



**New York State
Office of
Children & Family
Services**

Report to the Legislature Quality Enhancement Fund

State Fiscal Year 2009-10

**Report to the Legislature
Quality Enhancement Fund
State Fiscal Year 2009-10**

New York's Child Welfare Financing structure promotes safety, well-being and permanency for children, with the following three components:

1. Chapter 53 of the Laws of 2008 continued reimbursement to 63.7 percent/36.3 percent State/local funding for all child welfare services except foster care services after applying available Federal funds;
2. A Foster Care Block Grant capping State reimbursement to social services districts for foster care services to the annual amounts appropriated; and
3. A Quality Enhancement Fund (QEF) administered by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to increase the availability and quality of children and family services programs.

Chapters 53 and 83 of the Laws of 2002, and Section 97-yyy of the State Finance Law require that OCFS submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature annually that describes the disbursements from the QEF and the status of the projects financed by the fund.

In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2009-10, \$3,592,680 in Local Assistance General Funds was available for the QEF. This funding supports services and expenses related to improving the quality of child welfare services that include, but are not limited to: training to mandated reporters regarding the proper identification of and response to signs of child abuse and neglect; public information programs and services that advance a zero tolerance campaign of child abuse and neglect; and demonstration projects to test models for new or targeted expansion of services beyond the level currently funded by local social services districts.

The following initiatives are supported by the SFY 2009-10 QEF:

Adoption Grant **\$44,444**

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) continued to contract with the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall Center for Children for the evaluation component of an Adoption Opportunity Grant from the Federal Children's Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services called "Diligent Recruitment of Families for Children in Foster Care (Parent for Every Child)

OCFS was awarded \$2 million in Federal grant funds through the Parent for Every Child-Adoption Opportunity Program for a period of five years to promote the diligent recruitment of permanent families for children in foster care that have been freed for adoption. Both State and national data indicate that children in facilities with serious mental health, cognitive disabilities or criminal justice histories have little or no

permanency work done on their behalf even though 90 percent of these children have been in care for 11 years or more. The project recruits families willing to adopt youth with special needs and provides training to assist parents to learn the special parenting requirements for meeting the needs of these youth.

The Federal Children's Bureau requires that the grant activities include a rigorous evaluation component. Chapin Hall is well-known for its high quality research in the area of child permanency and was approved by the Federal Children's Bureau to be the program evaluator. Chapin Hall continued to oversee the development and implementation of a multi-year randomized control trial impact evaluation of the Parent for Every Child-Adoption Opportunities Grant. Chapin Hall researchers continued to manage the evaluation, design data collection tools, develop and manage a web-based case management and evaluation system, compile and analyze data, and prepare reports.

The Federal award required a 10 percent state match. OCFS used the Federal funds for the program operation; and the third year of a five year state match component of \$44,444 was supported by the SFY 2009-10 Quality Enhancement Fund.

Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data Center **\$60,000**

OCFS continued to maintain its membership and license to access the Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data (State Data Center). The Data Center operated by the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall Center for Children allows governmental entities to access information and research tools to assist in improving outcomes for children and families served in the child welfare system. The State Data Center is a research and developmental center that provides resources to policymakers and service providers in the area of child safety and permanency. Chapin Hall's State Data Center, in partnership with American Public Human Services Association (APSHA), provides child welfare agencies with advanced information technology for performance measurement.

The SFY 2009-10 Quality Enhancement Fund were used to continue OCFS's contract with the State Data Center, which allowed OCFS access to their information system and research tools to assist OCFS to improve outcomes for children and families served in the child welfare system.

Under this contractual agreement, OCFS continued to have access to Chapin Hall's computer programs and Internet based tools to make available child welfare indicator data. This activity includes the production of State and county data profiles based on New York State indicators of child safety and permanency. The contractor continued to work with OCFS to identify different ways of measuring time towards permanency and produce reports that were transmitted to counties. In addition, the contractor continued to work with OCFS to transfer this knowledge to continue State-level work on child safety and permanency indicators.

The following technical assistance was made available:

- Access to a sophisticated database to track state child welfare outcomes and agency performance longitudinally.
- Access to multi-state data for benchmarking New York State's progress compared with other national child welfare entities, and New York State data to allow OCFS, local districts and voluntary agencies to easily access variables specific to New York State.
- Technical assistance to OCFS on the installation and use of the database and the strategic use of data for program evaluation, policy analysis, and compliance reporting.

