

# 2016 Annual & RBA Report

Connecticut Commission on  
Women, Children *and* Seniors



# CWCS



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## OUR MANDATE *(excerpted)*

*Sec. 131. (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2016) (a) There is established a Commission on Women, Children and the Elderly, which shall be part of the Legislative Department. The commission shall focus on issues affecting each of the following underrepresented and underserved populations: Women, children and the family and elderly persons. The Commission on Women, Children and the Elderly shall constitute a successor to the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Children, and Commission on Aging in accordance with the provisions of subsections (b) to (d), inclusive, and subsection (f) of section 4-38d and section 4-38e of the general statutes.*

*Sec. 132. (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2016) (a) The Commission on Women, Children and the Elderly shall:*

*(1) Focus its efforts on the following quality of life desired results for women, children and the family and elderly persons in the state: That they are (A) healthy, safe and achieve educational success; (B) free from poverty; and (C) free from discrimination;*

*(2) Make recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor for new or enhanced policies, programs and services that will foster progress in achieving the desired results described in subdivision (1) of this subsection. Such recommendations shall, when applicable, include, but need not be limited to: (A) Systems innovations, model policies and practices which embed two-generational practice in program, policy and systems change on the state and local levels; (B) strategies for reducing family poverty, promoting parent leadership and family civics; (C) the promotion of youth leadership opportunities that keep youth engaged in the community; and (D) strategies and programs that address equitable access, impede bias, and narrow the opportunity gap for women, children and the family and elderly persons in the state. Such recommendations may include other state and national best practices, and recommendations on federal funding maximization;*

*(3) Review and comment, as necessary, on any specific proposed state legislation or recommendations that may affect women, children and the family and elderly persons in the state and provide copies of any such comments to members of the General Assembly;*

*(4) Advise the General Assembly concerning the coordination and administration of state programs that affect women, children and the family and elderly persons in the state;*

*(5) Gather and maintain, as necessary, current information regarding women, children and the family and elderly persons in the state that can be used to better understand the status, condition, and contributions of such groups. Such information, as appropriate and pertinent to the desired results delineated in subdivision (1) of this subsection, shall be included in the annual report submitted in accordance with subsection (b) of this section and shall be made available to legislators and other interested parties upon request;*

*(6) Maintain liaisons between women, children and the family and elderly persons of the state and government agencies, including the General Assembly; and*

*(7) Conduct educational and outreach activities intended to raise awareness of and address critical issues for women, children and the family and elderly persons of the state.*



Dec. 31, 2016

Joint Committee on Appropriations  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Honorable Appropriations Committee Members:

I am pleased to present the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors' (CWCS) 2016 Results-Based Accountability (RBA) and Annual Report to the General Assembly.

As you know, the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors was formed earlier this year through the consolidation of three previous legislative commissions. My staff, appointed members of our Board, and I are proud of our duty to fulfill our mandate as we move forward. This report is an account of our stewardship in continuing the work of our forebears as of July 1, 2016, when we officially began operating as a new commission, to the end of the calendar year.

In the six months we've been coalescing and operating as a new commission, our commitment to leading discussions and convening partners inside and outside of government on behalf of our three constituencies has been at the forefront of all we've done. In order to do so, while remaining independent in our judgment and committed to our non-partisan mandate, the CWCS intends to adhere to three basic principles:

- Any position we take, or advice and support we give, on an issue or policy will be informed by data, best practices, or both;
- When necessary, we will ask the tough questions that test the status quo and which may lead to reform or innovation; and
- We will strive for efficiencies, both systemic and programmatic, which will benefit our constituencies while saving the state time, money and effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the state's women, children and older adults. I look forward to a new year of hard, dedicated work on behalf of these three underrepresented, and at times underserved, populations.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Hernández". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Steven Hernández, Esq.  
Executive Director

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## About this RBA Report

Any report of annual accountability of the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors must take into consideration the dissolution of its three forebears as a result of the consolidation mandated during the last legislative session. This RBA report, therefore, does not reflect work done by these previously autonomous commissions; rather, it reflects work done -- and progress made -- from July 1, 2016 through the end of this calendar year.

In our six months of operation, the new commission has made strides in cultivating among previous coalition partners of the PCSW, the CoC and the CoA a new loyalty, new enthusiasm and new dedication to working together.

As a non-partisan arm of the Connecticut General Assembly which serves as staff to the legislature, the CWCS researches best practices, coordinates stakeholders, and promotes public policies that are in the best interest of Connecticut's underserved and often underrepresented women, children and older adults.

The agency recognizes that the experiences and needs of each population, while interconnected, are unique and may require individual public policy action. This RBA's "Quality of Life Results" are therefore organized into three sections to reflect our three target populations.

Please note that budget and staffing cuts have, by necessity, focused the scope of the services we can adequately provide. Therefore, we have included in the "Data Development Needed" sections at the end of each RBA indicator those projects and initiatives that constitute a "wish list" if personnel were to be fully authorized and funding fully restored.

# Mission Statement and Priorities

The Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS) is a non-partisan arm of the Connecticut General Assembly. As staff to the legislature, the CWCS researches best practices, coordinates stakeholders, and promotes public policies that are in the best interest of Connecticut's underserved and underrepresented women, children and older adults.

The agency recognizes that the experiences and needs of each population, while interconnected, are unique and may require individual public policy action. Therefore, the commission's legislative priority areas are meant to:

## For Women:

- Enhance women's economic security through leadership development and such family-friendly workplace policies as paid family leave and pay equity;
- Ensure wellness throughout the lifespan, including access to the full range of reproductive healthcare; and
- Eliminate gender-based discrimination in the workplace and in government.

## For Children:

- Empower families and community leaders to be change agents on behalf of children;
- Remove the economic and academic obstacles that prevent children and their families from reaching their full potential; and
- Promote the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of children.

## For Seniors:

- Promote economic security, choice and independence for older adults in both work and retirement;
- Support livable and accessible communities where older adults can retain their dignity and age in place; and
- Enhance the safety and wellbeing of seniors by preventing physical abuse and financial exploitation.

