



Within Our Reach

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*******PRESS RELEASE*******

**TRINITY HEALTH OF NEW ENGLAND RELEASES CHILD SAFETY FORWARD
EVALUATION REPORT HIGHLIGHTING FINDINGS IN MULTI-YEAR EFFORT TO
DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO REDUCE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN GREATER
HARTFORD AREA**

HARTFORD, CT – Saint Francis Hospital, a member of Trinity Health Of New England, today released their final evaluation report for the [Child Safety Forward](#) initiative funded by the Department of Justice (DOJ). Child Safety Forward is a multi-year demonstration initiative, launched in October 2019 by the DOJ's Office for Victims of Crime, that engaged five sites across the United States in research, planning and implementation around strategies aimed at reducing child injury and fatality from abuse and neglect.

"While the rate of child maltreatment for Connecticut is comparable to that observed nationally, the rate for Hartford and other urban areas in our state is higher than that of other areas across the state or nationally," noted Regina Dyton, program manager for Saint Francis Hospital and project director for Child Safety Forward in Hartford. "This data led our Hartford site to recognize the importance and impact of parent leaders, many of whom were not familiar with this data, and to focus our work on empowering community members to serve as allies and vital resources to local and state agencies engaging in child and family well-being efforts."

Hartford's Child Safety Forward project brought together a multidisciplinary team of stakeholders composed of state agencies; community-based organizations; and, most importantly, parents to share data, coordinate services, facilitate community participation, and seek best practice recommendations. They recruited a Parent Engagement Workgroup drawn from parents who have experience with child and family serving-systems, the Greater Hartford Family Advocacy Center at Saint Francis Hospital, and members of Hartford Parent University, a grassroots advocacy and educational project for parents of children in Hartford Public Schools.

Some of the insights from the Parent Engagement Work Group included:

- Parents made it clear that they wanted to address issues beyond child abuse and neglect by caregivers, noting that there are many environmental, systemic, and other types of threats to the safety of children, such as non-caregiver abuse and exploitation, drugs, suicide, and community violence.

- Parents reported that they and their communities mostly thought of child safety education as reactive and punitive, and often initiated only as a mandate by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) after an allegation of abuse or neglect.
- When presented with the maltreatment fatality data, parents and community-based organizations expressed anger that they had not been made aware that the death rate of black children is two times that of white children.
- Parents reported getting conflicting messages around safe sleep, coupled with cultural traditions, which led many to doubt or downplay CDC and AAP recommendations regarding safe sleep practices.

Insights from the Parent Engagement Workgroup led to the development of a [comprehensive educational guide](#), “From Pain to Parenting,” with training guidelines and modules for parents on multiple topics related to child well-being, including unsafe sleep, domestic violence, sexual abuse and assault, mental health, firearm safety and gun violence, and disabilities.

The Child Safety Forward Hartford initiative will serve as a springboard for establishing ongoing planning and action on preventing child maltreatment fatality and near fatality. The project will transfer from Saint Francis Hospital and Trinity Health Of New England to the Institute for Community Research (ICR) as the lead agency, with Voices of Women of Color and Hartford Parent University as partners. ICR will train a group of parents to design and implement their own research and will conduct sessions to help parents understand data and advocate for data-sharing with communities. Hartford Parent University will provide ongoing training on topics identified by parents as they relate to Hartford Public Schools, especially regarding children with disabilities and children belonging to other marginalized communities. Voices of Women of Color will provide training in community organizing and advocacy and will lead the recruitment of a parent engagement group for each of Hartford’s thirteen neighborhoods.

“The work of the Child Safety Forward team in Hartford has been truly groundbreaking,” noted Amy Templeman, director of the Within our Reach team at Social Current and the head of the technical assistance team. “Their focus on parent engagement, community organizing and the purposeful shifting of power to those most affected produced tremendous insights and learnings that will help inform the field of child welfare for years to come.”

“Successfully engaging those with lived experience requires an approach that goes beyond merely giving them a seat at the table,” noted Stacy Phillips, Victim Justice Program Specialist with the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) within the U.S. Department of Justice. “The Hartford project is unique because it centers power in parents and community members and integrates the decision-making community voices with CPS, law enforcement, the courts, and other relevant agencies. By improving cooperation and communication between community members and agencies responsible for child protection, they are contributing significantly to our efforts to decrease child maltreatment and injury.”

In addition to Saint Francis Hospital, the other Child Safety Forward demonstration sites include: Cook County Health in Illinois; Indiana Department of Health; Sacramento County CA’s Child Abuse Prevention Council; and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Final reports from these four sites will be released in the fall of 2023. The technical assistance team is led by Within Our Reach, an office at Social Current.

About the Within Our Reach Office

[Within Our Reach](#) is an office established within Social Current (formerly the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities) to further the recommendations of the federal [Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities](#). The goal of Within Our Reach is to equip policymakers, practitioners, and advocates with the tools they need to fundamentally reform child welfare. Based on the commission's national strategy, desired reform includes a proactive public health approach—a shared family and community responsibility to keep children safe. Within Our Reach is made possible through collaboration with Casey Family Programs, whose mission is to provide, improve, and prevent the need for foster care.

About Social Current

Social Current activates the power of the social sector by bringing together a dynamic network of human/social service organizations and partners. Leveraging the collective experience of the field and research, we energize and activate the sector and drive continuous evolution and improvement. Social Current amplifies the work of the social sector through collaboration, innovation, policy, and practice excellence. We offer access to intellectual capital of thousands of professionals within our network through peer groups, learning opportunities, collective advocacy, individualized consultation, tools, and resources that address the sector's most critical challenges.

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