

Memorandum of Understanding by and between the undersigned Community Partners related to Planning for Meriden Family Zone (MFZ)

The signatories of this Memorandum of Understanding join with the Meriden Family Zone (MFZ) Planning Team under the leadership of Meriden Children First Initiative (CFI) in a planning process to build a continuum of solutions from the cradle to careers to support academic achievement, healthy development, and college and career success for all children in the Meriden Family Zone neighborhood. This effort will connect families, neighborhoods, educators, human service providers, business, the faith community, funders, and policymakers. Strong schools for children are at the center of the collaboration.

Vision. We envision the Meriden Family Zone neighborhoods embracing lifelong learning and meaningful community involvement. Neighborhood children will access effective schools and strong systems of family and community support for their education, careers, family economic success, and overall engagement in the social, economic, and political lives of our neighborhoods and the broader community.

Theory of Change. Our theory of change for our neighborhood is based on five core values:

- 1) **Place-based and parent-focused approach:** Building on the strength of “grassroots organizing,” neighborhood residents lead the change process. Change will happen when the neighborhood sets clear goals and takes the initiative to implement that plan.
- 2) **Continuum of solutions and educational excellence:** To achieve the results we desire for all children and families in the neighborhood, it is critical to have an integrated series of evidenced-based programs and services to support the wide range of needs of families and children at every developmental stage. At the center of the continuum are the teachers and administrators at our five public schools serving virtually all MFZ neighborhood children: the elementary schools Israel Putnam, Casmir Pulaski, and Roger Sherman; Washington Middle School; and Maloney High School
- 3) **Data-driven and evaluation-focused:** In order to advance our work, it is critical that data and full, open dialog about its implications drive improvement in services and outcomes. Working with the schools and other project partners, we are committed to rigorously evaluating all our activities, services and the service delivery system on an ongoing basis in order to improve and refine them so as to target resources to meet critical needs and to attain our mutually agreed upon results, using a common data

system.

- 4) **Collaboration and parent involvement:** We value a diverse group of voices (parents, educators, human service providers, business, government, faith community, and neighborhood residents) in planning and orchestrating systemic change to identify and address root causes.
- 5) **Culture of success:** We nurture a culture of success within our neighborhoods grounded in strong local leadership, effective community-driven planning, accountability, and commitment to achieve results.

Theory of Action. We agree to work collaboratively over the next year to plan for the establishment of an effective, seamless, evidence-based **continuum of solutions** to support achievement of the academic and family and community results specified in Tables 1 and 2 of the federal guidelines and in the Meriden Promise Neighborhood application.

To accomplish these long term results, we will define and implement interim results including: (a) collecting and using data to determine baselines for indicators of the results we want and to inform planning work, (b) using objective indicator and qualitative data to determine the gaps preventing school success for segments of the neighborhood students; (c) selecting/scaling up successful programs or projects along a continuum of solutions to support achievement by neighborhood children; and (d) training and supporting neighborhood residents from a variety of backgrounds and cultures to work with the MFZ Planning Team to use data to determine project success.

Neighborhood-based Leadership and Governance. As partners, we recognize and support the leadership of CFI in implementing the plans created by the MFZ Planning Team, which will carry out the work specified in the application. The Team will keep the larger community and its partners informed about progress toward implementation of the plan. An eight-person Executive Committee will be composed of representatives of the United Way, a board member of Meriden Children First, three parent leaders, a representative of a provider of services to the neighborhood, a representative appointed by the Mayor, and a representative appointed by the Superintendent. The Executive Committee shall make all programmatic and funding decisions for the initiative after consultation with the larger Planning Team. CFI will serve as the fiduciary agent for the process. At least forty percent of the full Planning Team will be neighborhood representatives.

