



# HARTFORD FAMILY CIVICS INITIATIVE

A broad-based effort to engage  
families & strengthen our community





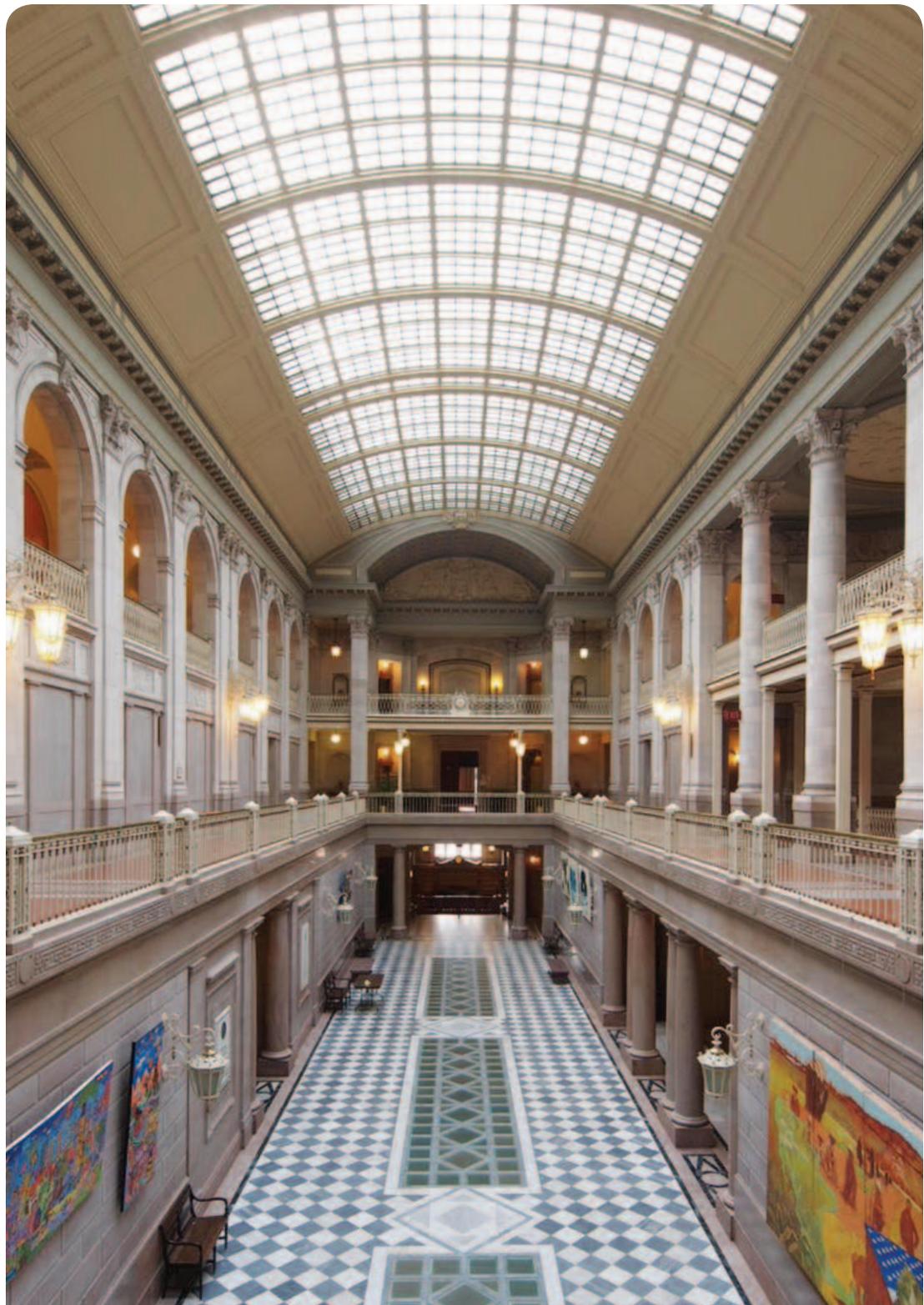
CELEBRATING HARTFORD'S  
HISTORICAL HERITAGE



**Hartford's Family Civics Initiative (FCI)** is led by a relatively new department of City government, the Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation. The Department was created on July 11, 2011 by combining the resources of three separate areas of City government into one central family-focused unit. Previously, the Office for Young Children focused on children from birth to age eight; The Office for Youth Services served youth from age nine to 24 and the Department of Recreation offered programs and services for Hartford residents of all ages. Now, as one combined entity, the Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation is strongly positioned to more holistically support the leadership role Hartford's families can and should play in shaping the programs, practices and policies that affect them.



The City of Hartford's **Commitment**



EVERYONE IS WELCOME



### **INCLUSIVENESS: OUR KEY OPERATING PRINCIPLE**

The voice and involvement of the diverse range of families living in Hartford are essential ingredients that the Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation depends on in order to plan and implement the City's family-development services. However you define "family" meets our criteria. We intend to be responsive to the wants and needs of married parents with or without children... to single fathers and mothers...to teen parents...to foster parents...to grandparents...to blended and extended families...to same sex partners...and to individuals living alone. When we say we support all families, we mean it.

