

The Children's Plan

"The Children's Plan: Improving the Social and Emotional Well Being of New York's Children and their Families", endorsed by nine statewide, child-serving agencies, must be the framework to promote truly multi-system, family-driven, community-based services. Below are highlighted sections from the Plan.

Every action should strengthen our capacity to engage and support families in raising children with emotional health and resilience.

Strengthen partnerships between service providers and family-run family support programs to expand family support actions across all child-serving systems.

Increase meaningful family and youth participation in planning and policy-making and the improvement of service systems at the provider, local and state levels.

One Family, One Plan: Ensuring integrated and effective services and supports.

An adequately sized workforce that is culturally competent and steeped in a new paradigm of integrated, family-driven care must be developed and sustained.

We know the Children's Plan will improve outcomes for children and families and ultimately reduce costs of expensive hospitalizations and high-end services.

Families Together in New York State

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Families Together is a statewide family-run organization that represents families of children with special social, emotional, behavioral and mental health needs. We represent thousands of families across New York State whose children have been involved in many systems including mental health, substance abuse, special education and child welfare. Our board and staff are made up primarily of family members.

February 4, 2010

Families Together in New York State 2010 Policy Agenda

Policy Principles that Guide Our Policy Agenda

The Children's Plan is the overarching theme for our policy priorities. All actions should be multi-system, family-driven and help to implement the Children's Plan.

All children youth and their families must have timely, affordable access to appropriate mental health services within their community.

Children and youth must receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment possible.

Families and youth must be full participants in planning services for their family and in all levels of planning, delivering and monitoring services for children.

Families should never have to relinquish custody of their children in order to receive mental health services.

Policy Priorities for New York State:

- 1. Support the proposed addition of \$3 million in the OMH budget to begin implementation of the addition of family support to Clinic Plus,** including training and credentialing of family advocates in the family support model.
Protect peer-run family support from any budget cuts. Family Support must run across all systems.
- 2. Support the proposed increase in the OCFS budget to fully fund the Bridges to Health (B2H) Medicaid Waiver** from 1565 to 3305 slots. Increase the availability of respite services to all families in need.
- 3. Restore the proposed TANF cuts to preventive services, alternatives to detention, Advantage Aftercare and home visiting.** These services are needed to keep children at home and out of expensive and often inappropriate detention facilities and hospitalizations.
- 4. Reform the Juvenile Justice System** to create a safe environment for youth, and support the increase in mental health services, and provide necessary educational services for youth in the facilities. Savings from any downsizing of residential placements in all systems must be reinvested in cross-system, youth-centered services that are consistent with the implementation of the children's plan.

4. Reform the Juvenile Justice System continued: There must be peer advocates to support youth in the facilities and an independent oversight agency that includes youth and families.
5. **Reduce and work to eliminate the use of restraints in all child-serving systems** including educational facilities. Support New York bill A1862 and federal bill HR 4247. Standardize training and reporting requirements across all systems.
6. **Fund mental health clinic services for those who don't have Medicaid** through an Uncompensated Care Pool.
7. **Reinstate a quality local diploma** for students who don't choose to, or are unable to obtain a Regents Diploma. Provide supports and flexibility for students who wish to pursue a diploma. Reclassify the current IEP diploma as an IEP certificate and make it more descriptive of students' skill level.
8. **End the discrimination of parents with psychiatric disabilities.** Pass legislation that will remove the diagnoses of mental illness or mental retardation as grounds for termination of parental rights. A6668, S2835.
9. **Promote cross-system coordination at the statewide level. Support legislation in the budget to move CCSI to the Council of Children and Families,** the cross-system agency that coordinates the meetings of commissioners of nine child-serving and additional agencies.
10. **Provide adequate opportunities for safe, affordable, permanent housing with optional support services for families and transition-aged youth.** Families can't help their children if they don't have a safe place to live. Restore the cut to supported housing for families and young adults in the OTDA budget and fund a range of support services for housing currently in development.
11. **Improve health insurance to cover the full range of mental health services.** Provide coverage for autism spectrum disorders. Provide parity of mental health services in Child Health Plus and Families Health Plus. Autism A6888, S6123
12. **Raise the age that youth can be tried as adults** to 18 in the criminal justice system. Youth should never be sent to adult prisons.