

INITIATIVE 1 **PRACTICE**

Tailoring Effective Responses to Families Through Targeted Services

- **Implement Family Assessment Response (FAR) statewide by 2015.** Family Assessment Response is the state's "differential response" or "dual track" program, an approach to child protection that provides a way to divert lower-risk matters to less intrusive interventions. Fourteen counties have implemented FAR, with five others starting in 2010. Based on these counties' results, the Office of Children & Family Services should consider statewide implementation over six years (25 counties by the end of 2011 and 15 more by the end of 2013, with implementation completed in 2016).
- **Implement recommendations to ensure differentiated and more suitable responses to reports of educational neglect.** OCFS has had long-standing concerns about how the child welfare system responds to educational neglect when it is reported to the State Central Register. In collaboration with Casey Family Programs, OCFS commissioned the Vera Institute of Justice to carry out several research initiatives leading to these recommendations:
 - > Craft legislation aimed at reducing educational neglect reports to the SCR while promoting alternative responses in localities;
 - > Develop standardized questions so that SCR intake

- workers can better identify educational neglect reports that involve neglect or abuse; and
- > Disseminate to the child welfare field Vera's research and proposals on handling educational neglect reports in New York State.

OCFS should implement these recommendations to address reports of educational neglect more effectively.

- **Implement an equity plan to eliminate the disparity in child welfare outcomes and the disproportionate representation of children of color who are in foster care.** OCFS should develop and implement a phased approach to eliminating disparity. The first phase should entail developing and disseminating a policy statement and developing a work plan. The second phase should ground the initiative in historic performance as well as trend data that is analyzed and shared with each locality. The third phase should include customized improvement initiatives in select counties with the support of national experts including Casey Family Programs and the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The experts would provide support, consultation, and information about effective strategies in other parts of the country.¹ Phase four should apply the lessons learned in these individual sites statewide.

INITIATIVE 2 **PRACTICE**

Permanency: Fulfilling the Promise of Stable, Secure, and Nurtured Lives

- **Strengthen subsidized guardianship.** The Office of Children & Family Services could pursue legislation that would fund and guide subsidized guardianship. This alternative would support the stability and well-being of children who are living with relatives and are likely to remain with them.
- **Promote more and earlier connections with family members.** OCFS may promote changes in practice so that certain activities occur earlier when families are engaged. These include, for example, family search practices—strategies to locate and engage extended family members and other significant adults who can be involved in children’s lives and help them develop a better sense of their own biographies. Agencies can also help strengthen family connections by supporting the role and function of parent advocates.
- **Design a protocol to limit excessive disruptions in foster care placements for children.** New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services has had positive experiences with placement preservation conferences that eliminate the need for a change in placement in a substantial percentage of cases. Building on this success, OCFS—in partnership with local districts and providers—may design a protocol for improving stability and continuity for children in care that will include elevated attention from service organizations’ management. Regular OCFS monitoring could also incorporate stability of placement measures, and the “State of the Child Report” could feature county and agency performance. Agencies and districts with high rates of placement disruptions may be expected to improve their practices.
- **Expand opportunities for youth in foster care and former foster youth to influence day-to-day operations of programs and changes in policies and practices.** Excellent work in this arena has begun in pockets across New York State. To encourage greater participation, OCFS could identify, document, and promote examples of successful efforts that have incorporated youth voices. We may also work with New Yorkers For Children to bring together groups to learn from each other, reduce redundancy, and support coalition building.
- **Encourage use of promising practices and state and federal guidance to help children who are returning to the community.** OCFS can work with local departments and agencies to prioritize the needs of adolescents being discharged from care. Using the requirements of the federal Fostering Connections law, OCFS has issued directives to improve casework practice during this critical transition—whether youths are discharged home or to an adoption setting or an Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement/ independent living.
- **Hold permanency panels to strengthen permanency planning for every child who has been in foster care.**² Mirroring the success of the adoption panels recommended by the New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children, these panels can bring together local districts, OCFS, courts, and providers to make sure that each child is given a real opportunity to achieve family permanency. These panels could prioritize children admitted to foster care within the last six months and those who have been in care for more than three years.