Through access and use of the data, OCFS continued to develop the capacity to:

- Analyze key child welfare outcomes such as: timely permanency, stability of placement, re-entry into foster care, using multiple variables, such as race/ethnicity, age, gender, etc.
- Compare outcomes for different entities (local social service districts, voluntary agencies) within New York State and other states.
- Access voluntary agency data that improved the joint effort between OCFS and the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) to advance the agencies' access to and effective use of data.
- Project future service patterns based on state and national historical trends and indicators.

Court Diversion Initiative

\$218,900

OCFS continued to support the Court Diversion Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to reduce the length-of-stay for children in foster care and/or enhanced permanency for adolescents in foster care with a goal of independent living. This project supports the goals of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).

The Court Diversion Project uses community based interdisciplinary intervention with families at risk of having their child(ren) removed and placed in foster care and/or facing the filing in court of a neglect petition. The Center for Family Representation, in collaboration with the Legal Aid Society and the Office of Court Administration (OCA), worked with families in the pre-court phase. A team of social workers, attorneys and parent advocates provide intensive children and family services at the front of a case to determine whether a family can engage in services and if a child can safely remain at home or should be returned home. This initiative also utilizes dispute resolution as a means to divert court involvement or achieve early settlement of Article 10 (child abuse and neglect) proceedings. OCFS continued the contract with the Center for Family Representation.

Child Welfare Organizing Project

\$75,000

The Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP) is a parent/professional partnership dedicated to public child welfare reform in New York City through increased, meaningful parent involvement in service and policy planning. Founded in 1994 with a grant from the Child Welfare Fund to the Hunter College School of Social Work, CWOP's early research concluded that clients, specifically biological parents, had practically no voice in the New York City's public child welfare system. Sixteen years later, parents who have had direct personal experience with the system now hold seats on three NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Advisory Groups, guest lecture at virtually every area school of law and social work, develop and implement training curricula for both parents and professionals, publish their own newsletter, advise elected officials on child welfare issues and legislation, and are employed as peer advocates by over twenty foster care, preventive and legal services agencies. Funding of \$75,000 was used to train parents as advocates who are identified by local social services districts and contract agencies. The parents were paid by CWOP and deployed to the agencies. These parent advocates provided new parents entering the system with relevant information and assistance to supplement what is provided by the caseworker. Their role is to inform parents about their rights and responsibilities and to reach parents in a meaningful way. A trained pool of parents attended family team conferences and training. CWOP also offered professional leadership training to parent advocates currently employed by the agencies.

Mandated Reporter Training

\$250,000

OCFS continued to support the State share of the Mandated Reporter Training in the 2010 Training Plan. Specifically, the Mandated Reporter Training is for the estimated one million mandated reporters in New York State who are required by New York State law to report all suspicions of child abuse and maltreatment to the OCFS State Central Registry of the Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR). As part of professional licensure or job requirements, these mandated reporters must have two hours of Mandated Reporter training. As the frontline reporters of child abuse and maltreatment, mandated reporters make more than 62 percent of approximately 150,000 registered reports to the SCR each year.

The Mandated Reporter training offers a state of the art curriculum that was developed through a joint task force that included OCFS, State Education Department, State Police and the NYC Board of Education. These funds support continuous updates to the curriculum and allow this training to be accessible on an ongoing basis through annual teleconferences, iLinc sessions, and traditional classroom training as required.

In addition, this plan now provides for the creation and maintenance of a database that tracks mandated reporters who have successfully completed training and logs information from trainers.

NYS Partnership for Family Recovery Practice Guidance Document \$50,000

The New York State Partnership for Family Recovery project is a joint initiative of OCFS, the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and The Office of Court Administration (OCA). It is directed by a Core Team that consists of staff from each of the partnering state agencies. Stakeholders from each of these systems provide input into the planning and implementation of the project through the NY Partnership for Family Recovery Advisory Group. The goal of this initiative is to achieve child safety, permanency and well-being by supporting sustainable family recovery and thereby reducing the need for lengthy interventions by the courts, the child welfare system and substance abuse treatment providers.

The New York State Partnership for Family Recovery implemented a holistic approach to working with families at the county level by bringing representatives of the three systems together to collaborate, by adopting common protocols and by conducting integrated case planning. Each of these systems and their partners recognizes the need to engage families more effectively; to accurately assess the needs of family members; and to incorporate the family's input in the creation of comprehensive service plans.

