



Child & Family Wellbeing Fund

The Child and Family Wellbeing Fund redefines what “child welfare” means in New York by investing state dollars in local trusted community-based organizations that provide families with basic necessities, material supports and mutual aid, maternal health, activities for children, and peer support groups. These formal and informal social structures serve as enmeshed family and community protective factors, proven to reduce CPS involvement and improve child and family wellbeing.

The Fund would support children’s growth and development by investing resources in 10 communities that have been historically disenfranchised and targeted for government intervention through child protective services (CPS) for at least 5 years. The Fund would be an innovative approach to resourcing communities to support healthy children and families.

Budget Recommendation: Provide \$30 million to establish the Child and Family Wellbeing Fund as a pilot in New York’s Department of State and adopt A.63-A (Hevesi)/S.6431 (Brisport) in Article VII language to operationalize the community-driven structure.

Research has documented the positive health and cognitive impacts of thriving neighborhoods on children, as well as social mobility and lifelong earnings. Studies have also found that specific neighborhood enhancements can make a big difference:

- Safe play spaces and greenery
- Density of nonprofits and civic events
- Convenient access to critical family resources, like food and child care
- Vibrant social fabric

In short, everyday surroundings offer significant **advantages** to children *even if their own family is struggling*. Yet decades of redlining and racist disinvestment have resulted in vastly inequitable neighborhood conditions. We saw that indelibly in the pandemic, and we’re seeing it now in the threats to New Yorkers from aggressive immigration enforcement and cuts to social services. The Child and Family Wellbeing Fund is a chance to **make a corrective shift** to ensure that all New York children live in neighborhoods set up to support their well-being.

The Child & Family Wellbeing Fund Would:

- Fortify the local nonprofit infrastructure by investing in small groups that are often locked out of government funding. *Only groups that are recommended by community members would be funded.*
- Resource trusted organizations. *This fund is only open to groups with no ties to CPS.*
- Center community expertise in resource decisions. *Advisory board includes parents and young people impacted by CPS.*
- Intentionally invest in the social fabric. *It uses the Asset-Based Community Development model to build social capital and collective action.*
- Build long-term community capacity. *Technical assistance to support growth is written in.*
- Reduce the likelihood of family involvement in CPS. *Invests in projects and resources known to reduce family stress and vulnerability to CPS involvement.*
- Brings joy. *It supports family activities, community gatherings, and neighborly care.*

Redefining Child Welfare: Promoting Child & Family Wellbeing

New York State’s “[family policy guidelines](#)” prioritize government support for families that promote “**safe, nurturing environments which support the healthy growth of all family members.**” However, the current framework of CPS investigates and prosecutes families for “neglect”—including allegations related to parental inability to provide basic necessities. Nationally, almost half of the families that are separated (47%) had [trouble paying for basic necessities](#). In New York, over 95% of reports to the state child abuse and neglect hotline include suspicions of “neglect or [deprivation of necessities](#)”. Parents with low incomes are disproportionately reported to CPS for experiencing domestic violence or struggling with substance use, despite these issues impacting families in all socioeconomic statuses. Many families who live in communities that have been disenfranchised and targeted by CPS are in survival mode, with limited trusted options for support. In fact, many state-funded resources available in communities are staffed by mandated reporters whose presence can make families uncomfortable due to the implicit threat of child welfare involvement.

The Fund’s Structure

How Does the New Fund Work?

The law creates a new **Child & Family Wellbeing Fund** office at the Department of State funding communities in 10 counties.

The law creates a 9-person **Advisory Board** to select the **Director** of the Fund and oversee its activities.

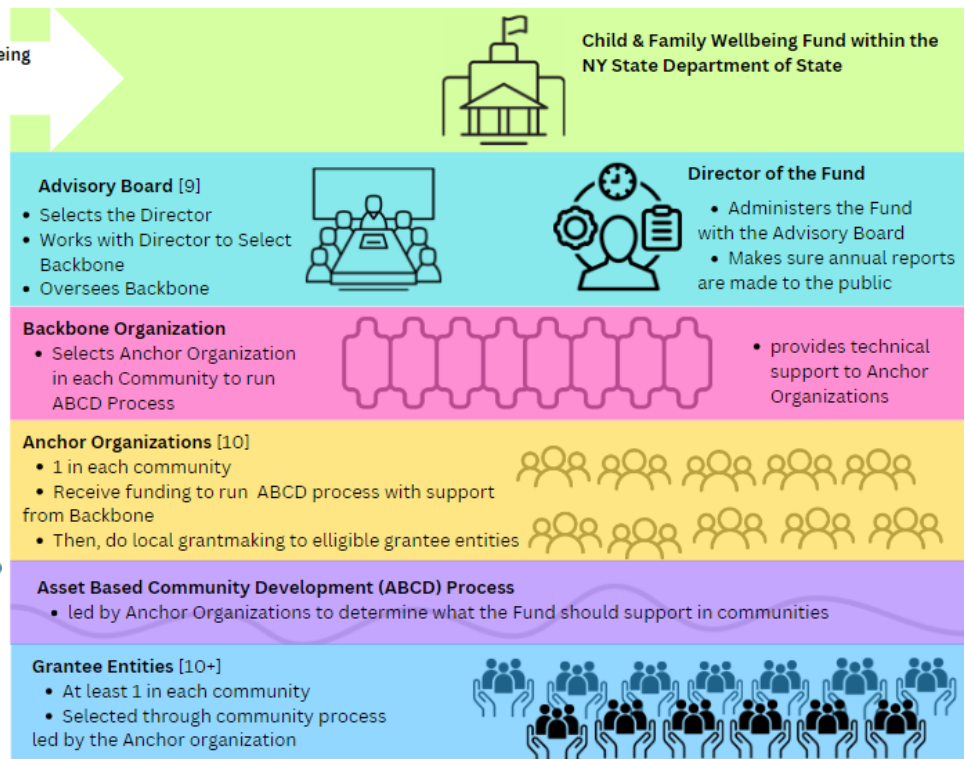
The **Director** and the **Advisory Board** work together to select a **Backbone** organization to provide technical assistance and hold the administrative burdens that keep most small groups from seeking state funds.

The **Backbone** selects 1 Anchor organization in each community [10].

Anchors receive funding to lead the **ABCD process**, assessing local assets supporting families and identifying gaps, and then administering a local grant-making process responsive to areas identified for investment. They receive TA from the Backbone.

Grantees are funded to respond to the community priorities identified in the ABCD process led by Anchor organizations in the 10 communities.

Funding supports grassroots **community assets that promote child and family wellbeing**, but have not been supported by state dollars, like mutual aid programs, emergency child care and peer support.



To learn more about the Child and Family Wellbeing Fund, please visit <https://scaany.org/what-is-the-Achild-and-family-wellbeing-fund/>