-building party. Each bear will be dressed in a Foster Care Awareness Month tee shirt.

To learn more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent, please call **1-888-KID-HERO** or go to www.ctfosteradopt.com.

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