

Hartford Zone

Working Statement of Purpose

Following the philosophy of the Harlem Children's Zone, a group representing Hartford residents, parents, community based organizations, city officials representing young children and health and human services, UCONN Public Health and Education faculty, public policy organizations, and faith-based groups has come together. This group recognizes, as the Harlem Children's Zone founders did, that Hartford's neighborhoods are in need of more than the traditional narrowly-focused means of fighting poverty. It is not enough to hone in on a certain issue related to poverty, such as health, education, or housing, but instead to address the total environment in which children and their families live. The Hartford group believes that the provision of "wrap-around" programs and services for children and their families from before birth through high school graduation and beyond is a model worth adapting.

The Hartford group has gathered statistics on the demographics of the 17 neighborhoods that compose the city and is collecting information on the existence and effectiveness of education, health, and social programs and services in each of those neighborhoods. In doing so, the group intends to identify the neighborhood(s) that presents both great need and great promise as a site for a Hartford Zone. This identification cannot and should not occur without the input and opinions of neighborhood residents and community stakeholders. In order to move forward in gathering that input, the group will begin to engage the neighborhood(s) in discussions about adapting the Harlem Children's Zone model. In doing so, the Hartford version will follow the Harlem goals of: 1.) Reaching children in numbers significant enough to affect the culture of a community; 2.) transforming the physical and social environments that impact the children's

development; 3.) creating a initiative large enough and comprehensive enough to meet the neighborhood(s) need.

The Hartford group strongly believes that adapting the Harlem model is a long term undertaking with a minimum of ten years necessary to implement a program and see significant outcomes. What has worked in Harlem, and what can work in Hartford, is gradual and strategic expansion. Planning the initial neighborhood and subsequent neighborhoods will be driven by the careful and thorough evaluation of all aspects of the initiative.