Child Welfare Summit 2023

Shared Policy Priorities for 2024 and Beyond

The Child and Family Wellbeing Action Network (CFWAN) is an expanding group of advocates, providers, and people impacted by New York's child welfare system. We are working towards a vision of New York where the state prioritizes investing in and implementing policies that strengthen and support children, youth and families.

For New York to take steps to realize that vision, in the 2024 legislative session we urge state leaders to take the following actions:

1. **Address the root causes at the community level of involvement in the child welfare system.**
    a. **Reduce child poverty with attention to racial equity by strengthening the Empire State Child Credit.** Ensure the maximum tax credit reaches the poorest New Yorkers, who are currently excluded from the full credit, and increase the credit amount to meaningfully impact family budgets.
    b. **Increase the availability of community-based services, especially mental health.** Alleviate waitlists by investing in the behavioral health workforce through a 3.2% cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA), an additional $500 million flexible rate increase, enhanced rates for children's community services, school-based programming, and tuition assistance and student loan forgiveness for mental health professionals.

2. **Address systemic bias.**
    a. **Pass Confidential Reporting (A.2479/S.902).** Require reporters to the State Central Register (SCR) to provide their name and contact information, which can only be accessed by the Office of Children and Family Services and counties, to prevent reports being used as a form of harassment.
    b. **Pass Family Miranda Rights (A.1980/S.901).** Require caseworkers to advise parents and caregivers of their rights at first contact.
    c. **Invest in high-quality legal representation.** Ensure legal services offer competitive pay and high-quality training to attorneys.

3. **Increase support for young people exiting the child welfare system into independent life.**
    a. **Fund the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYSCI) at $10 million.** Ensure this hugely successful and growing program can fully support all young people with foster care experience who are navigating college and currently in the program, including a new class of first-year students, and additional students as outreach expands.

b. **Add a COLA to the child welfare housing subsidy, and expand eligibility for young people up to age 24.** A COLA will ensure the child welfare housing subsidy automatically updates with rising costs; expanding access to age 24 will ensure New York fulfills its special responsibility to young people transitioning out of foster care—often at age 21—to protect them from housing insecurity and homelessness during the first few years they are out on their own.

At the same time, we look forward to partnering with state leaders to develop and advance the following initiatives to better support New York's children and families:

1. Establish a Child and Family Wellbeing Fund to ensure New York invests in trusted supports provided by and for community members.
2. Change New York's definition of neglect to ensure families are not swept up in the child welfare system simply because they are experiencing poverty.
3. Provide guaranteed income to young people exiting the system and families involved in the system.

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Program

10:00-10:30am	Registration
10:30-11:15am	**Policy Priorities Overview with Q&A** Crystal Charles, Brad Hansen, Deidra Nesbeth
11:15am-12:15pm	**Root Causes of System Involvement** Nora McCarthy, Kari Siddiqui, Georgia Boothe
12:15-1:15pm	**System Bias** Shalonda Curtis-Hackett
1:15-2:00pm	Lunch
2:00-3:00pm	**Supporting Young People Exiting the System** Nittya Casey, Julia Davis, LaTroya Lovell