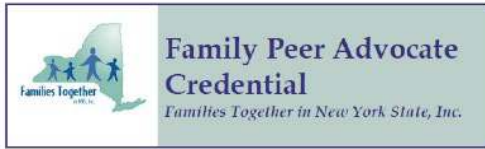


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# **Code of Ethics and Disciplinary Policies and Procedures for Family Peer Advocates**





## **Family Peer Advocate Code of Ethics Disciplinary Policies and Procedures**

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### **Statement of Confidentiality**

Except where otherwise stated, all information received and all reports, decisions, files, transcripts, or any other documents of any kind generated or received during the course of reviewing a potential violation of the Code of Ethics, shall be kept confidential by Families Together in New York State, Inc. (FTNYS), except as required by law.

### **Possible Sanctions for Violation of the Code of Ethics**

- A. All sanctions and corrective actions are designed to educate, remediate and/or prevent further ethics violations.
- B. Possible sanctions for violations of the Code of Ethics include but are not limited to: denial of a pending application for credentialing; a written caution; suspension of a credential; revocation of a credential.
- C. The FTNYS Workforce Development Advisory Committee (WDAC) may impose educational, supervisory, training and/or treatment requirements in conjunction with sanctions and corrective actions.
- D. Past actions taken by the WDAC against a credentialed individual may be considered in setting sanctions.

### **Complaints**

- A. Persons wishing to file a complaint against a Provisionally or Professionally Credentialed Family Peer Advocate may do so by completing the Code of Ethics Violation Complaint Form, including supporting documentation.
- B. Complaint Forms can be found on the FPA Credentialing page of the FTNYS website. Completed forms can be mailed with all supporting documents to FTNYS in an envelope marked 'Confidential':

Families Together in NYS  
737 Madison Ave.  
Albany, NY 12208  
Attention: Department of Workforce Development

## **Investigation and Review Process**

- A. The Director of Workforce Development or a designee shall conduct an initial review of all complaints filed with FTNY and will initiate and direct an investigation if the Director or designee determines that there are possible violations of the Code of Ethics. If during the course of the investigation, it appears that violations of law may have occurred, the Director will notify the appropriate authority.
- B. The Director or designee shall contact the person the complaint is about to discuss the complaint. They may submit a written response within a reasonable period as directed by the Director. The Director may, at their discretion, allow additional time to submit a written response if such is requested.
- C. Failure to provide accurate information or failure to cooperate with any investigation shall be independent grounds for a sanction.
- D. A determination regarding whether there has been a violation of the Code of Ethics will be rendered as soon as reasonably practicable under the circumstances.
- E. Each investigation will be conducted thoroughly and completely, and sanctions may or may not be imposed as warranted under the circumstances.

## **Appeal Process**

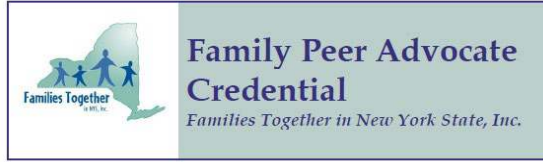
- A. If a sanction is imposed, the individual may appeal the decision by submitting a request for an appeal to the WDAC. Request for an appeal must state the reason for the appeal. Such requests shall be mailed to FTNYS by certified mail and postmarked no later than 30 days after the date of the decision. Appeals requests should be addressed to:  
Families Together in NYS  
737 Madison Avenue  
Albany, NY 12208  
Attention: Department of Workforce Development-Appeals
- B. If a timely request for an appeal is submitted, the WDAC shall appoint a three-person Appeal Committee. Nobody will be appointed to the Appeal Committee who has a potential conflict of interest or who was involved in the initial investigation/determination. The Appeal Committee will review the facts and issue a decision in writing as soon as reasonably practicable under the circumstances. The decision of the Appeals Committee will be considered final.

## **Surrender and Reinstatement**

- A. If a Family Peer Advocate Credential has been suspended or revoked without appeal, or if the Appeal Committee upholds the suspension or revocation, the affected individual shall return their credential certificate to the FTNYS Office no later than 14 days after the suspension or revocation takes effect.
- B. Following a suspension, the individual shall be reinstated and their credential certificate returned at the end of the suspension period unless they have failed to comply with the terms

of their suspension, including abiding by the Code of Ethics and remittance of all applicable renewal/recertification fees.

