



General Assembly

**Substitute Bill No. 912**

January Session, 2021



**AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING AND OVERSIGHT OF FATHERHOOD INITIATIVES.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) As used in this section and  
2 section 2 of this act, (1) "Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative", or "CFI",  
3 means an initiative that (A) promotes the positive involvement and  
4 interaction of fathers with their children with an emphasis on children  
5 eligible or formerly eligible for services funded under the Temporary  
6 Assistance for Needy Families block grant, and (B) identifies services  
7 that effectively encourage and enhance responsible and skillful  
8 parenting and increase the ability of fathers to meet the financial and  
9 emotional needs of their children; and

10 (2) "CFI objectives" means:

11 (A) Promoting public education concerning the financial and  
12 emotional responsibilities of fatherhood;

13 (B) Assisting men in preparation for the legal, financial and emotional  
14 responsibilities of fatherhood;

15 (C) Promoting the establishment of paternity at childbirth;

16 (D) Encouraging fathers, regardless of marital status, to foster their

17 emotional connection to and financial support of their children;

18 (E) Establishing support mechanisms for fathers in their relationship  
19 with their children, regardless of their marital and financial status; and

20 (F) Integrating state and local services available for families.

21 (b) There is established within the Department of Social Services the  
22 Office of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative. The office shall be  
23 overseen by the Commissioner of Social Services and shall perform  
24 administrative duties on behalf of the CFI in accordance with a strategic  
25 plan developed and implemented by the CFI with the approval of the  
26 council established pursuant to section 2 of this act.

27 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a CFI  
28 Council to approve the work of the CFI, including, but not limited to,  
29 implementation of CFI objectives through a strategic plan developed by  
30 the CFI. The council shall actively participate in efforts that further CFI  
31 objectives, including, but not limited to, (1) fostering collaboration  
32 between state agencies that provide services for fathers and families; (2)  
33 seeking opportunities to coordinate comprehensive services, ensuring  
34 the continuity of services, heightening the impact of services and  
35 avoiding duplication of services; and (3) supporting fathers of children  
36 eligible or formerly eligible for services under the Temporary Assistance  
37 for Needy Families block grant, including, but not limited to: (A)  
38 Providing assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for  
39 in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (B) promoting the  
40 independence and self-sufficiency of needy parents by promoting job  
41 preparation, work and marriage; (C) preventing and reducing the  
42 incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and (D) encouraging the  
43 formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

44 (b) The membership of the council shall include, but need not be  
45 limited to:

46 (1) The Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's  
47 designee;

48 (2) The Commissioner of Children and Families, or the  
49 commissioner's designee;

50 (3) The Commissioner of Correction, or the commissioner's designee;

51 (4) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's  
52 designee;

53 (5) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;

54 (6) The Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the  
55 commissioner's designee;

56 (7) The Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee;

57 (8) The Labor Commissioner, or the commissioner's designee;

58 (9) The Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or  
59 the commissioner's designee;

60 (10) The Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's  
61 designee;

62 (11) The commissioner of Veterans Affairs, or the commissioner's  
63 designee;

64 (12) The chairperson of the Board of Pardons and Parole, or the  
65 chairperson's designee;

66 (13) The executive directors of the Support Enforcement Services  
67 Division and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch,  
68 or their respective designees;

69 (14) The Chief Family Support Magistrate, or the Chief Family  
70 Support Magistrate's designee;

71 (15) The president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities,  
72 or the president's designee;

73 (16) The director of the Office of Child Support Services within the  
74 Department of Social Services, or the director's designee; and

75 (17) At least eleven members appointed by the Commissioner of  
76 Social Services, including:

77 (A) One with expertise in the area of legal assistance to low-income  
78 populations;

79 (B) One representative of the Connecticut Employment and Training  
80 Commission;

81 (C) One representative of a regional workforce development board;

82 (D) One member with expertise in family relations;

83 (E) One or more representatives of a local fatherhood program;

84 (F) One member with expertise in male psychology and health;

85 (G) One member representing the interests of custodial parents;

86 (H) One member representing the interests of noncustodial parents;

87 (I) One member representing the interests of children;

88 (J) One member with expertise in the area of domestic violence; and

89 (K) One member with expertise in child development.

90 (c) The Commissioner of Social Services shall serve as a chairperson  
91 of the council and shall designate a second cochairperson from among  
92 the membership of the council. The commissioner shall convene the  
93 council not later than thirty days after the effective date of this section,  
94 and the council shall meet at least quarterly thereafter. The  
95 commissioner shall fill any vacancy on the council.

96 (d) The Commissioner of Social Services may designate a working  
97 group from among the members of the council to carry out specific

98 duties required under this section and section 1 of this act. The  
99 commissioner shall seek the advice and participation of any person,  
100 organization or state or federal agency the commissioner deems  
101 necessary to carry out the provisions of this section and section 1 of this  
102 act.

103 (e) The Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the  
104 council and within available resources, shall apply for any available  
105 federal and private funds for programs that promote CFI objectives in  
106 accordance with this section and section 1 of this act. The commissioner  
107 shall award grants from any such available funds to entities that provide  
108 (1) employment and training opportunities for low-income fathers to  
109 increase the earning capacity of such fathers; (2) classes in parenting and  
110 financial literacy; and (3) other support services and programs that  
111 promote responsible parenting, economic stability and communication  
112 and interaction between fathers and their children.

113 (f) Applicants for grants provided pursuant to subsection (e) of this  
114 section shall apply to the Commissioner of Social Services at such time  
115 and in such manner as prescribed by the commissioner. The  
116 commissioner shall, in consultation with the council, establish criteria  
117 for eligibility for grants and for the awarding of grants. At a minimum,  
118 the commissioner shall require grantees to (1) implement accountability  
119 measures and results-based outcomes as a condition of being awarded  
120 a grant; (2) leverage funds through existing resources and collaboration  
121 with community-based and nonprofit organizations; and (3) consult  
122 with experts in domestic violence to ensure that, when appropriate, the  
123 programs and services provided to fathers and families pursuant to this  
124 section and section 1 of this act address issues concerning domestic  
125 violence.

126 (g) Not later than December 1, 2021, and annually thereafter, the  
127 commissioner, in consultation with the council, shall report, in  
128 accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint  
129 standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of  
130 matters relating to human services and children on the grant program's

131 effectiveness in achieving CFI objectives.

132 Sec. 3. Section 17b-27a of the general statutes is repealed. (*Effective*  
133 *from passage*)

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	Repealer section

**Statement of Legislative Commissioners:**

In Section 2(a)(3), "block grant program" was changed to "block grant" for internal consistency.

**HS** Joint Favorable Subst.