




**Middlesex Coalition
for CHILDREN**





The Middlesex Coalition for Children's mission is to improve the lives of children growing up in Middletown and Middlesex County.

The Coalition holds public meetings monthly on relevant issues. It convenes task forces to mobilize and coordinate community efforts to address specific children's issues, and advocates for children at the local, state and national levels.

Public Meetings, 2013-14

September: “What’s New” Annual Open Mic on new developments in children’s services: Attendance: 50

October: Conversation About DCF’s Proposed girl’s secured treatment center at the Former Riverview Hospital: Attendance: 80

Bill Rosenbeck (Superintendent of CJTS)

Allon Kalisher (DCF Region 3 Regional Administrator)

Dante Bartolomeo: State Senator

Also in Attendance to support the conversation:

Joette Katz: DCF Commissioner

Abby Anderson: Executive Director, Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance

November: New Office of Early Childhood/ Race to the Top Grant Application: Attendance: 50

Myra Jones-Taylor Executive Director

Maggie Adair- Director of Government and Community Relations

Mary Farnsworth- Strategic Planning Manager & Race to the Top Project Manager

December: School Reform & the Common Core: Attendance: 70

Dante Bartolomeo- CGA Chair of Children and Education Committee

Patricia Charles- Superintendent of Middletown Public Schools

Vincent Loffredo-Director of Government and Political Relations, CT Educations Association and Middletown Board of Ed Member

January: Juvenile Justice & School Based Arrest Reduction Legislation: Attendance:50

Justin Carbonella- Director of Middletown Youth Services Director; Chair of Middletown Area

Paul Doyle- State Senator, Vice Chair of Judiciary Committee

Gary Holder-Winfield- State Representative, Member of Judiciary Committee

Lara Herscovitch- Deputy Director, CT Juvenile Justice Alliance

February: Canceled due to snow

March: Legislative Breakfast

Bartolomeo, Doyle, Lesser, Linares, Miller, Serra, Vicino, Ziobron

Attendance: 100

April: Childhood Nutrition (rescheduled from February): Attendance: 40

Monica Belyea- Coordinator, Opportunity Knocks Collaborative

Matt Lesser- Member of Appropriations Committee

Dawn Crayco- Deputy Director of End Hunger CT!

Phil Miller –Vice Chair of Public Health Committee

May: Grand Rounds: Co-Management of Adolescent Behavioral Health: Attendance: 60

Average Attendance for Public Meetings: 65

Coalition-Led Committees

- **Family Support:** The family support committee met every other month this year and had many interesting conversations. The one conversation that seems most relevant to members and that has received the most interest has been *housing*. Questions that have been raised are: how much subsidized housing is there in our county, how does the housing authority manage its programs, who is eligible for what, how do we navigate the shelter system, and many more. We are planning to initiate a series of workshops around housing issues for the fall, as well as strengthen our connection to the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness and the Middlesex County Committee on Housing and Homelessness.
- **Childhood Hunger Task Force:** The Childhood Hunger Task Force has met every other month this year and did most of its work on school meals. New meals and backpack programs were initiated in 12 communities or districts in Middlesex County (see more detail in the Childhood Nutrition Handout from the April 2014 public meeting)
- **Advocates Committee:** Works on Relevant Legislative Issues
- **Possible new collaboration with the LIST**
- **Possible new Food Policy Council**

Long-Range Goals

Goals: Most of the goals of the Coalition are extremely long-range and it is hard to measure efficacy on a year-to year basis. The most important jobs of the Coalition are to maintain excellent relationships with child-serving programs and agencies and with our legislative delegation and to ensure that our coalition members are as informed as possible about emerging issues related to children. This has happened.

1) Goal: Identify barriers to local children's success and the most promising strategies to overcome them.

Long-range Outcome: better informed, more sophisticated policy debate on children's issues.

2013-14 Outcome: this is an ongoing effort. The director worked with all committees, partners and legislators to be responsive to immediate needs, as they have come up. The director has been engaged in strategy sessions, and our coalition has made progress.

2) Goal: Raise awareness of problems and mobilize community support for solutions.

Outcome: a growing corps of people actively working to improve children's lives in Middlesex County, and more sympathizers and supporters.