Agreement. In signing this Memorandum of Understanding, the undersigned confirm their commitment to: (a) participate in the development of the MFZ neighborhood plan and process and to the specific roles for each organization outlined below; (b) provide data (with appropriate releases, if necessary) on participation in and outcomes of programs operated within the neighborhood to inform planning; (c) participate in national Promise Neighborhoods Communities of Practice around specific components; and (d) work with the national evaluator of the initiative. **Specific commitments of each partner:**

Central Planning Partners

Meriden Children First (CFI) (Project Lead)

Meriden Children First (CFI) is a non-profit civic organization founded in 1994 to strengthen schools through research, advocacy and parent leadership. Since it's founding, CFI has used planning data to identify critical needs of the community and then work to meet them. In the Promise Neighborhood Planning year, we commit to:

- Serve as the Project Lead and Fiscal Agent for the PN planning process;
- Work with the Executive Committee and the Planning Team to complete all work tasks specified
- Build relationships with all partners involved in the Promise Neighborhoods process;
- Complete the Promise Neighborhood Plan on time and on budget.
- Participate in the Planning Team and bringing neighborhood input to the planning process through our monthly meetings;
- Train neighborhood leaders to use data to target resources towards segments of the school population most in need, and to continuously evaluate our success;
- Support parent involvement in the neighborhood schools.

Marisol Estrada Soto
President

David Radcliffe
Director

Meriden Public Schools

The Meriden Public Schools (MPS) oversees the operation of 12 public schools serving over 9,000 students. MPS works in partnership with schools, their teachers and administrators, non-profit organizations, families and the community to achieve their results. The Promise Neighborhood program will give the MPS the opportunity to develop this model of community wide collaboration to bring about change in three neighborhood schools: Roger Sherman Elementary, Casimir Pulaski Elementary and Israel Putnam Elementary to promote increased student achievement. MPS commits to:

- Provide data at the student level to track progress toward results;
- Provide school improvement resources to train teachers and administrators; promoting parent and community support of the neighborhood schools through collaboration on the Family Partnership Program to deliver coordinated supports for families and students and in greater parent engagement;
- Designate the Superintendent of Schools or a representative from central office, at least one school administrator and at least one teacher to serve on the Promise Neighborhood Planning Team and Executive Committee.
- Conduct regular, online district-wide assessments to provide near instant feedback to instructional leaders, teachers, parents and students.
- Address the non-academic needs of students through partnering with the Meriden Family Zone and through the assignment of Family School Liaisons to use evidence-based strategies and tactics to strengthen partnerships with families and with community service providers and other stakeholders dedicated to student success.
- Emphasize health, educational and other services and supports for Birth-5 year olds and their families, focusing on quality pre-K experiences, universal full-day kindergarten, and parent engagement.
- Support and connect existing - and where needed create new - school-parent-community partnerships to improve academic and other family/community outcomes for school-aged students. This includes before and after school, weekends and summer; and adult education focused on family literacy and employment training and job placement.
- Focus on improving school climate through Positive Behavior Support and other efforts.

- **The Meriden Public Schools pledges \$109,560 in matching cash and in-kind funds to the Meriden PN project in the form of parent outreach and data and evaluation support.**

Dr. Mark Benigni

Superintendent

Principals of Meriden’s Roger Sherman Elementary, Israel Putnam Elementary, Casmir Pulaski Elementary, Washington Middle and Maloney High School

Our five schools are committed to independent thinking, lifelong learning and responsible global citizenship. The Promise Neighborhood plan proposes to take our community collaboration to the next level, that of creating a fully integrated continuum of supports for our students focusing on whole student development. Our schools commit to:

- Develop plans to involve parents and neighborhood residents in a variety of activities to support student achievement, and in roles supportive of our programs;
- Engage the wider community in our efforts to develop career pathways for all students;
- Implementing fully the Meriden Public Schools District Improvement Plan designed to drive rapid improvements in student achievement.
- Participate in the Planning Team and sharing data to evaluate improvement results.
- Track the important transition from preschool to kindergarten, and working with the Planning Team to improve the process and results.

United Way. **United Way of Meriden and Wallingford** allocates more than \$600,000 to program services in the Meriden area annually and partners with nearly 50 local organizations and initiatives through grant making, leadership, and civic engagement. During the planning year, United Way commits to:

- Serve on the Planning Team and integrating Promise Neighborhood initiatives with United-Way funded programs to ensure results for children;

- Develop the capacity of United Way funded programs to be in a strong position to support the Meriden Family Zone
- Provide leadership to convene local providers and funders to better coordinate programs and funding for the Zone
- Collect data on services provided in the neighborhood by grantee organizations.