# RBA Quality of Life Results

## RBA Quality of Life Result #1:

*All Connecticut women have optimal health, opportunity and safety throughout the lifespan.*

### Indicator 1: Economic security at work and home

#### Story behind the baseline:

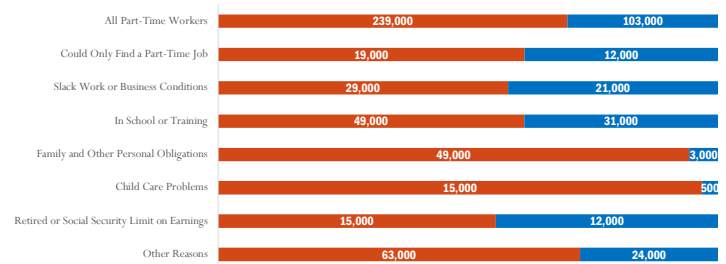
The United States remains the only industrialized nation without some system of paid family and medical leave. Unreimbursed time off to care for loved ones (or oneself) directly and severely affects women's ability to remain in the workforce and frequently sets women back professionally.

Additionally, the loss of income puts a financial hardship on Connecticut's families, 19.4% of which are now headed by single women. (FMLA, while an important jobs protection act, does not pay any portion of the worker's salary, and so is not used by many who are eligible but feel they cannot afford to take the time off from work. In addition, FLMA does not cover 50% percent of workers.)

And paid leave would also enhance women's health and safety, as paid leave would allow them to leave the workforce temporarily to care for their own health needs, ranging from the birth or adoption of a child to self-care after a sexual assault.

There is also a class distinction worth pointing out: the lower the income of the worker, the less likely she/he is to be able to take time off. Half of Connecticut's working women are employed in lower-paying service and sales occupations, which are notoriously bad when it comes to giving time off for medical care. And this disparity often affects women of color more dramatically, as the gender-based wage gap is far worse for them: in Connecticut, Latinas make just 46.6%, on average, of the white male dollar, and African-American women make 60.3%.

Finally, women of child-bearing age are often most in need of paid leave, and have few options.



Number of part-time workers by gender and reason for working part-time, Connecticut, 2012.

#### Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Enact a system of Paid Family and Medical Leave;
- Enact legislation that supports family-friendly workplace policies;
- Better coordination among advocacy groups working on women's issues; and
- Give younger women leadership options to work on policies that affect their lives.

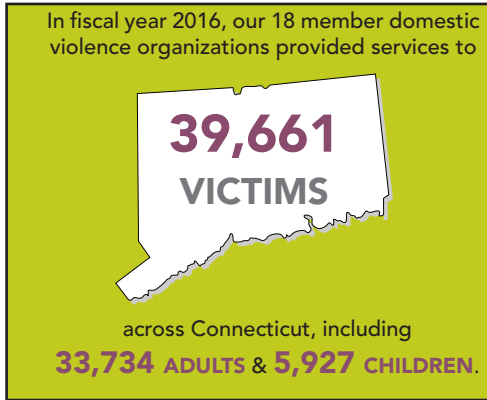
#### CWCS supports these strategies through:

- The CWCS works closely with the Connecticut Campaign for Paid Family Leave;
- CWCS supports legislation aimed at increasing women's financial security; and
- Opportunities provided through the Young Women's Leadership Program.

#### Data development needed:

- Update the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Connecticut (2015);
- Update the "On the Road to Economic Security Pathways" recommendations (2015); and
- Update the Status of Women in Connecticut's Workforce Report (2015).

## Indicator 2: Violence and discrimination against women



### Story behind the baseline:

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive, controlling behavior that can include physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial abuse. It is a pervasive, life-threatening crime that affects thousands of individuals in Connecticut, a disproportionate number of whom are women.

The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), which partners with CWCS on combatting the crime of domestic violence, reports 39,661 victims of domestic abuse in Connecticut for the year 2016. (*Graphic above courtesy CCADV.*)

Prevention efforts seek to reduce the overall likelihood that anyone will become a victim or a perpetrator by creating conditions that make violence less likely to occur. Prevention of intimate partner violence focuses on preventing first-time perpetration and first time victimization.

It's generally held that effective prevention efforts should promote healthy, respectful relationships in families, while countering the underlying beliefs, sexist attitudes, and misogynistic social norms -- deeply embedded in our social structures -- that condone forms of family and intimate partner violence.

On average, there are 12 to 14 intimate partner homicides each year in Connecticut. Firearms have been the most frequently used weapon in those homicides (39%). Until last legislative

session, despite having some of the toughest gun laws in the nation, as well as progressive policies addressing domestic violence, nothing in Connecticut law prohibited respondents of temporary, *ex parte* restraining orders from possessing firearms and ammunition. This is especially wrong because the days following a victim's application for a restraining order and attempts to end an abusive relationship are the most dangerous.

Fortunately, the General Assembly did pass an *ex parte* bill last session. This year, the CWCS will monitor legislation to make sure that does not get repealed.

### Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Advocate for legislation to support and protect victims through the judicial process; and
- Support domestic violence services in order to ensure women's access to confidential care, information, referral and safety.

### CWCS supports these strategies through:

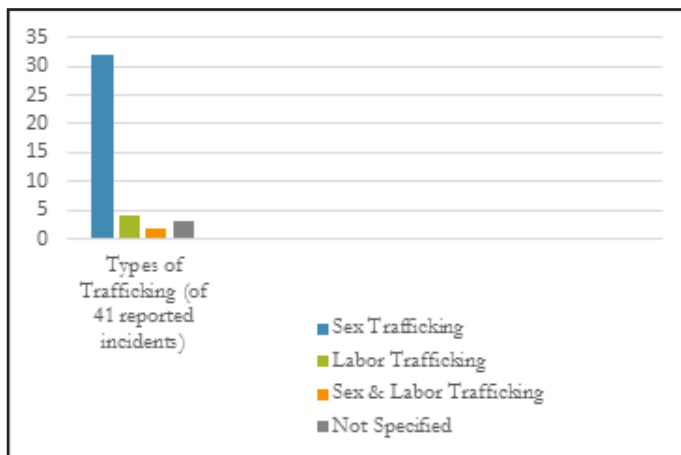
- Partnering with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) to support legislation that would protect the current restraining order process (which removes firearms from an abuser when a judge deems that a woman is in imminent danger and grants a temporary restraining order); and
- Meeting with lawmakers to support the work of CCADV and their member centers throughout the state and legislation that seeks to strengthen protections for victims and prevent domestic violence.