- C. Following a revocation, the individual must reapply for a Family Peer Advocate Credential after waiting two years from the effective date of the revocation. Such reapplication does not guarantee that they will be issued a FPA Credential.



## Code of Ethics Violation Complaint Form

**PERSON FILING THE COMPLAINT:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSON FILED AGAINST:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you discussed this situation with the Family Peer Advocate you are filing this complaint about?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

List the Code of Ethics standards you believe have been violated:

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On a separate piece of paper, please type (or print neatly in ink) the following information. Please keep your complaint to three pages or less:

1. A summary of the events leading up to the violation
2. A complete account of the violation at issue
3. Any relevant information about what happened after the violation occurred
4. Steps, if any, you have taken to address this situation

Please send us Photocopies (not originals) of any evidence you have related to your complaint. List your supporting documents below:


Please provide any additional information below that you feel may assist in our investigation.

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**\*\*\*\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*\*\*\***

*Please sign each of the releases below without modification. They are put in place so we may fully investigate your complaint. We will only process your complaint form if these releases are complete. If they are not complete, processing of your complaint will be delayed while we return this for to you for your signatures.*

**Notice of Due Process:** *A copy of this form, along with supporting documentation you submit will be provided to the respondent to allow for an adequate opportunity to respond all accusations.*

**Releases**

I hereby give the Family Peer Advocate against whom I am making this complaint permission to give the Family Peer Advocate Ethics Committee any confidential information regarding me, including any records of our interactions, and to answer all questions the Committee may have concerning such information.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby give the Family Peer Advocate Ethics Committee permission to send to the Family Peer Advocate against whom I am making this complaint, copies of any materials submitted by me or on my behalf concerning this complaint.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**By signing this complaint, I assert that all information is true to the best of my knowledge.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

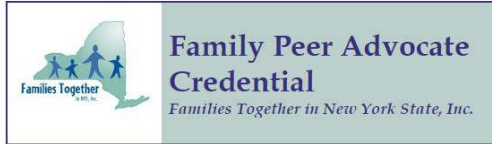
**Please Mail, Fax or Email Completed Form with attachments to:**

Families Together in NYS  
737 Madison Ave., Albany, NY 11208  
Attn: Department of Workforce Development-COE  
**Fax:** 518-434-6478      **Email:** [fpacredential@ftnys.org](mailto:fpacredential@ftnys.org)

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For office use only:

Complaint number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_ FPA Number: \_\_\_\_\_



## Code of Ethics Violation Appeal Form

*This form is to be used to file an appeal for a Code of Ethics violation determination against a Credentialed Family Peer Advocate.*

Complaint Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### PERSON FILING THE APPEAL:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

GROUND(S) FOR THE APPEAL as outlined in the Disciplinary Policies and Procedures:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Attach a written explanation (no more than 2 pages) to this form:

**Please mail completed form and written documentation within thirty (30) days from the date of the decision to:**

Families Together in NYS

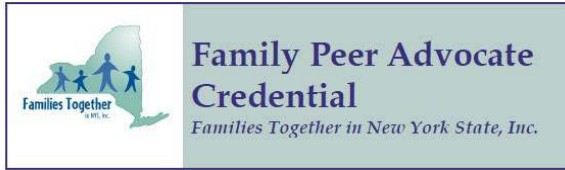
737 Madison Ave., Albany, NY 11208

Attn: Department of Workforce Development-Appeals

**Fax:** 518-434-6478      **Email:** [fpacredential@ftnys.org](mailto:fpacredential@ftnys.org)

For office use only:

Complaint number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_ FPA Number: \_\_\_\_\_