- **Promote comprehensive higher education supports for foster care children.** Many states have developed highly successful models for supporting foster care youth who enter college. The needs of youth in this critical developmental stage include mentoring, financial support, housing, counseling, and tutoring. Informed by research, OCFS should focus on developing a New York model that includes the supports necessary to help youth through the admission process and the college experience. We would need many partners to achieve this, including the State University of New York, the City University of New York, and other service providers.
- **Design a website for all children in New York State who are in or have graduated from foster care.** OCFS is developing a website for current and former foster children that will provide access to critical information

about resources and services. In future years OCFS will explore expanding the site to offer social networking and a way for youth to build secure and confidential individual portfolios to store significant historical documents (e.g., birth certificate, Social Security number, contact information, and names of extended family, neighborhood friends, and teachers).

- **Develop an assessment tool to measure critical core competencies of all children leaving foster care.** These assessments can focus on abilities at discharge, such as literacy, financial know-how, health, consumer advocacy, legal awareness, and employability. They can also be used at initial placement and at various points during foster care to assess developmental progress. OCFS could also collect aggregate assessment data to guide the development of additional interventions to support skill building.

INITIATIVE 3 PRACTICE

Supporting Community Partnerships

- **Promote a community-based approach to foster care placements.** The Office of Children & Family Services can identify, document, and share new strategies to ensure that more children who enter a foster home are placed within their community of origin, thus maintaining continuity of important relationships and stable interactions with schools, health care providers, and other resources. OCFS could work with its partners to explore technologies that can make our collective work more effective. OCFS may expand its geographic information system (to assess gaps between needs and resources, as well as the alignment of resources), and develop an automated vacancy control system.³ OCFS can engage private-sector experts to help test the viability of various approaches. Over time, OCFS will help evaluate the new approaches and seek to expand on the successes.
- **Survey and map family service coalitions and collaboratives statewide to promote best practices.** OCFS could identify existing coalitions and then gather, document, and disseminate their promising practices. Community coalitions often lay a foundation for future service improvements, as they did with family teams and family advocates. Both innovations have demonstrated effectiveness in increasing family participation in services, helping families negotiate service systems, and maintaining stability through a crisis. OCFS can use what we learn about coalitions to inform future funding strategies and recommendations for legislative support and can work with other state agencies to do the same. OCFS can also use technology to scan grant awards to service organizations funded by multiple state agencies, assess alignment between types and levels of resources and community needs, and offer this information to the collaboratives.
- **Work with the New York State Office of Court Administration to share promising evidence-based practices and promote replication of community-specific practices in Family Courts.** New York State has many model court initiatives; OCFS will seek to document and describe them and create learning opportunities about the most promising approaches.⁴
- **Create incentives to engage residents as advisers to nonprofit organizations.** OCFS contracting standards and requests for proposals could encourage organizations to submit proposals that effectively incorporate the voices of young people and other stakeholders in decision making.
- **Promote the use of preventive services beyond foster care prevention and set guidelines for length of service.** The law permits the delivery of preventive services to support families in a range of ways, though it is mostly used to prevent foster care placement. OCFS and other agencies can do more to support adoptions and reduce adoption disruptions, provide services to children and families through critical transitions, and expedite and strengthen discharge plans. OCFS could gather, document, and share information about successful and innovative uses of preventive funding, and recommend changes to program and practice guidelines on preventive service utilization based on what works.

INITIATIVE 4 PRACTICE

The Foster Care Continuum: Addressing Complex Needs and Expectations

The Office of Children & Family Services can collaborate with stakeholders to reassess expectations about the roles of family foster care, group care and residential care, and community-based services, and develop a set of supports at each level to ensure that expectations are reasonable. OCFS could build on the work begun in 2009 with counties and private and public agencies, to define with stakeholders what constitutes good family foster care. This definition can build on a clear understanding of who foster parents are and what they need to fully participate in the child's care and services. This collaboration could develop and articulate the role and contribution of group and residential care within the community-based service system and propose how to integrate services. OCFS may explore program initiatives to:

- > Increase stipends and provide more supports for foster parents.
- > Identify new evidence-based models of family foster care, such as therapeutic foster homes for young people who are in group programs. As part of its new research and development process, OCFS could identify these models, with homes that provide clinical and respite support systems for youth. In researching and designing any new model, OCFS will set realistic expectations about its outcomes and carefully define implementation requirements and costs.
- > Create incentives to encourage providers to move child welfare resources and services to the community whenever possible, while maintaining high-quality, integrated residential care and improving transitions back to the community.
- > Expand the range of tools and methods child welfare practitioners use to engage in family search activities for children and youth who have no identified permanency resource.

