

NOVEMBER 2019

Department of Children and Families  
**SPOTLIGHT ON WHAT'S RIGHT**



**CT CELEBRATES ADOPTION DAY WITH A FOCUS ON RELATIVE ADOPTIONS**

Seventy children were adopted on November 22 when Connecticut celebrated Adoption Day in Juvenile Courts across the state.

Every adoption is special -- as is every child. But one adoption by a maternal aunt from Cromwell drew particular attention because Emma, her one-year-old niece, was so excitedly received as part of the expanded family by her now-big brothers -- Gabriel, 12, Miguel, 8, and Jordan, 6. Alyssa Luna, the maternal aunt, never let her family responsibilities to her own boys stop her from taking in Emma as an infant.

[Read the entire article](#)



Vannessa L. Dorantes  
Commissioner

[Read Commissioner Dorantes' National Adoption Month Memo](#)



The Honorable Michael Dannehy presiding over the adoption by Joan Selleck of Giovanni and Anthony in Hartford Juvenile Court



Commissioner Dorantes and Lt. Gov. Bysiewicz discuss the wonderful relatives who adopt children in their family



A forever Home!

**QUICK LINKS TO NEWS ARTICLES ABOUT ADOPTION DAY**

[National Adoption Day brings cheers to courtrooms across Connecticut](#)

[Family Celebrates Officially Adopting Their Daughter](#)

[West Haven family adopts 5-year-old boy, court opens up proceedings to raise awareness](#)

[Adoption Day ceremony held in Hartford](#)

[Grandparents, child become permanent family](#)

[Happy beginning for Lebanon 9-year-old on National Adoption Day](#)

[Bridgeport gives forever homes to 9 children on National Adoption Day](#)

[Adoption proudly goes public on statewide celebratory day](#)

**UConn  
HEALTH**

ADOPTION ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM



**Adoption is more than a way of building a family;** it is a lifelong process of joys, personal growth and challenges for all involved. We understand that families may need support from time to time and the UConn Health Adoption Assistance Program is available to help!

The UConn Health Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) provides assessment, education, brief counseling and referral services to adoptive and guardianship families. All program staff are licensed clinicians with specific training in the unique needs of families parenting by adoption or guardianship. The program is a voluntary, confidential service that functions independently of DCF. Any Connecticut family formed through adoption or guardianship is welcome to contact the AAP, regardless of how recently the adoption/guardianship occurred. There is never a cost for direct AAP services and no limit as to how frequently a family may reach out for assistance. In addition to families, the AAP is a resource for therapists, agencies, schools and other professionals. The AAP provides support to providers in the form of case consultations, informational meetings and ongoing trainings.

The AAP practices with these core values in mind:

- Adoption is a lifelong process; children and their families are expected to need support around adoption issues at different times throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood.
- It is anticipated that the adoptive family's needs will vary over the lifespan of the family.
- Adoptive parenting can be significantly different than parenting birth children. Seeking adoption specific information, services and supports is a sign of strength and parental confidence.
- Adoptive families will benefit from providers, schools and therapists who have specialized skills and training to meet the needs of adoptive families.

To learn more, please visit the AAP website at <https://health.uconn.edu/adoption-assistance/> or call 860-679-4006 / CT toll free 877-679-1961



**Subsidy...Did you know?**

After finalization, there is more work to be done...

There are nearly 8,000 adoption subsidy cases being managed by a staff of 5 processing technicians (in addition to over 3,000 guardianship cases). Technicians are assigned cases based on the first letter of the child's last name.

[Read the entire article](#)

The **Connecticut Adoption Community Network (ACN)** is a group of adoption professionals and adoptive parents who have formed a collaborative partnership designed to support adoptive and relative caregiver parenting. Requested by the adoption community, the ACN aims to connect adoptive and kinship families, adoption professionals, and all those interested in adoption to form a strong, supportive, and resourceful adoption community.

Since its inception, the ACN has grown to include over four-hundred members. Subcommittees of the group have supported educational advocacy, legislative efforts, and development of a therapist directory of adoption competent therapists. The group meets twice annually and is managed by the UConn Health Adoption Assistance Program (AAP). The Adoption Community Network is proud to offer sponsorships of educational events that support adoptive and guardianship families as well as those to improve adoption competency among professionals.



The ACN's website includes a statewide therapist directory to identify local clinicians who indicate special training to work with adoptive families as well as support groups and professional resources. The ACN also maintains a Facebook page as a resource for parents and professionals to share articles, relevant information and training opportunities. Any agency or provider can submit workshop announcements to be shared with the adoption and guardianship communities via email blast, and advertisement on the group's web and social media pages.