### Data development needed:

- A study of the men who become abusers: propensity, percentage, psychological make-up, etc.



### Indicator 3: Human trafficking



#### Story behind the baseline:

Because of recent legislation, and the work of the Trafficking in Persons Council (TIPC), under-aged sex workers in Connecticut are no longer regarded under the law as prostitutes; rather, they are rightly regarded as exploited children who are victims of sex trafficking.

And while we don't have a complete picture of the scope and nature of sex and labor trafficking in Connecticut; we do know that sex, labor and domestic minor sex trafficking are taking place here. Connecticut's location along the I-95 corridor between New York and Boston makes it, in the eyes of some anti-trafficking experts, something of a human trafficking thruway.

We have pockets of information regarding various types of trafficking, and because of the Department of Labor investigation and the work of advocates on the ground, we know there are a large number of nail salon workers being exploited.

In addition, more than 456 children have been referred to DCF as possible victims of minor sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation since 2005.

*Charts and data courtesy of TIPC.*

#### Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

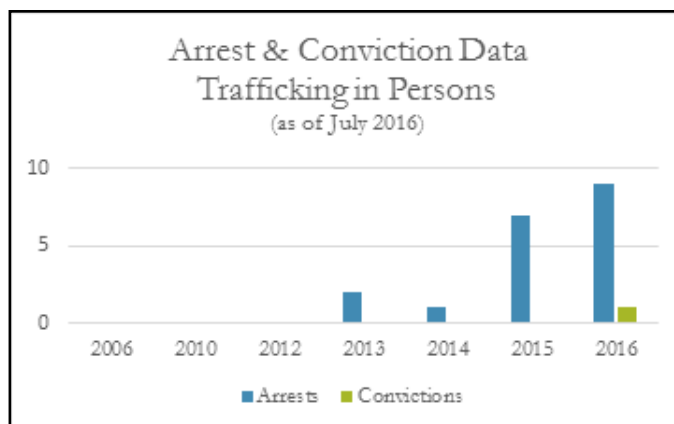
- An examination of why there have been no arrests or convictions in Connecticut for patronizing a minor under the age of 18 or a trafficking victim, despite the passage, in 2013, of Connecticut Statute 53a-83: Patronizing a Prostitute, which is a Class C felony;
- Legislation to require state's prosecutors and police chiefs to report to the legislature on trafficking investigations and prosecutions;
- Legislation to address the workplace and employment violations at Connecticut nail salons; and
- Greater public awareness of the "demand side" of the crime of trafficking.

#### CWCS supports these strategies through:

- CWCS chairs, pursuant to statutory mandate, and convenes, on a bi-monthly basis, the TIPC;
- Meetings with lawmakers to discuss potential policies to address nail salon issues and the lack of prosecution for trafficking in persons; and
- CWCS supports the TIP's efforts to disseminate the "End Demand" campaign, using traditional and social media to educate the public about the crime of purchasing victims for sex.

#### Data development needed:

- A statewide needs assessment study to ascertain the magnitude and nature of the problem; and
- A study of the extent of trafficking in Connecticut's nail salons.

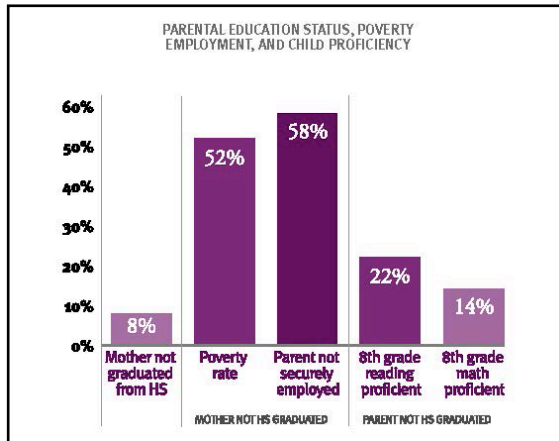




## RBA Quality of Life Result #2:

*All Connecticut children and youth are safe, and school- and workforce-ready.*

### Indicator 1: Early education and family stability



#### Story behind the baseline:

Low-income families in Connecticut continue to face substantial obstacles to economic self-sufficiency and access to quality early childhood education for their children. In Connecticut, 80,000 children under age 5 are in low-income households, 60% percent of low-income families with young children have no parent working full-time, year round, and 80% of low-income parents do not have a postsecondary degree. Families face challenges at work and home with their childcare and education due to inflexible, unpredictable jobs and insufficient income coupled with the lack of access to quality early childcare and education. These challenges lead to a continuum in the cycle of poverty, parent and child stress at home, and undiagnosed developmental and mental health needs.

The Commission on Women, Children and Seniors administers the Connecticut General Assembly's statewide Two-Generational Initiative. The two-generational initiative equips families with the tools and skills they need to get on the path to opportunity and overcome obstacles they face, by ensuring education and workforce development services for parents and high-quality early education for children. Meeting the needs of children and parents together, the family builds education, economic assets, social capital, and health and well-being to create a legacy of economic security that passes from one generation to the next.

#### Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Help social service providers to see families as units of people with integrated needs;
- Improve results for children with disabilities by improving educational services, including special education; and
- Develop leadership in parents and teach them how to be advocates for their children in schools and through civic engagement.

#### CWCS supports these strategies through:

- Two-Generational Initiative;
- Family Support Council; and
- Parent Leadership Training Institute.

#### Data development needed:

- Expand the development of the Hartford region's two-generational data system to be used statewide by all providers who serve families. The data system would include a common intake and enrollment process form, middleware to aggregate data from providers and modules for referrals and scheduling to streamline the process for providers and families.