INITIATIVE 5 PRACTICE

Service Integration: Meeting Families' Needs Through Cross-System Collaboration

- **Improve the efficacy and efficiency of work done in collaboration between Family Courts and local departments of social services.** The Office of Children & Family Services and the Office of Court Administration are developing performance measures for local departments of social services and family courts. Shared or common measures the agencies could develop may help inform joint initiatives and improve local processes and outcomes. OCFS could convene a small representative group from the courts, departments of social services, other stakeholders, and advocates to reexamine the Permanency Law of 2005 and recommend new legislation that protects the law's essential elements and eliminates requirements that are ineffective, unnecessarily prescriptive, or both.
- **Strengthen the relationship between the child welfare and education systems.** In many areas, the work of school districts overlaps with and has an impact on the work of the child welfare system. For example, educational stability is a critical component of the federal Fostering Connections law and requires a joint response from OCFS and the New York State Education Department. Many other critical intersections will require continued effort, such as educational neglect, truancy, transfer of children's credits as they leave foster care, and youth in residential care with special education needs.
- **Initiate a pilot child welfare–juvenile justice service redesign to create more integrated service arrangements at the community level.** Research demonstrates that children and youth involved in the child welfare system have a greater risk of entering the juvenile justice or criminal justice system. Our goal should be to replace this pipeline to prison with more promising scenarios. This means engaging multiple systems, including state and local child welfare and juvenile justice partners, the state Division of Criminal Justice Services, state and local departments of probation, and community-based organizations. Casey Family Programs, in partnership with the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR) at Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute, has developed a practice model for crossover youth—young people who move between the juvenile justice and the child welfare system. Casey and CJJR have selected 11 sites across the country to implement the practice reform and, in so doing, will develop and refine a template for how states can fully participate in this national reform. They have selected Monroe County in upstate New York to participate in the effort. This research will inform our initial work; OCFS may collaborate with Casey to examine how the model is working and how it can best be adapted for broader implementation in the state.
- **Promote the critical work of the New York State Council on Children and Families in identifying viable solutions to service integration problems.** The Council on Children and Families is in a unique position of authority and has great influence over member agencies. The Commissioners' Committee on Cross-Systems Services for Children and Youth will ask the council to continue recommending changes in policies, program design, and practices. Such recommendations will be based on lessons taken from successful local efforts. This will help state agencies promote effective models and integrate new findings into necessary

systems reform. The council will also identify challenges in service integration that lack ready solutions so that the commissioners' committee can focus its attention on these areas.

- **Support the implementation of Engage, the New York State Office of Mental Health's Children's Plan,**

and launch promising new efforts. Localities report a serious lack of access to mental health services in many communities. Cross-systems efforts should focus on improving access to a continuum of care through the service delivery system in communities and in residential care facilities. OCFS should aggressively pursue the initiatives in the Children's Plan.⁵

INITIATIVE 6 INNOVATION**Best Practices: Promoting What Works**

- **Promote the development of an independent institute to review efficacy of New York State child welfare programs.** Modeled on the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, this entity could regularly assess the progress, quality, and impact of evidence-informed and evidence-based work conducted in New York State. The institute could share its findings with counties, agencies, and other stakeholders.
- **Use the Quality Enhancement Fund (QEF) to finance innovative work and expand opportunities to implement successful programs and practices.** Whatever QEF funding is available should be used solely to implement innovative, promising ideas. Before programs or practices are funded, applicants should be required to submit documentation that describes the purpose, target population, program design/description, desired/measurable outcomes, and evaluation plan, along with a sustainability plan that includes future commitments (if applicants achieve desired outcomes). The Office of Children & Family Services can partner with the philanthropy sector to expand successful programs and make dollars available through clear, narrowly focused requests for proposals.
- **Promote program and practice improvements by developing two new web-based initiatives.** The “Research to Practice” (R2P) initiative would feature easily accessible information on recent and seminal research that provides the foundation for the OCFS Model of Practice. “Research to Practice” would also furnish information about implications for changes in practice or programming. The “Idea to Implementation” (I2I) initiative would allow individuals from districts and agencies throughout the state to share experiences and compare notes as they approach a particular operational challenge and progress from the inception of an idea to implementation.

