



For Immediate Release  
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## **Connecticut's Department of Children & Families is Awarded a \$6 Million "Systems of Care" Grant from SAMHSA for the *CONNECTing Schools to Care IV Students Initiative***

*CHDI will serve as the Coordinating Center for the initiative, which aims to expand comprehensive school mental health in schools across the State*

Farmington, CT – The State of Connecticut is launching the *CONNECTing Schools to Care IV Students* initiative to integrate trauma-informed comprehensive school mental health supports into the existing community-based network of care. The initiative fosters collaboration between families, schools, and the community to improve access to equitable and appropriate school-based and locally-based care for youth with behavioral health concerns or at risk of developing significant mental health challenges.

The *CONNECTing Schools to Care IV Students* initiative (CONNECT IV) has been made possible through a four-year Systems of Care grant awarded to the Connecticut Department for Children and Families (DCF) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA). It is the fourth [CONNECT Systems of Care](#) grant awarded to the State of Connecticut since 2013. CONNECT IV builds upon the successes of previous Systems of Care (SOC) awards and current Comprehensive School Mental Health implementation initiatives, which are being coordinated by CHDI.

*"We are excited to launch the *CONNECTing Schools to Care IV Students* initiative. This collaborative initiative will significantly enhance the support and resources available to Connecticut schools, families, and students,"* said Bethany Zorba, DCF Child and Family Program Supervisor and Principal Investigator for the grant.

The CONNECT IV initiative will use Connecticut's established [framework for trauma-informed Comprehensive School Mental Health](#), developed by the National Center for School Mental Health and CHDI, to address four key goals:

- 1) Expand the infrastructure for an integrated school- and community-based behavioral health network of care;
- 2) Expand school and family awareness, knowledge and access to information about behavioral health, trauma, and crisis response;
- 3) Build capacity of Connecticut's schools to access and utilize community-based behavioral health resources and supports for school mental health; and
- 4) Implement and sustain equitable and comprehensive school mental health supports.

*"We are excited to partner with the State to help schools and districts benefit from a comprehensive system that builds their capacity to identify and respond to behavioral health challenges among their students,"* said Jeana Bracey, PhD, Associate Vice President for School and Community Initiatives at CHDI. *"This approach fosters a school climate, culture, and system that supports student well-being, increases students' academic success, and decreases staff burnout."*

The following services and support will be available:

- All 206 school districts in Connecticut will have universal access to prevention and early intervention resources
- Selected supports for training, coaching, and implementation will be provided to up to 120 schools over the course of four years
- Intensive support for implementation and quality improvement activities will benefit up to 54 schools
- 1,600 children and youth will receive Wraparound/Care Coordination services

CONNECT IV is operated by five grant-funded partners (FAVOR, Carelon Behavioral Health, CHDI, the Consultation Center at Yale, and DCF), working closely with the State Department of Education and other state agencies and a Steering Team of family members and stakeholders. DCF has contracted with CHDI, who will serve as the Coordinating Center to provide fiscal, administrative, and logistical support; content expertise in systems of care development, implementation, and behavioral health systems integration; and leadership and governance support.

Learn more about Connecticut's Systems of Care work at [www.plan4children.org](http://www.plan4children.org) and Comprehensive School Mental Health initiatives at [www.chdi.org/our-work/school-based-mental-health](http://www.chdi.org/our-work/school-based-mental-health).

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