



DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities



Joette Katz
Commissioner

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

For Immediate Release
September 5, 2014

Contact: Gary Kleeblatt
Phone: 860-550-6305
Page: 860-260-0940

Post-Newtown Behavioral Health Draft Plan Now Available For Public Comment
*Prevention, Early Intervention, School And Community-Based
Access To Services Are Focus Of Draft Plan*

Hartford – The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is seeking public comment on the draft *Connecticut Children's Behavioral Health Plan*. The draft plan is now posted to the www.Plan4Children.org website and will be available for public review and comment through September 12.

The *Connecticut Children's Behavioral Health Plan* is a comprehensive, integrated plan to meet the mental, emotional and behavioral health needs of all Connecticut children as well as to prevent or reduce the long-term, negative impact of mental, emotional and behavioral health issues on children. The plan fulfills the requirements of Public Act 13-178, one part of the Connecticut General Assembly's response to the tragedy in Newtown. The final plan will be submitted by the Department to the Legislature in October 2014.

Governor Dannel P. Malloy said the tragedy in Newtown spurred a wide-spread discussion about the need to improve mental health services for children and youth, and that the behavioral health plan is an important step in that process.

"One of the most meaningful things we can do in the aftermath of Newtown is to promote the emotional and mental health of all our children," the Governor said. "By promoting health, preventing problems from developing into crises, and intervening early when problems occur, our children will be healthier, happier and stronger."

Department of Children and Families Commissioner Joette Katz said the draft plan benefitted from extensive input from children and families who have experience seeking and receiving behavioral health services in Connecticut and that this comment period is another opportunity for the public to make its voice heard.

"When we listen to families, it is clear they have so much to teach us about how to make further improvements," Commissioner Katz said. "This public comment period gives the families a

--more--

chance to see how well we heard what they said and to ensure we have effectively built their perspective into the plan and into the services. The key to effectively helping children and families is to gain their full participation and that means we have to respect their expertise."

The draft plan identifies six areas of focus that will result in significant improvements to the children's behavioral health system, including:

- (1) system organization, financing and accountability;
- (2) health promotion, prevention, early identification, and early intervention;
- (3) access to a comprehensive continuum of care;
- (4) continuity, coordination, and integration of care;
- (5) address disparities in access to culturally and linguistically appropriate care; and
- (6) family and youth engagement.

A set of goals and strategies to be implemented over the next five years are included for each of these six areas. Highlights include:

- Implement a statewide system of early detection and connection of children/youth to appropriate resources and services;
- Enhance school-based health promotion and prevention and expand school-based mental health services, including mental health screening for students and workforce development;
- Integrate pediatric primary care and community based behavioral health services as well as provide training and support for pediatricians to address mental health concerns, including adequate commercial insurance payment;
- Allocate funding to expand evidenced-based mental health services for children/youth to prevent and treat social/emotional disorders as early as possible;
- Develop a financing strategy to adequately resource a comprehensive array of behavioral health services promoting prevention, treatment and maintenance to ensure those services are culturally- and linguistically-competent, and accessible in all communities;
- Create a pooled financing system to "de-link" services from insurance status, system involvement and other factors, and provide children access to services based on needs;
- Convene a Children's Behavioral Health Implementation Team that will agree on a common set of behavioral health outcomes and track and regularly report on implementation progress and results.

DCF selected the [Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut \(CHDI\)](#), an organization with specialized expertise in children's mental health and development, to facilitate the development of the plan. CHDI and DCF established an Advisory Committee and launched an extensive input-gathering process as the cornerstone for the preparation of the plan. Input was gathered from families, youth, advocates, health and mental health providers, researchers, educators, stakeholders and members of the public through six open public forums, 26 family and youth "community conversations," 12 facilitated discussions with topical experts, and input submitted through www.Plan4Children.org. The plan's development is funded by a public-private partnership involving the Connecticut Health Foundation, the Children's Fund of Connecticut and the Grossman Family Foundation.

