

Top State Officials and Children's Health Experts Address Connecticut's Early Childhood Health Issues at State Capitol Today

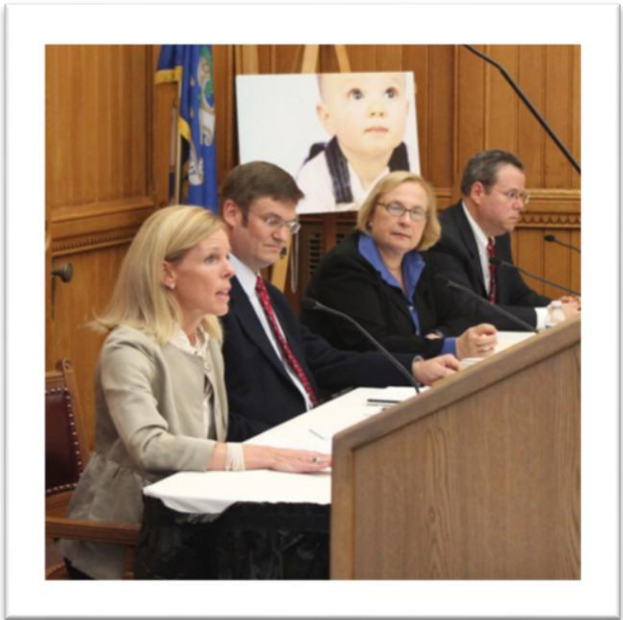
Hartford, CT – At the State Capitol today, top officials, health professionals, community leaders, and early child educators discussed Connecticut's early childhood health system and how it is serving children in the *First 1000 Days* of their lives. The discussion is part of the State's [First 1000 Days initiative](#), which was kicked off in June by Department of Children and Families' Deputy Commissioner Janice Gruendel. *The First 1000 Days* refers not only to the first three years of life, but what can be done in Connecticut over the next three years to improve the likelihood that all children will achieve optimal development leading to success in school and thriving in life.

Today's event: [First 1000 Days: Off to a Healthy Start...877 Days and Counting](#), focused attention on a key area of school readiness, that of children's health and was hosted by the Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI), Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Public Health's (DPH) Family Health Section. The accompanying briefing paper: [Connecticut's Children: Off to a Healthy Start](#), includes an overview of how Connecticut's children are doing on key health indicators, what the State is currently doing, and what still needs to be done.

"No child should arrive at kindergarten with unidentified and unaddressed health or developmental concerns," said Judith Meyers, President and CEO of CHDI and author of the briefing paper. "Research has clearly documented the importance of health in the first three years of life as the grounding for school success and lifelong well-being."

Health is defined broadly, encompassing physical, social, emotional and oral health. Health promotion, disease prevention and early identification and treatment during these earliest years lay the foundation for healthy development and decrease the need for costly and ineffective interventions later in life.

Nationally recognized pediatrician **Neal Halfon**, MD, (Director, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities) delivered the keynote address. **Judith Meyers** provided an overview of the health of young children in Connecticut, followed by two panels on Connecticut's Challenges and Solutions. Panelists included: **Commissioner Roderick Bremby**, Department of Social Services; **Commissioner Jewel Mullen**, Department of Public Health; **Commissioner Joette Katz**, Department of Children & Families; **Senator Terry Gerratana**, Co-Chair, Public Health Committee; Co-Chair, Select Committee on Children; **Myra Jones Taylor**, Connecticut's Early Childhood Planning Director; **Robert Dudley, MD** (pediatrician); **Rafael Perez-Escamilla**, Yale School of Public Health; and **Jennifer Carroll**, Family Support Network. **Paul Dworkin, MD**, Chair, Pediatrics, UCONN School of Medicine and nationally recognized leader in child development, discussed what's next: "877 Days and Counting."



Photos from event:

(Top left: Judith Meyers, President & CEO of the Child Health and Development Institute);

(Top right: keynote speaker Neal Halfon MD, Director, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities);

(Bottom left: Panel 1 – Jen Carroll, Family Support Network; Robert Dudley, pediatrician; Senator Gerrata, Co-Chair, Public Health Committee, Co-Chair, Select Committee on Children; and Rafael Perez-Escamilla, Yale School of Public Health).

(Bottom right: Panel 2 – Myra Jones Taylor, Connecticut’s Early Childhood Planning Director; Commissioner Mullen, Department of Public Health; Commissioner Bremby, Department of Social Services; and Commissioner Katz, Department of Children and Families).

[The Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut \(CHDI\)](#) works to advance policy, systems, program and practice changes that will result in better health and developmental outcomes for the children of Connecticut.

###