INITIATIVE 7 INNOVATION

Finance: Investing in Better Outcomes for Children, Stronger Families, and Healthier Communities

- **Identify the strengths and gaps in the current child welfare financing statute that sustains financing at 63/37 funding ratio until 2012.** The analysis should include consideration of the ideas below and should make recommendations for proposed changes in legislation that advance policy and practice goals.
 - > Review current 63/37 state/local share of preventive expenditures and consider an incremental return to previous reimbursement rates as finances allow.
 - > Consider separate funding mechanisms for preventive, protective, aftercare, and post-adoption services and applying different reimbursement rates as incentive.
 - > Use the law's donated-funds provision (including current limits and effectiveness) to spur innovation, alternative service models, and the potential for supporting community collaboratives.
 - > Redesign the currently capped Community Optional Prevention Service and create a more flexible community prevention program that uses group eligibility and reduces documentation requirements as a means to support growth of primary prevention.
- **Pursue innovations in child welfare financing by seeking reauthorization of federal IV-E waiver authority.** A federal waiver could provide flexibility, protect federal financial participation, and provide a vehicle for testing alternative financing approaches. This strategy would include an aggressive federal advocacy agenda to eliminate or improve rules governing foster care eligibility, limitations on administrative support, and adequate support for preventive funding under Title IV-B and Title XX of the Social Security Act.
- **Develop and test alternate models for financing residential, medical, and mental health care.** Building on the experiences of the New York City Administration for Children's Services' Improved Outcomes for Children reforms, the Office of Children & Family Services may explore using a limited number of alternative financial models to assess their potential impact on improving outcomes in residential, mental health, and medical services. Possible pilots include residential care models that have demonstrated promise: case-rate and budget-based financing. The case-rate approach offers incentives to expedite a child's return from a residential placement to the community and enables provision of services to the family in the home and community following a child's stay in care. The budget-based model allows greater flexibility in program design, with the projected costs of operation agreed to and paid in full in advance, regardless of utilization. Under this model, the county and the agency carry out joint program monitoring, using predetermined outcome and performance standards.
- **Develop, pilot, and implement improved financing models for medical and mental health services in residential and community-based care settings.** The models should reflect the diverse services provided in the residential care system as well as the various medical service delivery systems.

- **Establish funding mechanisms to support local collaboratives.** OCFS could partner with the New York State Council on Children and Families and other family-serving state agencies to pursue collaborative private-public funding models that target specific “high-need” communities and use common indicators of outcomes and social need. The goal would be to facilitate the formation of local collaboratives that respond to families with complex needs across systems that a single service system cannot adequately address.
- **Design a research and development (R&D) process for creating new child welfare interventions.** OCFS may research and identify effective public-sector R&D

programs that generate new models of service and have supportive financing structures. The work of the Council on Children and Families, OCFS’s new Public Policy Institute, and lessons from the Quality Initiative could also inform this process.

- **Expand the use of geographic targeting and platform/unified contracting in OCFS requests for proposals.** By encouraging greater use of geographic targeting, OCFS could direct funds to where they are most needed. OCFS could also work with other state agencies to encourage pooling funds through a single state contract to providers that offer multiple services to families.

INITIATIVE 8 **MANAGEMENT**

Caseloads and Workloads: Setting Reasonable Expectations

- **Host meaningful conversations with key stakeholders to address child welfare caseloads.** The Office of Children & Family Services can develop baseline data regarding caseloads and workloads in the public and private sector for workers in child protective, preventive, foster care, and adoption services. OCFS can work with its partners to devise a process for collecting statewide caseload data. They could also develop the capacity for conducting an in-depth analysis that measures the effect of caseload levels on critical child welfare outcomes. OCFS can then use the *New York State Child Welfare Workload Study* and similar studies to develop caseload targets for the state. Ultimately, we may collect data on county performance relative to caseload levels and share this information in the annual "State of the Child Report." OCFS anticipates seeking private funding for this work.

"Based on the time-log data...on average, district offices and voluntary agencies are spending between 0.6 and 1.5 hours (approximately 35 to 90 minutes) of face-to-face contact with children and their families per case per month."

— *New York State Child Welfare Workload Study, 2006,*
Walter R. McDonald & Associates

INITIATIVE 9 MANAGEMENT

Human Resources: Fostering a Stronger Workforce

- **Collect data routinely from local departments of social services and voluntary agencies and conduct regular analyses to track and understand the reasons for worker turnover.** The partnership between the Office of Children & Family Services and the University at Albany–SUNY has resulted in deeper insights about what workers need to remain productive members of a child welfare organization. For example, we have found that supervisory support and competence are strongly related to job satisfaction and that excessive administrative duties and an unsupportive work environment are key reasons for leaving. OCFS and the University at Albany may identify a self-assessment tool that can help organizations assess the presence of factors that contribute most to attrition so they can address them.⁶