The SFY 2009-10 Quality Enhancement Funds continued to support this initiative by expanding to include two additional counties (Oneida and Dutchess) with significant foster care populations.

Counties received the following training:

- Cross-systems Foundational Training: The standardized training modules and training materials that relate to each of the three systems. The modules have been developed for courts, substance abuse providers, and child welfare and temporary assistance workers. They provided foundational information on each system's core values, regulations, and practices so that each system has a working knowledge of the other systems.
- One-day Statewide or Regional Meetings: The regional meeting allowed for peer to peer learning and sharing of ideas. County staff from the child welfare, court and chemical dependency systems networked to better understand the elements of each system in order to improve their ability to assist families.

Performance Based Standards for Youth in Correction and Detention \$124,000

Performance-Based Standards (PbS) for Youth in Correction Facilities was launched by the U.S. Department of Justice as a system for agencies and facilities to identify, monitor and improve conditions and treatment services provided to incarcerated youths; and the work environment using national standards and outcome measures. Benefits of participating include the ability to measure and track key indicators of facility performance; comparison with similar participating facilities across the country;

definition of measureable goals and development of strategies to achieve them; access to resources and assistance to make improvements; and accountability measures.

Directed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA), PbS helps juvenile justice facilities and community residential programs establish and sustain systems for continuous improvement and accountability. It provides a blueprint of best practices for facilities based on national standards, regular data collection, and review of outcomes for tracking performance.

The SFY 2009-10 Quality Enhancement Fund plan continued to fund the contract with PbS Learning Institute Candidacy Program which supported approximately 21 sites with ongoing training.

Ready by 21 Quality Counts Initiative (QCI)

\$300,000

OCFS was selected to participate in the Ready by 21 Quality Counts Initiative sponsored by the Forum for Youth Investment, High Scope Educational Foundation, and the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work. It is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies. This was the third year of a three-year project. The SFY 2009-10 Quality Enhancement Funding was used to:

- Expand the Ready by 21 Initiatives: OCFS expanded this initiative into four new counties:

Each county was identified by OFCS/Office of Youth Development (OYD) in regards to readiness in the three areas listed below and were required to identify the outcomes they would be addressing. Ready by 21 initiative focuses on:

- collaborative planning;
 - program assessment; and
 - youth worker training.
- Orange County Contract: OCFS entered into a one year contract for \$30,000 with Orange County to provide specific technical assistance and support to other counties that are trying to implement the Ready-by-21 process. Orange County was selected as one out of the four pilot counties to receive a contract with OCFS based on the work performed by the county during the Ready-by-21 two year pilot.
 - Mini Grants: OCFS contracted with the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus for \$50,000 for one year, to administer mini grants to counties or municipal youth bureaus. These grants would range from \$5,000-\$10,000 and were designed to raise awareness of the Ready by 21 Challenge.
-

- Quality Assessment Tool Development and Training: OCFS dedicated \$70,000 to contract with David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. This joint initiative with the Forum for Youth Investment and High/Scope Educational Research Foundation supported OCFS efforts to develop an assessment tool. The Weikart Center developed a Quality Assessment Tool that will be used by the county/municipal Youth Bureau to determine if the agency's structure and process supports the OCFS administrative requirements for programs, fiscal reporting, and funding reimbursement. Annually, the Quality Assessment Tool was used for each program that is funded through RAP; and once every three years at a minimum the county/municipal Youth Bureaus does an external assessment of each program. The Quality Assessment Tool can be used for other child welfare programs that a county funds outside of the resource allocation process. The OCFS Youth Development Specialists/ Coordinators would receive a train the trainers (TOT) instruction on the use of the Quality Assessment Tool. The TOT will help sustain the work if/when county/municipal Youth Bureaus experience staff turnover. At a minimum there will be four regional training sessions.

Sanctuary Model of Treatment Training

\$725,000

OCFS continued to support the Sanctuary Model of Treatment training. The Sanctuary Model is a significant and complex initiative that is changing the manner in which young people in residential care are treated. By implementing this nationally-recognized and evidenced-based Sanctuary Model of Treatment training, a new method of healing from psychological and social traumatic experience can be addressed. The training being administered has created a new environment of treatment and a shift in philosophy designed to reduce the use of physical restraints and injuries sustained by youth and staff. The training has provided all levels of staff with new techniques and an understanding of the behaviors youth have in their care.