# Family Peer Advocate Code of Ethics

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## Preamble

The work of Family Peer Advocates is rooted in the values of Family-Driven Care and the Principles of the Child and Adolescent Service System (See Appendices A+B). The work of the Family Peer Advocate supports the belief that parents (i.e. biological, foster, adoptive, guardians, and others with primary caregiver duties) must have a meaningful voice and a primary decision making role in the care of their own children as well as in designing and evaluating services and developing the policies and procedures governing care for all children in their community, state, tribe, territory and nation. The concepts of empowerment and resiliency are central to the work of Family Peer Advocates. As peers, Family Peer Advocates use their 'lived experience' and training to inspire hope and reduce stigma. Family Peer Advocates focus on strengths as well as needs, assist families to set priorities and goals, provide information, and help families navigate multiple complex service systems. Family Peer Advocates support families to strengthen their connections to community resources and connect with natural supports. Family Peer Advocates work in collaboration with clinicians and other service providers to enhance engagement and partnership in order to improve both the experience and outcomes for families.

This Code of Ethics is intended to serve as a guide to professional conduct of Family Peer Advocates. It offers general principles to guide conduct in situations that have ethical implications.

## Family Peer Advocate Code of Ethics

The conduct of a Family Peer Advocate will be consistent with the following ethical and professional standards:

### A. Commitment to Families

- Primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of the families with whom s/he works (in keeping with all applicable laws).
- Seek to resolve any situations in which meeting his/her responsibility to the family comes into conflict with other obligations or requirements.
- When a team or employer decision raises ethical concerns, attempt to resolve the disagreement through appropriate channels. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, the Family Peer Advocate should pursue other avenues to address his/her concerns with the goal of promoting the well-being of the family.
- Engage in efforts to reduce stigma and blaming of families and youth.
- Promote family-driven practices that focus on strengths, view families as a part of the solution, and ensure families and youth participate as partners in all aspects of their care.

### B. Empowerment and Self-Determination

- Promote and support approaches that foster hope, resiliency, empowerment, the development of self-advocacy skills, and recovery.
- Promote family-driven practice whereby the parent or primary caregiver has primary decision-making authority as a member of all processes/teams whereby decisions are being made about treatment, services and other aspects of the care for the child and family.
- Promote youth-guided practice whereby young people have a meaningful voice in setting goals and shaping a plan of care.
- Promote approaches that provide families with the support they need in the least restrictive and least intrusive environment possible.
- Provide current, accurate, transparent information to family members and youth.



### C. Respect for Diversity

- Promote cultural and linguistic competence and respect at all times and in all relationships.
- Respect the rights and dignity of those with whom s/he works.
- Recognize cultural, individual, and role differences and demonstrate competence in providing services that are sensitive to families' cultures.
- Do not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate in any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical disability, military and/or veteran status, socio-economic status, immigration status, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition, or state.
- Demonstrate respect towards the cultural identities and preferences of the families and youth being served.
- Seek to understand, accept and appreciate his/her culture as the basis for relating to the cultures of others.
- Seek training and consultation to improve his/her ability to work effectively with individuals from diverse groups.
- Identify situations in which his/her biases are interfering with the ability to work with a specific family and seek guidance from a supervisor.

### D. Competence as a Family Peer Advocate

- Provide services with the maximum skill, competence, knowledge, and advocacy.
- Provide services within the boundaries of Family Peer Advocate training and expertise.
- Keep current with emerging knowledge related to family support practice, family-driven care, community resources, empowerment strategies, and evidence-based/ best practice treatment and support approaches.
- Seek out opportunities to enhance his/her knowledge and skills through training, self-study and development and through collaboration with other FPAs across the state.
- Seek to always incorporate effective practices.
- Seek guidance and feedback from colleagues and supervisors to improve effectiveness.
- Engage in ongoing discussions with employers and colleagues regarding the FPA role to achieve the maximum benefit to families.

### E. Propriety

- Act in accordance with the laws and statutes regarding all issues that affect his/her work.
- Assure that private conduct does not compromise the fulfillment of FPA responsibilities.
- Do not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonestly, fraud, or deception.
- Distinguish clearly between statements made and actions taken as private individuals and as representatives of the Family Peer Advocate program, employer, or credentialing organization.
- Do not exploit FPA relationships for personal gain.
- Do not use undue influence or in any way exploit the trust of the families and youth to whom they are providing services.
- Do not accept gifts of more than nominal value from those with whom he/she works.
- Recognize situations that involve ethical dilemmas and consult with supervisors and colleagues to seek appropriate resolutions.