*Two-Gen teamwork at the Capitol. Education/Poverty graphic courtesy of the 2015 "Kids Count" Report from CAHS.*

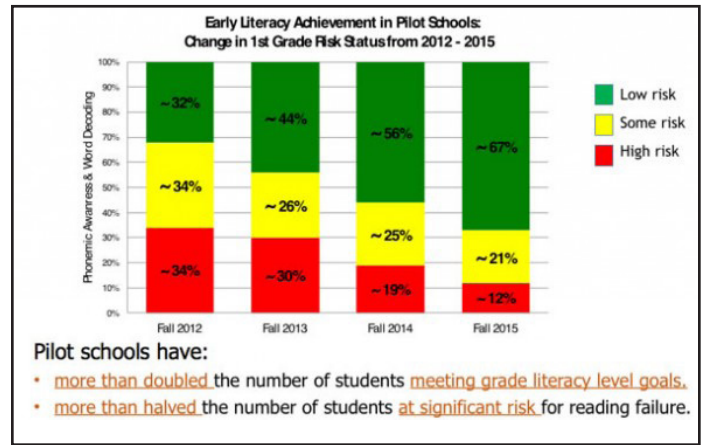
## Indicator 2: Literacy

### Story behind the baseline:

In the last few years, the CWCS and the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, in partnership with the State Department of Education, The University of Connecticut, Literacy How and the Grossman Foundation, sought to pilot, learn from, and grow an intentional set of literacy reforms to significantly narrow the opportunity gap in reading.

Policies have developed, as needed, to facilitate this intensive response to what continues to be an education crisis in the state. Initial reforms piloted the use of alternative instruments to assess children's reading level and building capacity of all teachers in the science of teaching reading. As we learned the extent of the need, a new pilot was developed in 2012 to focus on the 50% of African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students who were not reading at proficiency. This included individualized reading interventions to help these students move forward successfully.

In year three of the reform, we focused our efforts on professional development to improve teacher knowledge of teaching reading and increase pedagogical and practical exposure, expanding the interventions that were successful over the last two years. This included the development of a reading survey for teachers, the results of which were to be used to develop individual reading teacher knowledge through targeted professional development. Building on the results and learning from the ongoing, now-consolidated reading pilots, the CWCS continues to participate in leading a coordinated statewide literacy effort by 1) building internal capacity in tier 1 and 2 literacy efforts in Alliance Districts and Commissioner's Network schools; and 2) providing technical support in the development of district plans for improving literacy, leadership training modules with teacher leaders, principals, district reading coordinators and superintendents, to create and sustain reading improvement in their schools and districts, and an annual statewide reading conference (READCONN). The CWCS continues to work with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus and other stakeholders to bring these much needed interventions to scale in the state.



### Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Increase literacy among minority and low-income children;
- Encourage parents to read to their children and help parents improve their own literacy skills; and
- Improve oversight of achievement gap in literacy in schools statewide.

### CWCS supports these strategies through:

- CK3LI – partnership with UConn and SDE to address achievement gap;
- Conduct 3 parent literacy trainings per year in 40 schools;
- Hold forums with Pre-K and Birth-to-3 coalition leaders;
- Serve on the Achievement Gap Task Force; and
- Serve on Interagency Council to End the Achievement Gap.

### Data development needed:

- Create a research arm for CK3LI with a funded study at NEAG that aggregates data of key reading indicators at one month, three months and six months in schools and districts that have implemented the initiative.

*Graphic courtesy of Michael Coyne, Ph.D., Professor of Educational Psychology, Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut.*

### Indicator 3: School climate

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#### Story behind the baseline:

The National School Climate Council defines “school climate” as “the quality and character of school life.” School climate is based on patterns of students’, parents’ and school personnel’s experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes: Norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe; all people, including school leaders, teacher students and staff, are engaged and respected; students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision; educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

In many school communities, over 50% of students do not feel safe in school. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention affirmed that bullying is a public health problem. In fact, one in three students reports being bullied, and there is a growing body of research that shows that mean, cruel and/or bullying behaviors adversely affects everyone: the target of this behavior (the “victim”), the people who see or hear about it (“witnesses”) and the person who is acting in mean, cruel and/or bullying ways.

In fact, the entire school community is affected by the negative behavior of even a few students.

The most common finding in NSCC’s school climate measurement using the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) with thousands of schools is that, although the adults believe that social as well as physical safety is a “mild” and sometimes “moderately severe

problem,” students consistently rate school safety as a “severe problem.” As a result, a significant percentage of our work with schools, districts, State Departments of Education and the federal government has been focused on promoting socially responsible behavior and preventing mean, cruel and/or bullying behavior in order to promote socially responsible behaviors.

#### Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Address bullying in schools by promoting interventions that are less punitive and more restorative in nature;
- Promote positive school climates through research-based prevention, including multi-tiered interventions and supports, school-wide assessment and data tracking on climate and culture;
- School-wide climate training, social and emotional skills building and integration of such skills throughout the school day; and
- Asset-based behavioral and restorative interventions.

#### CWCS supports these strategies through:

- Participation in the School Climate Task Force;
- Promoting statewide adoption of sensible, fair and effective anti-bullying laws, National School Climate Standards, and district and school adoption of and implementation of model climate policies;
- Founding member of a national collaborative on academic, social and emotional learning developing integrative SEL guidance for schools;
- Partnering with the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Born this Way Foundation and Facebook on InspirED and the youth-led Emotion Revolution; and
- Working with the State Department of Education on integrative social and emotional learning standards for schools.

#### Data development needed:

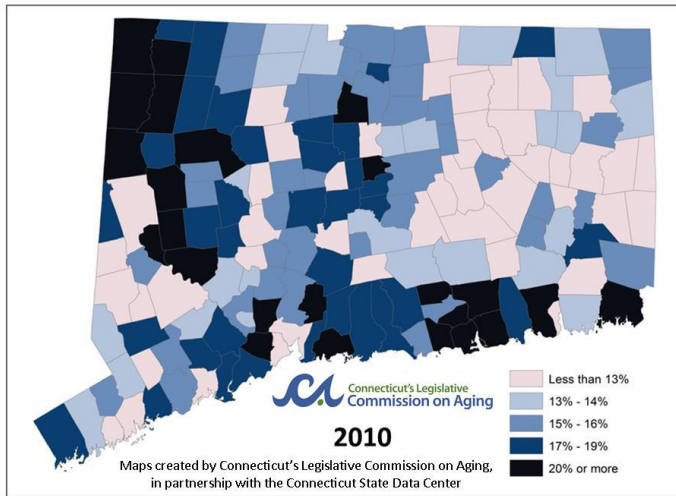
- School-based, grade-appropriate school climate assessment in every Connecticut school; and
- Data on schools and personnel that have received school climate and tiered intervention and supports training, and information on school climate indicators in those schools pre- and post-training, including attendance, referrals, and exclusionary discipline.

