



Joette Katz
Commissioner

DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES
Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

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Commissioner Joette Katz Convenes Children's Experts
To Reach Out To Communities, Recommend Agency Reforms
Governor Malloy Joins Commissioner In Welcoming DCF Transition Team

HARTFORD -- Department of Children and Families (DCF) Commissioner Joette Katz on Friday convened a group of experts on children's issues to gather input from the community on key agency reforms.

Governor Dannel P. Malloy joined Commissioner Katz in welcoming the "transition team" members at their first meeting today at the Connecticut Appellate Court building in Hartford. Governor Malloy said the transition team has an urgent task given that a child's earliest experiences and development will impact the child during his or her entire life.

"We have a small window of time to accomplish a great many things," the Governor told the group. "We will only settle when things are right."

Commissioner Katz, who ends her first full week on the job today, stocked this transition team with pediatricians specializing in child abuse and early intervention, experts in children's mental health, foster care, and the legal system, and child advocates.

Commissioner Katz underlined how important it is for the agency to have strong working relationships with people and organizations outside of the Department who work closely with children. Commissioner Katz said the transition team has a vital function in connecting the Department to the community partners -- especially service providers -- necessary to improve services for children.

"The Department cannot do its work alone and so must improve the way it works with its community partners," Commissioner Katz said. "One of the most important results I expect to see from the transition team are concrete recommendations on how we can serve as a more effective member of the larger community helping children and families."

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The team of volunteers is being led by Appellate Court Judge F. Herbert Gruendel, who formerly served as the chief administrative judge for family matters. In a message to the other members of the team, Judge Gruendel said this "represents the first time in a long time that a new DCF commissioner has reached out to the community for information about how the agency is doing."

The mission of the transition team is to (1) identify areas where the Department should focus its improvements efforts; (2) identify individuals and organizations in the community that the new DCF administration should consult with on those issues; and (3) identify specific actions the Department should take to improve its work.

Child Advocate Jeanne Milstein and Martha Stone, the executive director of the Center for Children's Advocacy, also are serving on the transition team.

The entire list of transition team members follows:

- **F. Herbert Gruendel**, Appellate Court Judge; former Chief Administrative Judge for Family Matters
- **Jim Battaglio**, journalist; former vice-president of Hartford Hospital
- **Steve Grant**, Director, Court Support Services, including family relations, probation, and parole
- **Lubbie Harper, Jr.**, Appellate Court Judge
- **Kathy Holahan**, attorney, Connecticut Legal Services
- **Dr. Nina Livingston**, Pediatrician, CCMC and St. Francis, specializing in child abuse evaluation, care of foster children, and related areas
- **Dr. Darcy Lowell**, Pediatric; Head of ChildFIRST Early Intervention Program, funded by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- **Jeanne Milstein**, Child Advocate
- **Dr. Kenneth Robson**, Psychiatry, Institute of Living
- **Dr. Galo Rodriguez**, President and CEO, Village for Families and Children
- **Evan Seeman**, Attorney, currently volunteering at Children's Law Center; soon joining Robinson and Cole; Volunteer (ie. Pro bono) Staff to Transition Team
- **Martha Stone**, Attorney for plaintiffs in suits against DCF, now head of the Center for Children's Advocacy
- **Raymond Torres**, Head of Annie E. Casey Foundation's Connecticut operations; former head of foster care services in Oklahoma and New York City
- **Michael Williams**, DCF Area Director, Hartford

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