### F. Informed Consent

- Provide information about the services of the Family Peer Advocate to parents in a manner which is thorough and understandable to them (reading level, native language, verbal explanations).
- Advocate for the family to receive current, accurate, transparent information from other providers.
- Facilitate opportunities for families to ask questions and obtain more information to help them participate in the planning and service delivery process.

### G. Access to Records

- Assist families to obtain access to records regarding their care as needed and in keeping with applicable laws.
- Keep notes concerning work with the family in a manner that is transparent and done in partnership with the family.

#### H. Confidentiality and Privacy

- Respect the right to privacy and confidentiality of families and youth in accordance with the law.
- Disclose confidential information only when necessary and only with valid consent (unless disclosure without consent is warranted to prevent serious, foreseeable, imminent harm and/or as required by law.)
- Explain to families the circumstances in which you are required to report or act in order to prevent harm (e.g. in situations involving child abuse, neglect or maltreatment).
- Inform families whenever confidential information is disclosed (either with consent or due to a legal requirement).
- Safeguard all records to assure they are not accessed by unauthorized individuals. This includes the use of electronic methods of storing and sharing information such as email, fax, etc.
- Refrain from discussion of confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be assured. Never discuss confidential information in public spaces.

#### I. Conflicts of Interest

- Be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest and inform the family if the potential for such a conflict exists.
- Resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that protects the family's interests. If that is not possible, inform your supervisor immediately so that other arrangements can be made for the family.
- Do not engage in dual relationships with families if there is any risk of harm to the family. If these relationships are unavoidable, take steps to protect the family and set clear boundaries. (Dual relationships have more than one relationship with a family – e.g. a family who also attends the same church or whose children attend the same school.)

#### J. Personal Relationships

- Under no circumstances should the Family Peer Advocate engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with any member of a family currently receiving services. This prohibition also pertains to former clients and their family members for a period of two years from their last date of service.
- Do not provide services to family members with whom the advocate has had a prior sexual relationship.
- Do not engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with relatives or others with whom family members have close personal relationships, when there is risk of potential exploitation or harm to anyone in the family.

#### K. Commitment to Partnership

- Actively seek out opportunities to partner with clinicians and other professionals.
- Work to enhance his/her understanding of all 'systems' involved in the lives of children and families with complex needs including, but not limited to: education, child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice, probation, family court, health, substance abuse treatment, youth development.
- Participate in and lead interdisciplinary teams (that include family members and youth) to promote holistic, cross-system solutions.
- Work with families to develop their constructive, self-advocacy skills to support their interactions with a wide range of professionals.
- Partner with a wide range of community organizations and resource people to support families to make connections to ongoing 'natural' supports that reflect their culture, interests, preferences, etc.

- Keep informed about colleagues' areas of expertise and competencies. Seek consultation from those who have demonstrated knowledge, expertise, and competence related to the subject of the consultation.

L. Integrity

- Uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the FPA program.
- Work toward the highest standards of FPA practice.
- Participate in opportunities to advance the FPA program through learning collaborative activities, mentoring colleagues, research, presentations in the community, publications, training, etc.
- Assume leadership roles (at all levels) whenever possible.
- Promote and facilitate evaluation and research to contribute to the development of knowledge and improved practice of family peer support and advocacy.
- Act with integrity in relationships with colleagues, families, youth, other providers and organizations, referral sources, and other professionals in a way that promotes respect for the FPA program and improved outcomes for families and youth.