## RBA Quality of Life Result #3:

*All older Connecticut adults can age safely and productively in their community.*

### Indicator 1: Long-term services and supports

#### Percentage of People Age 65 and Older as Proportion of Total Population



#### Story behind the baseline:

With the growing numbers of older adults in Connecticut, rebalancing the Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) system towards a model of home and community based services (HCBS) versus institutional care costs significantly less and honors personal choice. Over the past several years, Connecticut has made progress towards in systematic change that allows more choices and options for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Although progress has been made, additional work needs to be done.

As part of the efforts to support the Connecticut Long-Term Care Planning Committee initiatives to implement a LTSS plan, the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) calculates progress toward achieving the state's balance ratio goal of serving 75 percent of individuals receiving LTSS in the community and 25 percent receiving LTSS in institutions by 2025. (PRI Report 12/7/16) To this end, CWCS will focus our efforts in supporting systems change that "rebalance" the Long-Term Services and Supports system.



#### Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Coordinate and encourage communications among stakeholders in the aging community.
- Monitor changes in Medicaid and Medicare as they affect older adults.

#### CWCS supports these strategies through:

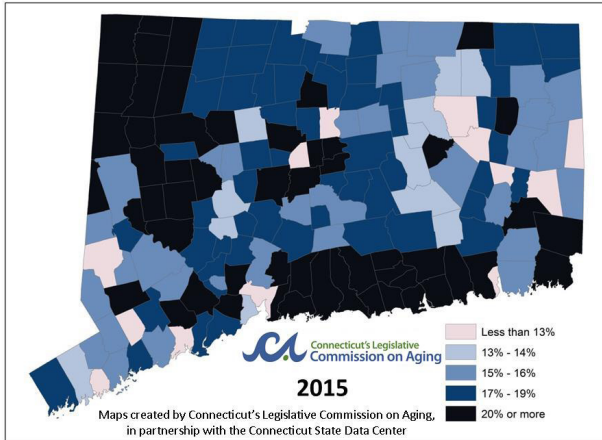
- CWCS chairs and convenes the Long-Term Care Advisory Council (CGS Sec. 17b-338);
- CWCS participates in MAPOC, a stakeholder group that identifies, pursues and designs federal opportunities to streamline the HCBS system; and
- Education and engagement of local municipalities in their efforts to respond to their changing demographics.

#### Data development needed:

- Updated demographic data trends concerning Connecticut's aging population.

## Indicator 2: Aging in place

Percentage of People Age 65 and Older as Proportion of Total Population



### Story behind the baseline:

Connecticut's population is aging, and that demographic transformation is both dramatic and permanent. By 2015, almost every town in Connecticut will have 20% or more of its population 65+. These changing demographics will impact nearly every facet of society ranging from housing, transportation to programs and services.

According to a recent AARP survey of Americans over and discovered that 89 percent wanted to stay in their own homes as long as possible. Aging in Place is defined as "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level" (according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)).

With Connecticut's population changing demographics in the state, communities that feature strong social services and supports help older adults prevent initial and repeated encounters with the health care system, improve quality of life, and keep people in their homes and communities.

In the past several years, legislation and program initiatives have promoted Aging in Place programs, stemming from the legislative Aging in Place Task Force (SA 12-6) in 2012.

Together with stakeholders, CWCS will continue to create and promote policy that addresses the growing numbers of older adults in Connecticut, honoring consumer choice and fostering collaboration and systems change.

### Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

- Assess programs and service delivery systems available to older adults in their communities; and
- Create/support legislation responsive to changing state demographics that promote aging in place.

### CWCS supports these strategies through:

- CWCS serves as administrative staff to the legislatively mandated Senior Center Task Force (SA 16-7) charged with assessment of delivery of health and human services and related information to persons age 60 years and older by senior centers, municipal agents, appointed pursuant to section 7-127b of the general statutes and other municipal employees; and
- CWCS monitors and testifies on legislation with attention to how well it serves older adults who wish to remain in their communities.

### Data development needed:

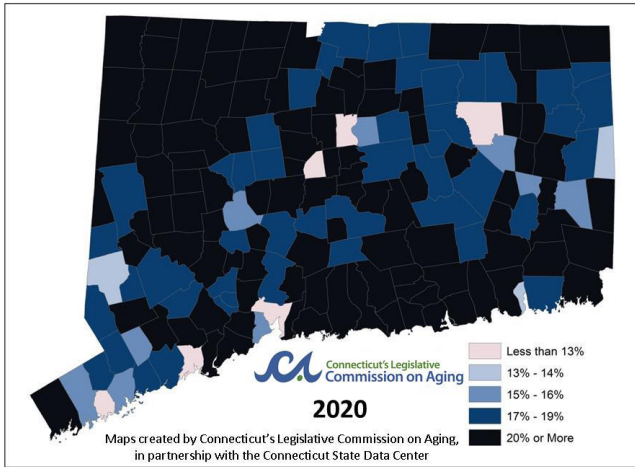
- Emergency generator in senior housing assessment study.



Area Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut's Annual Centenarian Luncheon.

### Indicator 3: Direct care workforce employment

Percentage of People Age 65 and Older as Proportion of Total Population



#### Story behind the baseline:

Around the nation, states are grappling with how to meet the escalating demand for Long-term Services and Supports (LTSS) while at the same time reframing their service delivery systems toward home- and community-based settings and away from institutional ones. A growing number of states are focusing on workforce policy and development as part of a multi-tiered approach to achieving the goals of increasing the volume of services provided while offering care in the least restrictive setting possible.

