



Memo in Support Critical Child Welfare Services

The safety and welfare of children should be the State's highest priority. Since 2008, funding for critical child welfare services has suffered with the downturn in the economy. At the same time, calls to the Statewide Central Register increased and the number of children in foster care decreased. Restorations are needed for important services. It is time to address the shortfalls and restore funding to needed services, provide additional family court judges to reduce court backlogs, and support foster care youth by offering TAP assistance on the dependent schedule.

Post-Adoption Services

There are an estimated 85,000 adoptive children and youth living in New York State, about 70% of them adopted from foster care. While many adoptive families experience no problems or only a few manageable problems, some adoptive families find themselves struggling with trauma-related developmental, health, emotional, or behavioral issues, especially when adoptees from foster care reach adolescence. Providing post-adoption support to these families prevents the State from incurring far greater costs down the road. It is both cost-effective and fair to provide supports and services from expert providers to the families who have adopted New York State's children.

Include the Senate's proposal for \$5 Million for Post-Adoption Services in the Enacted Budget.

Preventive, Protective, Independent Living, Adoption and After Care Services (65/35 funding)

New York State Social Services Law Section 153-k provides for a 65% state reimbursement rate for protective, preventive, independent living, after care and adoption administration services; however, for several years budget bills have reduced the level of state support down to 62%, leaving counties to increase their expenditures to simply maintain a flat level of program funding. Counties should reinvest their savings through an increased state share of funding for these services to provide increased access to evidence-based and -informed services and to help reduce caseloads. Increased funding should supplement and not supplant county investments.

Include the Assembly's 1% increase in the state share for these services at a cost of \$3.3 Million in the Enacted Budget.

Family Court Judges

New York's Family Court system is overburdened and under-resourced to handle the over 700,000 yearly filings with only 153 judges. The result is children stay in foster care too long and delays in other types of court cases, such as domestic violence cases. This backlog is costly to the State due to adjournments and court delays. More importantly, families experience delays in support payments, children experience additional trauma and instability, and domestic violence victims experience increased fear and uncertainty. New York routinely ranks near the bottom of states in terms of time

children spend in foster care, partially due to delays in court proceedings. Both the Assembly and Senate included the Judiciary's request in their budget bills.

Include the Judiciary's request for twenty (20) additional family court judges needed to address current delays in court proceedings in the Enacted Budget.

Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

Under New York's TAP, youth in care are currently treated as "independent," meaning that they receive less financial assistance than their peers who are "dependent" and living with their parents. Youth who are either in, or aged-out of foster care should receive the same TAP benefits as youth who are considered dependent. In addition, many of these youth attend college part-time because of the need to support themselves. However, part-time TAP is only available to students who first attend school full-time for one year. Requiring foster care and former foster care youth to attend school full-time for a year before they can qualify for part-time TAP limits these students' access to higher education. The State must support foster care and former foster care youth in their endeavors – educational and otherwise.

Include the Assembly's proposal to move foster care youth from the independent schedule to the dependent schedule for TAP Assistance.

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