OCFS and the University at Albany intend to use data collected on turnover rates to develop state and local strategies that promote staff longevity. The partnership, which initially focused on public agencies, is now expanding its scope to include private providers. The University at Albany School of Social Welfare, the New York State Social Work Education Consortium (SWEC), and the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) have been awarded a five-year grant from the National Child Welfare Workforce Initiative (NCWWI) of the U.S. Children's Bureau, to focus on the workforce needs of voluntary agencies under contract with the public child welfare system. NCWWI will partner with COFCCA member agencies to create sustainable system changes that strengthen and support the voluntary agency workforce to better meet the needs of children and families and improve outcomes related to safety, permanency, and well-being.
- **Enlist schools of social work and the National Association of Social Workers in developing the public child-welfare workforce.** By collaborating with social work schools and the NASW, OCFS could generate better sharing of research about evidence-based practices and promising new approaches in public child welfare; protection for existing scholarship programs for MSW candidates; an increase in the number of caseworkers who take advantage of the student loan forgiveness program; development of new sources of child care workers, such as the recently founded Children's Service Corps,⁷ an initiative inspired by Teach for America; and a new database and library of scholarship and fellowship opportunities for caseworkers. To promote the education of future members of the child welfare workforce, OCFS also supports a scholarship program being piloted by SWEC in Western New York State, the Capital District, and New York City.
- **Expand the Teaming Initiative.** Teaming is an innovative approach to casework in which child welfare workers operate together, sharing cases and decision making, conducting home visits jointly, participating in group supervision sessions, and exchanging information and advice about all cases within a unit. The approach changes the organizational culture to emphasize collective responsibility for a caseload. Teaming has been shown to benefit workers and improve decision making and consumer satisfaction. OCFS now supports this approach through 17 teams operating in 14 local districts throughout the state. All of these teams have attended an annual symposium, received a work plan and guide to develop teaming, and participated in team building and group-supervision training. OCFS is

assessing local interest in expanding this effort in 2010.

- **Develop an upstate initiative to prevent secondary traumatic stress among caseworkers.** Caseworkers are exposed to multiple traumatic events every day at work. To increase their capacity for resiliency in the face of trauma, this initiative will draw on the groundbreaking partnership between New York City's Administration for Children's Services and the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, which has recognized core resiliency traits that can be developed and supported. OCFS may replicate the New York City pilot in one or two counties, and will apply the lessons learned to core training for caseworkers and supervisors throughout the state.
- **Develop an integrated career path in child welfare and related services.** Workers in child welfare, probation, mental health, and family court often move from one service sector to another for marginal pay increases. OCFS may ask the Governor's Children's Cabinet to develop a joint career ladder to facilitate more planned moves between state agencies, keep workers in the field, and promote the development of specific skills and expertise. The cabinet could examine civil service systems to explore this and other approaches.
- **Develop and launch a statewide community education and worker recruitment campaign.** The next phase of OCFS's "Caseworkers Make a Difference" campaign should build on the success of local efforts, have the capacity to target specific communities, and promote the contributions of child welfare caseworkers.
- **Expand collaboration with the New York State Department of Civil Service to continue improving the process for hiring county caseworkers.** Many local child welfare officials feel challenged by civil service rules, requirements, and processes and perceive them as overly structured, inflexible barriers to screening and hiring good caseworkers. Recent OCFS collaboration with the Department of Civil Service has resulted in more flexible approaches to meet local needs, such as decentralized exams that can be offered at a county's request. An expansion of traineeships for the caseworker position in 2010 will help ensure that hiring preference goes to candidates with degrees in areas related to casework. The selection process also increases understanding of local testing options, alternative career paths, and full exploration of behavioral interviewing.
- **Strengthen supervisory practices statewide.** OCFS recently submitted a proposal to the Northeast and Caribbean Child Welfare Implementation Center to develop a three-year project to build a system of supports for child welfare supervisors. The project would develop, implement, and maintain an outcome-focused model of child welfare supervision that promotes family-centered, solution-focused, and data-informed practices and an organizational climate that fosters staff and family resilience. Practices should also be easy to use, flexible, and adaptable to the needs and capabilities of the state's 58 local departments of social services.
- **Update the core curriculum for ongoing child welfare worker training that is based on statewide implementation of Family Assessment Response and emerging practices.** As practice models change and grow, the training of new workers must keep pace with the best practices OCFS supports. OCFS may explore alternative ways to deliver training through the use of technology.

