



## Family Peer Advocate (FPA) Credential Information for Applicants Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Thank you for your interest in the Family Peer Advocate Training & Credential program administered by Families Together in NYS, Inc. (FTNYS) and sponsored by the NYS Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH).

### What is a Family Peer Advocate?

Family Peer Advocates (FPAs) have lived experience navigating one or more of the systems that serve children and families. They are the parent (biological, foster, adoptive) or primary caregiver\* of a child/youth with significant social, emotional, developmental, medical, substance use and/or behavioral needs with onset prior to the age of 21.

*\*A parent or primary caregiver is the person who holds parental responsibilities for the day-to-day care of their child/youth. For this definition, primary caregivers do NOT include providers. This definition gives the opportunity to be inclusive of non-traditional family arrangements.*

FPAs are an essential part of New York State's system of care – valued as professionals and multidisciplinary partners in treatment, rehabilitation, and support services, including community-based crisis, residential, inpatient and outpatient services.

### What are Family Peer Support Services (FPSS)?

Family Peer Support Services (FPSS) are services provided by Credentialled Family Peer Advocates working in partnership with parents/caregivers who are raising children from birth to age 21 experiencing social, emotional, developmental, substance use or behavioral challenges. Family Peer Advocates utilize their lived experience to engage, empower, and support parents/caregivers by providing the following core service categories:

- Outreach and Information
- Engagement, Bridging and Transition Support
- Self-Advocacy, Self-Efficacy and Empowerment
- Community Connections and Natural Supports
- Parent Skill Development
- Promoting Effective Family-Driven Practice

Please refer to the **Family Peer Support Services Definition** for additional information regarding this service:

<https://www.ftnys.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Family-Support-Services-Definition-2020.pdf>

### Is the Family Peer Advocate Credential required?

Provisional (temporary) Credential applications will **only** be processed from candidates currently employed in NYS Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH) licensed, designated or funded programs providing Medicaid reimbursable services of Family Peer Support or other state approved programs.

Since inception, the Family Peer Advocate (FPA) Credential is **only** required at the above-mentioned programs.

We remain committed to supporting the statewide Family Peer workforce through job readiness and quality provision of peer support services. The self-paced, online training modules hosted by our partners at the NYU McSilver Training and Technical Assistance Centers remains publicly available to allow a broader audience to access free training and explore the Family Peer Support profession. We continue to encourage supervisors and program management to also access our public training to support Family Peer Advocates.

### **Are there any fees?**

No. There are no fees associated with our FPA Credential Trainings. There are also no fees associated with any of the FPA Credential applications.

### **What are the eligibility criteria for the Family Peer Advocate Provisional (temporary) Credential?**

<b>FPA PROVISIONAL Credential Requirements At-A-Glance*</b>	
<b>Lived Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Applicants must be the parent (biological, adoptive or foster) or primary caregiver of a child/youth with significant social, emotional, behavioral, mental health, medical, substance use or developmental needs with onset prior to age 21 (child can be older than 21 at time of application).</li><li>Be able to use lived experience navigating child-serving systems of care on behalf of said child/youth.</li></ul>
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Applicants must be at least 18 years of age</li></ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>HS diploma, HS Equivalency or a State Education Commencement Credential.</li><li>(In exceptional cases, documentation of comparable skills may be accepted).</li></ul>
<b>Employment Verification Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Currently employed in NYSOMH licensed, designated or funded programs providing Medicaid reimbursable services of Family Peer Support Services (FPSS) or other state approved programs.</li></ul>
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Completion of FPA (PEP) Training Level 1 (online self-paced modules)</li></ul>
<b>Letters of Recommendation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2 letters of recommendation in support of the applicant's qualifications and readiness to maintain high professional standards while working with parents/caregivers for the benefit of the child/youth.</li></ul>
<b>FPA Code of Ethics Attestation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Applicants are required to read and understand the FPA Code of Ethics.</li><li>Applicants will sign an attestation to uphold these ethical standards.</li></ul>
*For complete details, access the <b>FPA Provisional Credential Application</b> on the Families Together in NYS website under the Peer Credentials tab: <a href="https://www.ftnys.org/pathway-to-fpa-provisional-credential/">https://www.ftnys.org/pathway-to-fpa-provisional-credential/</a>	

### **How can I obtain an FPA Credential before I am employed as an FPA?**

You cannot obtain an FPA Credential before you are employed as an FPA at a OMH licensed, designated or funded programs. If your prospective employer has questions about whether you would be eligible for the credential, they can reach out to FTNYS. You can also still complete Level 1 training and share that as evidence of your preparation for the role.

