

My name is Janice Andersen I reside at 879 Wilcoxson Avenue, Stratford, CT . I am the parent of 2 adult children with mental illness. I was a trainer for Kidcare, a trainer for NAMI's parent education program, the Co-Chair of my local Community Resource Collaborative and for five years the Co-Chair of the Children's Behavioral Health Advisory Council

Today I will share with you some of my impressions regarding the failed attempt to make DCF a family focus parent friendly state agency based on my ten years of involvement and the calls I received from parents asking for help and advice.

It is important for you to understand that a culture has been created in this agency that is not correctable, that will not change with a new commissioner, or a reconfiguration. It is the inability of DCF to internally correct itself and it's willingness to tolerate ineffective treatment facilities and area offices that unfortunately impacts it's overall ability to be effective.

DCF does not know how to oversee contracts .

The Office of the Ombudsman is a joke – This agency cannot police itself

DCF continues to use protective services as an intimidation tactic to force families to do what DCF wants and to keep parents quiet.

DCF continues to take no action regarding what the community knows to be notorious area offices and the staff at those offices that are nothing less than cruel to families.

I do not believe the behavioral health partnership can provide behavioral health services either – emergency rooms continue to be backed up and the number of children being sent out to the state for treatment has not been reduced

DCF marginalizes parents who speak up and ask too many questions.

DCF is way too top heavy – my tax dollar is used to send far too many highly paid staff to go from meeting to meeting accomplishing nothing.

The State of CT should consider combining DCF, DMHAS, DMR and DSS and create a Department of Human Services that provides all services to individuals, families and children. We must begin to look at families as a whole and serve the entire family in a coordinated effective way with one care coordinator that brings all needed services to a family or an individual.

The way CT serves families now could result in one family having a DCF voluntary services casemanager, a care coordinator from a local CRC, a casemanager from DMR, a casemanager from DMHAS and a casemanager from DSS. How effective can

Fortunately, my family was never directly involved with DCF, however we did have IICAP services for approx. six months- which was a disaster. I will share with you our experience with the attempt made to address the problems with IICAPS in my written testimony and urge you to take the time to read it.

My family had a terrible experience with IICAPS and feeling a sense of responsibility, since I co-chaired the CBHAC, I requested a meeting with Boys and Girls Village to address my concerns. This meeting took six months to schedule. The staff was caught in two blatant lies; no corrective action was taken. I then contact DCF and requested a meeting with the staff from Yale who were responsible for overseeing the IICAPS program. This meeting also took six months to schedule. So a year after my family was release from IICAPs services, I meet with Karen Andersson from DCF and the Yale staff. Although they agreed that my family and particularly my daughter were not treated under the IICAPS guidelines -no action was taken. At my daughters urging I filed a complaint with the DCF Ombudsman office -I don't remember how long this meeting took to schedule. My daughter and I meet with Rudy Brooks and Frank Gregory at the DCF office in Bridgeport. During this meeting my daughter was told she just needed to let go of this and move on with her life and I was told as her mother that if I "really" wanted to help my daughter I needed to move on and let this go. My daughter left this meeting feeling terrible and unimportant - I left just feeling disgusted. The meeting was facilitated by Mr. Brooks and I believe Dr.Gregory honestly felt bad about how the meeting went. We moved on with our lives - however my daughter's recovery was extended due to the inappropriate treatment she received.