The Sanctuary Model of Treatment is designed for rehabilitation programs to focus on treatment and individualized approaches, with the special recognition of trauma experienced by residents and its impact on their growth and development. Since most children who enter residential care have been exposed to overwhelming experiences related to some form of trauma and disruption, trauma-informed methods of care integrated into standard treatment practices are important for achieving residential treatment goals. The advancement of these child and youth development treatment goals is also aimed at preventing a multitude of problems as clients enter adulthood.

Using the Sanctuary Model moved OCFS towards a trauma-informed treatment approach. Currently, eleven voluntary agencies and all OCFS facilities participate in this treatment model.

Sanctuary Model Evaluation

\$87,000

A total of \$87,000 from the SFY 2009-10 Quality Enhancement Fund supported the final six months of a three-year, multi-site evaluation of the Sanctuary Model. The evaluation is a joint initiative of the OCFS Division of Juvenile Justice and Opportunities for Youth (DJOY) and the Division of Child Welfare and Community Services (CWCS).

The Sanctuary Model Evaluation examines whether youth and staff's perceptions of facility climate (e.g., safety, youth-staff relations, communication) and sites' use of sanctuary tools (e.g., community meetings, safety plans) improve over time as programs progress through the three-year implementation process outlined by the Sanctuary Model. Nine sites, including four DJJOY facilities and five voluntary agencies, are included in the evaluation. The SFY 2009-10 Quality Enhancement fund supported a contract with the Center for Human Services Research at the University at Albany under the direction of the OCFS Bureau of Evaluation and Research (BER).

Disproportionate Minority Representation (DMR) Project **\$240,000**

OCFS continued to support the DMR Project that has commenced a comprehensive initiative to identify and reduce racial and ethnic disparities associated with accessing treatment and services to children of color and their families. New York State has a disproportionate number of children of color in its child welfare and juvenile justice systems. There is an extreme disparity at every decision making point to place a child in either system. The outcomes for children of color, and especially Black children and families are disproportionate to the current population in both systems. The goals of the project are to:

- Reduce the disproportionate numbers of children of color in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and eliminate racial disparities in provision of services and treatment. This is particularly true for Black children and families who are most overrepresented and have the most disproportionate outcomes.
- Promote cultural competence in practice and policies.

The six selected counties (Erie; Monroe; Onondaga; Westchester; Suffolk; and Nassau) assisted OCFS to develop DMR related competencies for the counties and Division of Child Welfare and Community Services (CWCS). These competencies were used to implement activities to reduce overrepresentation and disparities in the provision of services to black, Hispanic and Native American children and families. In addition, the activities promoted heightened awareness of the programs and practices that are being utilized across the country to reduce unnecessary out of home placements and racial disproportionality and disparities. The deliverables supported by SFY 2009-10 Quality Enhancement Funds were as follows:

- Core Statewide Training and Support: OCFS continued to provide training and consultation on the use of the data, the implications and outcomes related to overrepresentation, and its impact on the service delivery system. Peer coaching was encouraged between the counties and counties were
-

supported by experts from other states that are successfully implementing DMR.

- Core Training and Support—Community Level Stakeholders: Community forums/training continued to be offered to provide an update of the work, discussion of the State and local data; what the data means; and what strategies community level stakeholders are using to address the issues and the impact on unnecessary out of home placements. LDSS continued to learn how to re-invest in preventive programs to further reduce the reliance of out of home placements; reduce disruption and fragmentation of families and neighborhoods; and support positive outcomes for youth, families, neighborhoods and communities. Planning for LDSS/community forums/training included identifying and working with “leaders” unique and specific to each target community, and those who were identified in the initial phase of the pilot. Each community was encouraged to continue to conduct sessions as needed.
- Conduct Surveys as Follow-up to Training: A follow-up survey was administered to all field staff who participated in the training. OCFS received ongoing feedback, and solicited input to what further training/skill building is needed. Surveys were conducted after receipt of training.
- Develop and Implement Community Plans: The pilot counties were encouraged to implement community plans that were created in the 2008-09 initial phase of the pilot. These plans were intended to identify the challenges that were addressed in a target community/neighborhood; assess issues and identify key persons/leaders in the community (day care, schools, senior citizen housing, health centers, churches); target persons organizations to participate in a local DMR advisory group; identify outreach methods and resources for the community (including public relations and media), and activities that can continue an ongoing dialogue. Implementation required development of process and protocols to measure and monitor activities and the impact.
- Race Equity Institutional Analysis: OCFS contracted with Center for the Study of Social Policy to conduct a Race Equity Institutional Analysis. The analysis focused on policies and practices at OCFS and up to three of the pilot counties.