M. Responsibilities when Credentialed

- As an applicant or credentialed individual, I will:
  - Remain current on any applicable fees
  - Comply with the Code of Ethics and requirements set by the Credentialing Committee
  - Only use the title Family Peer Advocate, or represent myself as having a credential, when I am in full compliance with the credentialing requirements
  - Always utilize the Family Peer Advocate designation appropriately
  - Cooperate with any ethics investigation by any professional organization or government agency, and truthfully represent and disclose facts to such

*By signing this Code of Ethics, I affirm that I have read through and understand all of the information provided in this document including Appendix A and Appendix B. By signing below, I also understand that I will be held responsible and accountable to above mentioned principles, rules and procedures. If a complaint is made, or it is alleged that I have broken any of these principles, rules or procedures, I agree to have these actions or inactions reviewed and assessed in accordance with the guidelines of the Family Peer Advocate Code of Ethics Disciplinary Policies and Procedures. If it is found that I have violated any of these principles, rules and/or procedures, then I understand that measures will be taken against me by the Workforce Development Advisory Committee, up to and including the revocation of my Family Peer Advocate Credential.*

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*Advocate Name (Printed)*

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*Advocate Signature*

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*Date*

## CASSP Principles

CASSP (Child and Adolescent Service System Program) is based on a well-defined set of principles for mental health services for children and adolescents with, or at risk of, developing severe emotional disorders and their families. These principles are summarized in six core statements.

### **Child-centered**

Services are planned to meet the individual needs of the child, rather than to fit the child into an existing service. Services consider the child's family and community contexts, are developmentally appropriate and child-specific, and build on the strengths of the child and family to meet the mental health, social and physical needs of the child.

### **Family-focused**

The family is the primary support system for the child and it is important to help empower the family to advocate for themselves. The family participates as a full partner in all stages of the decision-making and treatment planning process including implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A family may include biological, adoptive and foster parents, siblings, grandparents, other relatives, and other adults who are committed to the child. The development of mental health policy at state and local levels includes family representation.

### **Community-based**

Whenever possible, services are delivered in the child's home community, drawing on formal and informal resources to promote the child's successful participation in the community. Community resources include not only mental health professionals and provider agencies, but also social, religious, cultural organizations and other natural community support networks.

### **Multi-system**

Services are planned in collaboration with all the child-serving systems involved in the child's life. Representatives from all these systems and the family collaborate to define the goals for the child, develop a service plan, develop the necessary resources to implement the plan, provide appropriate support to the child and family, and evaluate progress.

### **Culturally Competent**

Culture determines our worldview and provides a general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality that are reflected in our behavior. Therefore, services that are culturally competent are provided by individuals who have the skills to recognize and respect the behavior, ideas, attitudes, values, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies and practices characteristic of a particular group of people.

### **Least restrictive/least intrusive**

Services take place in settings that are the most appropriate and natural for the child and family and are the least restrictive and intrusive available to meet the needs of the child and family.

## **Family-Driven Care Principles**

Family-driven means families have a primary decision making role in the care of their own children, as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all children in their community, state, tribe, territory and nation.

This includes:

- Choosing culturally and linguistically competent supports, services, and providers;
- Setting goals;
- Designing, implementing and evaluating programs;
- Monitoring outcomes; and
- Partnering in funding decisions.

### **Guiding Principles of Family-Driven Care**

1. Families and youth, providers and administrators embrace the concept of sharing decision-making and responsibility for outcomes.
2. Families and youth are given accurate, understandable, and complete information necessary to set goals and to make informed decisions and choices about the right services and supports for individual children and their families.
3. All children, youth, and families have a biological, adoptive, foster, or surrogate family voice advocating on their behalf and may appoint them as substitute decision makers at any time.
4. Families and family-run organizations engage in peer support activities to reduce isolation, gather and disseminate accurate information, and strengthen the family voice.
5. Families and family-run organizations provide direction for decisions that impact funding for services, treatments, and supports and advocate for families and youth to have choices.
6. Providers take the initiative to change policy and practice from provider-driven to family-driven.
7. Administrators allocate staff, training, support and resources to make family-driven practice work at the point where services and supports are delivered to children, youth, and families and where family and youth run organizations are funded and sustained.
8. Community attitude change efforts focus on removing barriers and discrimination created by stigma.
9. Communities and private agencies embrace, value, and celebrate the diverse cultures of their children, youth, and families and work to eliminate mental health disparities.
10. Everyone who connects with children, youth, and families continually advances their own cultural and linguistic responsiveness as the population served changes so that the needs of the diverse populations are appropriately addressed.