## **What is the process for reviewing applications?**

When we receive your submitted application, you will receive an email acknowledging receipt (remember to check your spam/junk folders). If your application is complete and in good order, it can take up to 6-8 weeks to review, depending on the volume of applications statewide. This timeframe may be extended if your application is incomplete and/or requires further review.

Your application will be reviewed by trained and credentialed FTNYS staff members who will determine whether you meet the criteria to be credentialed. If you do not meet the criteria, your application will not be approved. If it is unclear whether you meet the criteria, your application will be referred to the Family Peer Advocate Credential Advisory Committee (FPACAC) to assist in a final determination.

## **Is an FPA Training (PEP) Level One Certificate of Completion or Transcript the same as the FPA Provisional (temporary) Credential?**

No. Successful completion of FPA (PEP) Training meets the *training requirement* for the Family Peer Advocate Provisional (temporary) Credential, but it is not the only requirement. We hope that everyone who has completed FPA (PEP) Training Level 1 will consider applying for the FPA Provisional Credential.

## **Do I need to change my title to ‘Family Peer Advocate’?**

No. Your title is determined by your employer. However, you are a credentialed Family Peer Advocate if you hold a valid credential.

## **How can I let others know that I am credentialed?**

Once you are approved for a Family Peer Advocate Credential, you can use the post-nominal letters associated with the credential. Post-nominal letters are the letters placed after a person’s name to indicate that person holds a position, **credential**, academic degree, accreditation and other noteworthy accomplishments.

Credentialed Family Peer Advocate post-nominal letters are as follows:

Provisional (temporary) Credentialed Family Peer Advocates = FPA-P

Credentialed Family Peer Advocates (Professional) = FPA-C

For example: Michael Samuels, FPA-C. Be proud of your accomplishment!

Additionally, FPAs and agencies can check the status of their credentials through the **FPA Credential Verification Tool** available on the Families Together in NYS website under the Peer Credentials tab:

<https://ftnys1.gtdsystems.com/advocate?searchname%20>

## **What happens if my Provisional (temporary) Credential expires?**

Your Provisional (temporary) Credential is valid for 18 months. It is expected that you complete all credential training and work experience providing FPSS and apply for a Professional Credential during this time period. In exceptional cases, a one-time, 12-month extension may be granted at FTNYS discretion.

If your Provisional (temporary) Credential expires before you apply for a Professional, you may not refer to yourself as a FPA-P and your agency may not bill for Medicaid reimbursable services until you bring your credential back into good standing.

## What are the requirements for the Family Peer Advocate Professional Credential?

FPA PROFESSIONAL Credential Requirements At-A-Glance*	
<b>FPA Provisional Credential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicant must hold a valid FPA Provisional (temporary) Credential</li></ul>
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completion of FPA (PEP) Training Level 2 (online self-paced modules)</li><li>• Completion of FPA (PEP) Advanced Virtual Training</li><li>• Completion of FPA Coaching Call Series</li></ul>
<b>Supervisor Recommendation Letter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicant's FPA Supervisor must write a letter of recommendation describing the applicant's relevant experience, their capacity to support and empower parents/caregivers, their capacity to work collaboratively with other professionals, and their capacity to work in a manner that is consistent with the principles of Family Peer Support.</li></ul>
<b>Work Experience Verification Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1,000 hours of work experience as a Family Peer Advocate</li></ul>
<b>FPA Code of Ethics Attestation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicants are required to read and understand the FPA Code of Ethics.</li><li>• Applicants will sign an attestation to uphold these ethical standards.</li></ul>
<b>Renewal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The FPA Professional Credential must be renewed every two years.</li><li>• (20) hours of continuing education; including at least (2) hours of Diversity, Equity &amp; Inclusion (DEI) topics required.</li></ul>

\*For complete details, access the **FPA Professional Credential Application** on the Families Together in NYS website under the Peer Credentials tab: <https://www.ftnys.org/pathway-to-fpa-professional-credential-2/>

### Can past hours working as an FPA be used towards the Professional Credential?

Yes. The Professional Credential application requires a supervisor signature verifying that you have fulfilled the required 1,000 hours providing Family Peer Support Services to parents/caregivers for the benefit of their child/youth with social, emotional, behavioral and developmental challenges. More than one Work Experience Verification form may be used if necessary.

### Will I need to renew my Professional Credential?

Your FPA Professional Credential will need to be renewed every two years. For complete details, access the **Pathway to FPA Credential Renewal** on the Families Together in NYS website under the Peer Credentials tab: <https://www.ftnys.org/pathway-to-fpa-credential-renewal/>

### Additional Questions?

If you have additional questions or if you require assistance with completing your application, please email [FPAcredential@ftnys.org](mailto:FPAcredential@ftnys.org) or call (518) 432-0333 ext. 18. We look forward to supporting you on your journey to becoming a Credentialed Family Peer Advocate in New York State!