The next meeting of the ACN will be held on Monday, December 2, 2019 in Farmington. For details and directions, please visit <https://www.ctadoption.org/>



**CAFAF**  
CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE OF  
FOSTER & ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

**The Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families (CAFAF)** makes a difference in the lives of foster, adoptive and relative caregivers by providing support, training, and advocacy. The Alliance works in partnership with child welfare professionals and the entire community to nurture child safety, well-being, and stability.

CAFAF also works with DCF to find foster families who provide safe, caring homes for children while DCF and the courts plan for the children's futures. To learn more call 888-KID-HERO.

In addition, CAFAF supports a number of foster and adoptive training opportunities to help develop families' core competencies. Trainings -- including CAFAF post-licensing module classes, the CAFAF Conference Series, CPR classes and Foster Parent College -- help meet the unique needs of foster, adoptive and kinship care children by supporting their caregiver families. CAFAF also conducts advocacy and outreach to help develop communities that support caregiver families. To get help from CAFAF, please call **860-258-3400** or visit [www.cafafct.org](http://www.cafafct.org)

## Department of Children and Families Voluntary Services Program

The Voluntary Services Program (VSP) is a DCF program for children with serious emotional, behavioral and/or substance use treatment needs. VSP emphasizes a community-based approach coordinating services across multiple agencies. Parents and families are critical participants in the planning and delivery of services for their child or youth. VSP promotes positive development and reduces reliance on restrictive forms of treatment and out-of-home placement.

At the request of the family, DCF may provide casework, community referrals and treatment services for children who are not committed to the Department. These are youth who do not require protective services intervention, but may require any of the services offered by the Department to address emotional or behavioral difficulties.

VSP is designed for children and youth who have behavioral health needs and who are in need of services that they do not otherwise have access to. Parents do not have to relinquish custody or guardianship under this program. The DCF policy outlines eligibility requirements for this program.

**Families can initiate an application by calling DCF's Careline at 1-800-842-2288.**

# THANK YOU TO OUR CONNECTICUT LEGISLATORS!



Representative Dr. William A. Petit Jr. and Commissioner Dorantes



Senator Julie Kushner at the Danbury Office Listening Tour



Representative Catherine Abercrombie at the Meriden Listening Tour



Representative Robin Green on Adoption Day in Connecticut



Representative Charles Ferraro on Adoption Day in Connecticut



Chief Probate Court Administrator Beverly K. Streit-Kefalas along with legislative liaison Vinny Russo and Representative Bob Godfrey



Representative Kerrie Wood Celebrating Adoption Day in Middletown



## "Our Award Winning Staff"

**Congratulations** to Deputy Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly for receiving the National Staff Development and Training Association Distinguished Service Award

[For additional photos regarding Adoption Day – click here](#)



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



Vannessa L. Dorantes  
Commissioner

Ned Lamont  
Governor

To: All Staff  
From: Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes LMSW  
Re: National Adoption Month  
Date: November 4, 2019

November is celebrated across the country as National Adoption Month. This year, we want to specifically promote *relative* adoption and the significant impact extended family members play in the life of a child.

The Department has worked hard to continue our kinship placements and supports. We can say with pride that today there are just about as many children living in a relative or kinship homes as in traditional foster placements. We have done this for the most basic reason — if we have to remove children, they do best when living with people they know and love.

Children deserve the continuity kinship provides. They also need timely permanency as they grow into adulthood.

Later this week, on November 7, Governor Ned Lamont and Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz will lead a press conference featuring relatives who have or will soon adopt. Some will have the opportunity to share the rewards and benefits for both the families and the children who move to permanency.

Then on November 22, we will partner with Juvenile Courts across the state for Adoption Day and again feature relatives adopting their children in open court proceedings. We have invited our legislators and the media to share in this special day with us. We believe approximately 80 children will be adopted on that one single day alone!

Families should be celebrated every day as literally each day around the state, a child moves permanently to their “forever home.”

We can be proud of our accomplishments.

In State Fiscal Year 2019, we moved 855 children into permanency through 532 adoptions and 323 subsidized guardianships. We estimate that about 30 percent of the adoptions were to relatives. In total, our Subsidy Units assist approximately 7,800 families who have adopted and another 3,100 families through subsidized guardianship.

This is great work that you and our partners are doing day in and day out.

We must continue the intensity of our work. Our children cannot wait and the next child in need has already come to our attention.

We continue to find additional ways to build on permanency and kinship work to support more relative adoptions. Our purposeful efforts contribute to raising resilient children who thrive into productive and healthy adults.

Thank you for your hard work supporting permanency in its various forms, and I appreciate your continuing commitment as we build upon our kinship work to promote relative adoption.

