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## The Parent Trust Fund Provides Parent Leadership Grants

Parents have an important role to play in their communities and the state as leaders with a voice in improving the health, safety and learning of children. The Parent Trust Fund was created to build this parent leadership capacity and provide parents with the substantive civic tools to be effective advocates for children and participate in the civic life of communities throughout the state. Communities can apply for these funds and receive \$1,000 to \$8,000 to support parent training programs that:

- Increase the sustained motivation, ability and opportunity for parents to engage in the civic life of their communities and state.
- Increase the visibility and voice of parents raising their concerns about issues pertaining to the quality of life and education for children and families.
- Demonstrate diversity among parent participants, quality training of civic skills and plans for increased, sustained parent engagement in the community.
- Demonstrate a local match of 50% (one fourth may be an in-kind resource contribution).

The Parent Trust Fund is intentionally named to reflect that a trust of dollars has been created for quality parent skills training and that policy makers support the importance of recognizing parents as their children's first teachers. The Parent Trust Act was passed in the 2001 legislative session and represents a joint initiative between the Connecticut Department of Children and Families and The Connecticut Commission on Children. The United Way of Connecticut is the fiscal agent for the Parent Trust Fund.

The Parent Trust is part of the broad statewide effort of Family Support Connecticut, a public-private partnership working together to create a common statewide agenda for children and families and to coordinate family support efforts. The Core Team of Family Support Connecticut consists of representatives from:

- Department of Education
- Department of Mental Retardation

- Department of Public Health
- Department of Children and Families
- Office of Protection and Advocacy
- Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Department of Social Services
- The Connecticut Commission on Children
- Parents
- Family support programs and centers

A Robert Wood Johnson Family Support Grant supported the first two years of grants for the Parent Trust Fund, along with grants from the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund and contributions from State departments. This year, the Memorial Fund and State departments are providing matching funds to continue the Trust in its third year. "This project helps to prepare parents to develop leadership skills and engage in community activities on behalf of children, such as the Discovery work. We believe that this project has a simple, direct and special role in promoting healthy, engaged families for children," said David Nee, Executive Director of the Memorial Fund.

To be eligible for the grant, the training curricula must include civics, be financially sustainable and teach an appreciation of diversity. Communities are also required to demonstrate a 50% local match, 25% in cash and 25% in-kind contributions (such as volunteers, space, meals, child care, pro bono professional assistance, etc.).

To learn more about the grant process, time line, funding restrictions and commonly asked questions, contact the Connecticut Commission on Children at (860) 240-0290. ■

*The William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund works collaboratively to improve education for Connecticut's children by supporting school change, informing the public debate on educational issues, and strengthening the involvement of parents and the community in education.*

For more information on the Parent Trust Fund, visit the Connecticut Commission on Children website at [www.cga.ct.gov/COC/parent\\_trust.htm](http://www.cga.ct.gov/COC/parent_trust.htm)