Jim Ieronimo, Director

James H. Napier Foundation

The James H. Napier Foundation is committed to child and family success. We fund and work to encourage interagency collaborative to maximize outcomes. The Family Zone is an important priority for the Foundation. For Promise Neighborhoods, we commit to:

- Serve on the Promise Neighborhood Planning Team and connecting our work across several funded-program areas with Team planning;
- Provide data on funding provided to entities serving neighborhood residents;
- Provide a grant of \$19,000 for support of the Promise Neighborhood planning process.
- Provide leadership to convene local providers and funders to better coordinate programs and funding for the Zone

Lisa Barr

Trustee, James H. Napier Foundation

City of Meriden The education and well-being of our children is a priority for the City of Meriden. Our school local improvements initiatives have created the platform to measure school performance, student achievement and teacher quality effectively. The Promise Neighborhood Program will enhance these efforts and give us the opportunity to measure our success with other cities in the nation that have made school reform a priority. Therefore, the City of Meriden is committed to:

- Staff participation from myself, the City's Department of Development and Enforcement Housing and Building Division, Department of Economic Development, Department of

Health and Human Services and the Meriden Public Library in work groups or on projects in the Zone in coordination with the Family Zone project;

- Use of City facilities for planning and community meetings for functions that support the Zone;
- Provide in-kind office space to the lead PN agency, Meriden Children First;
- The City of Meriden pledges \$166,700 in matching support for the Meriden PN project.

Larry Kendzior
City Manager

Other Key Partners

Early Childhood

Meriden Early Childhood Council **The Meriden Early Childhood Council** (MECC) is the early childhood governing body of New Haven, appointed by the Mayor and Superintendent of Schools. In conjunction with its community partners, the Council works to enhance the quality of the early childhood experience for all Meriden children. The MECC commits to:

- Working with the Planning Team to implement the Promise Neighborhood and Meriden Early Childhood Plans;
- Working to strengthen connections between family-based early childhood providers and schools in the neighborhood and to promote effective parent engagement;
- Participating in focused outreach efforts to educate families about providers/early childhood education resources and the vision for the Zone;

Marisol Estrada-Soto
Co-chair

Meriden YMCA Head Start

The YMCA Head Start program is committed to helping young children and their families be ready for school. We believe our quality, affordable preschool experience is vitally important for

Meriden families, including those in the Family Zone. For Promise Neighborhoods, we pledge to:

- Work with the Planning Team to implement the Promise Neighborhood and Meriden Early Childhood Plans;
- Work to strengthen connections between family-based early childhood providers and schools in the neighborhood and to promote effective parent engagement;
- Participate in focused outreach efforts to educate families about providers/early childhood education resources and the vision for the Zone;
- Coordinate Head Start Family Advocate outreach with Zone family outreach
- Sharing data to be used to indicate continuum gaps and program success, and determining baseline numbers of neighborhood children in current programs;
- On-site dental clinic

Christine Cattel

Director, Meriden YMCA HeadStart

Health

MidState Medical Center

As the region’s largest hospital, MidState has a long history of working with Meriden neighborhood partners to improve health outcomes for City residents and to combat disparities in the delivery of health services for the City’s minority and disadvantaged communities. Over the planning year, MidState commits to:

- Work with the Planning Team on healthcare-related components of the continuum;
- Support solutions for health components of the continuum through our community programs;
- Explore possibility of developing student internships and work experience opportunities for Zone adults and students in the hospital;
- Working with the Community Health Center, engage new families in the PN through our birthing center; and,
- Provide data with appropriate releases to the Planning Team on hospital, emergency, and primary care utilization by Promise Neighborhood residents.

Senior Vice President of Operations, MidState Medical Center

Child Guidance Clinic For Central Connecticut Inc. (CGC) The CGC provides comprehensive behavioral health services for children, adolescents and their families. Our collaborative, family-focused approach optimizes individual capabilities which contribute to the growth of a strong community. CGC seeks to promote the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of children and families suffering the effects of sexual abuse, domestic violence, and other behavioral health issues, relying on prevention and intervention. During the planning year, the CGC commits to:

- Providing Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services for children in the zone;
- Develop in-home therapeutic services to children 0-5 in the zone; the development of this service is dependent on securing grant funding.
- Collect and share data, with appropriate releases, on key Zone indicators for CGC families.
- Enroll CGC families as Zone participants
- Have a representative serve on the planning team.

