



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Testimony Regarding

HB 5005, An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021

Member Organizations

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice
Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center
Danbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program United Services
Dayville, CT

Network Against Domestic Abuse
Enfield, CT

Domestic Abuse Services Greenwich YWCA
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

Chrysalis Domestic Violence Services
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services
New Haven, CT

Safe Futures
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program United Services

Department of Social Services Budget

Appropriations Committee February 19, 2020

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Flexer, Representative Abercrombie and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our members provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

We are requesting a total of \$954,000 in state funding through the Department of Social Services (DSS) to support one full-time Child & Family Advocate at each of Connecticut's 18 domestic violence organizations. Child & Family Advocates are the backbone of critical support to the nearly 1,000 children that stay in our state's domestic violence shelters annually, along with another approximately 3,600 children who seek community-based services with a parent each year.

There is currently no state funding provided in Connecticut for Child & Family Advocates at domestic violence organizations. Federal pass-through funding provided by the CT Office of Policy and Management (OPM) in the amount of \$11,500 per program covers approximately one-third of the cost of a full-time advocate. Considering that 4,632 children were served across the state in fiscal year 2019 and that funding was provided for .3 full-time advocate at each local domestic violence organization, the current funding structure only allows each Child & Family Advocate to provide 2.4 hours of service to each child annually. This is neither adequate nor sustainable.

The complexity of the issues a family is experiencing is directly equivalent to the complexity of the services they need. The trauma associated with experiencing domestic violence is quite complex. Many survivors seeking to end an abusive relationship must leave behind everything they have in search of safety. This means not only the relationship that they've known, but it may also mean their housing and all of their belongings, including those of their children. This can be an overwhelming and stressful period of transition for both the survivor and the children.

It is important that children who experience family violence in their home are provided a comprehensive and holistic approach that takes into account their different needs. Families benefit from services that incorporate a multi-faceted approach involving both large and small scale change. By working with the family unit, service providers gain greater insight into the level of violence experienced by all members of the family and can assist in the continuous development of age appropriate safety planning.

Currently our Child & Family Advocates utilize a number of trauma-informed, evidence-based and resiliency-driven approaches to their work including the Devereux Early Child Assessment (DECA); Mom's Empowerment and Kid's Club curricula; play, music and art therapy, and child-specific responses to trauma and violence. The Child & Family Advocates will support the non-offending parent in identifying protective factors that will enhance the relationship with child(ren). Building protective factors are about helping to ensure the basic needs of the family are met, such as food, clothing, and shelter, as well as connecting parents and children to various services they request.

(OVER)

Just meeting the immediate basic needs of a survivor and child entering shelter can be complex and time consuming, let alone the ongoing supports the family needs. Consider this family who recently sought services and fled with only the clothes on their back. The Child & Family Advocate met this family at shelter to start preliminary services, including purchasing diapers, formula, clothing and preparing a room for the school age children and a crib for the infant. The next day the advocate contacted the children's school to ensure that transportation would be provided from the shelter per the McKinney-Vento Act, bought replacement uniforms that the children needed, stuffed new backpacks with school supplies, and contacted their teachers individually to let them know that although the children may not have their homework, they should not be penalized. Once the children were settled at school, the advocate worked with mom to start the journey of stability and success. This includes working with other advocates both within and outside of the domestic violence organization to address court-based, housing, employment, economic security, and counseling needs. This scenario shows how one day with a family can easily surpass the 2.4 hours that a Child & Family Advocate has annually to work with a child under the current amount of federal pass-through funding provided for the position.

Currently our member organizations utilize different funding sources to supplement the federal pass-through received from OPM. This may include fundraising or private philanthropic support to pay for a full-time Child & Family Advocate, or it may include combining the Child & Family Advocate position with funding for another part-time position, such as Community Educator, and hiring one, full-time staff person to function in both roles. Approaches vary across CCADV member organizations.

Providing supportive evidence- and strengths-based resiliency services for children and the survivor/non-offending parent is paramount to the overall safety and stability of the family, but is not sustainable under the current funding structure. Two and half hours spent per child/family each year is not adequate to meet the complex needs they are facing. It is critical that we prioritize the role of the Child & Family Advocate to ensure that children and survivors receive the services they need to thrive. As such, we urge your support of state funding to fully fund these positions.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Kelly Anelli, MHSV
Director of Member Organization Services
kannelli@ctcadv.org
(959) 202-5004