The Connecticut Department of Labor expects the demand for Nursing Assistants, Personal Care Aides and Home Health Aides to grow significantly by 2024.

This demand reflects a growing aging population and increase in demand for services. Workforce development is one of the most significant components to achieve success in LTSS “rebalancing.” Connecticut possesses many valuable resources and initiatives for health care education and training, including a large number of strong institutions, associations, and professionals. Initiatives in recent years have laid a foundation for shared planning and action, and additional collaboration and coordination is critical to meet the anticipated growth in workforce projections.

To continue addressing this challenge, CWCS will promote workforce initiatives that are proven to

support consumer choice, self-direction and quality while enhancing recruitment, retention, productivity and training of the direct care workforce.

#### Proposed strategies to turn the curve:

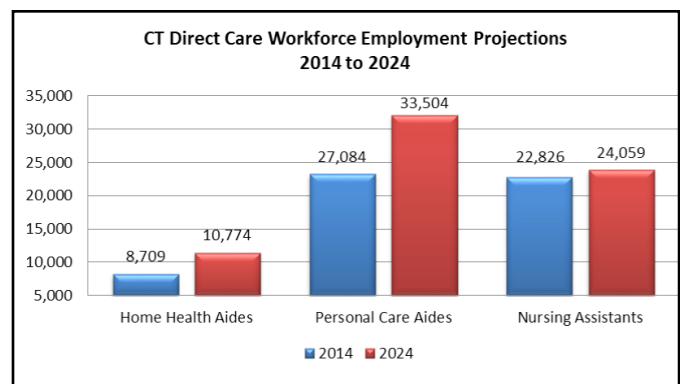
- Create a quality workforce to care for the growing number of older adults in Connecticut;
- Promote efforts to ensure a properly trained aging services workforce; and
- Collaborate with provider organizations to advocate for adequate reimbursements.

#### CWCS supports these strategies through:

- Support policy initiatives that encourage professional development in the aging services workforce;
- Raise awareness of the importance and value of the paid and unpaid direct care worker; and
- Support organizations and institutions that create a pipeline of direct care workers with opportunities for career advancement.

#### Data development needed:

- A systematic inventory of stakeholders to ascertain growing labor needs over the next five- and 10-year periods.



Workforce employment projections graphic courtesy of the Connecticut Department of Labor.



*Top photo: Young Women Rising networking event. Bottom photo: Jillian Gilcbrest, far left, meets with members of the Trafficking in Persons Council (TIPC) after a roundtable held to address the “demand side” of the crime of prostitution of children.*

# Highlighted 2016 Initiatives

**A**s this new commission makes its way, we will no doubt have to modify some of our ambitious agenda. However, we anticipate the following as new (or revised/continued) initiatives. A few are highlighted on the following pages.

## **For Women:**

- Pay Equity Study
- Female Vets (with the DCP)
- Statewide Trafficking Assessment (with TIPC)
- Sexual Harassment Awareness & Prevention Training (for State agencies)
- EEO/AGD Workplace Discrimination Investigation Training (with CHRO)
- Young Women Rising Program
- Talent Bank

## **For Children:**

- 2-Gen Update
- PLTI
- Opioid Prevention (with DCP)
- Literacy Development
- School Climate (CASEL Grant for social and emotional learning initiatives)
- Sexual Abuse Curriculum Development (with SDE)

## **For Older Adults:**

- Livable Communities strategies
- Long-Term Care Advisory Council
- Financial Abuse & Exploitation Portal
- Council on Medical Assistance Program Oversight
- Senior Center Task Force Study



## *Young Women Rising*

**Y**oung Women Rising, a project of CWCS, has a mission to encourage leadership among young women ages 18-35 within the political process, workplace and community. The project is run by a dynamic group of 10 young women who oversee the execution of Young Women Rising events and initiatives.

Throughout the year Young Women Rising provides opportunities for young women to network and build professional relationships, participate in volunteer opportunities and share their voices on issues they care about using the Young Women Rising blog.

In addition, the program runs an annual essay contest for 11th grade students of any gender aimed at encouraging youth to consider the issues impacting young women today. Finally, another key program of Young Women Rising is called #ProjectPeriod, which was created by the steering committee with the goal of raising awareness about the specific needs of homeless women.

Most people who donate items to homeless shelters do not think about the need for feminine hygiene products, such as tampons and pads, and homeless women often live in fear of getting their periods. #ProjectPeriod encourages donations of these products and within the past year has already donated over 1,000 feminine hygiene products to local Connecticut shelters.

*For more information about Young Women Rising please visit [youngwomenrisingct.com](http://youngwomenrisingct.com).*



## Intersectional Feminism & Reproductive Justice

CWCS is committed to the practice of intersectional feminism. According to Kimberlé Crenshaw, who developed this phrase, “intersectional feminism is the view that women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity.”

Historically, a justified critique of the women’s movement has been that it has mainly served the needs of white women. Intersectional feminism calls for a more inclusive approach by recognizing that every woman experiences oppression differently, depending on a variety of factors. Therefore there is no one-size-fits-all approach to women’s issues.

An example of applying intersectional feminism to women’s issues is the topic of reproductive justice. Instead of solely looking at reproductive rights through the traditional lens of access to abortion, broadening the view to include other factors that affect women’s ability to have, or not have, children such as lack of affordable housing, environmental issues impacting fertility, economic security and the lack of paid family leave for new parents, to name just a few, allows for a more diverse understanding of women’s reproductive health issues.

CWCS is mindful of the intersectional approach in all we do: for example, creating a diverse steering committee of young feminist leaders (Young Women Rising), creating a safe space for all voices for civic engagement (Women’s Day at the Capitol), and striving to be inclusive by disaggregating and reporting data regarding the gender-based wage gap, which is far wider for women of color.

