

Commissioner John A. Johnson, of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), is pleased to submit an amendment to the State's *Title IV-B Child and Family Services Report* to provide a plan for using funding available through Title IV-B, subpart 2. Since the 1979 enactment of a mandate to provide services to prevent foster placements, New York's investment in home and community based services to vulnerable children and their families has resulted in increased permanency by both diverting children from unnecessary placements or by facilitating adoptions.

Today, a combination of federal, state and local funds underwrite the costs of services and supports to maintain vulnerable children safely in their own homes, and when that is not possible, to achieve alternatives that provide permanency. In 2002, the enactment of Governor Pataki's Child Welfare Finance Plan augmented Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) services funding, Title XX and Chafee Funds for Independent Living with state reimbursement for 65% of local spending, net of federal funding, for child protective, preventive, adoption, aftercare and independent living services.

The benefits of investing in home and community based services is directly demonstrated by the numbers. In December 1998 over 51,000 children were living in foster placements. Five years later, only about 33,400 children were in foster placements. The percent of foster children with the goal of adoption for whom adoptions were finalized has increased from 34% in 1998 to 38% in 2003. In that same time period, the median period for children to be adopted has been reduced by over 10%. Finally, indicated reports of child abuse and maltreatment have been static. New York plans to use its Title IV-B, subpart 2 funding to continue these trends of permanency and safety at home.

Provision of Required Services

Title IV-B, subpart 2 funding requires state investment in four services: family preservation, family support, family reunification, and adoption promotion and support. New York is proud of its long tradition in providing these services. The *Title IV-B Child and Family Services Report*, which is available through OCFS, details activities in each of these areas. Below is a brief description of recent additional activities that have been initiated in direct or indirect relation to the State's Program Improvement Plan (PIP) stemming from its *Children and Family Service Review (CFSR)*.

Family Preservation Services

Federal guidelines define family preservation services as services for children and families that are designed to help families at risk or in crisis. These services are intended to:

- Help children at risk of placement remain safely in their homes;
- Safely return children to homes from which they have been removed; and
- Place children in adoptive or other planned permanent living arrangements.

The federal CFPS reviewers noted New York's achievements in this area:

The review team was very encouraged to have found significant strengths in New York's child welfare system, including key outcomes in safety, continuity of family relationships, and meeting the educational and physical health needs of children. These included such areas as the timely initiation of investigations of reports of child maltreatment, services to protect children in their own homes and to prevent removal, proximity of foster care placements, preserving connections, emphasizing sibling and relative placements, and worker visitations with children and parents.

In recognition of the pivotal role of parents in effecting permanency and stability for their children, New York has increased its focus on family engagement in planning for children in jeopardy of foster placement, as well as those children already placed in out-of-home foster care placements. Workgroups established to address findings in the CFPS have identified the value of using more evidence-based and promising practices that successfully involve parents and extended family members in working to quickly achieve permanency and safety for their children.

In addition to maintaining the existing array of services, OCFS has been collaborating with local districts, service providers, the Office of Court Administration (OCA) and local family courts to expand the use of mediation services within families to develop and implement strategies that maintain vulnerable children with their families. Family Functional Therapy and Multi Systemic Therapy have been adopted by individual districts and consortia of districts to provide home-based interventions to prevent placements of youth likely to enter foster care, as well as to shorten the duration of care by providing intensive interventions upon children's return from foster care. Finally, the advantages of family conferencing in involving a broad network of family members in planning for the safety of children and in reducing the need for foster care is receiving mounting attention as a vehicle for strengthening families.

Family Support Services

Family support services involve community-based services that promote the safety and well-being of children and families. Some of the outcomes expected from increased and successful implementation of family support services include improved parenting skills, more stable and supportive family environments and enhanced child development. Day care, aftercare and post adoption services can be covered under family support expenditures. Many of the programs noted under family preservation services are also applicable under family support services.

Again, the State's *Title IV-B Child and Family Services Report* includes descriptions of a broad array of family support services conducted throughout the State. For example,

- Healthy Families New York Home Visiting Program continues to offer an important family-centered outreach program to expectant and new parents in

identified high-need categories. Identified families are connected to community supports that promote child development and family functioning.

- The Advantage After School Program provides supports to engage youth in developmentally appropriate, constructive activities during non-school hours.
- Collaborative efforts among schools, probation departments, mental health service providers and child welfare providers divert youth from court involvement and probable out-of-home placements.
- Housing arrangements are located and subsidized to help parents afford housing suitable for their children returning home from foster care.