## THE RESULTS WE SEEK

The Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation envisions a future in which members of Hartford's families have access to all the tools they need to become leaders who partner with schools, faith communities and nonprofit organizations; engage in civic activities; promote a safe and healthy environment; and advocate for families on the local and state levels of government. Examples of civic engagement include:

- Participating in School Governance Councils (SGCs) and Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs)
- Collaborating with schools and local colleges to create opportunities for civic engagement and careers
- Using the internet to access public knowledge
- Visiting the library to be informed of local programs, events and opportunities
- Organizing community conversations that bring diverse groups of people together to address common interests (classes for English language learners, creative arts, sports, community gardens, etc.)
- Engaging with neighbors to solve local problems (transportation, blight, crime, affordable housing, etc.)
- Contacting public officials and participating in elections
- Serving on municipal boards and commissions (historic preservation, civilian police review board, cultural affairs, planning and zoning, etc.)

**To get to the family development results that the Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation intends to make happen, it focuses on the following four primary strategies:**

- 1 Convening the Family Design Team (a broadly representative group of stakeholders who invest in Hartford families) to advise the Department on all facets of the Family Civics Initiative
- 2 Strengthening and expanding existing leadership development programs that have proven to be effective for families
- 3 Providing a comprehensive system of strengths-based professional development and credentialing for workers in the areas of early care and education, youth services and recreation
- 4 Creating a family civics database that aligns family-centered resources with the specific wants and needs of Hartford's families and that measures the effectiveness of specific engagement activities





## A CITY THAT WORKS FOR ITS FAMILIES

The Family Civics Initiative brings together people of all backgrounds and views to talk, solve problems, bring about measurable change & create a City that works for everyone.



## FAMILY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In the area of family leadership development and advocacy, our training is based on curricula that have been implemented, tracked, evaluated, and refined over many years in various locations with a wide range of participants.

**The People Empowering People (PEP)** program is a 10-week personal and family development program with a strong community focus. It is offered in both English and Spanish. Created and coordinated by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System, the PEP program builds upon individual life experiences and strengths to encourage growth in communication and problem-solving skills, parent/family relationships and community involvement. Following formal training sessions, participants attend bi-weekly educational support sessions and work on group projects that benefit the community. The program has graduated more than one thousand people in over fifteen years.

**The Parent Leadership Alumni Association** is a year-round, grassroots membership organization composed of parents who have been trained to advocate on behalf of families. They meet to share their skills and to share accountability for improving conditions for children and families. They collaborate and act collectively to address problems that threaten the well-being of families and to pursue opportunities to create positive, lasting and systemic changes in public policies and City life.

**The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI)** is a 20 week course that helps parents become leading advocates for children. It is designed by the American Leadership Forum, Leadership Greater Hartford, and the Connecticut Commission on Children. Its goals are to:

- Inform parents on how local and state government works
- Teach parents the power of the media and how to use it
- Demonstrate to parents how to make their voices heard
- Examine the social and economic trends affecting children & families
- Develop an understanding of public policy and the law
- Explore how local and state budgets are established

# LINKING PEOPLE TO THE COMMUNITY

Hartford Public Library is a hub of civic activity—helping students, parents and recent immigrants to connect and productively interact with the community.





## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS

The Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation offers high-quality professional development and credentialing for staff who work with families:

**The Family Development Credential & Training Program** is an 80-hour strengths-based professional development model used across Connecticut and in 18 other states. It is made available by the Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation in partnership with the Children's Trust Fund Division of the Connecticut Department of Social Services. The Credential is issued by another key partner, the University of Connecticut Center for the Study of Culture, Health and Human Development. Family workers who successfully complete the training program are eligible to receive seven credits from Charter Oak College.

The program has taught many family workers and other professionals effective ways to help families set and reach goals for healthy self-reliance and interdependent relationships within the community. The training also enhances family workers' ability to strengthen community collaborations which are an essential part of their work with families and with each other.

## CREATING CONNECTIONS & MEASURING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A comprehensive family civic database is being developed that uses information to create connections and assess the effectiveness of the Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation's strategies to improve the quality of life for Hartford's families. The Department's project team expects to be able to demonstrate with concrete evidence the economic value of proactive, preventive action to avoid problems rather than addressing them after they occur. The database also will create financial and operational efficiencies by helping to reduce redundancies and increase collaborations.

## AN IMPRESSIVE & GROWING LIST OF PARTNERS

The Family Civics Initiative is funded by a partnership between the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's Brighter Futures Initiative and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Besides the Connecticut Commission on Children and Hartford's Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation, several other local organizations have received support to be part of this broad, state-city alignment effort. Philliber Research Associates of New York City conducts the evaluation of the funding partnership.

# SELF-RELIANCE, TEAMWORK & CONNECTIONS

Family Civics Initiative bolsters the ability of family workers to help people achieve self-reliance and to build collaborative relationships with each other and within the community.



# HOW TO GET MORE ENGAGED

If you as an individual are interested in engaging in our family leadership development activities or if you represent a family-centered service organization that wants to explore the benefits of partnering with us, please contact Hartford's **Department of Families, Children, Youth, & Recreation** at 860-757-9595.



Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation  
550 Main Street | Third Floor, Room 306 | Hartford, CT 06103  
tel 860/757 9530 | fax 860/722 6036  
[ofyc.hartford.gov](http://ofyc.hartford.gov)