Differential Response

\$300,000

The Family Assessment Response approach, currently known as “Differential Response”, uses a family assessment and services approach for a subset of families that are reported to the SCR for child maltreatment. The Differential Response approach requires an initial assessment of child safety. If a child is assessed as unsafe, the report may not be handled using a family assessment response. For families that

are reported to the SCR where the Differential Response approach is used, no determination of the SCR report is made. OCFS believes, as do other states that use a family assessment approach, that it is easier to engage families since the approach is likely to be viewed as less threatening by the family; it allows the family to have a larger role in determining what services benefitted their children; and the LDSS is more likely to be viewed by the family as a helping entity in the future should issues arise that create risk to children.

Children are often removed from the home when there are challenges occurring in the home and the family is in need of assistance. The Differential Response approach allows the family to work with the county to identify wraparound services that supported the family's need. The \$300,000 in Quality Enhancement Funds were used to provide wraparound services to the families. These services included, but are not limited to: clothing and food vouchers; repair or replacement of a washer or dryer; repair to a broken vehicle; cleaning supplies purchase of mattresses (for children sleeping on the floor); and bus passes.

In the fall of 2008, six counties launched New York State's pilot of a Differential Response model regarding the investigation of certain child protective services reports. The counties participating in the pilot were Erie, Onondaga, Chautauqua, Tompkins, Albany and Westchester. An additional thirteen counties (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chemung, Columbia, Essex, Livingston, Monroe, St. Regis, Washington, Putnam, Rensselaer, Suffolk, and Yates) have now implemented Differential Response, bringing the total number of counties to nineteen.

OCFS Web Site

\$125,000

OCFS continued to make modifications to the OCFS existing web site. The modifications focused on developing a specific site for youth exiting foster care; and changes that made the current site user friendly.

While local districts and agencies continue to ensure that youth leaving foster care are connected to a permanency resource, there continue to be many youth exiting foster care who are frequently disconnected from their family and necessary resources to aid in their transition. OCFS supported the creation of a website that would provide youth exiting from foster care with resources about transitioning to adult life. The site would also be beneficial for the staff working with these young adults. The target audience were youth from upstate that are in their early teens to early twenties (youth just thinking about the possibility of aging out to youth who have already aged out of foster care). The site included stories by teens, information on resources for all 57 upstate counties and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, and tips for staff. While the site is accessible to any youth or staff member, the intent of the web site is for both youth and staff to use the site together to locate resources and plan for the teens' future. The site, tentatively called www.YouthSuccessNYS.org, is a replica of a similar site for New York City teens,

www.YouthSuccessNYC.org. Other information, such as the county-by-county resources, are unique to the New York State site. Some information may be shared between the sites, such as information on the SUNY system, or Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program that is equally relevant to upstate and downstate teens.

OCFS continued to redesign and create the agency's website into a more user and consumer friendly tool for public users. This project was an extensive one but resulted in providing more information to providers, consumers, parents, and children in a format that is easy to access. Graphic design and improved functionality included separate portals for OCFS customers.

Vera Institute – Educational Neglect

\$50,000

OCFS continued to support the work of the Vera Institute related to educational neglect. Under New York State law, a parent or guardian who does not ensure that his or her child attends school regularly can be found to have neglected the child. Since 2004, educational neglect allegations have increased by 34 percent statewide. In 2008, one in every 10 children whose parents were investigated for abuse or neglect was the subject of an allegation of educational neglect. OCFS, with support from Casey Family Programs, has been working with the Vera Institute of Justice over the last year to study New York State's approach to educational neglect and to develop strategies for improving the system's response.