*On facing page: Steering committee members of Young Women Rising.*

*This page: On Aug. 26, Public Information Officer Christine Palm (center) spoke to education experts at the federal prison in Danbury about the importance of workplace discrimination prevention awareness.*

## Workplace Discrimination Investigation Trainings

Preventing and addressing workplace gender discrimination is a large part of our work. In cooperation with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), the CWCS conducts annual Workplace Discrimination Investigations Foundation Training, and biennial Update trainings, as required by C.G.S. §46a-68(b)(3).

These trainings are for State employees who conduct employment discrimination investigations, including Attorneys General Designee, and Equal Employment Opportunity Officers (formerly known as Affirmative Action Officers). In addition to yearly Foundation training held in autumn, every other year, CWCS and CHRO give an Update training in summer, in recognition of the fact that laws change frequently.

Material covered includes: Understanding C.G.S. Statute §46a-68(b); Protected Classes & Discriminatory Conduct; Sexual Harassment; Other Areas of Discrimination; the CHRO Complaint Process; Review Mock Complaint; Conducting Internal Investigations; Duty to Investigate; Interviewing and Gathering Facts; and Making a Finding and Writing a Report.

In 2016, we trained 19 State employees in the Foundation Training, held on Oct. 25. The next Update training will be in the summer of 2017.



# Parent Training Leadership Institute

Stamford 2016 PLTI class.



While their voices are often unheard, parents are none-the-less motivated and determined to change their children's lives. The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) teaches parents how to become practiced change agents for the next generation.

The program integrates child development leadership and democracy skills into a parent curriculum. Parents attend a 20-week program and get college credit for the program through Charter Oak State College. Each class mentors the next, creating a pyramid effect of community caring and a developing coalition of parents. The classes are evaluated by parents.

The PLTI goal is to dignify the role of parents as change agents within community and government by building their capacity. Parents use their new tools to address social policy issues of concern and are taught the tenets of democracy and how to work with government in the best interest of children.

Parent participation in children's issues bolsters parent-child relations and outcomes. Parents feel stronger about their own capabilities as they develop leadership skills. This increased sense of self-regard and belonging in community enhances parent-child communication. Children sense the potential to effect change in their own lives and the lives of others.

Similarly, institutions, through parent leadership training, improve their capacity to work with and empower parents. PLTI has worked with early care and education programs, social services institutions and cities to improve: 1) parent involvement policies; 2) consumer-driven service delivery; and 3) leadership opportunities for parents.

## Concussion Prevention

The impact of concussions on the health of our children is an issue receiving attention as studies highlight increased cause for concern. If a youth athlete has a concussion, his or her brain needs time to heal. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes the brain to recover; in rare cases, repeat concussions in young athletes can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to their brain, and even death.

Young women and girls are disproportionately impacted in degree and severity by concussions, even though their occurrence is underreported, as they occur in "non-traditional" impact sports or activities.

Current Connecticut law protects student athletes who play for their official high school or middle school teams by requiring, among other things: 1) concussion training for coaches; 2) a ban on student athlete participation unless the athlete and his/her parent/guardian receive training on the plan; 3) informed athlete parent/guardian consent on concussions; 4) notice to a student athlete's parent/guardian when he/she is removed from play for a concussion; 5) a physician's note to return to play.

While a recent law expanded concussion safety information provision to our athletes outside of school and brings parents into the conversation, a majority of our young people remain unprotected: those who participate in municipal parks and recreation leagues, private leagues, non-for-profit leagues, or other after school sports leagues, nor parochial school.

Therefore, the CWCS works to enact a statewide youth concussion protection law that mirrors our protections for student athletes that expands to the use of municipal and private athletic facilities; works closely with brain injury coalitions around the state and nationally to compile and present the best research and recommendations on brain injury protocols and protections; and works closely with the City of Norwalk and the Town of Westport, to bring their excellent protocols and experience to the state.

We hope to engage in annual data on the number of student-reported concussions, disaggregated by grade level, gender, and specific activity, noting whether it was an in-school sport, out-of-school sport, or non-sport related activity.

## Explaining the Aging Demographic



Connecticut has the third longest-lived constituency. People 85 years and older are the fastest-growing portion of our population. These population shifts will significantly impact nearly every facet of society including the state budget, and will challenge existing models of social support in cities and towns.

As part of our outreach to communities, CWCS has relationships with several colleges and universities and is frequently called upon to guest lecture on a variety of topics. This education is critical in redefining aging and challenging ageism stereotypes for this developing workforce. CWCS has provided presentations highlighting Connecticut's changing demographics and its anticipated impact in municipalities, provided an overview of the state's legislative process and illustrated current Aging In Place initiatives.

## Senior Center Task Force Study

SA 16-7: An Act Concerning Senior Centers establishes a task force (with CWCS serving as the administrative staff) to study best practices concerning the delivery of health and human services and related information to persons age sixty and older by senior centers, municipal agents, appointed pursuant to section 7-127b of the general statutes, and other municipal employees. Per legislation, the task force shall examine (1) the resources and training needs of senior center personnel, municipal agents and other municipal employees to allow them to facilitate delivery of health and human services and related information, (2) the most effective means to provide such resources and training, (3) current information delivery practices, (4) best practices in this state and other states for the delivery of such services and information, (5) barriers to access to information, and (6) data on the cost of resources and staff provided by emergency medical services, municipal police departments and other entities to provide such health and human services and information in the calendar year 2015. CWCS has engaged a graduate intern from Quinnipiac University to assist with research and legislative appointments to the task force are currently in process. A final report on findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to aging is due July 1, 2017.



