COFCCA CARES 4 KIDS

Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies

2017-18 Budget Recommendations

There are over 100 voluntary not-for-profit child welfare agencies across the state, which make up the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA). They provide critical programs and services to over one million vulnerable children and families. They employ over 51,000 men and women dedicated to supporting children and families. The following are COFCCA's 2017-18 budget recommendations:

Support 4% Growth to the Maximum State Aid Rate (MSAR) that Funds Foster Care

While the MSAR is developed and approved after the state budget is passed, we strongly encourage the Legislature to vocalize their support for foster care funding by supporting a 4% growth factor for all expense parameters, and the establishment of predictable annual growth to the MSAR. Annual increases are imperative to ensuring that agencies can provide the best programs and services to foster children, cover operational costs, and provide raises to direct care staff who care for our most vulnerable youth.

$1 Million to Establish the Child Welfare Workforce Higher Education Opportunity Program

Our workforce provides stability, trust, and confidence to the youth in care. In addition, there are thousands of non-direct care staff employed by COFCCA agencies who are critical to the maintenance, safety, and day to day operations of our agency. Unfortunately jobs in the child welfare sector are also some of the lowest paying across the state and many workers are unable to afford higher education on their own. COFCCA agencies struggle to recruit and retain employees and find that they are in need of a higher quality workforce. Investing in higher education opportunities for individuals committed to the child welfare system not only invests the over 51,000 employees but also invests in the children in care by investing in stabilizing relationships among children and caretakers.

$15 Million for Capital Improvements and Deferred Maintenance on Residential Campuses for Youth in Care

New York State has approximately 60 residential campus programs statewide which provide shelter and therapeutic services for youth in care. Due to multiple years of stagnant funding residential agencies have not had the ability to over the make ongoing repairs to these residential facilities. Maintenance has been deferred leading to increased need for a capital investment. $15 million in 2017-18 State budget specifically for the capital needs of foster care agencies, as well as a commitment for $15 million in 2018-19. Funding over 2 years will help to prioritize needs and recognize that some projects are "shovel ready" while others will need development time.

For more information, contact Janet Silver at Hinman Straub, (518) 436-0751 or jsilver@hinmanstraub.com.

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Advocate for an increase to the 2017-18 MSAR through the administrative rate setting process. Encourage that increases be applied to all expenses - direct & non-direct.

Encourage the Executive, Division of the Budget and Office of Children and Family Services to develop a model for long term stability by establishing an annual index to the rate.

Provide an investment through the MSAR to assist agencies with the initial fiscal impact of implementing the new minimum wage.

Support 4% Growth to the Maximum State Aid Rate (MSAR) that Funds Foster Care

New York State partners with COFCCA agencies to provide the care and custody of New York's children placed in foster care. COFCCA agencies providing foster care are supported by the Maximum State Aid Rate (MSAR). This rate - established annually - through a recommendation by the Office of Children and Family Services and approval by the Division of the Budget - supports all expenses related to the care of New York's foster care children.

During the recession and for multiple years after, a growth factor was not applied to the MSAR. Without annual increases, COFCCA agencies struggled to cover the costs of providing a safe therapeutic environment to New York's most vulnerable and traumatized youth.

Over the past two years, growth to the MSAR has been approved. While modest, COFCCA agencies appreciate the reinvestment into the child welfare system. Unfortunately, last year's growth was only applied to direct care expenses. No support was provided to non-direct care costs, such as utilities, staff training & professional development, maintenance, etc. The decision to limit growth continues to put a fiscal strain on agencies which have already significantly reduced during the recession.

While the MSAR is developed and approved after the state budget is passed, we strongly encourage the Legislature to vocalize their support for foster care funding by supporting a 4% growth factor for all expense parameters, and the establishment of predictable annual growth to the MSAR. Annual increases are imperative to ensuring that agencies can provide the best programs and services to foster children, cover operational costs, and provide raises to direct care staff who care for our most vulnerable youth.

MSAR Growth Factor

2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	**2016-17**
3.0%	2.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	**2%***

* 2% was only provided to support direct care costs, no additional support was included for non-direct costs.

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$1 Million to Establish the Child Welfare Workforce Higher Education Opportunity Program

COFCCA's child welfare workforce provides stability, trust, and confidence to the children and youth in care many of whom have experienced profound trauma. In addition, there are thousands of non-direct care staff employed by COFCCA agencies who are critical to the maintenance, safety, and day to day operations of our agencies. Unfortunately jobs in the child welfare sector are also some of the lowest paying across the state and many workers are unable to afford higher education on their own.

While COFCCA agencies struggle to recruit and retain employees, agencies are also finding that they are in need of a workforce who has the education, training, and experience to:

Support and treat the complex needs of children and families	Utilize evidence based tools and practices to improve safety and outcomes	Perform administrative & operational functions during a time of change due to healthcare reform.

Investing in higher education opportunities for individuals committed to the child welfare system not only invests the over 51,000 employees but also invests in the children in care by investing in stabilizing relationships among children and caretakers. As New York has invested to help recruit physicians, engineers, and teachers; COFCCA recommends an investment for child welfare workforce to enhance their skills in meeting the needs of our most vulnerable children and families.

Child Welfare Workforce Higher Education Opportunity Program

$500,000 Investment

NYS Child Welfare Worker Incentive Scholarship

Provides current employees a scholarship to obtain a degree that would enhance their ability to work in an agency & continue to work in the child welfare field on a full- time basis for five years.

$500,000 Investment

NYS Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program

Provide new or current employees loan forgiveness awards if they agree to work in the field of child welfare on a full-time basis for five years.

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$15 Million for Capital Improvements and Deferred Maintenance on Residential Campuses for Youth in Care

New York State has approximately 60 residential campus programs statewide which provide shelter and therapeutic services for youth in care. Due to multiple years of stagnant funding residential agencies have not had the ability to over the make ongoing repairs to these residential facilities.

Maintenance has been deferred leading to increased need for a capital investment for such projects as:

- Deferred Maintenance
- Safety of Youth & Staff
- Energy Efficiencies
- Improved Living Spaces for Youth
- Cameras
- Roof Repairs
- HVAC Improvement
- New Carpets
- Replacement Furniture
- Upgraded Appliances
- Windows
- Cottage Conversions
- IT Needs

COFCCA recommends including $15 million in 2017-18 State budget specifically for the capital needs of foster care agencies, as well as a commitment for $15 million in 2018-19. Funding over 2 years will help to prioritize needs and recognize that some projects are “shovel ready” while others will need development time.

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