Thomas Czarkosky
Executive Director

ChildFIRST

Child FIRST (Child and Family Interagency Resource, Support, and Training) is a model home-based early childhood intervention, embedded in a local early childhood system of care, that works to decrease the incidence of serious emotional disturbance, developmental and learning problems, and abuse and neglect among the most vulnerable young children (birth up to age 6) and families in Connecticut.

Child FIRST takes a two-pronged approach in delivering its home based services providing:

(1) care coordination to reduce stressors in the home environment and (2) parent guidance and parent-child psychotherapeutic services. By addressing concrete needs and strengthening the parent-child relationship to buffer “toxic” stress, Child FIRST is able to improve learning, reduce behavioral and emotional problems, decrease parental stress and depression, reduce involvement with child protective services, and connect families with multiple needed services, as evidenced by a randomized control trial.

Child FIRST is best suited for communities, like Meriden, whose community agencies are committed to working collaboratively and coordinating services for vulnerable families. Child FIRST works closely with these community partners to strengthen the local early childhood system of care.

As part of the MFZ initiative, Child FIRST CT will work with Meriden’s local partners to:

- Help establish Child FIRST services with a local mental health agency that is an active partner in the Meriden’s early childhood community partnerships
- Provide necessary training and technical services to ensure high quality services
- Ensure that the local Child FIRST office collect and analyze implementation and results data to assess and improve the program on an ongoing basis.

During the planning phase, Child FIRST CT is committed to investing up to \$5,000 of in-kind planning and technical assistance services.

Darcy Lowell, MD
Executive Director, Child FIRST CT

Meriden Community Health Center (CHC) The CHC currently provides many services to neighborhood children, including school-based health centers at the target elementary schools in the Family Zone. In partnering with our neighborhood to reach its Promise Neighborhood goals, CHC commits to:

- Participate as a member of the Planning Team;

- Share data with appropriate releases to be used to indicate continuum gaps and program success, and determining baseline numbers of target neighborhood children in current CHC programs;
- Invite Zone families to participate with our Nurturing Families program and other CHC workshops and supports
- Support efforts to ensure families enroll and remain enrolled with HUSKY, the state health insurance program for lower-income families.

Yvette Highsmith-Francis
 Director

Youth Development

Youth Serving Agencies As youth services agencies serving the Promise Neighborhood Meriden Family Zone, we provide safe, caring environments that offers a variety of recreational, social and leadership opportunities that complement a child’s formal schooling and contributes to higher levels of school achievement and an enhanced ability to navigate the social world, pursue higher education and secure jobs. For the planning year, we commit to:

- Build a partnership with the MFZ Planning Team to recruit and serve children from the PN neighborhood with positive youth development;
- Participate in the Promise Neighborhood education and youth development network to secure resources for expanded supportive services for children and families in the neighborhood.
- Share data to be used to indicate continuum gaps and program success, and determining baseline numbers of neighborhood children in current programs;
- Have agency director or representative serve on the MFZ Planning Team.

John Benigni	Denise Keating	Larry Pellitier	Don Maleto
Meriden YMCA	Meriden Youth Services	Beat the Street	Boy’s and Girl’s Club

Education and Career

South Central CT Workforce Investment Board (WIB). WIB is a policy and oversight organization responsible for creating a comprehensive, community-wide response to the challenges of building a highly skilled workforce. We will work with the Promise Neighborhood to provide resources and supports to agencies (including the City of Meriden and Meriden's One Stop Center called 'CT Works') that help job search skills and opportunities to youth and adults looking for employment. We will support PN by:

- Help secure state and Federal funding from the Department of Labor for youth employment to youngsters who don't have easy access to the employment system;
- Participate in a WIB youth committee to provide support to local agencies where possible;
- Support and connect Meriden's One Stop Center / CT Works and the local community college to connect to local PN solutions.

