

2019-2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

GOAL: EXPAND USE OF FAMILY-BASED FOSTER CARE, INCLUDING KINSHIP FOSTER CARE, RATHER THAN CONGREGATE CARE



Why: Across New York State more than 16,000 children and young people live in foster care. Research has shown that children experience better outcomes when they are able to live with relatives or in a family setting. However, New York counties' practices related to utilizing relative- and family-based foster care vary significantly. While 30.5% of children in foster care in New York City live with relatives, only 12.7% of children in foster care in upstate New York live with relatives.

Furthermore, new federal legislation will require the state to reduce its congregate care caseload by increasing the use of family-based care. The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), which passed Congress in early 2018, places requirements around federal funding for the placement of children and young people in group home settings. With the passage of this law, supporting counties' use of family-based, including relative, foster care will not only help the State implement FFPSA, but will help lead to better outcomes for the children and youth in our child welfare system.

Supporting Policies & Initiatives:

- **Supporting Families Fund.** Create an incentive fund through a public-private partnership to support localities in developing and innovating efforts related to family-based foster care. Such funding would be intended to create practice change that produces better outcomes for children in care, result in significant savings, and be financially sustainable for the long-term. The funding could be used to cover expenses such as:
 - Targeted recruitment of kin and foster families
 - Expenses related to supporting new relative foster parents in meeting the requirements and expectations of the foster care system
 - Transportation of children to court, visitation appointments
 - Respite care for foster and kin families
 - Financial assistance to support normalcy activities
- **Maintain and utilize a robust Foster Parent Census.** As the State and counties will need to recruit, support and retain more foster families in order to meet the requirements of FFPSA, we will need more and better information about our foster families. The State should support local districts in collecting and analyzing data on their existing pool of foster parents, and comparing geography and skills with the census of foster children.
- **Secure State funding for the creation of the Supporting Families Fund.** Proposed funding structure: State portion: \$5 million total over 3 years; Private match: \$2.5 million total over 3 years; County match: \$2.5 million total over 3 years (per county cost will depend upon award amount).