

Families Together in New York State

2020 Policy Priorities

Families Together in New York State is a family-run organization that represents families of children with social, emotional, behavioral health and cross-systems challenges. Our goal is to ensure that *ALL* families and youth have the support they need in order to succeed. We represent thousands of families from across the state whose children have been involved in many systems including mental health, substance abuse, special education, juvenile justice, and foster care. Our board and staff are made up primarily of family members and youth who have been involved in these systems.

Families Together 2020 Policy Agenda is created by families of children and youth with social, emotional, behavioral and cross-systems challenges.

Address the Children's Behavioral Health Crisis

GOAL: All children, youth and their families, regardless of insurance status, must have timely, affordable access to appropriate children's behavioral health services within their community:

- Place a moratorium on any cuts to children's behavioral health services and restore enhanced rates for CFTSS services.
- Ensure robust and adequate rates for children's behavioral health services – in commercial insurance, Medicaid, and CHP.
- Provide a 3% increase on contracts and rates for the human services sector for 5 years.
- Hold health plans accountable and enforce mental health parity laws on behalf of children and youth.
- Maintain and expand program code 1650 state-aid funding for Family Peer Support and Youth Peer Support.
- Expand service capacity for community-based prevention, treatment and recovery and recovery-orientated addiction programming.
- Expand clinical and non-clinical mental health services in schools.
- Support the proposed Behavioral Health Parity Compliance Fund.

Promote Safe and Supportive Schools

GOAL: End the school-to-prison pipeline and ensure that schools are safe and supportive environments for all students:

- Pass the Safe and Supportive Schools Act.
- Expand alternative discipline and restorative practice training in schools.
- Support the School Mental Health Resource Training Center.
- Develop multiple pathways to a high school diploma beyond high stakes testing.

Put Families First in Child Welfare

GOAL: A “family first” system that recognizes the value of keeping families together when possible and ensures that, when necessary, children are placed with well-supported relatives or foster families.

- Create the Office of Family Representation to support access to timely and high quality parental legal representation statewide.
- Expand primary prevention and define eligibility for preventive services as broadly as possible.
- Increase the Family First Transition Fund to strengthen family-based foster care.
- Dedicate an open-ended funding stream to KinGAP similar to adoption subsidies.
- Establish an Ombudsman for birth parents, foster parents, kin, and children in care.
- Implement “Kin-First” firewall policies statewide.
- Pass comprehensive State Central Registry reform and a Miranda Bill of Rights for parents.
- Pass the New York State Kincare Coalition policy priorities that support relatives and non-parent caregivers caring for children outside of formal foster care.

Achieve Youth Justice

GOAL: A system restorative in nature that emphasizes developmentally appropriate approaches to holding young people accountable:

- Implement and improve the Raise the Age law.
- End the Use of Solitary Confinement in Adolescent Offender Facilities.
- Stop the Criminalization of Childhood by Ending Prosecution of Children Under 12.
- Strengthen and Expand Protections for Court Involved Youth Up to Age 25.
- End the Adult Incarceration of Youth.
- Pass the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act.

*Empowering Families.
Coordinating Systems.*