William P. Villano

Executive Director, Workforce Alliance

Family Success**Meriden Housing Authority**

The MHA is committed to providing quality, safe and affordable housing to Meriden residents. We operate a 140-unit low income development in the heart of the Family Zone with our children attending two of the target elementary schools, thus we recognize the need and value of working across agencies to help children and their families achieve economic independence and housing self-sufficiency. As part of our commitment to the Family Zone, we pledge to:

- Work with the Planning Team to implement the Promise Neighborhood and Meriden Early Childhood Plans;
- Work to strengthen connections between family-based early childhood providers and schools in the neighborhood and to promote effective parent engagement;

- Participate in focused outreach efforts to educate families about providers/early childhood education resources and the vision for the Zone;
- Coordinate MHA ROSS and Family Self-Sufficiency outreach with Zone family outreach
- Share data to be used to indicate continuum gaps and program success, and determining baseline numbers of neighborhood children in current programs;
- Coordinate future application for Choice Neighborhoods with MFZ planning team
- Provide outreach to resident population concerning Zone programming and events
- Provide use of the MHA's on site Community and Training Center for Zone events and activities.
- The Meriden Housing Authority also pledges \$13,500 in matching support for the PN.

Rob Capelletti
Executive Director

Data and School / Community / Parent Capacity Building

Connecticut Center for School Change

The Connecticut Center for School Change (the Center) is a statewide, non-profit organization with a mission to improve teaching and learning. The Center supports comprehensive preK-12 educational reform through a system-wide, integrated approach focused on improving instructional practice and building leadership at all levels, from parents to superintendents. Our work is informed by the concept that "system success = student success." As part of the Meriden Promise Neighborhood planning process, we pledge the following supports to the Family Zone and Meriden Public Schools:

- Engage the Meriden Superintendent in **Superintendents' Network**, a clinical study group of 24 CT superintendents facilitated by Harvard University professors Richard F. Elmore and Lee Teitel.
- Provide any necessary technical assistance and coaching for superintendents, principals, teachers and parents through professional development programs and communities of practice;

- Help district leaders develop systemic thinking, generate theories of action, employ coherent strategies, align resources, develop and support effective leadership teams, ensure accountability, engage stakeholders, and sustain improvements.
- Deliver leadership training for parents with the **Parents Supporting Educational Excellence (*Parents SEE*)** program. *Parents* provides parents with the skills and understandings necessary for them to become leaders, change agents, and active participants in education policy development and governance, at the school, district, and state levels; and to facilitate partnerships between district and school personnel and parents in developing policies and programs to improve student learning.

Andrew Lachman

Executive Director

Connecticut Commission on Children

Created with bipartisan support in 1985 by the Connecticut legislature, the Commission on Children brings together the various levels of government, the private sector, nonprofit agencies, and philanthropy to promote public policies in the best interests of children. For the Meriden Promise Neighborhood application, the COC will:

- provide information and help conduct research regarding the status of children and children's programs in Meriden and the state of Connecticut; □
- enlist the support of leaders in business, education, and state and local government leaders, along with the news media, to improve services and policies for children; □
- review coordination and assess all programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect children and in context of how those programs and practices are delivered locally; □
- provide support to Meriden in delivering the Parent Leadership Training Institute, including training of program facilitators and measuring of impacts;
- serve as a liaison between government and the Meriden team concerned with children; and □
- make policy recommendations for children annually to the legislature and the governor, including consideration of replicating the 2011 California Promise Neighborhood

legislation

Elaine Zimmerman
Executive Director

DataHaven **DataHaven**, a 501(c)3 nonprofit and National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership organization governed by civic leadership, whose mission is to compile and share high-quality information for communities to use in making better decisions, commits to:

- Serving on the Planning Team and working with them to build a Neighborhood Knowledge Center that will support community decisions, and highlight social inequities that demonstrate the need for place-based change, by cataloguing and presenting cross-linked, multi-sector information about the project, its key partners and the neighborhood;
- Sharing and developing data, and providing technical assistance and access to visualization software, for measuring progress towards Promise Neighborhood goals.
- Provide \$2500 in-kind match for staff and web support.

Mark Abraham, Executive Director