Joette Katz, JD, was appointed as Commissioner to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (CT DCF) in 2011. Before her appointment, she served as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Connecticut for almost twenty years. Commissioner Katz has taught several university courses on ethics and law and has been a member of multiple organizations throughout the state, including the American Law Institute’s Sentencing Advisory Committee and the State of Connecticut Public Defender Commission. In 2015, Commissioner Katz spoke at the “Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Child Welfare” for the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, and in 2013, she presented “Where Do We go from Here?” at the Juvenile Justice Reform Forum. Through her work on the ground assisting with reconstruction efforts in Biloxi and Sri Lanka, as well as her mentoring of children in New Haven, Commissioner Katz has approached her work with a lens toward justice and community.

Susan R. Smith, Chief of Quality and Planning, CT DCF. Ms. Smith attended Williams College and Duke University School of Law. She has worked at CT DCF since 1995 and has managed the department’s Systems of Care initiative for children with complex behavioral health needs, directed the department’s procurement operations; overseen Connecticut’s private foster care system; and served as the DCF Director for the Office of Research and Evaluation. In 2013, Ms. Smith was appointed as the Chief of Quality and Planning in the DCF Commissioner’s Office. She currently oversees the Office of Multiculturalism and Immigration Practice, Office of Performance Management, the department’s Office for Evaluation, Risk Management Unit, Special Qualitative Reviews, Ombudsman’s Office, and Office for Administrative Case Reviews. She is also the Executive Sponsor of the Department’s Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup.

Jodi Hill-Lilly, MSW, Director of the Academy for Workforce Development, CT DCF. Mrs. Hill-Lilly is responsible for statewide coordination of all workforce development activities for approximately 3,500 staff. She works in partnership with the Director of Human Resources and the Chief of Quality Improvement to recruit, train, and support a highly skilled and diverse workforce to work with some of Connecticut’s most vulnerable children and families served by the child welfare system. Mrs. Hill-Lilly has more than 29 years of child welfare experience, including direct service and management, and is currently a member of the DCF Senior Leadership Team. For the last 14 years, she also has served as a national consultant, trainer, and speaker for a number of federal and state initiatives, including but not limited to the Child and Family Service Reviews, Child Welfare Adoption Leadership Institute (formally The Minority Adoption Leadership Institute), Making Baltimore City a Trauma-Informed System, Training on Adoption Competencies, and the Leadership Academy for Middle Managers. Mrs. Hill-Lilly has been an active member of the DCF initiative on Racial Justice and is charged with assisting the development and implementation of policy, training, and coaching on issues related to race and culture throughout the agency and the community. Strengthening the lives of children and families has been at the core of Mrs. Hill-Lilly’s work experience.
Tracy Davis, MSW, has been an employee of CT DCF for twenty-three years. She has held numerous positions within the department, most currently serving as the Assistant Director for the Academy for Workforce Development. She currently manages the child welfare trainers responsible for the ongoing development and delivery of training for newly employed social workers. Mrs. Davis has been involved with the racial justice initiative for the past two years. Her work in this area centers on furthering the development of the workforce through webinars, trainings, and application to practice. Her role also extends to the coordination of efforts provided by contracted consultants for technical assistance across the state to the various leadership teams.

Vannessa Dorantes, LMSW, CT DCF Region 5 Administrator, oversees the 43 cities and towns in the northwest Connecticut catchment area, and has worked for DCF for the past 25 years. Vannessa’s career at DCF began as a social worker then a social work supervisor. While as an Intake Program Manager, she was part of the development of what we now know at the Differential Response System (DRS). She served 4 years as Office Director before her appointment as one of six Regional Administrators who report directly to the Commissioner. She currently co-chairs CT DCF’s Statewide Racial Justice workgroup, which focuses on addressing disparities and reducing disproportionality from a child welfare practice framework. Ms. Dorantes is also an adjunct faculty member at Central Connecticut State University where she has taught 8 core competency and elective social work courses. She is also a member of both Central Connecticut State University and Western Connecticut State University Social Work Advisory Boards.

Jen Agosti, MPP, provides consulting services focused on the transformation of organizational culture. She helped adapt the Breakthrough Series Collaborative methodology from the health care arena to child welfare in 2001 and worked closely with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network in 2005 to further adapt the model for the field of child trauma. Jen infuses a racial justice lens in all her work, believing that no system can improve unless it explicitly and intentionally addresses issues of racial and social injustice, and she believes that no true system improvements will ever be possible without understanding and addressing the structural and institutional racism that currently exists within all our systems, as well as the conscious and unconscious biases that impact daily decision-making.

William Rivera, MATS, is the Director of Office of Multicultural Affairs and Immigration Practice for CT DCF. He is responsible for creating and sustaining ongoing diversity initiatives designed to promote a culturally and linguistically competent child welfare system. Mr. Rivera spearheaded the creation of DCF’s human trafficking response system. He has served a leader and facilitator in the DCF’s efforts to create and sustain racial equity in child welfare practice. He currently co-chairs CT DCF’s Statewide Racial Justice workgroup, which focuses on eliminating disparities and reducing disproportionality in the child welfare system. He has also served as an adjunct faculty member for the Connecticut College Department of Human Development in New London, Connecticut.