



2020-2021 Policy & Budget Priorities

Restore State Support for Preventive Services at 65%

To invest in services to support children and families in their communities

To increase availability of local services that keep youth with their families and out of foster care, including those services which the State could receive federal funds to support for the first time under the federal Family First Prevention Services Act

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) will allow states to seek federal reimbursement for evidence-based preventive services. We urge New York to adopt this provision of the new federal law to help fund existing services, and to expand access to evidence-based preventive programs across the state. New York State reimbursement for preventive and protective services, which is set at 65% in statute, has been reduced to 62% through the state budget each year since 2008. We recommend that the state restore reimbursement to 65% and designate the restored funds to support counties in implementing evidence-based services.

Fund KinGap Outside of the Foster Care Block Grant

To expand use of KinGap across the state, which provides necessary financial support for children living with family

The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) is under-utilized across the state; in 2017, there were 3,645 children in foster care with a relative, but only 481 children statewide left foster care for a KinGAP arrangement. Nearly 80% of those were in New York City. There is a clear opportunity to expand the use of KinGAP across the state. To do this, New York should fund KinGAP outside of the Foster Care Block Grant. Because counties must prioritize their Block Grant funds for foster care, funding KinGAP from these limited dollars can create a disincentive for counties to support families with KinGAP. To remedy this, the State should make KinGAP subsidies an independent and open-ended funding stream, like adoption subsidies.

NEW YORK STATE CHILD WELFARE COALITION



2020-2021 Policy & Legislative Priorities

Reform the State Central Register

To reduce the economic and racial injustice of current State Central Register (SCR) procedures

Last session, the legislature passed groundbreaking legislation that would have brought New York in line with a majority of jurisdictions that require the government to find that it is at least more likely than not that maltreatment occurred, before a parent or guardian is found to have done something wrong. This legislation was vetoed by the Governor. New York currently has the lowest possible standard to put a parent on the registry for alleged child abuse and maltreatment: “some credible evidence.” Parents are listed on the SCR for up to ten years after their youngest child turns 18 – which could be as many as 28 years.

We support renewing this legislation, with reasonable amendments, to raise the standard, as well as requiring automatically sealing indicated reports of neglect after 5 years to shield them from employers, while ensuring that all reports continue to be available to child welfare and foster care agencies who must ensure child safety. Reports of abuse would continue to be accessible to these agencies for up to 28 years. This reform must also make the process for parents to challenge their inclusion in the SCR more fair and efficient by improving court procedures and allowing them to present evidence of rehabilitation, where applicable.

Improve Access to Data on Preventive Services

To expand publicly available data on preventive services and better evaluate utilization of services

New York is a national leader in investing in a range of services to prevent child abuse and neglect. New York’s investment in preventive services has helped lead to a dramatic reduction in the number of children in foster care over the last several decades. There is little publicly available data on statewide preventive services.

To increase access to data, we recommend the state amend Social Services Law Section 409a on Collection and Reporting of Data on Child Welfare Prevention Services to require annual reporting related to NYS Child Welfare Systems including prevention services for increased oversight and accountability.

Secure Housing for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care

To reduce child welfare involvement due to housing instability and to prevent homelessness among young people transitioning out of foster care

The child welfare housing subsidy must be strengthened to adjust for rising housing costs and better meet the needs of youth and families involved in the child welfare system. Housing instability jeopardizes well-being of children, youth and families. The child welfare housing subsidy can be an important tool in supporting families and preventing child welfare system involvement, reducing time in the foster care system, and preventing homelessness among youth aging out of care.

The amount of the subsidy has remained the same since it was created over three decades ago and places certain restrictions that limit utilization. New York Social Services law must be amended to increase the subsidy amount and to extend the upper age limit so that a young person aging out of care can receive the subsidy up to age 24.