Vera investigators found that the majority of cases involve teenagers and that these cases do not fit well in the traditional child protective system process. A central purpose of child protective services (CPS) investigations into allegations of educational neglect is to determine whether absence from school is a symptom of abuse or serious neglect that threatens the child's safety. But reports involving teenagers rarely uncover safety concerns. They do, however, reveal other issues which the child protective system is not always well-equipped to address, including complex educational needs, conflict between parents and teens, homelessness, and mental illness. Vera found that the current system is not serving teens well and there is a need for a new approach. Vera proposes building off the research conducted so far to implement specific strategies to improve outcomes for youth and families while focusing child protective resources where they can have the greatest impact.

The SFY 2009-10 Quality Enhancement Funds were used to support the next phase which continues to explore the following activities:

- Design and implement new procedures at the State's Central Registry of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) to reduce the number of families unnecessarily brought into the child welfare system.
-

- Develop and pilot programs that proactively address chronically absent teenagers' needs outside of the child protective system.

Child Welfare Decision Points and their Potential Impact on Racial Disproportionality

\$16,686

Nationally, there are significant and long-standing racial disparities inside both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The same holds true within New York State. To understand how such disparities continue to be present, OCFS supported an Office of Court Administration (OCA) and Hunter College project that examined the decision-making process of cases adjudicated in three counties in New York State. Utilizing a unique judicial and academic partnership between the Ninth Judicial District-Westchester Family Court and the City University of New York (CUNY)-Hunter College School of Social Work (HCSSW), the project includes the systematic evaluation of key decision points in the child welfare system so that it can be ascertained whether or not such decisions intensify or diminish the likelihood of racial disproportionality and disparity inside child welfare. Based on this assessment, necessary training and consultative interventions may be warranted so that such racial disparities diminish.

HCSSW research faculty designed a mixed method study using case record reviews and interviews with key stakeholders at the critical decision points in the life of a child welfare case. Through the resources of the District Court and targeted counties' child welfare leaders, a randomized set of such cases would be provided for such data-mining. Combined with interviews of key actors involved in overseeing such cases, the intent of such work would be to describe the factors that may or may not impact key decisions and the outcome associated with racial disproportionality and disparity.

Vera Institute

\$ 626,670

The Vera Institute of Justice is a nonprofit organization that combines expertise in research, demonstration projects, and technical assistance to help leaders in government and civil society improve the systems people rely on for justice and safety. Vera's Center on Youth Justice (CYJ) specifically works to promote the well-being and safety of youth, families, and communities.

The contract with Vera Institute of Justice, Inc. CYJ provided technical assistance and research support to the OCFS Commissioner's executive committee to implement the recommendations from the Transforming Juvenile Justice Taskforce in two key areas: (1) juvenile placement reform, and (2) juvenile detention reform. Combination of these two areas of assistance greatly support and further OCFS' drive to improve outcomes and opportunities for young people and families involved in the juvenile justice system. The work includes:

Placement Reform

CYJ provided technical assistance and staff support to the OCFS executive committee that are responsible for responding to Task Force recommendations to reform of the state's juvenile placement system by designing and implementing a detailed implementation plan, and providing general reports of progress to the state on a regular basis. CYJ provided assistance to this group in the following three areas:

- Structuring the Planning and Implementation Process: CYJ worked closely with the OCFS commissioner and OCFS staff to assemble a working group that are responsible for responding to Task Force recommendations. CYJ provided facilitation and strategic planning support to the executive committee in an effort to identify reform priorities and draft a detailed and effective master plan for implementation. The executive committee along with assistance from CYJ ensured the plan establishes specific timelines and benchmarks; identifies responsible participants for the tasks associated with implementation; and identifies needed resources (capital, operational, human, and otherwise). Finally, the contract with CYJ helped draft agendas, prepare relevant briefing documents, and develop progress.
- Enriching the Knowledge Base: CYJ' research team provided ongoing data collection and analysis to the executive committee. Specifically, CYJ integrated the data that OCFS gathered for the Task Force into the executive committee's planning and implementation process (e.g., offense severity of youth in OCFS custody, lengths of stay, recidivism measures, and detailed maps of where youth are placed in relation to their home communities); introduced additional data as needed; and measured, documented, and tracked reform outcomes over time. In regard to outcomes, CYJ researchers assisted OCFS' executive committee, as needed to: establish appropriate benchmarks, indicators, and goals to gauge the executive committee's work; and collect and analyze information throughout the process.

In addition, CYJ sought to apply relevant national best practice insights to the planning and implementation process. By facilitating conversations with practitioners and researchers from across the country—including Vera's own "associates"—and inviting these experts to advise and support specific aspects of the executive committee's implementation efforts.

