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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Family Reunification Month Celebration Set for June 24 in Rhode Island

In honor of Family Reunification Month, Governor Dan McKee and the RI Department of Children, Youth & Families' Birth Parent Advisory Board will host an event to celebrate reunified families.

[Providence, R.I.] (June 19, 2023) – June is Family Reunification Month and to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of families working to stay together, Governor Dan McKee has issued a proclamation recognizing June as Family Reunification Month in Rhode Island. To celebrate this important month, the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families' (DCYF) Birth Parent Advisory Board is planning the first annual Reunification Month event on Saturday, June 24, 2023.

"Family Reunification Month recognizes the families and ongoing efforts in our state to help families stay together and promote their resilience," says Governor Dan McKee. "It's also a time for all of us to recommit to strengthening, improving, and increasing those efforts all year long. Family unity provides stability, and keeping families together without sacrificing child safety is our goal."

In Rhode Island, the number of parents reuniting with their children has continued to increase. In 2022 among open DCYF cases there were 379 children discharged to reunification with parents.

"When children are removed from their families to ensure their safety, the goal is to safely reunite them with their families as quickly as possible," says EOHHS Secretary Richard Charest. "The efforts parents make to reunite their families are a testament to the importance they place on being in their children's lives and this should be celebrated."

DCYF Director Ashley Deckert agrees. "Preserving families is a strong value of the DCYF. However, there are some situations where removal is imminent for the health, safety, and well-being of children. If a child has to be removed, DCYF is committed to working hard with the mom, dad, and child to be returned home. When a child returns home, it is something to be celebrated! As Director, I am certain I can speak for all DCYF staff in saying we are so proud when children are reunified with their parents. We know that children thrive when their parents are well supported and given the resources needed to be successful. I am proud to live in a state that recognizes the importance of family reunification!"

Hundreds of Rhode Island parents work diligently to improve and enhance their parenting skills through the assistance of social caseworkers, advocates, the RI Family Court, and community partners to successfully reunite with their children. Members of DCYF's Birth Parent Advisory Board come together

using their knowledge and lived experiences to help improve the system and outcomes for all families who may be or may become involved with the Department's Child Protective Services (CPS) Division. As parents who have lived through involvement with DCYF, board members are taking steps in shedding the stigma associated with that experience, by providing great insight into the experiences parents might endure while involved with the Department and beyond.

In recognition of this important month, the RI State House dome will also be illuminated in blue on June 18, 20 and 21. At the Family Reunification Day event on June 24, taking place between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at District Hall in Providence, there will be guest speakers, resources for parents, food, and games and activities for children. Families can reserve their spot online at <https://bit.ly/RIFamilyReunification2023>.

Media interested in attending this event, must respond to Damaris Teixeira by email at damaris.teixeira@dcyf.ri.gov.

About DCYF

The mission of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families is to partner with families and communities to raise safe and healthy children and youth in a caring environment and to engage respectfully and effectively with people of all races, ethnicities, cultures, classes, genders, sexual orientations, and faiths in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of all individuals, families, tribes, and communities, and protects and preserves the dignity of each.

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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