

RURAL AREA FLEXIBILITY ANALYSIS

1. Types and estimated number of rural areas:

The proposed regulations will affect 44 local departments of social services and the approximately 35 voluntary authorized agencies in rural areas of New York State.

2. Reporting, recordkeeping and compliance requirements:

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) enacted as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-123) requires states to adopt a myriad of provisions regarding foster care services on or before September 29, 2021. Among other things, FFPSA enacted provisions requiring new types of congregate foster care programs to be operated by voluntary authorized agencies. Specifically, qualified residential treatment programs (QRTPs); and QRTP exceptions, which include supervised settings; specialized programs to serve prenatal, postpartum, or parenting youth; and programs for youth who have been or are at risk of sex-trafficking. Moreover, FFPSA set forth certain requirements that must be met by states regarding when placement of a child in foster care is made into a QRTP, including requirements for casework documentation, certain reviews that must be conducted if foster children in certain age groups remain placed in QRTPs for specified extended periods of time (long stayer reviews) and after care services that must be provided.

These regulations adopt various federal mandates that local departments of social services (LDSS) and voluntary authorized agencies must meet in order for New York State and local governments to continue to receive federal Title IV-E reimbursement (approximately \$600 million annually).

Specifically, the proposed regulations would require the LDSS to document certain information in the case contact notes related to the formation and involvement of the family and permanency team, for all children placed in a QRTP. Moreover, the proposed regulations require the LDSSs document specified information for long stayer reviews where children in foster care remain in QRTPs for extended periods of time.

Among other things, these regulations would establish the requisite health, safety, and programmatic standards for the issuance of an operating certificate or approval for initial and continued operation of a program as a QRTP or QRTP exception including paperwork requirements that voluntary authorized agencies must meet.

3. Compliance Costs

Failure to adopt these regulations may result in a loss of the ability for New York to receive any federal Title IV-E reimbursement. This funding stream provides approximately \$600 million annually in federal reimbursement to New York State and local governments (counties and New York City).

Adoption of requirements tied to state and federal law as contained within these regulations are expected to result in a modest cost to New York State, LDSSs and voluntary authorized agencies. Anticipated costs are expected to be substantially less than the potential for loss of federal reimbursement. New costs are anticipated to be incurred in regard to: assessments required to be conducted by qualified individuals; long stayer reviews; creation of QRTPs and QRTP exceptions; and aftercare. Impact of these costs on the state, LDSSs and voluntary agencies was considered as part of the budget making process for the enacted budget for State Fiscal Year 2022. Funding streams that may be available to support these various new costs include, federal Title IV-E reimbursement; Medicaid reimbursement; foster care block grant; child welfare financing, state general fund (state operations) and local tax levy dollars.

4. Minimizing adverse impact:

These regulations would adopt federal and state mandated provisions. To minimize adverse impact, provisions allowing programs to request and receive a waiver from regulatory requirements in appropriate circumstances, are being proposed.

5. Rural area participation:

The Office has engaged in a process of receiving extensive and robust feedback on FFPSA implementation. This includes a Statewide Implementation Team (SIT) that involves representation from various LDSSs and voluntary authorized agencies in rural areas. The Office has also put forth a series of webinars and presentations geared to these entities for all areas of the state, including rural areas.