- Communicating with Diverse New York State Stakeholders: To promote and support a wider public conversation about reform and to maintain a high level of transparency and buy-in from constituencies across the state. CYJ helped OCFS share the reform efforts through forums, focus groups, memos, and one-one-one meetings, with important stakeholders across the state. Including, but not limited to, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and advocacy groups. During these briefings, CYJ assisted OCFS in sharing the research and rationale for reforms, offering information on similar efforts across the country, providing updates on the planning and implementation
-

process, and communicating preliminary outcomes once reforms are underway.

Detention Reform

The second major area is Detention Reform. CYJ worked with the OCFS executive committee in an effort to sustain detention reform. OCFS has already invested in productive systems change and beginning to provide similar technical assistance and research support to additional counties.

- Sustaining Current Reform Efforts: OCFS continued building on the momentum generated from previous work too support new reform efforts by implementing the Detention and Assistance project into counties that exhibit a high number of detention placements. The Detention and Assistance Project included: reducing county reliance on detention for Juvenile Delinquents (JDs) and Persons in Need of Supervisions (PINS), decreasing local and state expenditures, and providing more substantively sound outcomes for young people and their families in the community.
- Supporting New Reform Efforts: OCFS is building on the momentum from previous work with CYJ to provide detention assistance in two additional counties. Two counties were selected based on factors such as detention and placement rates, commitment to reducing reliance on detention, and willingness to provide data and work with Vera. Each county received from the contractor: assistance in research and data analysis; facilitated strategic planning; and continued coaching and support.

Culturally Sensitive Workforce Development

\$100,000

With an emphasis on improving frontline case practices related to family engagement, as noted in the NYS Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan, the cultural and linguistic needs of the communities being served must be taken into account. According to the most recent Community Snapshot completed by Administration for Children Services (ACS) in 2008, 35 percent of the citywide population under the age of 18 is identified as Latino, and 24 percent of New York City families in 2008 spoke Spanish. Given the disproportionate number of Latino families known to the child welfare system there is a greater disproportion of culturally sensitive and linguistically fluent Latino social workers serving this constituency.

The fact that families relate best when approached by someone who speaks their language and understands their cultural perspectives has been widely accepted. The need for bilingual and bicultural social workers is abundantly clear.

The shortage of Latino social workers is a critical issue for both Latino the community based organizations and other non-profits serving Latino clients. Although agencies

employ bachelor's level Latino staff, many of whom are dedicated and committed to serving their community; these individuals are not able to consider enrolling in graduate school due to economic factors. The expense of a two-year Master of Social Work (MSW) program ranges from about \$20,000 at a publicly funded university to over \$60,000 at a private university. Despite the availability of scholarships, tuition waivers and student loans, these funds are limited and do not approach the level of financial need. Potential older students often have extensive obligations to their families, which creates added financial demands.

To address the critical shortage of bilingual and bicultural professionally trained Latino social workers, the Latino Social Work Task Force, a joint venture of the Puerto Rican Family Institute (PRFI) and the National Association of Social Workers – NYC Chapter (NASW-NYC) provided scholarships through Quality Enhancement Funds on behalf of Latino students pursuing a MSW degree.

Beginning in 2000, PRFI and NASW-NYC Chapter began enlisting the support of a score of community based organizations and New York City's seven graduate schools of social work including:

- Adelphi University School of Social Work
- Columbia University School of Social Work
- Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service
- Hunter College School of Social Work
- Lehman College
- New York University Silver School of Social Work
- Yeshiva University Wurzweiler School of Social Work

The social work schools nominate qualified students currently enrolled in their graduate social work programs. The selection of scholarship recipients is made by a panel of Task Force members. The panel members review the student's academic achievement and financial need. They also take into consideration the student's work experience in the field and their commitment to continue working in the field upon completion of their MSW degree. Student awardees generally receive a scholarship of up to \$5,000, comprised of \$2,500 raised by the Task Force, and a matching grant of \$2,500 from the graduate school. The demand for these scholarships has consistently outstripped the resources available.

A total of \$100,000 was used to continue the scholarships and the administrative costs, with \$60,000 dedicated to providing additional scholarships, and \$40,000 allowing for the expansion of the role of the Task Force coordinator. This also enabled additional outreach and recruitment activities, as well as the convening on an ongoing basis of a scholarship alumni career planning and support group.
