



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) Among Pilot Sites Selected by National Quality Improvement Center for Youth Engagement to Work on Child Welfare System Reforms

[Providence, R.I.] (December 2, 2022) – The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) announced today that it has been selected as one of eight pilot sites across the United States to partner with the national Quality Improvement Center on Engaging Youth in Finding Permanency (QIC-EY). Established in 2021, the new center is expected to bring about systemic changes in how child welfare professionals authentically engage children and youth, as reflected in intentional shifts in policy, practice and culture within the pilot sites.

From October 2022 through September 2026, DCYF’s Region 3 office in Wakefield [the only site in New England,] will receive support and resources through a federal grant provided by the Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children & Families, aimed at producing a multifaceted system of successful models of youth engagement. The goal is to embrace and support youth’s voice in the permanency planning process. Information gained through evaluation of the work being done in all of the QIC-EY pilot sites will help to transform how children and youth are engaged authentically in child welfare systems throughout the nation. The six other sites selected so far are Hawaii, Michigan, Montana, and Nebraska, plus the Oklahoma Southern Plains Consortium and the Yakama Nation. One additional site will be selected for this project.

Along with the other pilot sites, DCYF will work in partnership with the QIC-EY during the next four years to achieve the following objectives:

- Identify, implement, and evaluate a program model for authentic, child and youth engagement
- Implement a child welfare training and coaching for the workforce
- Identify and implement systemic changes; and
- Partner with the courts to implement a training for court professionals and staff

“DCYF is excited to be selected to participate in this very important project,” said DCYF Acting Director Kevin Aucoin. “Our goal is to improve permanency outcomes for all children and youth in the care of DCYF, and to give our children and youth a meaningful voice in the process. And at the same time, this project will support our staff in developing the skill sets they need to make this happen.”

“DCYF being chosen as a QIC-EY pilot site is a great opportunity for our child welfare professionals to implement a new intervention, while developing our system capacity to promote and support authentic

engagement and empowerment of children and youth,” said Rhode Island Executive Office of Health & Human Services’ Acting Secretary Ana Novais. “The work we will do with the QIC-EY will let us serve as a catalyst for producing systemic change to help children and youth – not only in our state but also across the country.”

### **About DCYF**

The Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) is charged with implementing a statewide network of supports to protect vulnerable children and families. The Department develops, oversees, and evaluates programs which provide opportunities for children to reach their full potential.

DCYF has three major operational divisions: Children’s Behavioral Health Services, Child Welfare (including child protective services, family services, and permanency support), and Juvenile Corrections (including the Rhode Island Training School and juvenile probation). The Department supports nearly 3,000 children and their families both in the community and in DCYF care, and indirectly serves thousands more through community-based programs.

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