OCFS recognizes the need to continue and strengthen interdisciplinary planning for children. The flexibility in using Title IV-B, subpart 2 funding enhances such interagency/interdisciplinary initiatives as the Coordinated Children's Services Initiative (CCSI) and Interagency County Planning (ICP). CCSI brings agency representatives together to plan for and arrange services for children and youth with multiple needs. ICP brings those same agencies together to conduct systemic needs assessments and to plan for use of available resources.

Family Reunification Services

Family reunification services describe the entire spectrum of services that are provided to facilitate the safe and timely return of children to the homes of their parents or primary caregivers. Counseling, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, assistance for victims of domestic violence as well as other necessary services are included in this description. Such services are limited to the 15-month period that begins when the child enters foster care. Certain temporary child care, transportation and therapeutic services are covered under the umbrella of family reunification services.

The team involved in the CFSR found that New York displayed systemic strengths in several areas including, among others, its quality assurance system and training. These strengths form the basis for implementing strategies for family engagement. The *Title IV-B Child and Services Report* notes the instrumental role of family treatment courts in monitoring and holding accountable substance abusing parents with children in foster placements.

Recent partnerships among the courts, local districts, the State Court Improvement Project and OCFS incorporate principles of family engagement early in a placement to expedite permanency decisions. Techniques such as concurrent planning and increased family involvement in assessments and case planning are the subject of training and program development.

Adoption Services

Adoption services include an entire array of services to promote and support the adoption of children. Such services are intended to serve the best interests of the children and expedite the adoption process. Further service delivery designed to support adoptive families is also authorized. These supports involve parents and children, adoptive and foster families and the many service providers committed to the encouragement and finalization of adoption throughout New York State.

Since issuing the *Title IV-B Child and Family Services Report*, OCFS has joined with OCA and New York City's Administration for Children Services (ACS) to expedite adoptions. Although New York continues to be a national leader in the area of adoption, with over 38 percent of its foster children with the goal of adoption having been adopted in 2002, the CFSR has highlighted the long period of time children wait in foster care before their discharge to adoption. This partnership, which expanded to include family courts and districts outside New York City, became known as "Adoption Now". Its immediate accomplishment was a statewide review of cases involving children freed for adoption to identify and remedy barriers impeding adoption. The case review stimulated an almost 15% increase in adoptions between 2002 and 2003 (from nearly 3900 to over 4550 adoptions). Equally important, the group has divided into workgroups with a goal of overcoming structural barriers to adoption in the State. In short, the workgroups are designed to expedite adoptions by improving the timing and the completeness of information flow between social services agencies and the courts after children are freed for adoption.

Financing the Services

New York State's revised CFS 101 Part 2 estimates include Federal funds of \$2.2 billion and State and Local funds of \$1.3 billion contributing to a \$3.5 billion Child Welfare program. Of the \$2.2 billion in Federal funds, \$37.8 million is estimated Title IV-B Subpart 2 funds, a combination of the State's FFY 2003-2004 Title IV-B Subpart 2 estimated allotment of \$27.8 million and another \$10 million that the State is requesting if additional funds become available. Of the \$27.8 million of Title IV-B Subpart 2 funds, New York State will spend at least \$25 million as 75 percent reimbursement for family preservation and community-based family support services, time-limited family reunification services and adoption promotion and support services. A minimum of 20 percent of the State's allocation will be expended on each of these four service categories. The State has chosen not to expend Title IV-B Subpart 2 funds on planning and service coordination. In addition, the State will expend up to \$2.8 million (up to 10 percent) as 75 percent reimbursement for administration.

Of the \$1.3 billion in State and Local funds, \$337 million is related to existing family preservation and support services and will be utilized to meet the 25 percent State Match requirement in the Federal regulation at 45 CFR 1357.32(d) and the maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement in section 432(a)(7) of the Social Security Act and the Federal regulation at 45 CFR 1357.32(f). The \$337 million of available State and Local funds is

based on the SFY 2004-2005 New York State Executive Budget. The SFY 2004-2005 Executive Budget recommends significantly less Federal funds for Family Preservation and Family Support services compared to previous years. For child welfare services, the SFY 2004-2005 Executive Budget recommends a \$119 million transfer from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to Title XX compared to the \$241 million transferred in SFY 2003-2004. In addition, the SFY 2004-2005 Executive Budget shifts to the Title IV-B Subpart 2 MOE, approximately \$150 million of State and Local child welfare expenditures previously contributing to the TANF MOE.

Public Input

OCFS receives public input on an ongoing basis through the Commissioner's Advisory Committee, various workgroups, briefings and routine meetings. OCFS developed its PIP in response to the CFSR with broad-based input from public and private service providers and administrators, academics, advocates, users, and others interested in child welfare services.

OCFS will be posting this plan amendment on its website. The input of interested parties will be welcomed as we continue to examine our delivery and finance of services to children and their families to make improvements and refinement.