INITIATIVE 10 **ACCOUNTABILITY****Accountability: Getting Results**

- **Establish critical outcome measures for departments of social services and licensed residential care providers to use in the areas of child safety, permanency, and well-being.** The Office of Children & Family Services' new accountability initiative will make outcome and performance data available to stakeholders and the public on the OCFS website. OCFS may also develop incentives to recognize excellent performance and other initiatives, such as:

- > Requiring evaluation of the outcome measures in the selection process for all its requests for proposals and
- > Identifying successful quality improvement practices (such as ChildStat in New York City) and promoting their application elsewhere.

- **Publish an annual "State of the Child Report."** Building on the Touchstones data report published by the New York State Council on Children and Families, this report would include counties and agencies' performance on each of the new critical outcome measures and become a tool for public accountability.
- **Design a transparent and participatory statewide approach to monitoring, assessing, and improving quality of practice.** This new quality initiative would involve youth, families, and communities served, as well as other stakeholders, as informants and sources of qualitative input. The initiative can build on continuous quality improvement principles and will include recognition for excellent performance. It should also establish clear expectations for improvement by those who perform poorly.

OCFS may pilot the approach in 2010 with a redesign of the review protocol used with voluntary agencies.

- **Develop a statewide learning collaborative to improve quality in child welfare services.** OCFS may hold an annual quality improvement gathering, in conjunction with the publication of the annual "State of the Child Report." The meeting would highlight what works, showcase successful improvement efforts, and recognize innovations that result in better child and family outcomes. OCFS would seek private funding to develop the learning collaborative and the annual gathering, and would explore ways, within its authority, to create incentives for innovation.
- **Launch extensive improvements to the CONNECTIONS case management system.** Starting in 2010, OCFS is rolling out an enhanced CONNECTIONS system that is web-based and easy to use. The system will be fully implemented statewide by 2012 and is an important improvement in the child welfare system, as it will reduce the time caseworkers spend inputting data.

"The new accountability must offer basic protections to consumers, it must promote practice improvements, and it must help us answer the question 'What works?'"

—OCFS Commissioner Gladys Carrión

ENDNOTES

1. The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) recently issued a report about race equity in the policies and protocols of the Michigan Department of Human Services and is completing an analysis of the New Mexico child welfare system. The CSSP's forthcoming report on "Places to Watch" will recommend other actions OCFS may consider.
2. OCFS and the local district facilitate the permanency panels, bringing together critical stakeholders (e.g., Family Court, provider agencies) to review individual children's cases with the goals of identifying barriers to permanency and solving problems. The panels are modeled on the work done under the guidance of Judge Judith S. Kaye that demonstrated success in moving children more expeditiously toward a finalized adoption. While the adoption panels continue, the permanency panels will review two categories of children: those who have been in foster care for less than six months, to determine what actions can expedite a reunification or achieve a permanency goal; and those children/youth who have been in care for three years or more, to assess the viability of the permanency plan, modify it as needed, and ensure that actions planned have a reasonable likelihood of achieving success. The panels would be held twice a year for children in these categories.
3. OCFS's Geographic Information Center maps data geographically and can be used to display community-based resources so that, for example, families looking for a day-care center can locate one close to their home or a community planner can demonstrate the relationship between families in need of services and existing resources (such as neighborhood centers). A vacancy control system would enable optimal matching to address the needs of a particular child or children and their family. Criteria would include the skills, abilities, proximity, and availability of specific foster homes.
4. The Bronx Family Court's first community-specific part for the Highbridge community has had positive results, including more reliable service arrangements for families based on the courts' increased knowledge about community services. OCFS could work with the Office of Court Administration to replicate this model in at least three other locations in New York State.
5. Initiatives include the Foster Care Mental Health Initiative; the development of a residential treatment facility to serve incarcerated juveniles; exploring methods for providing mental health consultation for early childhood providers; and exploring opportunities to provide cross-systems training for effective parenting.
6. For example, Survey of Organizational Excellence by the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work.
7. *Social Work for America: Adapting the Teach for America Model to Meet the Demands of Child Welfare*, issued by Changing the World One Child at a Time (CTWOCAT), www.ctwocat.org; written and edited by Viviane De Milly, consultant with CTWOCAT, Rachael Barasz, CUSSW MSW student intern; Barry Chaffkin, CEO and cofounder of CTWOCAT; and Judith Meltzer, deputy director of the Center for the Study of Social Policy.