*Some members of the Long-term Care Advisory Council.*

# CWCS Coalitions

*The CWCS serves on the following coalitions:*

Coalition for Choice  
Healthy Youth Connecticut  
Family Law Working Group  
Maternal and Child Health Coalition  
Campaign for Paid Family Leave  
Secretary of State Civic Health Advisory Group  
Safe Havens Working Group  
Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance  
Commission on the Standardization of the  
Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations  
Trafficking in Persons Council  
Commission for Child Support Guidelines  
Governor's Sexual Assault Kit Working Group  
Long-Term Care Advisory Council  
Council on Medicaid Assistance Program Oversight  
Task Force on Senior Centers  
Hospital Merger Watch Coalition  
Legislature's Task Force to Study School Climate  
Children's Behavioral Health Plan Implementation  
Advisory Board  
  
MTR Policy Oversight Committee  
Legislature's Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force  
Legislature's Achievement Gap Task Force  
LGBT Aging Advocacy  
Family Support Council  
Two-Generational Interagency Working Group

# Outreach & Speaking Engagements

Informing the public of our work means reaching out to community groups, colleges, high schools, advocacy groups and coalition partners. This work is as local as the school down the street and as far away as national summits. Here is a partial list:

*Facebook, California*

*Concussions*

*National Summit on Education, D.C.*

*CASEL, Chicago*

*University of Connecticut School of Law*

*Danbury Prison*

*Graustein Foundation*

*Fairfield Ward High School*

*Quinnipiac University*

*University of Connecticut*

*At Home in Darien*

*Alliance for Retired Americans*

*N. E. Women's Policy Conference, Boston*



*CWCS staff present at the New England Women's Policy Conference, Boston, in October. Left to right are: Michelle Noebren, Heather Petit, Rosemary Lopez and Joan Barere.*

# Media & Press Conferences

Informing the media of the needs of our three under-represented populations is a major focus of CWCS. Statistics for the six months of our operation (tracked since July 1, 2016) are:

Traditional print/electronic media coverage: 14

Official statements and news releases sent:

Website hits: 25,796

Facebook fans: 6,558

Twitter followers: 1,612

Press conferences: 3



*Clockwise, from bottom left: Communications Director Christine Palm spoke at a press conference on ex parte restraining orders with U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal and U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy on Oct. 5; CWCS Executive Director Steven Hernández was a guest on W NPR's "Where We Live" with Lucy Nalpathanchil in November; new CWCS commissioners meet in November - left to right are: Barbara Thorton, April Guilbault, Helene Shay and Myron Genel; a group of parent volunteers meet with CWCS consultant for PLTI Melvette Hill, and CWCS Senior Special Projects Coordinator Heather Petit to plan the February, 2017 "Parent Academy"; and Hartford PLTI 2016 class.*

# 2017 Legislative Agenda

The Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS) provides information, research and analysis to elected officials and the public regarding issues affecting the state's women, children and older adults, without regard to ethnicity or socioeconomic standing. As appropriate, our work also seeks to inform – and is informed by – federal policies that have an effect on our residents.

This Legislative Agenda is a culmination of non-partisan public policy initiatives in the best interests of Connecticut's women, children and older adults. As such, it is an evolving agenda designed to be responsive to both state and federal policies as they impact our target vulnerable and under-served populations.

## Legislative Priorities

*Legislative priorities are policy measures that the CWCS takes the lead on, in partnership with others.*

### **Paid Family and Medical Leave**

Establish a system of paid family and medical leave that can support Connecticut's working families when they need time from work to care for themselves, a loved one, or for the birth or adoption of a child.

### **Literacy**

Expand sustainable scientific and research-based literacy efforts in under-performing schools and districts and develop assessment and implementation tools for reading instruction readiness.

### **School Climate**

Play an active role in the Legislature's review and revision of Connecticut school climate and anti-bullying laws and participate in a nationwide collaborative to develop and model Social and Emotional Learning Standards.

### **Aging Services Network**

Adequately support and hold harmless providers of care for the aging and disability community with no additional cuts in service or rate reductions.

## CWCS Issue Areas

*Issue areas are general policy topics that the CWCS supports, in partnership with others.*

**Access to Comprehensive Health Care** – Reduce gender, racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare by increasing coverage and privacy, ensuring that preventative care includes a diversity of needs, and that care is not compromised as hospital and healthcare systems are acquired and merged.

**Gender-based Ratings** – Monitor changes to the Affordable Care Act for trends in health insurance premiums to prevent gender-based ratings that require women to pay more than men for the same services.

**Human Trafficking** – Prevent and address sex and labor trafficking by supporting policy measures identified by the Trafficking in Personals Council.

**Medicare and Social Security** – Monitor trends in – and proposed changes to – these programs to ensure that seniors are protected.

**Achievement Gap** – Promote policies inside and outside the school system to close persistent gaps in educational achievement among the poor and children of color.

**Childcare** – Provide livable wages for childcare providers and affordable childcare to families so they are able to parent in safe and healthy environments.

**Concussions** – Protect children and teens from concussion and other traumatic brain injuries by supporting policy efforts that require best practices and more awareness on the part of coaches and parents.

**Long-Term Care** – Assist State agencies and policy makers in developing and modifying programs that serve all persons in need of long-term care.

**School Climate** – Support schools efforts to reduce suspension and expulsion rates by increasing teacher training and support. Support policies to reduce bullying in schools, including those based on race, ethnic history, religion, and sexual orientation.

**Minority Teacher Recruitment** – Collaborate with the State Department of Education and institutions of higher education on strategies to increase the number of culturally sensitive and ethnic minority administrators and teachers in the state of Connecticut school system.

**Pay Equity** – Promote wage equality by eliminating gender segregation in the labor market through data collection, stronger anti-discrimination laws and standard wage initiatives.

**Reproductive Justice** – Ensure all women’s right to have children, not have children, parent the children they have in safe and healthy environments, and have bodily autonomy and freedom from any form of reproductive oppression.

**Senior Centers** – Strengthen the connection between senior centers and the State by serving as the administrative staff for the task force established through S.A. 16-7, An Act Concerning Senior Centers.

**Two Generational System Change and Service Delivery** – Promote two-generational approaches and systems reform at the state and local level that provide opportunities for and meet the needs of vulnerable children and their parents together.

**Violence Against Women** – Promote the rights of all women to bodily autonomy by confronting, addressing, and preventing all forms of violence against women including rape, sexual assault and abuse, domestic and intimate partner violence, stalking, sexual harassment and emotional abuse.

**Disabled Children and their Families** – Monitor the changes and funding reductions that would affect children (from birth through age 21) who are entitled to educational and other services, including transitional services and family supports.

**Safety Nets** – Monitor trends in funding of – and access to – such vital Safety Net supports as Care4Kids, TANF, SSI/SSDI



Connecticut Commission on  
Women, Children *and* Seniors

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**CWCS**