



**Vision for change from an expanding group of child and family advocates:
New York must transform child welfare systems by putting children,
youth and families first**

North Star: New York prioritizes investing in and implementing policies that strengthen and support children, youth and families.

Who we are: A statewide group of advocates, providers, and people impacted by New York's child welfare system.

Problems in New York's child welfare system:

- Families are investigated and separated, rather than supported. Children and families who are Black and Latinx are disproportionately involved, investigated, and separated by child welfare systems.¹
- Poverty, which remains pervasive in New York, and which disproportionately impacts children and families of color, is a significant driver of involvement in the child welfare system.²
- New York has yet to fully use the funding available via the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, which provides new funding to encourage states' use of services to avoid family separation, family-based placements, and reunification and aftercare support, and discourage unnecessary use of institutional placements.
- Most families do not receive child welfare *Preventive Services* before they are separated.
- Children and youth, disproportionately those who are Black and Latinx, are placed in institutions at higher rates in New York State than most other states; tend to stay for years, instead of the intended short-term; and "age out" (exit the system at age 18-21 without legal ties to family) with little to no support as they transition to living independently.
- Our system provides insufficient support to kin and foster families and the State struggles to recruit and retain foster parents and kinship guardians.
- Reports to the Statewide Central Register (SCR) can result in traumatic family investigations. In New York, nearly three quarters (72%) of the calls made to the SCR are unfounded.^{3,4}
- Families impacted by the system have limited avenues for complaint and the State does not systematically collect, analyze, publicly report, or respond to complaint data.

The solution: New York can transform child welfare by making substantial investments in children and families.

- Narrow the Front Door: Invest in community-driven and community-based, universal supports for children and families in communities that have had the highest rates of system contacts. The American Public Human Services Association suggests this requires a system that moves resources upstream with a stronger focus on concrete family supports, including employment, economic assistance, child care support, and housing.⁵ In New York, the majority of reports to the SCR are made not for abuse, but for “neglect,” often symptoms of poverty. We must invest state dollars in local community-based organizations that provide families with necessities and support formal and informal social structures that serve as enmeshed family and community protective factors.
- Ensure when they do become involved in the system, families receive the support they want and need, including robust, responsive child welfare Preventive Services, if appropriate.
- Ensure every child in New York’s care, including those in institutional placements, experiences high quality material, educational, creative and emotional supports and treatment, and support to help them thrive when they exit the child welfare system.
- Invest in reunification and supports to return children home to their families and communities.
- Prioritize and resource well-supported, loving kin and foster families and reduce institutional placements.
- Collect, publicly report, analyze, and take action to address systemic complaints in the child welfare system.
- Take all necessary steps to identify and eliminate racial disparities throughout systems.

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¹ New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services. 2023. Child Protection in New York State: A New Paradigm. https://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/annual-report/documents/2022%20annual%20report_UPDATE.pdf.

² Boston University Center for Innovation in Social Sciences. June 15, 2022. POV: US Child Welfare System Is Falling Short Because of Persistent Child Poverty. <https://www.bu.edu/ciss/2022/06/15/pov-us-child-welfare-system-is-falling-short-because-of-persistent-child-poverty/>

³ Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. 2022. The State of New York’s Children Data Book: January 2022. <https://scaany.org/state-of-new-yorks-children-2022/>

⁴ *Id.* at 7.

⁵ American Public Human Services Association. May 21, 2021. Poverty and Neglect Are Not the Same — It’s Time to Realign Our Response. <https://aphsa.org/APHSABlog/mhhspp/poverty-and-neglect-are-not-the-same.aspx>