2013-14 Outcome: This work has mostly happened in conjunction with #1 and at our monthly public and committee meetings, as well as through email alerts.

3) Goal: Advocate effectively for solutions with local, state and national governments.

Outcome: Governments will provide greater resources to support increasingly effective programs in Middlesex County.

2013-14 Outcome: Members advocated for increased funding for a host of programs, many of which have been expanded or implemented. The greatest successes have been in nutrition programs. Our members expanded

Summer lunch and breakfast sites all across the county, and worked to add supper sites at two Middletown schools (beginning in April, 2014). In August 2014, an AmeriCorps VISTA Food Justice worker (40 hours per week) will be working with Opportunity Knocks, NEAT and the Coalition on issues around parent mobilization and childhood hunger. We have also worked to increase School Readiness, Child First and Kindergarten Kickstart, among other programs

4) Goal: Provide leadership and structure to help local agencies innovate and collaborate.

Outcomes: fewer duplicative and overlapping programs; more focus on child outcomes, less on internal agency concerns; more agency accountability.

2013-14 Outcome: this is the one area that was held back by the change in leadership. There are so many

programs in the county, it has taken the full year (and may take more) for the new director to fully understand the ways in which they are interrelated and can work cooperatively. That said, the director has been involved in areas where she had existing knowledge, especially in participation with college readiness planning and Right Response/ School Safety Grant partnership with the Middletown public Schools, Juvenile Justice issues, and

Childhood Hunger Issues, among others.

5) Goal: Measure success by tracking child outcomes, either directly or by publicizing Middlesex County data compiled by other organizations.

Outcomes: greater ability to distinguish between effective and ineffective strategies and programs; more responsiveness to broad economic changes (recession, export of jobs, etc).

2013-14 Outcome: Data and information has been shared both through the creation of monthly resource guides and also through social media and the website.

Co-Sponsorship Events

- **The Color of Justice:** This forum model was created by the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. CTJJA initiated partners to run local conversations all over the state. Ours was successful in that it brought in around 200 people, and sparked a beginning conversation about racial disparity in the Juvenile Justice system. Since then, we have worked with a group of parents to start a local, parent-led *Color of Justice* working group. The group has only just begun to meet, but it seems as though it will spark some very interesting and useful conversation.
- **DCF Provider Fair:** was held at Middlesex Community College and hosted approximately 30 different providers from all over the state. Many people who work with DCF involved children participated and attended in the fair.
- **Kindergarten Kickstart:** will be held in the summer of 2014. This is the third year of a successful program which provides 5 weeks of “preschool” experience before kindergarten for children who has no or little to no preschool experience. The program is designed to create both the social/emotional connections and academic experience to help the children succeed in kindergarten.
- **Legislative Breakfast:** The Coalition’s Legislative Breakfast, held in March, 2014, was extremely well received. We received many compliments about organization of the event, the efficiency of Q & A with the legislators, the seemingly easy conversation, the important issues that were covered, and the attention to detail. Some changes this year include:
 - Sign-in happening at the tables instead of in the hallway
 - Videography being handled by the very professional Center for New Media at Middlesex Community College
 - Asking questions of the legislators in advance and learning which issues they feel most passionately about
 - Making “packets” for each table that can be reused next year
 - Making a hanging sign for the podium that shows up in all pictures
 - Using social media to publicize the event in advance and in-person (next year we will have an event-specific #hashtag)
 - Tailoring the Legislative Breakfast to be a follow-up conversation with legislators about the topics that were covered in the issue-specific monthly meetings that they participated in, propelling and deepening the conversation about the issues that we care most about in a particular year
 - Allowing legislators to bring up legislation that is important to them, regardless of our Coalition’s history with the bill
 - Using a smaller space at the college, which makes the room seem more intimate

Town	# of Board Members
Chester	8
Clinton	9
Cromwell	11
Deep River	8
Durham	10
East Haddam	9
East Hampton	10
Essex	9
Haddam	9
Killingworth	8
Middlefield	10
Middletown	15
Old Saybrook	11
Portland	12
Westbrook	9

Board Member Participation in Relevant Activities

Activity	Number of Members Participating
Statewide Advocacy	10
Local Advocacy	15
Direct Service	6
Program Administration/Oversight	11
Other	5

Contact

www.middlesexchildren.org

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