## CONNECTICUT CELEBRATES ADOPTION DAY WITH A FOCUS ON RELATIVE ADOPTIONS

*Helpful organizations and programs exist to support families throughout the whole adoption experience*

Seventy children were adopted on November 22 when Connecticut celebrated Adoption Day in Juvenile Courts across the state. (See related links below to media coverage of the adoptions from throughout Connecticut.)

Every adoption is special -- as is every child. But one adoption by a maternal aunt from Cromwell drew particular attention because Emma, her one-year-old niece, was so excitedly received as part of the expanded family by her now-big brothers – Gabriel, 12, Miguel, 8, and Jordan, 6. Alyssa Luna, the maternal aunt, never let her family responsibilities to her own boys stop her from taking in Emma as an infant. Nor was she deterred by the fact that she had just started a new job at a local hospital AND was a full-time nursing student at Goodwin College! When the Department called her to see if she would consider providing a home for her sister's newborn, Emma just said, "Sure."

Now Emma is a permanent part of the family along with Alyssa and her three handsome and proud boys! Alyssa is far from being alone as a relative stepping in to fill the gap of a family member who is unable to care for his or her child.

While hundreds of children are adopted each year in Connecticut, it is not widely recognized that family members can and do adopt related children who have been placed into foster care. Of the 532 adoptions that were completed in State Fiscal Year 2019, about 30 percent were adoptions by relatives. Another 340 children in state care achieved permanency through subsidized guardianship – bringing the total number of children in state care to achieve permanency to 872 during that period.

Department Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes said important improvements in using relatives to provide foster homes for children have taken place in Connecticut, and now the time is right to build on that success by increasing relative adoptions and providing greater permanency to children in care.

"Children deserve and benefit from the continuity that kinship provides, and they also deserve permanency that will serve as a mooring for them as they grow into adulthood." Commissioner Dorantes said. "So this year, we are making relative adoption the focus of our month-long celebration of National Adoption Month and Connecticut Adoption Day."

Over the last several years, the Department has expanded the use of kinship families – those that are either related to the child or otherwise know the child, such as a coach, teacher, neighbor or friend of the family. The use of these kinship families has more than double since 2011 and now there are roughly as many children in a kinship home as in a traditional, non-relative foster home.

"If we have to remove a child from home, we reduce the trauma that results if we can have the child live with someone they already know and love," Commissioner Dorantes said. "Those same wonderful kinship families can provide the permanency every child needs through adoption, and we need to highlight those opportunities."

A critically important factor that supports relatives and ALL adoptive parents is the network of organizations and programs available to help the families – the adoptive parents and the children – get through inevitable challenges and continue to thrive. Below are some of these organizations and programs and how to access them.

## Subsidy... Did you know?

### After finalization, there is more work to be done...

There are nearly 8,000 adoption subsidy cases being managed by a staff of 5 processing technicians (in addition to over 3,000 guardianship cases). Technicians are assigned cases based on the first letter of the child's last name.

As soon as the child's adoption or guardianship has been finalized, it is important to have the record sent to the subsidy unit so the processing technicians can set up the child's subsidy file. Adoptive parents are eager to start using the child's new adoptive name at doctors' offices and pharmacies but need to continue using the birth name/medical until the new medical coverage is processed which can take several months.

Families should be told to expect a gap in the initial subsidy payment due to the case being converted in LINK to a subsidy case and the following month the subsidy payment will be caught up. Direct deposit is highly recommended to avoid lost checks. It takes 6-8 weeks for the direct deposit to begin. It is important to notify the subsidy unit of any address changes.

The processing technicians send weekly reports to Revenue Enhancement for medical insurance changes. The child will receive a new medical card/number under the new name.

Processing technicians conduct 300-400 biennial reviews every month (in addition to guardianship reviews). Families are asked to sign an updated adoption agreement every 2 years (every year for guardianship) and have the agreement notarized.

Adoptive parents obtain the new birth certificate from the town hall where the child was born. Adoptive parents should then contact their local social security office for a card with the new name. The processing technicians review all medically complex cases for continued eligibility.

### Phone Numbers:

- Subsidy Files (A-C, T, U) & (guardian S) Dixon, Sharon, 860-550-6472
- Subsidy Files (D-H) & (adoption S) Gonzalez, Maria, 860-550-6408
- Subsidy Files (I-M, W) Adgers, Lorri , 860-550-6397
- Subsidy Files (N-R, V, Y, Z) Montagano, Rosemary, 860-550-6308



*left to right: Lori Franceschini (PS), Sharon Dixon, Maria Gonzalez, Lorri Adgers, Delcina Gilling, Deanna McIntosh (SWS), Rosemary Montagano*

# Adoption Day 2019 Photos



